FUTURE OF SPORT IN CANADA COMMISSION

Preliminary Report

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Preface

Message from the Commissioner and Special Advisors

Canada is a sporting nation. Every day countless Canadians organize, coach, officiate or participate in sport. Sport and physical activity are integral to their lives. They are an essential component of Canadian culture, pride and identity from community playgrounds to championship podiums. Canadians actively participate and celebrate sport from the grassroots to the world stage, bringing us together as a society.

That fulfilling relationship with sport, however, has escaped many.

The Canadian sport world is in crisis. As many have told us: "it is broken." The challenges are as profound as they are numerous: meager funding; archaic governance practices; discontinuities between and within sport organizations; duplication of efforts and resources; a problematic focus on high-performance; a lack of protection for children; and the commodification of some athletes. There is also a lack of access and opportunity for many, but more particularly for para-athletes, Black, Indigenous and people of colour and those of the 2SLGBTQI+ communities. And when access and opportunities have been provided, they have often come at a cost to the dignity and safety of many individuals. Canadian sport has lost its way. This was most dramatically evidenced by the horrific instances of abuse and maltreatment that have come to light, many of which were swept under the rug as a result of a lack of leadership.

We heard heart-wrenching stories, across all sports and spanning the entire country, of broken dreams, humiliation and destruction. In many cases, these are stories that have been told before. And more than once. The very fact that individuals had to share these painful memories repeatedly shines a light on the fundamental failures of the system.

But we also witnessed the courage and resilience of many and the passion, dedication, and commitment of all who are working to build, promote, enhance and safeguard sport and physical activity in Canada. As a result of these actions, the positive culture change that has already begun cannot be stopped. It must not be stopped. Now is the time to transform beliefs, values, behaviours, and assumptions. Now is the time to alter the practices that shape how those within the Canadian sport system and physical activity communities interact and make decisions. Canadians are demanding, and expect, meaningful change. They believe in the importance of sport and its positive, personal and collective benefits. They want to ensure we have a system that provides safe opportunities and access to all.

We recognize the changes that Sport Canada and sport organizations have made in the last few years. But the change required has to be transformative and profound. To bring this objective to life, all governments and sport organizations have a role to play. While the Government of Canada must play a leadership role in driving change, provincial and territorial governments must actively collaborate, and sport and physical activity organizations must assume and assert their national-leadership roles. Canadians need to continue to voice their concerns. Above all, the driver of this transformative reform must be a desire to enhance and protect the well-being of society, especially children.

We were heartened to hear that Canadians, including those at the highest level of sport, and governments, are truly motivated to unite, develop and deliver significant change. In preparing our preliminary recommendations, we listened very carefully to the voices of the sport and physical activity communities in Canada. In particular, we took note of the work done by others who, in the past, reviewed and addressed similar issues, making many recommendations and suggestions for change. Many of which remain unaddressed or unimplemented. We found broad support for many of our preliminary recommendations.

Canada now has a unique opportunity to address the profound challenges we have identified. We can create an exceptional, revitalized, and safer sport and physical activity system that will more effectively and more efficiently serve generations to come. Canadians deserve no less.

Lise Maisonneuve, Commissioner

Dr. Andrew Pipe and Noni Classen, Special Advisors
August 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

Sport and physical activity are vital threads in the fabric of Canadian life. Canadians take pride in sport and see it not just as a platform for elite competition but also as a means to promote lifelong physical activity, health and social connection. Sport can create the leaders of tomorrow and contributes to the national and local economies. For some people, sport can literally save lives and for others, sport is a space where children can learn to embrace diversity. Approximately half of Canadians participate in sport (at many levels) underscoring how integral sport and movement are to our national identity.

Sport and physical activity ought to reflect the values of health, cultural diversity and resilience that define our nation. Yet, in recent years, stories that have come to light have tarnished this inspiring portrait of Canadian sport. Widely publicized revelations of maltreatment, including abuse, harassment and discrimination, as well as governance issues, have undermined trust in the Canadian sport system. This prompted calls for a thorough examination of the Canadian sporting environment and broad reforms to the sport system.

In May 2024, the then Minister of Sport and Physical Activity announced the creation of the Future of Sport in Canada Commission. Our mandate required us to carefully examine sport in Canada, engage widely and make recommendations on actions to improve (i) safe sport and (ii) the sport system in Canada.

Early on in our work, it became clear to us that the two parts of our mandate are closely interconnected. A robust, well-governed and well-supported sport and physical activity system is foundational to the creation of safe and inclusive sport environments, which in turn reduce instances of maltreatment in sport.

We have come to understand that this two-fold mandate is broad and complex, given the nature of the sport system in this country. For this Preliminary Report, we have focused our attention on examining: (i) the structure, leadership, funding and governance of the Canadian sport system; and (ii) the mechanisms intended to create and maintain safe sport environments, respond to maltreatment and support those affected. Following months of engagement and careful review of these issues, we offer for consideration preliminary recommendations which we believe would drive meaningful change and rid Canadian sport of the systemic flaws that enable maltreatment to persist largely unaddressed. We recognize that we still have much to learn from Indigenous people. We are committed to continuing to engage, listen and learn from them as we pursue our work.

We are particularly indebted to those who took the time to share with us their painful, often life-altering, sport experiences, and we recognize the courage, strength, resilience and dedication of those individuals. Their voices were essential in guiding our work.

Time for leadership and vision

From a system-wide perspective, Canadian sport suffers from a significant leadership void. There is no single entity responsible for developing and overseeing a cohesive strategic direction for sport and physical activity in Canada. The sport system has evolved reactively over decades in response to various crises, including the doping crisis and the safe sport crisis that led to the creation of the Commission, societal pressures and changing political priorities within the federal government.

The Government of Canada's current emphasis on high-performance and medal achievements does not align with the sport community's desire for a sport system that, while valuing success, also embodies respect, diversity and inclusion, encourages participation and promotes health and well-being.

In our view, the moment calls for decisive leadership and a clear long-term strategic vision for sport and physical activity in Canada. Drawing on models from other Commonwealth countries, we are of the view that the Government of Canada should establish an independent entity, referred to in this Preliminary Report as the Centralized Sport Entity, and entrust it with the strategic leadership, coordination, administration and oversight of sport and physical activity across the country. The entity's responsibilities should include the development and oversight of a national sport and physical activity strategy in collaboration with interested parties such as the provinces and territories, Indigenous groups, and sport and physical activity organizations.

A clear need for structural alignment

The absence of leadership and coordinated strategic planning in sport has resulted in a proliferation of sport organizations and misalignment across the system. In most cases, National Sport Organizations have limited abilities to influence the policies, programs and procedures of their Provincial and Territorial counterparts. As such, the misalignment further extends to the community level. There is considerable overlap and duplication of services and programs among sport organizations. Parasport organizations face comparable, yet more complex, challenges with issues of alignment and operational efficiency evident at both the national and provincial and territorial levels.

A further complication is seen in the emergence and growth of private sport clubs, academies, teams, and leagues, which operate beyond the reach of National Sport Organizations. These private entities often promote a pay-to-play model, where access and development are tied more to financial means than to interest or athletic potential. Similarly, university and college sport exist in virtual isolation from the National Sport Organizations, despite the fact that they involve thousands of athletes and the greatest number of paid coaches in Canada.

To strengthen alignment among sport organizations and enhance overall efficiency in the sport system, the Government of Canada needs to (i) improve horizontal alignment, by encouraging the amalgamation of National Sport Organizations through incentives, and by encouraging National Sport Organizations to establish

and implement the sharing of common services, (ii) by encouraging National Parasport Organizations to establish and implement the sharing of common services tailored to the needs of the parasport community, (ii) improve vertical alignment, by encouraging National Sport Organizations to seek broad application of policies across all levels of their sport, by encouraging National Sport Organization to establish and implement the sharing of services with their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and Community Sport Organizations, where possible, and encouraging with incentives the amalgamation of National Sport Organizations with Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, (iv) create a strategic transformation fund to support National Sport Organizations, and National Parasport Organizations, as they undertake the amalgamation and/or shared services processes, (v) develop a national parasport strategy in collaboration with the national and provincial and territorial parasport community. Once the Centralized Sport Entity is established, it will become responsible for the development of the national parasport strategy.

Addressing the funding crisis

Government funding and attention have too often been concentrated on elite, high-performance athletes, with insufficient focus on the burgeoning needs of youth and local communities. Participation in sport is now impeded by high costs and limited access to facilities and programs. Sport and physical activity are no longer accessible to all. This shift to a performance-focused sport system has also placed unhealthy pressure on athletes, coaches and sport organizations. The sport system needs a strategy that provides for ongoing, stable and equitable funding to ensure it serves equity-deserving groups, including persons with disabilities, Black, Indigenous people, and people of colour , and members of the 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

The sport system is severely underfunded. National Sport Organizations today are expected to be leaders in their sport but also to create safe sport environments, promote diversity and inclusion and strengthen their governance practices, among many other responsibilities. Yet, they operate with static or even diminishing funding levels that have not kept pace with inflation nor reflected increasing expectations over the past two decades. The Government of Canada's overreliance on project-funding rather than increasing core funding for sport organizations hinders their ability to plan for the long term and retain qualified staff. The provision of multi-year core funding through Sport Canada's Sport Support Program, which we understand is now taking place, is an important first step in the right direction.

Despite Sport Canada's efforts to revamp and streamline its funding framework in 2024, the application process remains lengthy and complex. The oversight and monitoring of public funds in sport remain insufficient.

To ensure a well-resourced sport system that can meet the needs of all stakeholders, we believe that the Government of Canada ought to (i) urgently increase core funding to National Sport Organizations and National Parasport Organizations, (ii) consolidate the sources of federal funding, (iii) develop a long-term funding strategy for sport, (iv) improve the funding framework, namely the application process and the monitoring of public funds, and (v) increase funding to provinces and territories so they can better support Provincial and Territorial Sport

Organizations in a coordinated manner. Furthermore, once the Centralized Sport Entity is established, it should become responsible for the allocation, distribution and oversight of all federal funding for sport and physical activity, including the development of the long-term funding strategy.

Strengthening governance in sport organizations

Sport organizations at all levels, in part due to limited resources, rely heavily on well-intentioned volunteers to serve on their boards of directors. These volunteers are often former coaches, parents, or administrators from within the sport in which the organization operates. This reality presents several challenges, including a lack of financial, governance and legal skills, a lack of independence, real and perceived conflicts of interest, limited diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation, and insufficient representation of athletes and para-athletes on boards of directors. Although sport organizations receive public funding, their processes and procedures frequently lack the transparency and accountability expected by governments and the Canadian public.

The Government of Canada announced in 2023 that compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code would be required as a condition of funding for National Sport Organizations. Yet, at the time of writing this report, compliance with the Code is not mandatory. National Sport Organizations are only required to meet minimal governance requirements as a condition of federal funding.

Because good governance practices are essential to creating safe and inclusive sport environments, the Government of Canada ought to (i) mandate compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code for federally funded sport organizations, (ii) enhance the Code to add governance requirements such as including racial diversity as an element in the skills matrix for board member selection, mandating regular board training on anti-racism and inclusion and on preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport, requiring athlete representation on boards with full voting rights, and making publicly available on sport organization's website key documents, and (iii) oversee compliance with the Code. We strongly endorse the Code's implementation at all levels of sport. Therefore, we offer recommendations to expand the Code's application to provincial/territorial and community-level sport organizations. Other than the enhancement of the Code which should be completed by the Government of Canada, the Centralized Sport Entity should become responsible for all responsibilities related to the governance of sport organizations that were previously assigned to the Government of Canada once the Entity is established.

Maltreatment in sport persists

Despite growing awareness and the many studies and reports that came before us, maltreatment in sport, including abuse, harassment and discrimination, remains widespread within sport. While instances of maltreatment permeate all levels of sport, they are particularly prevalent at the grassroots and community-level.

Maltreatment can take many forms, including physical punishment, bullying, body shaming, sexual exploitation, abuse of power imbalances, failure to meet basic needs, racism, sexism and homophobia. These individuals' harms are a result of broader systemic issues, such as poor governance, underfunding, conflicts of interest, a lack of oversight and a focus on winning, that together have contributed to a culture of silence that protects perpetrators and institutions and allows maltreatment to persist unchecked.

Building and sustaining safe sport environments through enhanced prevention

While recently governments and sport organizations have increasingly focused on safe sport, that emphasis remains largely on responding to maltreatment rather than preventing it. We believe that more efforts must be placed on prevention. A system that only reacts after harm has occurred cannot be considered truly safe.

There is a broad range of existing safe sport education and training initiatives taking place across the country. The multiplicity of trainings and courses has contributed to the sport community's fatigue, frustration, and disengagement with this topic. This is due to the fragmented delivery model, which results in repeated and overlapping content, and the prevalence of ineffective online education and training formats. With a view to improving harmonization, coordination, reach, content and efficiency of safe sport education and training, the Government of Canada ought to (i) develop, in collaboration with its provincial and territorial counterparts and Indigenous groups, a national safe sport education program with tailored content for all individuals involved in sport and (ii) mandate delivery of the Program to all individuals involved in sport organizations receiving federal funding. These responsibilities should be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established. The Government of Canada should also incentivize its provincial and territorial counterparts to mandate the delivery of the Program to individuals involved in sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding by providing the resources necessary for delivering the Program within their territory. We also explore other ways to expand the reach of the Program to provincial/territorial and community-level sport organizations.

Our work has highlighted a strong consensus that background screening processes for coaches, officials, referees, staff and volunteers are essential to the creation of and maintenance of safe sport environments. Unfortunately, the adoption of background screening policies and the choice of screening tools remains inconsistent from one sport organization to another. To ensure the consistent application and effectiveness of background screenings, the Government of Canada needs to mandate background screening requirements

or develop, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments and Indigenous groups, a standardized background screening policy for adoption by sport organizations receiving federal funding, and to subsidize their implementation costs. As part of our preliminary recommendations, we also explore ways to extend those requirements to provincial/territorial and community-level sport organizations. Namely, we recommend that the Government of Canada encourage provincial and territorial governments to mandate background screening requirements or the adoption of the standardized background screening policy as a condition of funding for Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations by offering conditional grants to provinces and territories to help offset implementation costs. These responsibilities should be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity once it is established.

Harmonizing and expanding our response to maltreatment in sport

As noted above, our work has revealed increased efforts in recent years, by governments and sport organizations, to develop safe sport policies or codes of conduct and establish mechanisms for handling safe sport complaints.

We note the work of Sport Canada and several National Multisport Service Organizations in developing the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, the former Abuse-Free Sport Program and the new Canadian Safe Sport Program. Several provinces and territories are also actively working on developing or implementing universal safe sport policies or legislation (Quebec, British Columbia and Saskatchewan) and centralizing the administration of safe sport complaints in their jurisdiction (Quebec, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Saskatchewan).

That said, like the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, the new Canadian Safe Sport Program and its provincial/territorial counterparts have limited reach and applicability. Except for Quebec, centralized complaint mechanisms do not reach the grassroots and community-level of sport, where most instances of maltreatment take place. The jurisdiction of these mechanisms is typically limited to sport organizations receiving funding from their enabling government, and even within those organizations, their scope is restricted to specific individuals and certain contexts. These are shortcomings which must be addressed.

In response, many national and provincial and terrivorialterritorial level sport organizations have adopted their own safe sport policy or code of conduct and hired external individuals or agencies to independently administer complaints that fall outside the jurisdiction of the centralized complaint mechanisms. This has further contributed to the fragmentation of the Canada “safe sport system.” It currently includes both centralized complaint mechanisms and Independant Third-Party mechanisms. The latter vary significantly in quality, particularly with respect to the selection, qualifications, and independence of adjudicators.

In this Preliminary Report, we set out several options of intergovernmental collaborative frameworks which would allow for an integrated approach to responding to safe sport issues across all levels of the Canadian sport system. Each of the options we put forward for consideration aim at building on the structures and mechanisms

already developed and implemented by governments and sport organizations, including the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. Among the various options, we recommend that the Government of Canada collaborate with provincial and territorial governments to create a national safe sport authority or tribunal to administer all federal, provincial and territorial safe sport legislation. Such legislation would be enacted by the federal, provincial and territorial legislatures. The national safe sport authority or tribunal could leverage the expertise and experience of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.

Supporting those involved

The proliferation of complaint mechanisms nationwide has led to inconsistent approaches in how reports of maltreatment in sport are managed, investigated and resolved. In addition to these variations, complaint mechanisms often lack transparency and adequate support for those involved, including assistance to navigate the process and legal aid resources. Complaint management processes and procedures are often overly complex and lack clear timelines to ensure prompt resolution. In many cases, they have not been adequately trauma-informed and lack procedural fairness. Seeing as the Canadian Safe Sport Program only began operating on April 1, 2025, we are not in a position at the moment to make findings about its process and procedures. However, there are key critical features that any complaint mechanism and complaint management process dealing with reports of maltreatment in sport ought to include. Importantly, they must be accessible and prioritize trauma-informed practices while embedding procedural fairness. These attributes are integral to respecting the lived experiences and the rights of all parties involved.

Registries of sanctioned individuals as another preventive tool in safe sport

The rise in complaint mechanisms across the country resulted in the emergence of public registries of individuals whose eligibility to participate in sport has been restricted following a violation of a safe sport policy or code of conduct. In addition to the Canadian Safe Sport Program and the centralized complaint mechanism established in Saskatchewan, both of which provide for the implementation of a public registry, a handful of National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations have voluntarily implemented public registries within their organizations.

Without widely adopted public registries, individuals may move between sport organizations and provinces/territories and continue to participate in sport despite being under active restriction. In this Preliminary Report, we set out several approaches to implementing a nationwide public registry of sanctioned individuals. These recommendations are consistent with the various options of intergovernmental collaborative frameworks we propose to ensure a coordinated response to safe sport issues across all levels of sport. Among the various options, we recommend that the national safe sport authority or tribunal to be created by the Government of Canada in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments be tasked with maintaining a national registry

of sanctioned individuals. We believe this could serve as an effective background screening tool to further strengthen efforts to prevent maltreatment in sport.

Conclusion

The common thread of our preliminary recommendations is the pressing need for an integrated sport system spanning from the national to the grassroots level and for a harmonized safe sport approach.

Like so many parts of Canadian life, sport and physical activity are areas of shared jurisdiction between the federal and the provincial/territorial jurisdictions. Achieving uniformity and alignment in structure, funding, leadership, governance and the approach to safe sport across the sport system will require meaningful collaboration between both levels of government.

We were encouraged to see political will from federal, provincial and territorial governments to strengthen their collaboration on these critical issues. We believe that sport has the potential to demonstrate how coordinated action between both orders of government can protect and promote societal well-being.

After all, Canada deserves a safe, efficient, sustainable, and robust physical activity and sport system that encourages participation, athletic excellence and community engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Future of Sport in Canada Commission

Canada is a nation deeply passionate about sport. Sport is embedded in the history and fabric of our country.

Sport has occupied an integral place in Canada for centuries. Indigenous Peoples were practising sport long before settlers arrived in Canada. Their sports and games were deeply rooted in their lives, spirituality, and worldviews, designed not only for fun and competition but also to teach life skills.[1] Over generations, immigrants have brought new sports and games to the country. Sharing sporting 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 across the country, whether it is sports days in schools, by watching emerging athletes on playing fields, driving children and their teammates to tournaments in neighbouring communities, cheering on Team Canada at world championships, or watching with pride as the Canadian flag is paraded into the opening ceremony of Olympic and Paralympic Games.[2]

Sport and physical activity are important for individual health, but also for the health and well-being of our communities. We discovered that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the social isolation and limited opportunities for sport, particularly engagement in collaborative and team sport, took a toll on the fabric of neighbourhoods, schools and communities. While numerous sport organizations did commendable work during the pandemic to sustain sporting activities as much as possible, the challenges were significant.

Although sport and physical activity contribute to physical, mental and community well-being, as well as the cultural and economic strength of Canada, they are not isolated from systemic challenges. These include physical, emotional, economic and sexual abuse, sexism, racism, bigotry and homophobia. These broader societal issues have left their mark on the Canadian sporting community, just as they have in sporting communities across the world and society in general.

Virtually no sport in Canada, or internationally, has been immune from issues of maltreatment and abuse. Failures of governance, structural inadequacies, and the inadequate oversight over the sport system have all contributed to a failure to recognize and respond to the abuses that have come to light.

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1 Kyle Edwards, "Sports" in Canadian Geographic, ed, *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada* (Ottawa: Royal Canadian Geographical Society, 2018),s 20; Loprespub, "Indigenous Peoples and Sport in Canada" (June 21, 2018), online: <https://hillnotes.ca/2018/06/21/indigenous-peoples-and-sport-in-canada/>; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939 - The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, vol 1 (Winnipeg: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) at 360, online: <https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Volume_1_History_Part_1_English_Web.pdf>.

2 See e.g. Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Power of Sport: The True Sport Report 2022* (Ottawa: CCES, 2022) at 14, online: <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2024-01/cces-true-sport-report-2022-acc-en.pdf; Statistics Canada, "Participation in Canadian society through sport and work" (last modified October 12, 2023), online: <www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231010/dq231010b-eng.htm>.

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 Seoul 1988. This incident sent shockwaves through the Canadian sport system.[3]

The Dubin Report, as it is referred to in the sport community, 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 Canadian
- 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[4]

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."[5] 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 [...]."[6]

The challenges we face today suggest that the extensive warnings of the Dubin Report have been ignored. Renewed public concerns about sport have contributed to the pressures leading to the creation of this Commission.

Indeed, there have been, unfortunately, many further examples of abuse and maltreatment in sport. Such problems have persisted in many sport settings. Recent movements addressing violence against youth, women, Indigenous peoples and racialized people, have fostered an environment in which those who have been

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3 See Sarah Bridge, "Dealing with doping: Sports world can learn from Canada and Ben Johnson legacy", *CBC News* (February 12, 2018), online: <www.cbc.ca/news/thenational/sport-doping-scandal-ben-johnson-russia-ioc-steroids-1.4511130>; "De la negation aux aveux: la saga de Ben Johnson aux Jeux olympiques de Séoul", *Radio Canada* (September 25, 2018), online:<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1125839/ben-johnson-jeux-olympiques-athletisme-dopage-sports-archives>.

4 Privy Council Office of Canada, *Commission of Inquiry into the Use of Drugs and Banned Practices Intended to Increase Athletic Performance*, the Honourable Charles L Dubin, commissioner (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1990) at 527, online (pdf of ch 22): <https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2014/bcp-pco/CP32-56-1990-3-eng.pdf>.

5 Privy Council Office of Canada, *Commission of Inquiry into the Use of Drugs and Banned Practices Intended to Increase Athletic Performance*, the Honourable Charles L Dubin, commissioner (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1990) at 527–28, online (pdf of ch 22): <https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2014/bcp-pco/CP32-56-1990-3-eng.pdf>.

6 Privy Council Office of Canada, *Commission of Inquiry into the Use of Drugs and Banned Practices Intended to Increase Athletic Performance*, the Honourable Charles L Dubin, commissioner (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1990) at 528, online (pdf of ch 22): <https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2014/bcp-pco/CP32-56-1990-3-eng.pdf>.

abused and maltreated are now increasingly breaking their silence and holding public institutions accountable. A similar sentiment was present throughout the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Sadly, we learned that in some cases, the media were the only ones willing to listen to victims and survivors and bring their stories to light.

Leading up to the establishment of the Commission, several other major reports and investigations were undertaken or released regarding allegations of maltreatment and abuse in Canadian sport. Among others:

- In April 2019, AthletesCAN, in partnership with the University of Toronto, released a report on the prevalence of maltreatment among athletes.[7]
- In January 2022, the Canadian Hockey League released a report by an Independent Review Panel on the abuse of young hockey players. Commissioned in mid-2020, the authors submitted their report to the Canadian Hockey League in December 2020.[8]
- In March 2022, an independent review of Rugby Canada's high-performance programs raised concerns about the organization's high-performance environment and culture.[9]
- Also in March 2022, current and former gymnasts called for an investigation into alleged toxic and abusive practices against athletes in the sport.[10]
- In May 2022, Boxing Canada announced the appointment of an independent expert to conduct a high-performance culture review of the High-Performance Program.[11]
- 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 a settlement was reached with the alleged victim.[12]
- In July 2022, an independent review undertaken by McLaren Global Sport Solutions found that Canada Soccer mishandled sexual assault complaints between 1988 and 2008.[13]

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7 AthletesCAN, "AthletesCAN Releases Prevalence of Maltreatment Among Current and Former National Team Athletes Study" (April 30, 2019), online: <https://athletescan.ca/athletescan-releases-prevalence-of-maltreatment-among-current-and-former-national-team-athletes-study/>.

8 Canadian Hockey League, "Update on Player Wellbeing" (January 21, 2022), online: <https://cdn.chl.ca/uploads/chl/2022/01/21095713/PlayerWellbeingUpdate_FINAL.pdf>.

9 STRAAD Consulting, *Rugby Canada: High-Performance Review* (Vancouver: Rugby Canada, March 22, 2022), online: <rugby.ca/uploads/HQ/Rugby_Canada_High_Performance_Review_Final_Report.pdf>.

10 Lori Ewing, "Canadian Gymnasts Echo Growing Call for Investigations into Abusive Practices, Toxic Culture", *CBC Sports* (March 28, 2022), online: <www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics/summer/gymnastics/canadian-gymnasts-calling-for-investigation-into-abusive-practices-toxic-culture-under-gymcan-1.6399721>.

11 Boxing Canada, "Statement in Response to Open Letter by Boxing Canada Board President Ryan Savage" (May 4, 2022), online: <https://boxingcanada.org/annoucements/statement-in-response-to-open-letter-by-boxing-canada-board-president-ryan-savage/>.

12 Hockey Canada, "Hockey Canada Statement" (May 26, 2022), online: <www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/news/2022-news-hockey-canada-statement>.

13 McLaren Global Sport Solutions, *McLaren Independent Canada Soccer Review: Final Report* (Toronto: McLaren Global Sport Solutions, 2022), online (pdf): <www.mclarenglobalsportsolutions.com/pdf/CanadaSoccerReview_MGSSFinalReport_July28_2022.pdf>.

- In October 2022, the Board of Directors of Water Polo Canada launched an independent internal investigation into allegations of mistreatment of female water polo athletes between 2004 and 2016.[14]
- In November 2022, Hockey Canada released the final report of the Honourable Thomas Cromwell regarding an independent review of the organization's governance. The report had been commissioned in August 2022.[15]
- 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." The report focused on governance and safe sport issues.[16]

As a nation in which hockey is one of the national sports,[17] the revelations in that sport deeply affected Canadians and, in 2022, triggered reviews by two parliamentary Standing Committees in relation to safe sport:

- 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.[18]
- The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage issued its report entitled "Safe Sport in Canada" in June 2024.[19]

The work of both parliamentary committees and their subsequent reports reflected increasing public concern regarding aberrant 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."[20]

In this context, 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.

The Commission has examined the above-mentioned reports carefully. We will refer to past recommendations throughout this report, as many of those have not been implemented and deserve reconsideration.

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14 Water Polo Canada, "Statement by Kathleen Dawson, President of the Board of Directors of Water Polo Canada" (October 28, 2022), online: <www.waterpolo.ca/article/79222>.

15 Hockey Canada, "Hockey Canada Releases Final Independent Governance Review from Former Supreme Court Justice Thomas Cromwell" (November 4, 2022), online: <www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/news/cromwell-report-released-2022-corp>.

16 McLaren Global Sport Solutions, *A Framework for Change: How to Achieve a Culture Shift for Gymnastics in Canada* (Toronto: McLaren Global Sport Solutions, January 25, 2023), online (pdf): <www.mclarenglobalsportsolutions.com/pdf/Gymnastics-Report-Jan-22-2023.pdf>.

17 Government of Canada, "Sport in Canada" (last modified August 17, 2022), online: <http://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-canada.html>.

18 House of Commons, *Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada* (June 2023) (Chair: Karen Vecchio), online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Reports/RP12528102/feworp07/feworp07-e.pdf>.

19 House of Commons, *Safe Sport in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage* (June 2024) (Chair: the Honourable Hedy Fry), online: <www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/CHPC/report-12>.

20 Government of Canada, "Terms of Reference — The Future of Sport in Canada Commission" (last modified November 28, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/future-sport/about/terms-reference.html>.

A reminder of the Commission's mandate

The Commission's mandate, as provided in its Terms of Reference, is two-fold. The Commission is 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.[21]

The Terms of Reference expressly provide 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."[22]

To achieve the objectives of its mandate, the Commission is 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. [23]

The Commission is also able to draw on existing literature and reports to guide its work. The Terms of Reference also require the Commission to engage and seek input from provinces and territories in order to foster collaboration and constructive engagement from the outset of its work.[24]

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21 Government of Canada, "Terms of Reference — The Future of Sport in Canada Commission" (last modified November 28, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/future-sport/about/terms-reference.html>.

22 Government of Canada, "Terms of Reference — The Future of Sport in Canada Commission" (last modified November 28, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/future-sport/about/terms-reference.html>.

23 Government of Canada, "Terms of Reference — The Future of Sport in Canada Commission" (last modified November 28, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/future-sport/about/terms-reference.html>.

24 Government of Canada, "Terms of Reference — The Future of Sport in Canada Commission" (last modified November 28, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/future-sport/about/terms-reference.html>.

In fulfilling its mandate and conducting its activities, the Commission was, and continues to be, guided by the following principles:

- victim- and survivor-centred
- trauma- and violence-informed
- human rights-based
- intersectional
- inclusive
- accessible
- responsible
- respectful
- transparent
- flexible
- forward-looking[25]

The Commission is to conduct an examination and review of the sport system. It is not within the Commission's mandate to make any findings of misconduct or liability, or to determine whether individuals or organizations are civilly or criminally responsible.[26] The Commission is also required to ensure that its conduct and activities do not jeopardize any legal proceedings.[27]

The Commission's procedures and methods

The Commission acted expeditiously to establish trauma-informed processes and procedures. These were designed to support difficult and painful conversations about maltreatment and abuse. We also developed mechanisms to facilitate the participation of a wide range of Canadians, from within the physical activity and sport communities and beyond, who have personal experiences of abuse and maltreatment.

To ensure our work was trauma-informed, a specific guide on trauma-informed practices was developed for the Commission's activities. The Commission also participated in training on trauma-informed engagement processes. Mental health support staff were made available to victims and survivors before, during, and after any meetings or other engagements. Individuals were also welcome to bring their own support person to themeetings. Commission staff were available to answer questions and address individual concerns before and after each meeting.

25 Government of Canada, "Terms of Reference — The Future of Sport in Canada Commission" (last modified November 28, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/future-sport/about/terms-reference.html>.

26 Government of Canada, "Terms of Reference — The Future of Sport in Canada Commission" (last modified November 28, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/future-sport/about/terms-reference.html>.

27 Government of Canada, "Terms of Reference — The Future of Sport in Canada Commission" (last modified November 28, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/future-sport/about/terms-reference.html>.

The Commission made available a variety of modes of communication and engagement for all participants, including those who may have found the experience of telling their stories challenging or painful. The Commission provided opportunities for in-camera sessions as part of its engagement opportunities. These sessions were designed to provide a safe forum for participants to freely share their experiences and express their opinions. They allowed participants to meet with the Commission confidentially and without certain information being recorded in any form. These processes enabled substantial and significant participation by many, within environments which were sensitive, supportive and built on trust.

In September 2024, in accordance with its Terms of Reference, the Commission launched its public online submission portal. It facilitated input from athletes, parents, coaches, officials, administrators, academics, victims and survivors, and members of the public interested in contributing to our examination of approaches to improving safe sport and the sport system as a whole in Canada. The portal allowed individuals and organizations to request a meeting or submit information in writing, and to indicate their willingness to participate in a public online survey.

The Commission undertook a robust set of engagements. At the time of writing this report, it had conducted more than 450 meetings (more than 80 of which were in-camera) with more than 825 individuals. Some of these meetings took place during the Commission's cross-country discussions and roundtables, which were held in 12 cities across 8 provinces and territories.

The Commission engaged with many individuals and groups knowledgeable about safe sport and the structure of sport and physical activity in Canada. This helped us better understand the issues, challenges and opportunities. We met, engaged with and learned from a diverse cross section of Canadians, including Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, people with disabilities and those of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, all offering different perspectives. Our meetings included, but were not limited to, current and former athletes at all levels, parents and guardians, coaches, referees, officials, victims and survivors of maltreatment and abuse, academics, administrators, and public officials. We welcomed the opportunities for open, frank and rich discussions with a broad range of engaged and interested individuals and organizations.

At the time of writing this report, the Commission has had the opportunity to speak with representatives from all 13 provincial and territorial governments, as well as representatives from 2 federal departments and organizations. In addition, the Commission has met with a wide variety of organizations across all levels of the sport system, including national, provincial and territorial sport organizations, along with multisport service organizations. We heard from athlete and advocacy organizations, as well as grassroots and community groups.

We met with people who spoke to us in their individual capacity, whether as an athlete, coach, parent, sport administrator, official or referee (among others). Many who met with the Commission held multiple roles in the Canadian sport system. This demonstrates not only the complexity of the sport system — which will be discussed further under Chapter 3 — but also the depth of involvement and breadth of connectivity that exists.

The Commission also met with over 40 academics from a variety of disciplines such as kinesiology, psychology, medicine, engineering, sociology, law and Indigenous studies.

The Commission received over 1000 written documents, including 200 reports and academic articles. This information was further complemented by the Commission's research activities, which involved a broad range of analyses of the Canadian sport system and those of other jurisdictions. The Commission set up an Academic Guidance Panel composed of experts in Canadian sport history, sport governance and globalization, disability and sport, Indigenous sport, and the intersection of race, gender, class and sport. As part of its mandate, the Academic Guidance Panel provides guidance on the Commission's areas of research and identifies relevant existing studies.

Scope of this Preliminary Report

The Report is divided in two parts: the Sport System and Safe Sport, which reflect the two focus areas of the Commission's mandate. In each part, we begin by describing some of the current players and frameworks in place. We then examine specific topics and formulate preliminary recommendations.

We will first address the Canadian Sport System, because understanding its structure and key stakeholders is essential to appreciating the basis for the preliminary findings and recommendations contained in this Preliminary Report. Moreover, there is an undeniable connection between a healthy and robust sport system and the creation of sport environments that promote safety and well-being.

This Preliminary Report reflects information gathered by the Commission through engagement activities, written submissions, and research. As this report highlights, it is time to explore new and innovative approaches to address the layers of deficiencies within the Canadian sport system, including those that relate to safe sport. The preliminary recommendations are intended to stimulate discussion and encourage broader thinking.

The Commission's examination of the Canadian sport system revealed its complexity and its innumerable challenges and issues. Seeing as not all of these concerns could be addressed in this Preliminary Report, the Commission chose to focus on a subset of these issues for the time being. It is therefore important to note that, if an issue is not addressed in this Preliminary Report, it does not mean that it was not brought up during the Commission's activities or that it is less important.

We have not examined issues which might be seen as lying exclusively within the professional sport environment, although we recognize that there may be overlap between high-performance sport and professional sport.

We begin by exploring the significance of sport to Canadians and its vital role in promoting physical and mental health, and in shaping Canada's social, cultural and economic landscape.

Terminology

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

In this Report, where we say "We were told," "We were advised," "We were informed," or other variations, we refer to the information provided to us by participants during our engagement activities.

To protect the confidentiality of our conversations and communications, and as outlined in the Commission's Terms of Reference,[28] we have not included any information in this Preliminary Report that might identify specific individuals or organizations (including specific sport organizations or provincial or territorial governments). In accordance with our Terms of Reference, we have only included such information if it had already been established through legal proceedings or admission, or publicly disclosed by the individual or organization.

Although we use in this report 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, and, the expression "Indigenous Peoples" to refer to a collective term that refers to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples in Canada, we recognize that the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis People each have unique perspectives and interests, which are fundamental to our understanding of their perspectives for the purpose of our work and reconciliation.

We have chosen to use the term "victim and survivor" to respect individual preferences. Some people we spoke with prefer "victim," others prefer "survivor" and some identify with both. This approach reflects everyone's preference without identifying individual choices. For some, the term "survivor" emphasizes resilience and reclaims the experience from the abuser who aimed to victimize them. The term "victim" is often used by institutions, such 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. These terms are used together in the governing federal legislation, the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*.[29] Our engagement activities have underlined how interconnected sport and physical activity are. However, sport generally involves more than just physical activity. It is organized, involves rules, training, goals, and can be played individually or as a team, either informally or in a regulated setting.

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28 "The Commission will not name names or make use of personal information without the express consent of the individual, unless such findings or information has already been established through legal proceedings, by admission, or by public disclosure by the individual. Other information that could be used to identify an individual will be anonymized to the extent possible." (Government of Canada, "Terms of Reference — The Future of Sport in Canada Commission" (last modified November 28, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/future-sport/about/terms-reference.html>.)

29 *Physical Activity and Sport Act,* SC 2003, c 2, online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/P-13.4/>.

Throughout this Report, we use the terms “community sport,” “local sport,” and “grassroots sport” interchangeably to refer to organized sport that is local and community-based.[30]

Acknowledgments

Our Review would not have been possible without the contributions of the many participants to our engagement process, who generously, and in some cases courageously, shared with us their knowledge, experiences and insights. We are very grateful to all of them.

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 who worked tirelessly.

30 Sport Information Resource Centre, “Community Sport” (last visited June 2025), online: <https://sirc.ca/athlete-development/community-sport/>.

WHY SPORT IS IMPORTANT TO CANADIANS AND CANADA

Why Sport is Important to Canadians and Canada

Sport plays a crucial role in society, acting as a powerful unifying tool that transcends cultural, geographical and social boundaries. It can shape healthier and more cohesive communities and be invaluable in challenging stereotypes and driving positive societal change. Sport is a fundamental element of Canadian culture.

Sport is also an essential avenue for health and well-being and can afford unique opportunities for vulnerable populations. Sport and physical activity can provide invaluable and life-changing opportunities for personal growth and development. It is a multifaceted tool that promotes health, social inclusion, and the development of essential life skills.

The importance of sport and physical activity to Canadians was emphasized in almost all of our conversations. Many recounted the magic of their first sport experiences, and the lessons and camaraderie that developed in sport environments. They spoke of the joy of acquiring new skills and the sense of accomplishment that followed, as well as the value of sport in community life and social interactions. We also heard how sport was a safe place away from home for some people, 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: the fundamental importance and value of sport.

Statistics Canada's 2023 Survey Series on People and their Communities found that approximately 55% of people aged 15 years or older participated in organized sport, with men participating at a higher rate than women (62% in comparison with 49%).[31] It was reported that just over 80% of sport is played recreationally, outside of a club or league, sometimes in combination with more structured recreational programs, such as group fitness, intramural sports or sport clubs.[32] The most common reasons that Canadians participate in sport are physical health and fitness, fun, recreation and relaxation, mental health, and time with friends.[33]

In contrast, in 2024, the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's Physical Activity and Sport Survey found that 27% of Canadian adults 18 years and older participate in organized sport, which includes structured

31 Statistics Canada, "Participation in Canadian society through sport and work" (October 10, 2023), online (pdf): <www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231010/dq231010b-eng.pdf>.

32 Statistics Canada, "Participation in Canadian society through sport and work" (October 10, 2023) at 2, online (pdf): <www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231010/dq231010b-eng.pdf>.

33 Statistics Canada, "Diving into the data: Sports participation in Canada" (November 1, 2023), online: <www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/4863-diving-data-sports-participation-canada>.

sport activities with a focus on competition, rules, and skill development.[34] The lower participation rate reported by this survey reflects a specific focus on organized sport participation compared to the broader definition of sport used by Statistics Canada. As reported by Statistics Canada, while acknowledging that activity is good for them, only 49% of Canadian adults meet recommended physical activity guidelines.[35]

Perhaps more concerning is the data documenting depressingly low levels of physical activity in Canada's school children. This 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 qualifications, and challenges with access to facilities. Only 39% of children youth (5-17 years old) in Canada met the recommended 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity per day necessary for healthy growth and development, according to ParticipACTION's 2024 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth.[36]

In general, sport participation rates decline with age and are lower among girls and women. Only a small portion of Canadian adults are active. For example, only 18% of men aged 65 and older reported participating in sport, compared to 28% of men aged 45-64.[37] The trend is even more pronounced among women, with only 9% of those aged 65 and older participating, compared to 13% in the 45-64 age group.[38] Among children and youth aged 5 to 17, approximately 68% participated in sport in 2022, with boys participating at a slightly higher rate than girls.[39]

According to the 2024 Rally Report, the rate at which girls drop out of sport increases at age 16 and then accelerates through their teens, such that more than one in five leave sport during this time. While a similar number of boys leave sport at the same age, their participation remains consistent through their late teens and into their twenties, resulting in a sizable participation gap between men and women. This means that young women are more likely to miss out on the benefits of continued sport involvement. When exploring why people withdraw from sport, a primary reason often cited is the focus on success and victory, which limits participation for many.[40]

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34 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, "Adults" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://cflri.ca/publications/sport-participation/adults/>.

35 Statistics Canada, "Household population meeting/not meeting the 2020 Canadian physical activity guidelines" (September 1, 2021), online: <www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310082101>.

36 ParticipACTION, "2024 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth: Rallying for Resilience" (2024) at 7,online (pdf): <www.participaction.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2024-Children-and-Youth-Report-Card-Highlight-Report-1.pdf?x82550>.

37 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, "Adults" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://cflri.ca/publications/sport-participation/adults/>.

38 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, "Adults" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://cflri.ca/publications/sport-participation/adults/>.

39 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, "Children and youth" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://cflri.ca/publications/sport-participation/children-and-youth/>.

40 See e.g. Canadian Women & Sport, *Rally Report 2024: A Call to Reimagine Sport so all Girls can Play* (Toronto: Canadian Women& Sport, 2024) at 5, online (pdf): <https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Rally-Report-2024_Canadian-Women-Sport.pdf>.

As for sport participation among Indigenous people in Canada, limited data makes it difficult to accurately determine any participation rates, particularly for adults. Indeed, most reports only provide broad statistics for "Indigenous" populations without distinguishing between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. One report sampled Ontario-based youth and found that 55% of all youth participated in sport within the previous year. Compared to their peers, 54% of Indigenous youth sampled reported participating in sport at least once in the previous year. Another report indicates that 30% of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis girls aged 13 to 18 years old participate in sport at least weekly, compared to 52% of "White girls."[41]

A 2010 Statistics Canada report for Sport Canada also noted that immigrants who arrived in Canada after 1990 participated in sports at the same rate as Canadian-born (27%). Long-term or established immigrants were less likely to take part in sports, with a participation rate of only 16%. Most recently, Statistics Canada reported that participation in sport varied based on ethnic or cultural origins, with some groups participating significantly more in sport than others.[42]

Furthermore, data with respect to children in the lowest income households reveal that 46% of children 5 to 11 years old meet the physical activity recommendation, compared to 57% of children in the highest-income households.[43]

41 Canadian Women & Sport, *Rally Report 2022: A Call for Better, Safe Sport for Girls* (Toronto: Canadian Women & Sport, 2022) at 7, online (pdf): <https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Rally-Report-2022-Dec2-1.pdf>.

42 Statistics Canada, "Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022" (December 1, 2023), online: <www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231201/dq231201b-eng.htm>; Statistics Canada, "Sports: More than just a game" (2024), online (pdf): <www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2024008-eng.pdf?st=ks5iHrfq>.

43 ParticipACTION, *Rallying for Resilience: Keeping Children and Youth Active in a Changing Climate* (Toronto: ParticipACTION, 2024) at 7, online (pdf): <www.participaction.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2024-Children-and-Youth-Report-Card-Highlight-Report-1.pdf?x26420>.

Individual benefits of sport

One of the most profound impacts of sport lies in its contribution to individual health. Compelling evidence shows that consistent participation in sport and physical activity strengthens cardiovascular health, thereby decreasing the likelihood of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, and premature mortality, among other medical conditions.[44] In addition, engaging in moderate physical activity helps 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.[45]

Beyond the physical benefits, quality sport and physical activity experiences contribute to better mental and emotional health. Exercise has been shown to significantly decrease anxiety, stress, and depression, and by extension, improve overall mood.[46] Among adults, engaging in sport also boosts psychological well-being, including higher levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction.[47] Among youth, participation in sport can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.[48] It should be noted, however, that for elite-level athletes, participation in sport can also generate stress and other mental health challenges.[49]

During the Commission's work, numerous participants highlighted the significant individual benefits of sport. It was 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 tool for self-regulation.

Sport also plays a vital role in cultivating essential life skills. Team sports in particular, teach participants how to work, communicate, and cooperate with others. They help people strengthen interpersonal skills such as

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44 See e.g. Pekka Oja et al, "Health Benefits of Different Sports: a Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Longitudinal and Intervention Studies Including 2.6 Million Adult Participants" (2024) 10:46 Sports Medicine – Open, online: <https://sportsmedicine-open.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40798-024-00692-x>; Darren E R Warburton, Crystal Whitney Nicol & Shannon S D Bredin, "Health Benefits of Physical Activity: The Evidence" (2006) 174:6 Can Medical Assoc J 801, online: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16534088/>.

45 See e.g. World Cancer Research Fund, *Diet, nutrition, physical activity and cancer: a global perspective summary of the third expert report* (London: WCRF, 2018) at 51; Wendy M Kohrt et al, "American College of Sports Medicine Position Stand: Physical Activity and Bone Health" (2004) 36:11 Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise 1985, online: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15514517/>.

46 Kathleen Mikkelsen et al, "Exercise and Mental Health" (2017) 106:48 Maturitas 48, online: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29150166/>.

47 Narelle Eather, "The Impact of Sports Participation on Mental Health and Social Outcomes in Adults: A Systematic Review and the 'Mental Health through Sport' Conceptual Model" (2023) 12:1 Systematic Rev at 22, online: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37344901/>.

48 Narelle Eather, "The Impact of Sports Participation on Mental Health and Social Outcomes in Adults: A Systematic Review and the 'Mental Health through Sport' Conceptual Model" (2023) 12:1 Systematic Rev at 22, online: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37344901/>.

49 Narelle Eather, "The Impact of Sports Participation on Mental Health and Social Outcomes in Adults: A Systematic Review and the 'Mental Health through Sport' Conceptual Model" (2023) 12:1 Systematic Rev at 22, online: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37344901/>.

conflict resolution and collaboration by providing a structured environment where they work together towards common goals.[50] These shared experiences encourage social bonding,[51] and support the development of meaningful relationships.[52] While we noted that some adverse behaviours may originate in certain sport settings if not appropriately led, we recognize that sport participants can learn how to respect rules while developing a sense of fair play.[53] This promotes ethical behaviour, values that can extend beyond the playing field, shaping responsible and engaged citizens. Skills like dedication and perseverance, cultivated through striving for improvement in sport, can help participants develop self-discipline and a strong work ethic.[54]

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

Early involvement in sports is linked to better educational and employment outcomes, especially for women and girls.[55] It is also associated with higher earnings and job satisfaction later in life.[56] 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.[57]

Collective benefits of sport

The Commission heard compelling stories of the role sport plays in bringing people together, fostering social connections, creating friendships and enhancing community life. Whether it is playing on a team, interacting on a playground, or participating in recreation leagues, sport allows children (and often parents or guardians), teens, and adults, to connect with others in healthy and socially positive ways. These relationships, which transcend winning or losing, create supportive networks that promote belonging.

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50 David Jones, "Impact of Team Sports Participation on Social Skills Development in Youth" (2024) 3:2 Am J Recreation & Sports 24 at 25, 31.

51 Narelle Eather, "The Impact of Sports Participation on Mental Health and Social Outcomes in Adults: A Systematic Review and the 'Mental Health through Sport' Conceptual Model" (2023) 12:1 Systematic Rev at 22, 24, online: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37344901/>.

52 David Jones, "Impact of Team Sports Participation on Social Skills Development in Youth" (2024) 3:2 Am J Recreation & Sports 24 at 24.

53 David Jones, "Impact of Team Sports Participation on Social Skills Development in Youth" (2024) 3:2 Am J Recreation & Sports 24 at 24.

54 Katrijn Opstoel, "Personal and Social Development in Physical Education and Sports: A Review Study" (2019) 26:4 European Physical Education Rev 797 at 805–06, online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1356336X19882054>.

55 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Power of Sport: The True Sport Report 2022* (Ottawa: CCES, 2022) at 42, online: <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2024-01/cces-true-sport-report-2022-acc-en.pdf.

56 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Power of Sport: The True Sport Report 2022* (Ottawa: CCES, 2022) at 42, online: <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2024-01/cces-true-sport-report-2022-acc-en.pdf.

57 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Power of Sport: The True Sport Report 2022* (Ottawa: CCES, 2022) at 42, online: <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2024-01/cces-true-sport-report-2022-acc-en.pdf.

IDENTITY, DIVERSITY AND PREVENTION OF YOUTH CRIME

Beyond the general benefits of sport in communities, sporting events can bring communities together, fostering a shared sense of identity and pride. After-school sports programs in culturally diverse communities have been shown to successfully facilitate social inclusion processes, enabling the development of relationships between students from different cultural backgrounds.[58] From local leagues to national competitions, sport provides opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to connect and celebrate common goals.[59]

A 2014 report from the Institute for Canadian Citizenship showed that 95% of new Canadians citizens believe that sports are an important part of Canadian culture, generating national pride and a more intense connection to being Canadian.[60] In addition, 87% of new citizens reported that watching their children play sports or volunteering for their children's sports teams helped them 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.[61]

Consistent with this information, the Commission heard particularly important messages from new Canadians, Indigenous Peoples and organizations, racialized athletes and para-athletes about the incredible value of sport in facilitating inclusion, community development and exchange of cultural knowledge for marginalized groups. We learned that sport can serve as a bridge that brings people together despite differences in background or ability.

The relationship between the benefits of sports participation and the reduction of youth crime is complex. Academic findings about the degree to which sport reduces crime and recidivism are inconsistent.[62] Sport is nevertheless seen as a vehicle to minimize risk factors associated with crime, violence and drug use.[63] Some cite data to suggest that sport programs may act as a "protective" measure and reduce unlawful, anti-social and risky behaviour.[64]

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58 Bastian Cartier-Thuillier, "After-School Sports Programmes and Social Inclusion Processes in Culturally Diverse Contexts: Results of an International Multicase Study" (2023) 22:14 Front at 14, online: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37034954/>.

59 Fred Coalter, "Sports Clubs, Social Capital and Social Regeneration: 'ill-defined interventions with hard to follow outcomes'?" (2007) 10:4 Sport in Society 537 at 547, online: < https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17430430701388723 >.

60 Institute for Canadian Citizenship, *Playing Together: New Citizens, Sports & Belongings* (Toronto: ICC, 2014) at 36, online (pdf): <https://forcitizenship.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/PlayingTogether_FullR-Online_Final.pdf>.

61 Institute for Canadian Citizenship, *Playing Together: New Citizens, Sports & Belongings* (Toronto: ICC, 2014) at 136–38, online (pdf): <https://forcitizenship.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/PlayingTogether_FullR-Online_Final.pdf>.

62 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Crime Prevention through Sports" (last visited June 2025), online: <http://www.unodc.org/dohadeclaration/en/topics/crime-prevention-through-sports.html>.

63 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Crime Prevention through Sports" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.unodc.org/dohadeclaration/en/topics/crime-prevention-through-sports.html>.

64 Irina Jugl-Kuntzsch, Doris Bender & Friedrich Lösel, "Do Sports Programs Prevent Crime and Reduce Reoffending? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis on the Effectiveness of Sports Programs" (2021) 39:14 J Quantitative Criminology 959, online (pdf): <https://d-nb.info/1249992338/34>.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND HEALTH CARE

The economic impact of sport is substantial and multifaceted, contributing significantly to the national and local economies. The sports industry encompasses a wide range of activities, including sports tourism, generating considerable revenue.[65] Major sporting events, such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games or national championships, can attract significant tourism and therefore boost local businesses, create employment opportunities and drive infrastructure development.[66]

Government sources indicate that Canada hosts over 250,000 sports events annually, varying greatly in size and significance. These events all provide economic benefits in the form of visitor spending.[67] In 2018, sport tourists (domestic and international visitors) spent $6.8 billion in total spending across Canada.[68] These investments can have long-term impacts for local economies. They enhance community appeal, which can help attract and retain knowledge workers.[69] For example, it was reported that in 2022, the sport and recreation sector in Canada produced more than 259,000 jobs.[70]

While sport and recreation employ thousands of Canadians across the country, it would not exist without the legions of volunteers who make an essential contribution to community health and well-being. In Canada, 27% of adults[71] reported volunteering in an activity related to sport, the third most significant level of volunteer activity[72] following hospitals and religious organizations.[73] In 2020, the financial value of volunteering for sport-based activities in Canada was estimated at $13.6 billion.[74]

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65 "The Economic Impact of Major Sporting Events in Canada", *CultMTL* (February 9, 2024), online: <https://cultmtl.com/2024/02/the-economic-impact-of-major-sporting-events-in-canada/>.

66 "The Economic Impact of Major Sporting Events in Canada", *CultMTL* (February 9, 2024), online: <https://cultmtl.com/2024/02/the-economic-impact-of-major-sporting-events-in-canada/>.

67 Government of Canada, "Tourism organizations offer enhanced sports experiences across southern Ontario" (July 26, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/economic-development-southern-ontario/news/2024/07/tourism-organizations-offer-enhanced-sports-experiences-across-southern-ontario0.html>.

68 Sport Tourism Canada, *Annual Report 2018* (Ottawa: STC, 2019) at 2, online (pdf): <www.sporttourismcanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/annual-report_en_final.pdf>.

69 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Power of Sport: The True Sport Report 2022* (Ottawa: CCES, 2022) at 41–42, online: <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2024-01/cces-true-sport-report-2022-acc-en.pdf.

70 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute & Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, *The Price of Inactivity: Measuring the Powerful Impact of Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation in Canada* (Ottawa: CFLRI & CPRA, 2023) at 11, online (pdf): <https://measuring-impact.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CFLRI-CPRA_Price-Inactivity-Full-Report-EN-FINAL.pdf>.

71 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, "2020 Sport Monitor. Monitoring and Tracking the Field" (2022) at 1, online (pdf): <https://cflri.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CFLRI-TrackingTheField-Sport-Monitor-Volunteering-EN-Final.pdf>.

72 At average of 105 hours per volunteer annually for sport and recreation. 111 hours for hospitals and 110 for religious organizations. Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, "2020 Sport Monitor. Monitoring and Tracking the Field" (2022) at 1, online (pdf): <https://cflri.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CFLRI-TrackingTheField-Sport-Monitor-Volunteering-EN-Final.pdf>.

73 Tara Hahmann, "Volunteering in Canada: Challenges and opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic" (last modified December 17, 2020), online: <www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00037-eng.htm>.

74 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute & Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, *The Price of Inactivity: Measuring the Powerful Impact of Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation in Canada* (Ottawa: CFLRI & CPRA, 2023) at 20–21, online (pdf): <https://measuring-impact.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CFLRI-CPRA_Price-Inactivity-Full-Report-EN-FINAL.pdf>.

The impact of physical activity on the health of Canadians has significant socio-economic implications. A physically active population places less strain on the healthcare system, leading to lower healthcare costs in the short-term.[75] On the contrary, physical inactivity is a controllable risk factor linked to multiple diseases and mental health disorders, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, breast and colon cancer, diabetes (type 2) and depression.[76] In 2022, the health costs associated with sedentary lifestyles were estimated at $3.9 billion.[77]

NATIONAL PRIDE

Sport cultivates national pride and unites Canadians through shared moments of triumph and passion. Moments like a game-winning goal in overtime or a last-second penalty shot remind Canadians of their collective strength and determination. With their dedication, perseverance and resilience, athletes serve as role models and inspire Canadians to pursue their own goals in their personal and professional lives.

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.[78] This represents a 170% increase from the Tokyo 2020 Games and 121% from the Beijing 2022 Games.[79] 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.[80]

In sum, the Commission's engagement process and independent review consistently affirmed that sport and physical activity are not only essential to the physical and mental well-being of Canadians but are integral parts of Canada's culture, economy and national identity.

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75 Marjolein Duijvestijn et al, "Impact of Physical Activity on Healthcare Costs: A Systematic Review" (2023) 23:1 BMC Health Services Research 572, online: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37268930/>.

76 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute & Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, *The Price of Inactivity: Measuring the Powerful Impact of Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation in Canada* (Ottawa: CFLRI & CPRA, 2023) at 2, online (pdf): <https://measuring-impact.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CFLRI-CPRA_Price-Inactivity-Full-Report-EN-FINAL.pdf>.

77 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute & Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, *The Price of Inactivity: Measuring the Powerful Impact of Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation in Canada* (Ottawa: CFLRI & CPRA, 2023) at 56, online (pdf): <https://measuring-impact.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CFLRI-CPRA_Price-Inactivity-Full-Report-EN-FINAL.pdf>.

78 "7 in 10 Canadians tune in for Paris 2024", *CBC – Radio-Canada* (August 12, 2024), online: <https://cbc.radio-canada.ca/en/media-centre/millions-of-canadians-tune-in-to-2024-paris-olympics>.

79 "7 in 10 Canadians tune in for Paris 2024", *CBC – Radio-Canada* (August 12, 2024), online: <https://cbc.radio-canada.ca/en/media-centre/millions-of-canadians-tune-in-to-2024-paris-olympics>.

80 "11 million Canadians tune in for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games", *CBC – Radio-Canada* (September 10, 2024), online: <https://cbc.radio-canada.ca/en/media-centre/11-million-canadians-tune-in-to-paris-2024-paralympic-games>.

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. Furthermore, we were 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 manage stress, anxiety and trauma. We were told that for Indigenous people, "movement is medicine."

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

Within Indigenous communities, sport builds social skills, develops a sense of belonging and teaches important life lessons. 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.

Other benefits for people with disabilities

Statistics Canada reports that in 2022, 27% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and older had one or more disabilities, a 5% increase in 5 years.[81] Even though they constitute more than a quarter of the population, most Canadians with disabilities continue to face limited access to sport and physical activity.

Parasports are designed to meet the unique needs of Canadians with a broad range of physical and sight disabilities. Some of these sports are adaptions of sports played by people without disabilities, for example wheelchair basketball, while others are uniquely designed activities, such as goalball.

Sport and physical activity play a particularly crucial role in enhancing the physical and mental health of persons with disabilities. It also helps them adapt and build supportive communities. Sport holds particular importance for para-athletes, who often face challenges not encountered by others. Parasport empowers them 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. Through sport, para-athletes build confidence, resilience, and life skills, while also gaining a strong sense of belonging and community.

Para-athletes shared that they never thought that they could play sport until they found parasport 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.[82]

Para-athletes also emphasized the importance of high-performance sport for Canadians with disabilities, noting that it serves as a source of inspiration and opportunities. It also helps to represent people with disabilities both within Canadian society and on the international stage. Events such as the Special Olympics, which offer a range of unique and empowering sport opportunities for individuals with an intellectual disability, challenge negative stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusion, respect, and acceptance.

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81 Statistics Canada, "Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022" (December 1, 2023), online: <www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231201/dq231201b-eng.htm>.

82 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Disability And Sports" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/disability-issues/disability-and-sports#:~:text=Through%20sport%2C%20persons%20with%20disabilities,cooperation%20and%20respect%20for%20other>.

PART I
THE CANADIAN SPORT SYSTEM

CHAPTER 1:
A fragmented framework: challenges in Canada's sport system

The Canadian sport "system" is multi faceted 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.

Many of the participants we engaged with struggled to describe or paint a picture of a cohesive Canadian sport system. Some have told us that the challenges facing sport in Canada are myriad, and that past responses to these challenges were often reactive, leading to a confusing and ineffective patchwork of organizations and sport governing bodies. Some participants bluntly told us there was no sport system in Canada.

The Canadian sport "system," such as it is, has evolved over the decades responding to various crises, pressures and political priorities. The Ben Johnson doping scandal at the Olympic Games Seoul 1988 led to the Dubin Inquiry referenced above.[83] The desire to win the greatest number of medals at the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games led to the creation of Own the Podium (formerly known as Podium Canada).[84] Safe sport crises within Hockey Canada and Gymnastics Canada led to inquiries before Standing Committees of the House of Commons of the Canadian Parliament.[85] And these are just a few examples.

In many of our conversations, we were told that there is an overemphasis on high-performance and elite sport. This emphasis often comes at the expense of developing sport at the community and grassroots level and increasing physical activity among all Canadians. Many noted that high-performance sport will ultimately benefit from community growth and an increased pool of participants, but that National Sport Organizations have often paid little attention to developing and governing their sport at the community level.

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83 Privy Council Office of Canada, *Commission of Inquiry into the Use of Drugs and Banned Practices Intended to Increase Athletic Performance*, the Honourable Charles L Dubin, commissioner (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1990), online (historical digitized publication): <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.699756/publication.html>.

84 Government of Canada, News Release, "Canada's New Government Announces the Creation of Podium Canada" (November 24, 2006), online: <www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2006/11/canada-new-government-announces-creation-podium-canada.html>; Own the Podium – 2010, "Fact Sheet" (last visited June 2025), online (pdf): <www.rbc.com/newsroom/pdf/Own-the-Podium-2010-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

85 House of Commons, *Safe Sport in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage* (June 2024) (Chair: the Honourable Hedy Fry), online: <www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/chpc/report-12/>; House of Commons, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, *Minutes of Proceedings,* 44-1, No 42 (September 20, 2022), online: <www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/CHPC/meeting-42/minutes>; House of Commons, Standing Committee on the Status of Women, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 44-1, No 37 (October 31, 2022), online: <www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/FEWO/meeting-37/minutes>.

The sport system as it currently exists does not always reflect the values that are important to our society such as respect, diversity, inclusion and fairness. This calls for meaningful change. 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.

CHAPTER 2:
Roadmap for Part I of this Preliminary Report

To understand the current sport system and its challenges, it is important to examine the various organizations, bodies and entities that comprise it, including governments, sport organizations and other institutions.

In this first part of the Preliminary Report, the Commission:

- Describes the structure of the sport system, including the roles and responsibilities of its institutional stakeholders (Chapter 3).
- Examines alignment in sport system structures (Chapter 4).
- Examines the funding model of the sport system, including the funding sources, levels and priorities (Chapter 5).
- Explores leadership in Canadian sport and the potential for establishing a Centralized Sport Entity in Canada (Chapter 6).
- Assesses the current governance frameworks in the Canadian sport system (Chapter 7).

Throughout these chapters, we provide a summary of the viewpoints, experiences and knowledge shared with the Commission by a wide range of participants involved in our engagement process. With the exception of Chapter 3 which is more descriptive, each of the above chapters concludes with our preliminary findings and recommendations related to the topics discussed therein. A list of our preliminary recommendations can be found in Appendix 11 of this Preliminary Report.

In line with the Commission's Terms of Reference, these preliminary recommendations are being put forward to give participants the chance to review them and offer input, whether through the National Summit or other engagement channels. The feedback received will be considered before the Commission submits its final recommendations to the Government of Canada.

CHAPTER 3:
Roles and responsibilities of institutional stakeholders in the sport system

There are many different stakeholders in the world of Canadian sport and physical activity. While they are all part of a "system," it is frequently described as non-existent, fractured or fragmented. There are distinctions to recognize within the sport world, for example, between organized sport, whether amateur and professional, and between recreational sport and high-performance sport. The different roles, reporting lines, duplications and disconnects are evidence of a system that lacks consistency and connectivity.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the key institutional stakeholders in the sport system. These stakeholders are generally divided into three main categories: governments, sport organizations and other stakeholders.

- **Governments.** We begin with a review of the roles and responsibilities of the federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, as well as Indigenous communities and governments with respect to sport and physical activity.
- **Sport organizations.** We then turn our attention to National, Provincial, Territorial, and Community Sport Organizations, Multisport Service Organizations and Indigenous Sport Organizations.
- **Other stakeholders.** Lastly, we briefly address other notable stakeholders in the sport system including schools, private and for-profit sport organizations, colleges and universities, and professional leagues.

GOVERNMENTS

Sport is a fundamental aspect of Canadian culture, economy and identity. All levels of government play a role in supporting and promoting sport in Canada. This can include funding, supporting athletes and sport organizations, policy development, the provision of infrastructure and reporting on sport participation.

In the sections below, we provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the federal government, provincial and territorial governments, municipal governments and Indigenous governments.

Federal government

Canada is a federal state. One of the features of federalism is the distribution of legislative powers between two or more orders of government. The Canadian Constitution divides the legislative powers between the federal and the provincial legislatures. Each order of government is assigned respective **spheres** of jurisdiction by the *Constitution Act*, 1867.[86]

86 *Constitution Act, 1867* (UK), 30 & 31 Vict, c 3, s 91, reprinted in RSC 1985, Appendix II, No 5. Section 91 of the *Constitution Act, 1867,* establishes the explicit powers of the federal legislature, whereas Section 92 of the *Constitution Act, 1867,* establishes those of provincial legislatures.

Because sport is not an area of jurisdiction explicitly mentioned in the *Constitution Act, 1867*, each level of government has enacted legislation that reflects its constitutional authority.[87] Since sport and recreation are aspects of health, culture and education, the more general and direct responsibility for sport falls to provincial, territorial, municipal and local bodies.[88] Thus, provincial and territorial jurisdiction allows for the development and implementation of programs and regulatory standards of health, safety and integrity over sport.[89]

As for the federal government, it may provide support for sport through the exercise of its spending power.[90] However, it is important that this does not interfere with matters under provincial jurisdiction.[91]

Parliament may also enact federal legislation based on its residual authority to make "Laws for the Peace, Order, and good Government of Canada"[92] and on other enumerated federal heads of power.[93] More generally, whenever an issue is deemed to be of national or international interest, the federal government may claim jurisdiction.[94] Therefore, when it comes to sport, the federal government has a role in supporting participation in international competitions such as the Olympics and Paralympics, the Commonwealth and Arctic Winter Games, as matters of national presence and diplomacy.

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87 John Barnes, *Sports and the Law in Canada*, 3rd ed (Toronto: Butterworths, 1996) at 10; John Barnes, *The Law of Hockey* (Markham: LexisNexis, 2010) at 24; The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 35, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>; House of Commons, *Safe Sport in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage* (June 2024) (Chair: the Honourable Hedy Fry) at 19, online: <www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/chpc/report-12/>.

88 John Barnes, *Sports and the Law in Canada*, 3rd ed (Toronto: Butterworths, 1996) at 10; John Barnes, *The Law of Hockey* (Markham: LexisNexis, 2010) at 24; The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 35, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>; House of Commons, *Safe Sport in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage* (June 2024) (Chair: the Honourable Hedy Fry) at 19, online: <www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/chpc/report-12/>.

89 John Barnes, *Sports and the Law in Canada*, 3rd ed (Toronto: Butterworths, 1996) at 10; John Barnes, *The Law of Hockey* (Markham: LexisNexis, 2010) at 24.

90 *Constitution Act, 1867* (UK), 30 & 31 Vict, c 3, s 91, reprinted in RSC 1985, Appendix II, No 5, s 91.

91 John Barnes, *Sports and the Law in Canada*, 3rd ed (Toronto: Butterworths, 1996) at 11; John Barnes, *The Law of Hockey* (Markham: LexisNexis, 2010) at 25; The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 35–36, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>; House of Commons, *Safe Sport in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage* (June 2024) (Chair: the Honourable Hedy Fry) at 20, online: <www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/chpc/report-12/>.

92 *Constitution Act, 1867* (UK), 30 & 31 Vict, c 3, s 91, reprinted in RSC 1985, Appendix II, No 5, s 91.

93 John Barnes, *Sports and the Law in Canada*, 3rd ed (Toronto: Butterworths, 1996) at 11; John Barnes, *The Law of Hockey* (Markham: LexisNexis, 2010) at 25.

94 John Barnes, *Sports and the Law in Canada*, 3rd ed (Toronto: Butterworths, 1996) at 11; John Barnes, *The Law of Hockey* (Markham: LexisNexis, 2010) at 25; The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 35–36, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>; House of Commons, *Safe Sport in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage* (June 2024) (Chair: the Honourable Hedy Fry) at 20, online: <www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/chpc/report-12/>.

Legislation

Over many years, the role of the federal government in sport has evolved and developed, partly through legislation. In 1961, the *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act* came into effect to encourage, promote and develop fitness and amateur sport.[95]

Of note, 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.[96] While recognizing the importance of these sports to Canadian society, this legislation did not include provisions to encourage funding of 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.[97] Last amended in 2017, the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* remains in effect today.

The policy objectives of the federal government 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[98]

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 *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act*. Initially the Minister of Amateur Sport, reported to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. However, over the past sixty years, the ministerial title, reporting department and position in government have changed many times, sometimes incorporating both physical activity and sport in the title.[99]

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95 *Fitness and Amateur Sport Act*, RSC 1985, c F-25, online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/F-25/page-1.html>.

96 *National Sports of Canada Act*, SC 1994, c 16, online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/n-16.7/page-1.html>.

97 *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, SC 2003, c 2, online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/P-13.4/>.

98 *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, SC 2003, c 2, s 3, 4(2), online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/P-13.4/>.

99 Parlinfo, "Departments and Roles : 1867 – Today : 'Sports'" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://bdp.parl.ca/sites/ParlInfo/default/fr_CA/Federal/domainesResponsabilites?permalink=21089>.

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."[100] This puts sport alongside matters related to Canadian identity and values, cultural development and heritage.[101]

Typically, the Minister of Canadian Heritage is responsible for the Department of Canadian Heritage, including sport.[102] Following the 2025 Canadian general federal election, a Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages was appointed to oversee the Department of Canadian Heritage.[103] With regard to sport and physical activity, these responsibilities were divided between the Secretary of State (Sport) and the Minister of Health, respectively.[104]

Within the Department of Canadian Heritage, the branch that is primarily responsible for sport is Sport Canada. Sport Canada's role includes developing national sport policies, providing support (including funding to National Sport Organizations and national Multisport Service Organizations), and encouraging 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.[105]

In this Preliminary Report, the Commission has relied, when possible, on the most recent publicly available information found in the Public Accounts of Canada volumes when referring to funding provided by Sport Canada.

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100 *Department of Canadian Heritage Act*, SC 1995, c 11, s 4(2)(f), online: <www.laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-17.3/>.

101 *Department of Canadian Heritage Act*, SC 1995, c 11, s 4(1). Other responsibilities of the Department of Canadian Heritage include, but are not limited to, royal visits to Canada, Canada Day celebrations, official languages, and support for cultural industries as well as the performing and visual arts (Government of Canada, "Canadian Heritage" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage.html>.)

102 *Department of Canadian Heritage Act*, SC 1995, c 11, s 2(1), online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-17.3/page-1.html>.

103 Prime Minister of Canada, News Release, "Prime Minister Carney announces new Ministry" (May 13, 2025), online: <www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2025/05/13/prime-minister-carney-announces-new-ministry>.

104 PC 2025-0427, (2025), online: <https://orders-in-council.canada.ca/attachment.php?attach=47183&lang=en>; Prime Minister of Canada, News Release, "Prime Minister Carney announces new Ministry" (May 13, 2025), online: <www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2025/05/13/prime-minister-carney-announces-new-ministry>.

105 Government of Canada, "Role of Sport Canada" (last modified April 1, 2020), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/role-sport-canada.html>; Government of Canada, "Sport research, policies, acts and regulation" (last modified November 21, 2021), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-policies-acts-regulations.html>.

Sport-related policies

To meet the objectives of the *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, the federal government, through Sport Canada, has introduced a range of policies which establish benchmarks and measures to achieve them.[106]

The *Canadian Sport Policy*, introduced in 2002 and renewed in 2012, is arguably the most foundational 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.[107]

The *Canadian Sport Policy 2012* outlines five overarching goals for intergovernmental cooperation for the period of 2012-2022:

- Canadians have the fundamental skills, knowledge and attitudes to participate in organized and unorganized sport.
- Canadians have the opportunity to participate in sport for fun, health, social interaction and relaxation.
- Canadians have the opportunity to systematically improve and measure their performance against others in competition in a safe and ethical manner.
- Canadians are systematically achieving world-class results at the highest levels of international competition in a safe and ethical manner.
- Sport is used as a tool for social and economic development and the promotion of positive values at home and abroad.[108]

An updated policy was set to be released in February 2023, but was not.[109] At the time of writing this report, it is anticipated that a renewed policy will be revealed at the time of the 2025 Canada Games.

Other notable sport-related policies introduced by Sport Canada include:

- The (2019) *Canadian High Performance Sport Strategy* outlines the desired strategic areas of focus to achieve the goal of world-leading high-performance sport in both results and values.[110]

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106 See e.g. Michael Howlett & Ben Cashore, "Conceptualizing Public Policy" in Isabelle Engeli & Christine Rothmayr Allison, eds, *Comparative Policy Studies: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 17 at 17.

107 Canadian Heritage, *Canadian Sport Policy 2012* (Ottawa: Canadian Heritage, 2012), at 2, online (pdf): <https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/pch/CH24-46-2012-eng.pdf>.

108 Canadian Heritage, *Canadian Sport Policy 2012* (Ottawa: Canadian Heritage, 2012) at 9, online (pdf): <https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/pch/CH24-46-2012-eng.pdf>.

109 Canadian Heritage, *Sport in Canada: Canadian Sport Policy* (last modified August 17, 2022), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-canada.html#a2>.

110 Government of Canada, *2019 Canadian High Performance Sport Strategy* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2019), online (pdf): <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-policies-acts-regulations/high-performance-strategy.html>.

- The *Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls* (2009) encourages and creates opportunities for the participation of women and girls in sport as athletes, coaches, officials, and technical and administrative leaders.[111]
- 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.[112]
- *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport* (2005) aims to ensure that the *Canadian Sport Policy* is inclusive and that the positive impact of sport is maximized for Aboriginal Peoples.[113]
- The *Federal Policy for Hosting International Events* (2008) establishes the way that the federal government will support the bidding and hosting of international multi-sport and single-sport events.[114]

Most recently, in November 2024, the federal government launched its Sport Integrity Framework which clarifies the role of the federal government and other key stakeholders in sport integrity issues, including maltreatment, doping, concussions, discrimination, and governance.[115]

The Framework recognizes that maltreatment is unacceptable and incompatible with the core values of sport. It also provides information on the government's response to promote safe sport environments. This includes requiring National Sport Organization, Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Centres and Institutes to adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program to receive funding.[116] As we describe in Chapter 16, the Canadian Safe Sport Program receives and manages allegations of maltreatment in sport at the national level.[117]

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111 Government of Canada, "Actively Engaged: A Policy on Sport for Women and Girls" (last October 31, 2017), s 4 - Policy Objectives and Results, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-policies-acts-regulations/policy-actively-engaged-women-girls.html>.

112 Government of Canada, "Policy on Sport for Persons with a Disability" (June 2006) at Minister's Foreword, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-policies-acts-regulations/policy-persons-with-disability.html>.

113 Canadian Heritage, *Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sport* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2005) at 2, online (pdf): <www.canada.ca/content/dam/pch/documents/services/sport-policies-acts-regulations/aborignial_v4-eng.pdf>.

114 Government of Canada, "Federal Policy for hosting international sport events" (last modified February 11, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-policies-acts-regulations/policy-hosting-international-sport-events.html>.

115 Government of Canada, "Sport Integrity Framework" (last modified April 15, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/safety-integrity-ethics-sport/sport-integrity-framework.html>.

116 Government of Canada, "Sport Integrity Framework" (last modified April 15, 2025) at "Maltreatment", online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/safety-integrity-ethics-sport/sport-integrity-framework.html>.

117 Government of Canada, "Sport Integrity Framework" (last modified April 15, 2025) at "Maltreatment", online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/safety-integrity-ethics-sport/sport-integrity-framework.html>.

The Framework also calls attention to the importance of good governance to protect the sport system.[118] As such, the Government of Canada commits to integrating good governance principles as a requirement for federally funded sport organizations, rather than requiring them to comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code.[119] The Canadian Sport Governance Code will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 7.

Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada

The Public Health Agency of Canada falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Health, who is responsible for maintaining and improving the health of Canadians.[120] The mandate of the Public Health Agency of Canada 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.[121]

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 is discussed below).
- Monitoring the physical activity levels in Canada.
- Providing funding for physical activity through several funding programs (which are discussed in Chapter 5.[122]

The Public Health Agency of Canada also supports safe sport in two key areas by addressing sport-related concussions,[123] and supporting mental health in sport.[124]

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118 Government of Canada, "Sport Integrity Framework" (last modified April 15, 2025) at "Governance", online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/safety-integrity-ethics-sport/sport-integrity-framework.html>.

119 Government of Canada, "Sport Integrity Framework" (last modified April 15, 2025) at "Governance", online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/safety-integrity-ethics-sport/sport-integrity-framework.html>.

120 Government of Canada, "Health Portfolio" (last modified September 23, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/corporate/health-portfolio.html>.

121 Government of Canada, "Public Health Agency of Canada mandate" (last modified March 21, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/corporate/mandate.html>.

122 Government of Canada, "The Public Health Agency of Canada 2024–25 Departmental Plan" (last modified August 20, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/corporate/transparency/corporate-management-reporting/reports-plans-priorities/2024-2025-departmental-plan.html>.

123 The Public Health Agency of Canada supported the development of the Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport. Government of Canada, "The Public Health Agency of Canada 2024–25 Departmental Plan" (last modified August 20, 2024) at "Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention: Advancing Concussion Prevention, Detection and Management", online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/corporate/transparency/corporate-management-reporting/reports-plans-priorities/2024-2025-departmental-plan.html>.

124 See e.g. Coaching Association of Canada, News Release, "Coaching Association of Canada Announces New Mental Health and Sport Project Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada" (December 13, 2022), online: <https://coach.ca/news/coaching-association-canada-announces-new-mental-health-and-sport-project-funded-public-health>.

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 full 24-hour period.[125]

In 2018, the Public Health Agency of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, released *Let's Get Moving: A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada.*[126] 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 through strengthening the connection between physical activity and sport, recreation, health and other policy areas[127]

Provincial and territorial governments

Provinces and territories in Canada have broad jurisdiction in the area of sport and physical activity.[128] As described above, sport is an area of shared jurisdiction between the federal, provincial and territorial legislatures. Provinces and territories also have broad responsibilities over employment and labour standards, and workplace health and safety,[129] areas that have an impact on sport and physical activity.[130]

With respect to sport and physical activity, as with all issues in the Canadian federation, provinces and territories have their unique approaches to what they fund, legislate, govern, and oversee within their jurisdictions.

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125 Government of Canada, "24 Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth: An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep" (last modified June 16, 2015), online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/healthy-living/physical-activity/24-hour-movement-guidelines-children-youth.html>.

126 Public Health Agency of Canada, *A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada: Let's Get Moving* (Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018) at 6, online: <www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/healthy-living/lets-get-moving/pub-eng.pdf>.

127 Public Health Agency of Canada, *A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada: Let's Get Moving* (Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018) at 4, online: <www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/healthy-living/lets-get-moving/pub-eng.pdf>.

128 *Constitution Act, 1867* (UK), 30 & 31 Vict, c 3, s 91, reprinted in RSC 1985, Appendix II, No 5, s 92(16).

129 *Constitution Act, 1867* (UK), 30 & 31 Vict, c 3, s 91, reprinted in RSC 1985, Appendix II, No 5, s 92(13) (property and civil rights); Isabelle Brideau, Laurence Brosseau & Allison Lowenger, *The Distribution of Legislative Powers: An Overview*, HillStudies, Publication No 2019-35-E (Ottawa: Library of Parliament, 2022), online: <https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/201935E#a3.11>.

130 *Constitution Act, 1867* (UK), 30 & 31 Vict, c 3, s 91, reprinted in RSC 1985, Appendix II, No 5, ss 92(13) (property and civil rights), 92(16) (matters of a mere local or private nature in the province).

Provinces and territories have many roles related to sport and physical activity. They include the development of school curricula, the creation of recreational and sport facilities, and the support of provincial and territorial sport organizations. Certain provinces and territories have also adopted sport-specific legislation. For example, Ontario has legislation to prevent concussions.[131] Quebec also has comprehensive legislation for safe sport,[132] and Manitoba has introduced a bill in its legislative assembly intended to address this issue.[133] These legislative measures are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 15.

Provinces and territories have ministries responsible for sport, although the exact title of the ministry and its responsibilities varies per jurisdiction. For example, sport is the responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport in British Columbia. In Quebec, it falls into the mandate of the ministère de l'Éducation (Ministry of Education).

As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 which focuses on funding, each of the provinces and territories has funding programs to support their athletes and sport organizations. Many have delegated the distribution of funds to Multisport Service Organizations like viaSport in British Columbia. Some provinces like Saskatchewan leverage lottery funds to support sport in the province. These provinces also delegate the responsibility to administer these funds to Multisport Service Organizations like Sask Sport in Saskatchewan.

Municipal governments

Municipalities are legal creations of their provincial and territorial governments.[134] They have no independent constitutional status but play a highly significant role in providing funding, infrastructure and support for a broad range of high performance, amateur and recreational sport and physical activities.

The local parks, community centres and programs they provide are critical elements of the Canadian sport environment. These 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.

131 See e.g. *Rowan's Law* in Ontario (*Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety) 2018*, SO 2018, c 1, online: <www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/18r01>.

132 *Act Respecting Safety in Recreation and Sports*, RLRQ c S-3.1, online: <www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/S-3.1?langCont=en#ga:l_vii-h1>; *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*, SQ 2024, c 25, online: <www.canlii.org/en/qc/laws/astat/sq-2024-c-25/latest/sq-2024-c-25.html>.

133 Bill 21, *The Protecting Youth in Sports Act*, 2nd Sess, 43rd Leg, Manitoba, 2025, online: <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/43-2/b021e.php>.

134 *Constitution Act, 1867* (UK), 30 & 31 Vict, c 3, s 91, reprinted in RSC 1985, Appendix II, No 5, s 92(8).

Intergovernmental collaboration

Given the shared jurisdiction, there are mechanisms for intergovernmental collaboration on sport matters that exist 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 are held on a regular basis. They bring together the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation to set priorities, make decisions, and build relationships to further collaborative work.[135] A notable product of such collaboration, the *Red Deer Declaration – For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport*,[136] was endorsed by the ministers at the 2019 conference in Red Deer, Alberta.[137]

The *Red Deer Declaration* is a fundamental agreement aimed at eliminating harassment, discrimination and abuse in Canadian sport. Under the *Red Deer Declaration,*[138] federal, provincial and territorial ministers formally agreed to work together to:

- Activate the values of the Canadian Sport Policy, the Framework for Recreation in Canada and the Common Vision for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living in Canada.
- Foster a collaborative and coordinated relationship with sport organizations, participants, and stakeholders, and engage relevant experts to identify effective approaches to prevent and respond to incidents of harassment, abuse, and discrimination.
- Prioritize collective actions to address harassment, abuse and discrimination and unethical behaviour in sport, while respecting jurisdictional responsibilities.

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135 Government of Canada, "Intergovernmental Sport Policy Development: Federal-Provincial/Territorial Sport Committee (FPTSC)" (last modified October 31, 2017), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-policies-acts-regulations/policy-sport-intergovernmental.html>.

136 Conference of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation, *Red Deer Declaration – For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport* (Red Deer: February 14-15, 2019), online: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/red-deer-declaration-for-the-prevention-of-harassment-abuse-and-discrimination-in-sport/>.

137 Conference of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation, Press Release, 831-231, "Sport, Physical Activity and Ministers Collaborate to Make Sport Safe and Inclusive" (February 15, 2019), online: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/press-release-sport-physical-activity-and-recreation-ministers-collaborate-to-make-sport-safe-and-inclusive/>.

138 Conference of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation, *Red Deer Declaration – For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport* (Red Deer: February 14-15, 2019), online: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/red-deer-declaration-for-the-prevention-of-harassment-abuse-and-discrimination-in-sport/>.

- Establish a standing item on safety and integrity in sport, including harassment, abuse and discrimination, on the agenda for ministerial conference calls and meetings for the purpose of reviewing progress of actions, updating priorities, and exploring innovative approaches.
- Implement a collaborative intergovernmental approach, with better harmonized commitments, mechanisms, principles, and actions to address harassment, abuse, and discrimination in sport in the areas of awareness, policy, prevention, reporting, management, and monitoring.
- 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.[139]

The Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council (SPARC) is an intergovernmental cooperation mechanism that is co-chaired at the federal level by Canadian Heritage and Sport Canada.[140] 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.[141] 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 are 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*

139 It should be noted that the Government of Quebec indicated that it did not wish to participate in joint federal, provincial, and territorial initiatives in these areas. However, it expressed its willingness to exchange information and best practices with other governments. See Conference of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation, *Red Deer Declaration – For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport* (Red Deer: February 14-15, 2019), online: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/red-deer-declaration-for-the-prevention-of-harassment-abuse-and-discrimination-in-sport/>.

140 Government of Canada, "Questions and Answers - PHAC" (last modified April 10, 2024) at Question: How do federal, provincial and territorial governments work together to promote physical activity?, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/corporate/transparency/open-government/standing-committee/qualtrough-pch-dec-2023/questions-answers-phac.html>.

141 Evaluation Services Directorate, "Grouped Evaluation of Sport Canada Programs 2015-16 to 2019-20" (October 25, 2021), s 4 (Findings-Relevance at para F-P/T Governance), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/corporate/publications/evaluations/grouped-evaluation-sport-canada-program.html#a5e>.

Priorities for Collaborative Action.[142] 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.

Intergovernmental collaboration occurs between representatives from the provinces and territories who also meet as the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council (ISRC). This Council originated over five decades ago, as a provincial and territorial body. Today, the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council is the operational arm of the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council.

Bilateral agreements

The Government of Canada also supports provincial and territorial projects and activities by providing funding through bilateral agreements. The purpose of these agreements is 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 children 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.
- To support projects that provide opportunities for persons from under-represented and/or marginalized populations, so that they can actively participate in sport including in roles as athletes, coaches, officials and volunteer leaders.
- To strengthen Indigenous Capacity and Leadership for the Provincial/Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies.
- To increase culturally relevant sport programming for Indigenous children and youth at the community level.[143]

It appears that the funding for these agreements is partly provided by Sport Canada's Sport Support Program and the Hosting Program. These programs and the bilateral agreements are discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

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142 House of Commons, "Q-2211 [Red Deer Declaration] by Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North), January 29, 2024" byAdam Van Koverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity), Sessional Paper, 44-1, No 8555-441-2211 (March 18, 2024) at 17, online: < https://parl-gc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/delivery/01CALP_INST:01CALP_F/12160748550002616?lang=fr >.

143 Government of Canada, "Bilateral Agreement with the Provinces and Territories" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-participation/bilateral-agreements-provinces-territories.html>.

Participant perspectives on the roles and responsibilities of governments

Lack of leadership

Throughout our engagement activities, there was consistent emphasis on the need for clear leadership within the sport and physical activity community to address the multiple challenges it faces. There is deep 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 Sport Canada. We were told that the lack of leadership from Sport Canada created a gap that 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.

The federal government's approach to sport is perceived as fragmented and lacking in strategic vision. There is a common perception that Sport Canada is reactionary rather than proactive. This 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.

Many spoke of the work that had been accomplished in the area of sport by the federal government in the past years, with past ministers introducing numerous important sport policies. For instance, the provision of multi-year funding for sport organizations was positively received by many. Further, some participants noted that the federal government has made progress in developing policies, but was less successful in developing programs.

Instability

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 in 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 may regularly occur, it has nevertheless contributed to the stagnation of sport policy development.

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 emerged, requiring further revisions, ongoing delays and often confusion.

Focus on high-performance sport

We have noted previously that there is a perception that Canadian sport policy, funding, and programs have emerged over decades like a pinball bouncing from crisis to crisis, and from the latest political or ministerial priority to the next. For instance, the federal government's current funding focus on performance and medals was highly criticized by many organizations and individuals. The shift to a medal and performance-focused system was linked to the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It was noted by many that the emphasis on performance puts undue and sometimes unhealthy pressure on athletes, coaches, and organizations.

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. But 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 a rebalancing of priorities between high-performance and participation, within a comprehensive national physical-activity and sport system.

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. Therefore, it is important that the government's policies and funding priorities reflect the needs of society at large by focusing on participation and inclusion.

Insufficient short-term strategy

The lack of clarity, cohesion, and strategic depth of Canada's current sport policy framework was highlighted throughout our engagements. Many cited the stalled Sport Funding and Accountability Framework and challenges with the renewed Canadian Sport Policy as examples of Sport Canada's lack of leadership. It was noted that Sport Canada's Policy on Aboriginal Peoples Participation in Sport requires revision as it was written prior to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and employs outdated language.

On a related note, we were also advised that Sport Canada was working on an Indigenous sport policy, the status of which is unknown. In this respect, it was noted that the policy needs to be strategic and 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 cannot use a colonial approach, and that collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and communities was essential in its creation.

Additionally, many have criticized the federal government for its responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls for Action concerning sport and reconciliation. The government responses have been described as insufficient. Providing funding to the North American Indigenous Games was seen as an inadequate response to the Call to Action 88 which implores all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth. We were advised that more remains to be done, and that concrete actions need to be taken by the federal and other governments.

Overall, despite the best intentions, political cycles and shifting priorities limit the ability of sport organizations to undertake proper strategic long-term planning with secure multi-year funding. We were told that the system is "broken." Sport organizations often struggle with insufficient funding and short-term funding. This makes it difficult for them to address an array of challenges, including governance, accessibility, safe sport. Their limited resources hinder their ability to ensure coordinated, consistent approaches to these issues.

The sport and physical activity sector is seeking sound, long-term strategic thinking and secure multi-year 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.

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 compliance with its policies. There is a common view that Sport Canada is not ensuring that the conditions of funding, like minimum governance requirements for National Sport Organizations, are being met.

On the other hand, we were advised that Sport Canada's ability to provide effective oversight over National Sport Organizations and the sport system is also limited. This is because its only form of leverage is its spending power. Essentially, Sport Canada can only have control over the organizations that it funds, which are largely national level organizations. This form of control may be ineffective in cases where the sport organization receives funding from various sources and is not heavily reliant on federal funding.

We also understand that pulling funding from a sport organization is a measure of last resort because it usually has a more significant impact on the athletes than 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.

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 noted above, the responsibility for sport and physical activity is currently divided between Canadian Heritage and the Public Health Agency of Canada (i.e., the Ministry of Health). There were 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 and physical activity and sport. Consequently, we were told that the transfer of the responsibility for sport to the Ministry of Health, coupled with additional funding, would underline the critical role of physical activity in the physical and mental health of Canadians.

Additionally, there was concern that sport bureaucracies in the federal government were sometimes 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 due to the many 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 believe that Sport Canada should continue to remain responsible for sport with a focus on high-performance athletes, and that a new department in the Ministry of Health should be created to coordinate and develop youth and grassroots movement sports.

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.

Provincial and territorial governments

Many of the concerns 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, insufficient funding and resources provided by governments to support their sport communities.

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. 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 burden on sport organizations. 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 levels of funding are insufficient to sustain Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

Shared jurisdiction over sport and intergovernmental collaboration

The Canadian sport system is complex due to the shared jurisdiction over sport between the federal governments and the 13 provinces and territories. The shared jurisdiction was identified as a longstanding challenge to many in the sport community, leading some to suggest it was easy for governments to point fingers at other levels of government for inaction or funding gaps.

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 grassroots level. Participants explained that collaboration between the provincial and territorial governments and federal government is crucial because the federal government is far removed from the grassroots and may not have the visibility of the needs at the local level. Yet, we were frequently told that such collaboration and communication were lacking.

Participants told us of a lack of communication between provinces and territories and Sport Canada. Many questioned the ongoing effectiveness of intergovernmental collaborations, even though it has 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. This contributes to the fractured and disjointed approach to sport that many feel is evident throughout the country.

Participants stressed that the federal, provincial and territorial governments needed 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.

We also heard a significant amount of frustration with the lack of collaboration between federal, provincial, territorial and municipal government in supporting hosting opportunities for sport events.

Indigenous people in sport

Sport is interwoven with Indigenous culture and history. Indigenous Peoples hold an important space in the sport system. Over the course of our engagement activities, a number of Indigenous communities, organizations, governments and individuals welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge with the Commission as it relates to sport and physical activity. We recognize that we still have much to learn from Indigenous people. We are committed to continuing to engage, listen and learn as we pursue the Commission's work.

For now, this section provides a brief overview of Indigenous governments and communities, Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies and Indigenous-led games.

Indigenous governments and communities

First Nations, Inuit and Métis governments, councils, communities and organizations deliver sport and physical activity programs in their communities. This can include administering sport programs, providing education and

resources, and funding to athletes, programs and events. The details of the programs, services and policies will vary per community.

Some Indigenous governments support their communities through sports 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 Provincial or Territorial Aboriginal Sport Body and Association of Friendship Centres.

Some Indigenous communities have a dedicated sports 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 have year-round programming aimed at enhancing the quality of life for members of the community through community-driven sport, recreation, and other physical activities.

Aboriginal Sport Circle and Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies

The Aboriginal Sport Circle is a National Multisport Service Organization. It is described as "Canada's national voice for Aboriginal sport, physical activity, and recreation bringing together the interests of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples."[144] They receive funding from Sport Canada through the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities allocated to them and 13 Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies for the development of sport community programming.[145] In 2023-2024, the Aboriginal Sport Circle received $2,745,000 from Sport Canada's Sport Support Program.[146]

Established in 1995, the Aboriginal Sport Circle was created to address the need for more accessible and equitable sport and recreation opportunities for Aboriginal Peoples. Their mandate has since evolved to include physical activity, health, nutrition, physical education, and wellness.[147]

The Aboriginal Sport Circle is a member-based not-for-profit organization whose members consist of 13 Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies. These bodies are funded by Sport Canada. Their respective structure, mandate and the services they provide to their communities may vary in nature. As members of the Aboriginal Sport Circle, they represent the grassroots interests of the Aboriginal Peoples in their respective jurisdiction.[148]

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144 Aboriginal Sport Circle, "About" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca/about>.

145 Government of Canada, "Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities" (last modified May 14, 2025), online <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/social-development-indigenous-communities.html>.

146 Government of Canada, "Section 6 of Volume III of the 2023–2024 Public Accounts of Canada: Transfer Payments" (2023) at 25, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

147 Aboriginal Sport Circle, "About" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca/about>.

148 Aboriginal Sport Circle, "About" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca/about>.

Working in partnership with other National Multisport Service Organizations, the Aboriginal Sport Circle delivers the following three programs:

- The Athlete Support Program, which aims at increasing physical literacy in Indigenous children and increasing the number of Indigenous people that remain active for life. It also aims at creating a pathway for Indigenous athletes into high-performance sport. 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.[149]
- The Indigenous Long-Term Participant Development, designed as a roadmap for developing sport and physical activity among Indigenous people.[150]
- The Aboriginal Coaching Program, 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 with Indigenous participants.[151]

Indigenous games

Indigenous games are a means of preserving cultural heritage, but also serve as a tool for reconciliation in Canada. There are several Indigenous games, either multi-sport 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 content below provides an overview of the North American Indigenous Games, and the Arctic Winter Games.

North American Indigenous Games

The North American Indigenous Games is a multi-sport event for Indigenous North American athletes.[152] It is one of the largest sporting and cultural gatherings of Indigenous Peoples in North America.[153]

The North American Indigenous Games, unlike other Multisport Service Organizations grew out of an Indigenous-led process and without government support. They are also unique in 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 comprised of a 26-member council of representatives from all 13 provinces

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149 Aboriginal Sport Circle, "Athlete Support" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca/athlete-support>.

150 Aboriginal Sport Circle, "Indigenous Long-term Participant Development (ILTPD)" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca/athlete-support>.

151 Aboriginal Sport Circle, "Aboriginal Coaching Program (ACP)" (last visited June 2025), online <www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca/coaches-support>.

152 Government of Canada, "North American Indigenous Games" (last modified May 12, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/north-american-indigenous-games.html>.

153 Government of Canada, "North American Indigenous Games" (last modified May 12, 2025) online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/north-american-indigenous-games.html>.

and territories in Canada and 13 regions[154] in the United States.[155] The Council is an incorporated, non-profit organization.[156]

The North American Indigenous Games were created to promote healthy lifestyles, strengthen self-image, and highlight Indigenous role models through sport and culture. Its sport program features 16 sports, including three traditional Indigenous sports: canoe/kayak, lacrosse, and 3D archery.[157]

The vision for these games is "[t]o 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 Indigenous distinctiveness."[158]

Arctic Winter Games

The Arctic Winter Games is a biennial multi-sport event.[159] These games were founded in 1969 to provide athletes from the arctic and subarctic regions a place to compete in their own cultural context.[160] Their mission is to "provide a meaningful Arctic Winter Games Experience."[161]

The Arctic Winter Games is a Corporation under the Canada Corporations Act.[162] They are governed by a Board composed of Directors from each of its permanent members. Those members are Alaska, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Northern Alberta, Nunavut and Greenland.

Through a bidding process, the Arctic Winter Games selects a hosting community with whom it enters into a formal agreement for the purposes of the games. The host community then establishes a not-for-profit Host Society for the event. The host community, through the Host Society stages the games in accordance with the Arctic Winter Games requirements.[163]

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154 North American Indigenous Games Council, "Council Structure, Roles and Responsibilities" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.naigcouncil.com/council-structure-roles-and-responsibilities>.

155 North American Indigenous Games Council, "Council Structure, Roles and Responsibilities" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.naigcouncil.com/council-structure-roles-and-responsibilities>.

156 North American Indigenous Games Council, "History" (last visited June 2025), online:<www.naigcouncil.com/history>.

157 Government of Canada, "North American Indigenous Games" (last modified May 12, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/north-american-indigenous-games.html>.

158 North American Indigenous Games Council, "History" (last visited June 2025), online:<www.naigcouncil.com/history>.

159 Arctic Winter Games, "Background & History" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://arcticwintergames.net/About-AWG/Background-And-History>.

160 Arctic Winter Games, "Background & History" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://arcticwintergames.net/About-AWG/Background-And-History>.

161 Arctic Winter Games, "Mission, Vision, & Values" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://arcticwintergames.net/About-AWG/Mission-Purpose-Values>.

162 Arctic Winter Games, "Mission, Vision, & Values" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://arcticwintergames.net/About-AWG/Mission-Purpose-Values>.

163 Arctic Winter Games, "International Committee" (last visited June 2025), online:<https://arcticwintergames.net/About-AWG/International-Committee>.

As such, the key activities of the Arctic Winter Games include selecting a host community, overseeing the games preparation and ensuring technical and cultural integrity. Through these activities, the Arctic Winter Games fosters the development of young athletes, promotes cultural exchange, and strengthens the bonds among Circumpolar North communities.[164]

Funding for the Arctic Winter Games typically comes from a combination of government contributions, corporate sponsorships, grants, and in-kind donations. For example, the Government of Yukon committed $4 million in funding and an additional $350,000 in in-kind contributions for the 2026 Games.[165]

In 2024, the Games' budget was supported largely by grants, sponsorships, and in-kind donations.[166] The Commission understands that the Arctic Winter Games do not receive any funding from the federal government of Canada. However, when games are hosted in Canada, the host society typically receives funding from Sport Canada and Infrastructure Canada.

National Association of Friendship Centres

The National Association of Friendship Centres is a network of member Friendship Centres and Provincial and Territorial Associations, referred to as the Friendship Centre Movement.[167] While it is not a sport organization and does not have any specific policy or program initiatives related to sport and physical activity, it plays a significant role in the sport context for urban Indigenous Communities.

The National Association of Friendship Centres promotes and advocates the concerns of its members and supports them in achieving their missions and visions within their urban Indigenous communities. It also provides urban Indigenous perspectives to municipal, provincial, territorial, and federal governments, and non-Indigenous civil society organizations.

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 Homeland)."[168]

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164 Arctic Winter Games Mat-Su 2024, "Our International Committee" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.awg2024.org/about/awg-international-committee>.

165 Government of Yukon, News Release, 23-301, "Government of Yukon announces support for the City of Whitehorse's 2026 Arctic Winter Games Bid" (July 27, 2023), online: <https://yukon.ca/en/news/government-yukon-announces-support-city-whitehorses-2026-arctic-winter-games-bid>.

166 Amy Newman, "Big Valley Welcome: Mat-Su Borough Hosts the 2024 Arctic Winter Games", *Alaska Business* (March 11, 2024), online: <www.akbizmag.com/industry/arctic/winter-games-2024/>.

167 National Association of Friendship Centres, "About the NAFC" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://nafc.ca/about-the-nafc>.

168 National Association of Friendship Centres, "2023 Annual Report" (last visited June 2025) at 3, online (pdf): <https://issuu.com/nafc_anca/docs/2023_nafc_annual_report_web?fr=xKAE9_zU1NQ>.

The National Association of Friendship Centres is a not-for-profit incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act.* They are governed by a volunteer Executive Committee of five members and a volunteer board of directors. The Board is comprised of 11 regional representatives including members from the Indigenous Youth Council[169] and the Senate.[170] Board members are selected by the Provincial and Territorial Associations.

The National Association of Friendship Centres receives funding under various agreements with the Government of Canada and other contributors. The Association then distributes these funds to its members across Canada and to other organizations that carry out the projects intended to fulfil its mandate.

In 2023, the Association's revenues totalled $49,921,261, with $48,445,884 coming from government contributions. These government contributions came from Indigenous Services Canada, Canadian Heritage, 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.[171]

The National Association of Friendship Centres, through its members, provide culturally appropriate services for Indigenous people. Despite this, the Association is not a recipient of any sport-specific funding from Sport Canada.

Moreover, the Association is not eligible to receive funds from the Aboriginal Sport Circle, as it is not a Provincial or Territorial Aboriginal Sport Body. It is also important to note that in some cases, the Association represents and provides services to people who may not be represented by Provincial or Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

Three reference points were often cited as being highly relevant for discussions and engagement regarding Indigenous communities and sport in Canada: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

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169 The Indigenous Youth Council brings Indigenous youth views, concerns, and issues to the national level. It is comprised of 13 members including a four-member Executive Committee, a youth executive member, and eight provincial/regional representatives. National Association of Friendship Centres, "Indigenous Youth Council" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://nafc.ca/about-the-nafc/governance/senate?lang=en>.

170 The National Association of Friendship Centres Senate is made up of individuals recognized for representing values which reflect the history and evolution of the Friendship Centre Movement. Senators may be called upon to provide information, guidance or advice to the Friendship Centre Movement from time-to-time. They are role models to Indigenous youth and are highly respected ambassadors of the Friendship Centre Movement. National Association of Friendship Centres, "Senate" (last visited June 2025), online: <nafc.ca/about-the-nafc/governance/senate?lang=en>.

171 National Association of Friendship Centres, "Financial Statements For the year ended March 31, 2023" (July 16, 2023) at 5, 11, online (pdf): <https://nafc.ca/downloads/2022-2023-nafc-financial-statements.pdf>.

It is important to note that Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in their 2015 Final Report, included five Calls to Action that addressed sport and physical activity.[172] These were:

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.[173]

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172 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (Winnipeg: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) at Calls 87–91, online (pdf): <https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf>.

173 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (Winnipeg: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) at Calls 87 to 91, online (pdf): <https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf>.

In response to these Calls to Action, the federal government has made commitments to support Indigenous sports initiatives, including funding First Nation, Métis and Inuit governments for various programs.[174]

A Standing Working Group, co-chaired by the Aboriginal Sport Circle and Sport Canada, was also established to identify priorities, and co-develop action plans in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.[175]

According to publicly available information, and at the time of writing this report, the Standing Working Group is expected to finalize its strategy soon. We understand that it may be presented to federal, provincial, and territorial sport ministers in August 2025.[176]

In addition, the federal government created the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities, a component of the Sport Support Program.[177] Through this program, Sport Canada provides funding to the Aboriginal Sport Circle, the 13 Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Bodies, Indigenous governments, communities and not-for-profit Indigenous organizations.[178] Details of these programs are provided below in the funding section in Chapter 5.

Moreover, Sport Canada announced in 2022 its support for the creation of the *Commonwealth (Lekwungen) Sport Declaration on Truth, Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples*. They provided funding to Commonwealth Sport Canada to support the Commonwealth Indigenous Sport Declaration Working Group in creating this Declaration.[179]

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174 In the 2017 Budget, the federal government allocated $18.9 million over five years, along with $5.5 million in ongoing funding on a four-year cycle, to support Indigenous sport leadership, culturally relevant programming, the North American Indigenous Games, and Sport Canada's data and research efforts. Investments were provided to the Aboriginal Sport Circle to take on a leadership role in Indigenous sport development, to provincial and territorial governments to enhance their capacity and leadership in Indigenous sports, and to National and Multi Sport Organizations to promote the long-term development of Indigenous athletes through culturally relevant programs. The government has also incorporated reconciliation into sport funding frameworks. In the 2023-2024 Sport Support Program guidelines, a section on reconciliation initiatives was introduced, ensuring such projects are eligible for funding under federal programs. The 2022 Budget extended this commitment, allocating $20 million over five years to continue supporting these efforts. Indigenous Watchdog, "Call to Action #90" (last visited January 2025), online <www.indigenouswatchdog.org/cta/call-to-action-90/>.

175 Government of Canada, "Sports and reconciliation" (last modified June 26, 2024), online: <www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524505883755/1557512006268>.

176 Government of Canada, "Sports and reconciliation" (last modified June 26, 2024), online: <www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524505883755/1557512006268>.

177 Government of Canada, "Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/social-development-indigenous-communities.html>.

178 Government of Canada, "Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/social-development-indigenous-communities.html>; Government of Canada, "Stream One – Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/stream-one.html>.

179 Canadian Heritage, "The Government of Canada supports the creation of a Commonwealth Sport Declaration on Truth, Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples" (August 30, 2022), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2022/08/the-government-of-canada-supports-the-creation-of-a-commonwealth-sport-declaration-on-truth-reconciliation-and-partnership-with-indigenous-peoples.html>.

The Commission understands that this Declaration was approved by acclamation at the Commonwealth Games Federation General Assembly in 2023.[180] Within this Declaration, there are 10 calls to action to promote inclusion, education, health and development through sport. The hope is that signatories to this Declaration implement all 10 calls to action leading to meaningful change for Indigenous communities across the Commonwealth.

Participant perspectives on Indigenous sport

The Commission had meaningful discussions with a range of Indigenous sport organizations and Indigenous community organizations engaged with sport on and off reserve, recognizing that a large population of Indigenous people live off reserve and Métis homelands, often in urban settings.

Racism and creation of two parallel sport systems

Every Indigenous organization and community with whom 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.

To illustrate the presence of racism experienced by Indigenous people in the sporting context, many of the parents from Indigenous communities we engaged with shared that their children experienced racial slurs and differential treatment and that they were excluded from activities. We were informed that parents were also subjected to racism, facing 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 of the importance of honouring this history and recognizing the contributions of Indigenous Peoples to Canadian Sport.

Through sharing, we learned that the Indigenous sport system was created since Indigenous people were not included in the "mainstream" sport system. This resulted in two parallel sport systems that operate independently from each other.[181]

Indigenous athletes who reached the national level of their sport expressed receiving enormous support and encouragement from their communities. This visibility created an immense sense of pride in the community. However, we also heard that such a profile could be isolating and place enormous pressure on the athlete as one of the few to reach the pinnacle of their sport.

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180 Commonwealth Games Federation, News Release, "CGF embraces historic Declaration on Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples" (November 15, 2023), online <www.commonwealthsport.com/news/3786113/d>.

181 Janice Forsyth & Victoria Paraschak, "Chapter IX. The Double Helix: Aboriginal People and Sport Policy in Canada" in Lucie Thibault & Jean Harvey, eds, *Sport Policy in Canada* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2013), Ch IX. The Double Helix: Aboriginal People and Sport Policy in Canada, online: <https://books.openedition.org/uop/715?lang=en#:~:text=The%20anatomy%20of%20a%20double,where%20the%20two%20systems%20connect>.

The Commission was informed of the need for a sport system that is intentional, well researched, culturally safe and grounded, and accountable. The need for Indigenous-led sport programming and games was also highlighted. In fact, we were told that an Indigenous Sport system which empowers communities and nations to administer their own programs would align with the principle of self-determination.

Aboriginal Sport Circle

Many recognized the pivotal role of the Aboriginal Sport Circle in promoting an Indigenous sport system and emphasizing the infusion of spiritual and cultural practices. It was seen by some, as the national voice for Indigenous sport. It was also noted that what is being done at the community level should also be carefully examined to ensure that community needs are being met. The underfunding of the Aboriginal Sport Circle was highlighted by many.

Others noted that the Aboriginal Sport Circle reflected a colonial approach in that it followed a National Sport Organization model in which the Aboriginal Sport Circle is akin to a National Sport Organization with its 13 Provincial and Territorial Aboriginal Sport Body members. Some opined the Aboriginal Sport Circle is recognized by the Government of Canada as the voice and gatekeeper of the Aboriginal voices. Finally, questions regarding the accountability of the Aboriginal Sport Circle to Indigenous communities were raised.

Indigenous games

A recurring theme throughout our engagement with Indigenous sport organizations and communities was the importance of the various Indigenous games to Indigenous athletes and communities.

Some shared that youth involvement in the North American Indigenous Games was life changing, removed barriers and provided youth support. 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 post-secondary education. More importantly, it was noted that participation in these games gave youth self-confidence, self-worth, and led to some seeing themselves as role models in their communities.

Additionally, the success and substantial economic impact of the North American Indigenous Games were broadly recognized despite a lack of funding. There were calls for the federal and provincial and territorial governments to re-open these funding discussions in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls for 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, similar sentiments were expressed with regard to 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 for intergenerational trauma while providing 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, contributed to a sense of belonging and provided a safe space for competition and play.

At the provincial level, we were informed that the Alberta Indigenous Games has led to a dozen athletes accessing education in the United States and receiving a scholarship because of scouts attending these games. In contrast, an unfortunate reality raised with respect to Indigenous Games is that many people do not know of, or even acknowledge their existence. Therefore, scouts attend these events infrequently, which results in the accomplishments of Indigenous athletes going unnoticed.

National Association of Friendship Centres

Despite not being sport organizations, the important roles played by the National Association of Friendship Centres and individual Friendship Centres were noted. It was recognized that, in many urban settings, some Indigenous children access sport through a Friendship Centre while others access sport through a mainstream sport organization. Many shared that such mainstream sport organizations are not set up to provide a safe and inclusive environment to Indigenous people. For this reason, it was strongly recommended that consideration be given to providing funding for sport and recreation activities to the National Association of Friendship Centres, which could then be distributed to local Friendship Centres.

SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to the varying levels of government involved in the Canadian sport system, there are numerous sport organizations primarily responsible for the development and delivery of sport programs. The differing levels of coordination and alignment between and within these organizations further complicate the Canadian sport system.

As will be discussed below, there are International Sport Federations, National Sport Organizations, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and Community Sport Organizations, all playing a variety of roles across the Canadian sport landscape.

It is important to note that 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,[182] and that volunteers in the sport and recreation context gave on average 105 hours of their time per year.[183] 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.

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182 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, "Monitoring & Tracking The Field" (2022) at 1, online (pdf): <https://cflri.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CFLRI-TrackingTheField-Sport-Monitor-Volunteering-EN-Final.pdf>.

183 Statistics Canada, *Volunteering counts: Formal and Informal contributions of Canadians in 2018*, by Tara Hahmann, Catalogue No 75-006-x (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, April 23, 2021) at 6, online: <www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00002-eng.htm>; Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, "Monitoring & Tracking The Field" (2022) at 1, online (pdf): <https://cflri.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CFLRI-TrackingTheField-Sport-Monitor-Volunteering-EN-Final.pdf>.

In the sections below, we provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the various international, national, provincial and territorial, and community sport organizations and the perspectives shared by those who participate in their activities.

International Sport Federations

International Sport Federations are independent non-governmental organizations that administer one or more sports or distinct sport disciplines. They have the responsibility and duty to manage and to monitor the everyday running of the world's various sports disciplines and the practical organization of events during the Olympic Games. They must also supervise the development of athletes practising these sports at every level. Each International Sport Federation governs its sport at world level and ensures its promotion and development.[184]

Some examples include the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (better known as FIFA, the governing body for soccer),[185] World Athletics (the governing body for track and field as well as road and cross-country running),[186] World Aquatics (the governing body for diving, swimming, artistic swimming, and water polo),[187] and the International Skating Union (the governing body for speed skating and figure skating).[188]

National Sport Organizations

National Sport Organizations are the Canadian counterparts of international sport federations. They are the governing bodies for their sport and, usually, variants of their sport in Canada.[189] Among other responsibilities, they 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.[190]

The programs and services of National Sport Organizations are designed to be nationwide. However, as noted below, they may not extend to all provinces or territories.[191]

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184 International Olympic Committee, "International Sports Federations" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.olympics.com/ioc/international-federations>.

185 FIFA, "Organisation" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://inside.fifa.com/organisation>.

186 World Athletics, "About World Athletics" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://worldathletics.org/about-iaaf>.

187 World Aquatics, "Overview and History" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.worldaquatics.com/about>.

188 International Skating Union, "About the ISU" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.isu.org/about/>.

189 Government of Canada, "National Sport Organizations" (last modified August 27, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-organizations/national.html>.

190 Government of Canada, "National Sport Organizations" (last modified August 27, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-organizations/national.html>.

191 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024) at Eligibility, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a3>.

The sports under the authority of National Sports 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 a single International Sport Federation. For example, World Aquatics has five Canadian National Sport Organizations among its members (Aquatics Canada, Water Polo Canada, Canadian Artistic Swimming, Diving Canada and Swimming Canada).

Some National Sport Organizations govern both non-para and parasports.[192] Parasports are sports primarily for people with a broad range of physical or sight-related disabilities. There are four National Sport Organizations that govern only para or adaptive sport and are in receipt of funding from Sport Canada.[193] Other similar organizations exist but do not receive this funding.

At this time, all federally funded National Sport Organizations are incorporated under the federal *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.[194] These organizations are typically governed by a board of directors. Details about their governance are discussed in Chapter 7.

There are no statutes or legislative requirements specific to National Sport Organizations. To be recognized as such by Sport Canada, they are only required 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 allows it to be eligible to receive funding from the federal government.[195]

Funding for National Sports Organizations can come from a variety of sources, including from the federal government through Sport Canada's three funding programs.[196] For example, over the 2023-2024 fiscal year, Sport Canada funded a total of 64 National Sport Organizations under the Sport Support Program.[197]

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192 For example, Athletics Canada is responsible for Para Athletics and Swimming Canada is responsible for para-swimming. Athletics Canada, "Para Athletics" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://athletics.ca/get-involved/para-athletics/>; Swimming Canada, "What is Para Swimming " (last visited June 2025), online: <www.swimming.ca/what-is-para-swimming-2/>.

193 Wheelchair Basketball Canada, Wheelchair Rugby Canada, the Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports Association (Boccia) and the Canadian Blind Sport Association (Goalball) receive funding from Sport Canada. Government of Canada, "National Sport Organizations" (last modified August 27, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-organizations/national.html>.

194 *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*, SC 2009, c 23, online: <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-7.75/>.

195 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024) at Eligibility, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a3>.

196 Government of Canada, "Funding – Sport" (last modified March 31, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding-sport.html>.

197 The funding for Wheelchair Basketball Canada was provided via Canada Basketball. Government of Canada, "National Sport Organizations - 2023/2024 Funding " (last modified May 23, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-organizations/national/funding.html>.

The list of these National Sport Organizations can be found in Appendix 1. It has been noted that approximately 90% of these National Sport Organizations are heavily dependent on federal funding to deliver programs and services. Further details are provided on Sport Canada's funding programs below in Chapter 5. 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 are expressed within their respective provincial or territorial boundaries. These responsibilities include the selection and management of provincial-territorial teams for national competitions.

In addition, 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. To name a few examples, under the Act, members elect and may remove the directors of their National Sport Organization.[198] They also confirm, reject or amend any by-law of the corporation.[199] Other rights of voting members include the right to receive notice of and attend the annual meeting of members.[200]

Generally, there is a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization in each province and territory for every sport. 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 the province of Ontario: Hockey Eastern Ontario, Hockey Northwestern Ontario and the Ontario Hockey Federation.[201]

In other cases, a Provincial and Territorial Sport Organization will be responsible for multiple provinces and territories. Notably, a 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.[202]

Some sports may not have Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations in every jurisdiction. Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton, for example, is present in only four provinces.[203] This demonstrates the inconsistencies that may be present in Canadian sport structures.

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198 *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*, SC 2009, c 23, s 128(3), s 130(1), online: <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-7.75/>.

199 *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*, SC 2009, c 23, s 152, online: <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-7.75/>.

200 *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*, SC 2009, c 23, s 162(1), online: <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-7.75/>.

201 Hockey Canada, "Find contact information for your provincial or regional Member" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/corporate/contact/branches>.

202 Skate Canada, "Sections" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://skatecanada.ca/community/sections/>.

203 Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton, "Provincial Sport Organizations" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.bobsleighcanadaskeleton.ca/en/about/pso/>.

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 and Territorial Sport Organizations to incorporate as not-for-profit corporations under either provincial or federal legislation, whereas Quebec and Alberta require the Provincial Sport Organizations to incorporate under their respective provincial legislation.[204]

Similar to National Sport Organizations, some Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations can govern multiple parasports, a single parasport, or both para and non-parasport. For example, the Ontario Para Network governs wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby and wheelchair tennis.[205] In contrast, BC Wheelchair Basketball is a single parasport provincial sport organization.[206] Conversely, para swimming is integrated within Swim Alberta.[207]

Many of the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations are associated with clubs at the community level. In those cases, these clubs may be the 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 sports and physical activity programs. They often offer recreational level sport programming, but 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.

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, there is a broad range of delivery organizations, including non-profit groups and charitable organizations (like the YMCA[208]), for-profit clubs, businesses and training institutions, schools and universities, and municipal governments.

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204 Similarly, British Columbia, New-Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nunavut require provincial or territorial incorporation. (British Columbia, "Sports, recreation, arts and culture – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)" (last visited June 2025), online: <www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/sports/sport-frequently-asked-questions>; Prince Edward Island, "Sport PEI Membership Categories" (April 2021) at 3, online (pdf): <https://sportpei.pe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Sport-PEI-Membership-Categories-April-2021.pdf.>; Nunavut, "Sport and recreation grants and contributions policy" (last visited June 2025) at 21, online (pdf): <Sport and Recreation Grants and Contribution Policy.pdf>.

205 Ontario Para Network, "Mission and Vision" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://onpara.ca/about-ontario-para-network/mission-and-vision/>.

206 BC Wheelchair Basketball Society, "About Wheelchair Basketball" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.bcwbs.ca/about/about-wheelchair-basketball>.

207 Swim Alberta, "Para Swimming" (last visited June 2025), online: < https://swimalberta.ca/swimmers/para-swimming/>.

208 YMCA, "Swim, Sports and Play" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ymca.org/what-we-do/youth-development/swim-sports>.

As will be discussed in greater detail below, while participation in these organizations frequently overlaps, their governance and operations remain siloed. For example, a coach may work within both the school and club system, each of which has its own governing structure.

Indeed, many sport organizations at the community level and their participants exist beyond the oversight of National Sport Organizations and other elements of the "conventional" sport system.

At the community level, parasport programs are delivered in both integrated and non-integrated environments. Parasports are delivered at the community level by many types of organizations including conventional sport organizations, commercial organizations, charitable organizations and organizations that provide other non-sport services to persons with disabilities.

Participant perspectives on sport organizations

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.[209] The new application guidelines for the Sport Support Program were released in 2024 in conjunction with the Sport Integrity Framework. This will be further examined in Chapter 5.

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 Paralympic program sports experienced challenges in meeting the minimum organization membership 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 being reviewed and that they had to wait for its publication in order to apply.

In addition, we understood from some National Sport Organizations that for their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations to be eligible for funding within their own provincial or territorial jurisdictions, the National Sport Organization itself first needed to be eligible for federal funding.

As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, sport organizations at all levels are facing significant financial challenges. Funding is seen as 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 spend them 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 approaches to rationalize the funding of the sport and physical activity sector.

209 Canadian Heritage, "Review of Sport Canada's Targeted Excellence Approach – Backgrounder" (last modified June 22, 2017), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2017/06/review_of_sport_canadastargetedexcellenceapproach-backgrounder.html>.

Proliferation of National Sport Organizations

There is a proliferation of sport organizations in Canada. Many have noted that there are too many sport organizations delivering similar programs and services.

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 Federations amalgamate under one entity. For example, by combining Aquatics Canada, Water Polo Canada, Canada Artistic Swimming, Diving Plongeon Canada and Swimming Natation Canada, five National Sport Organizations could be merged into one.

Others proposed that federal government funding for National Sport Organizations be focused on a smaller number of sports that have broader participation. Some National Sport Organizations have fewer than 100 participants and face significant financial challenges as they seek to train and compete at a high international level.

Misalignment

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 varies per 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 applied at all levels of sport. 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, National Sport Organizations were seen to focus on high-performance, whereas community organizations were seen as prioritizing growth, participation and fostering a sense of belonging and well-being.

In most cases, the relationship between National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and its 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. It is also important to note that National Sport Organizations generally have very little oversight or control over their member organizations. We note that the limited role of National Sport Organizations 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.

Some suggested that National Sport Organization 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 the training and advancement opportunities. On the other hand, the Commission also heard 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 athlete safety, inclusivity and program accessibility.

Participants voiced concerns that despite not being located in Canada, International Sport Federations make decisions and policies that directly impact Canadian sport, particularity for high-performance and elite athletes. The processes by which Canadians are able to participate in these organizations also vary widely.

Integration of parasport

The Commission learned that the structure of parasport is equally complex and difficult to navigate. There were varying opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of integrated sport versus maintaining separate organizations, training and competitions for parasport and adaptive sport.

Integration was seen as positive for many para-athletes who appreciated the ability to train with colleagues without a disability.

On the other hand, serious concerns were shared about the extent to which sport organizations integrated parasport in their governance and, programming, and their commitment to this aspect of sport. Integration was identified as problematic when National Sport Organizations shuffle budgets and parasports' funding is jeopardized.

Integration was also identified as more challenging for high-support-need athletes. We sensed 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.

Ultimately, we heard that whether parasport should be integrated with non-parasport depends on the leadership, capacity of the organization, and understanding of the needs of athletes with disabilities within a sport organization.

The Commission was advised that Paralympic sport appears to many individuals to be a secondary focus for National Sport Organizations. Many noted that para-athlete voices are not being heard within integrated sports. It was suggested that, rather than creating para-specific programming, too many National Sport Organizations model their Paralympic program on their Olympic program. Participants suggested that organizations prioritize hiring Paralympic experts. They also suggested forming a Paralympic focus group composed of world-renowned experts to ensure para-programs are developed "the right way."

The Commission was made aware of the significant funding and cost inequities experienced by para-athletes and their organizations as will be discussed below.

Volunteers and governance

A number of concerns were shared with us about the reliance of sport organizations on volunteers. 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.

We heard many remarkable stories of the commitment and dedication of volunteers, without whom sport organizations would not be able to function. However, there were also 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 "perks" are a significant sweetener for sport administrators and Board members.

It was also noted that the decline in volunteers has led sport organizations to hire individuals who may not be properly screened or have received safe sport training. The issues of education and training are further discussed in Chapter 14.

Athletes and observers also noted 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.

Athlete representation in sport organizations

Athletes were often described as the primary actors in Canadian sport. Yet, we heard that many athletes felt they are being treated as disposable commodities rather than valued contributors within the sport system.

Although many National Sport Organizations have some athlete representation and involvement in their governance, we were advised that the representation of athletes on the board of directors is often symbolic, and that athlete representation 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 be created to represent carded athletes in the sport system.

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.

It was brought to our attention that the lack of facilities was a significant problem in many remote and Indigenous communities, particularly within the Territories. This acts as an additional barrier to accessing sport opportunities, as individuals must travel outside their communities to participate and not all have the resources to do so.

Some shared with us that the lack of facilities, including physically accessible facilities, also requires attention. They noted that an injection of capital funding, either from the government and/or through public-private partnerships is required. It was suggested that national, provincial and territorial strategies should be implemented to invest in and improve sport facilities across the country.

These issues are explored further in the chapters that follow.

MULTISPORT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Unlike the sport organizations described above, Multisport Service Organizations generally do not directly deliver sport programming to athletes. Instead, they lead or coordinate the delivery of specific sport services to the sport community.[210] They play a key role in the Canadian sport system by supporting athletes, coaches, and sport organizations at all levels of sport.

This section explores the structure and roles of Multisport Service Organizations at the international, national, provincial, territorial and local levels of sport.

International Sport Organizations

International Sport Organizations are Multisport Service Organizations responsible for multisport international competitions. Examples of International Sport Organizations that are responsible for competitions include:

- International Olympic Committee (responsible for the Olympic Games)[211]
- International Paralympic Committee (responsible for the Paralympic Games)[212]

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210 Julie Stevens, ed, *Safe Sport: Critical issues and practices*, (St. Catharines, Ontario: Centre for Sport Capacity, 2022) at Glossary Multi-Sport Organization, online: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/safesport/back-matter/glossary/>; Government of Canada, "National Multisport Service Organizations" (last modified September 11, 2023), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-organizations/national-multisport-service.html>.

211 International Olympic Committee, "IOC Mission" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.olympics.com/ioc/mission>.

212 International Paralympic Committee, "About the International Paralympic Committee" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.paralympic.org/ipc/who-we-are>.

- Commonwealth Games Federation (responsible for the Commonwealth Games and the Commonwealth Youth Games)[213]
- Special Olympics International (responsible for the Special Olympics World Games)[214]
- International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (responsible for the Deaflympics)[215]
- North American Indigenous Games Council (responsible for the North American Indigenous Games)[216]
- Arctic Winter Games International Committee (responsible for the Arctic Winter Games)[217]
- International University Sports Federation (responsible for The World University Games, formerly known as the Universiades)[218]
- Federation of Gay Games (responsible for the Gay Games)[219]

International Sport Organizations, like International Sports Federations, through their governance rules, qualification processes, and competition regulations, significantly affect national Multisport Service Organizations.

In addition to organizing major games, International Sport Organizations can also have vital roles in setting international standards. They develop rules and requirements related to participating in sport. Most notably, the World Anti-Doping Agency headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, is responsible for developing and coordinating anti-doping rules and policies across all sports and all countries.[220] In particular, the World Anti-Doping Agency oversees the World Anti-Doping Code and the eight related International Standards, including the List of Prohibited Substances.[221] The implementation of Canadian rules related to anti-doping occurs through the Canadian Anti-Doping Program administered by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, which will be discussed further below.

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213 The Commonwealth Games Federation, "About Commonwealth Sport" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.commonwealthsport.com/commonwealth-sport>.

214 Special Olympics, "Governance & Finance" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.specialolympics.org/about/governance-and-finance?locale=en>.

215 International Committee of Sports for the Deaf, "About the ICSD" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://ciss.org/icsd>.

216 North American Indigenous Games Council, "North American Indigenous Games Council" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.naigcouncil.com/>.

217 Artic Winter Games International Committee, "Mission, Vision & Values" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://arcticwintergames.net/About-AWG/Mission-Purpose-Values>.

218 FISU World University Games, "History" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://rhineruhr2025.com/en/about/rhine-ruhr-2025/history>.

219 Federation of Gay Games, "Our mission" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.gaygames.org/mission>.

220 World Anti Doping Agency, "What We Do" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.wada-ama.org/en/what-we-do>.

221 Anti Doping Agency, "What We Do" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.wada-ama.org/en/what-we-do>.

National Multisport Service Organizations

National Multisport Service Organizations are defined by Sport Canada as organizations that provide "sport-related programs, services or activities to its members, stakeholders, the national sport community, or the Canadian public."[222]

The services provided by Multisport Service Organizations 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 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 delivery of programs to the national sport community (see Chapter 5 for details).[223] 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 2 contains a list of all 23 federally funded national Multisport Services Organizations. Here, we offer a brief overview of a selection of Multisport Services Organizations.

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222 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024) at National Multisport Services Organization, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#MSO>.

223 Government of Canada, "National Multisport Service Organizations- 2022/2023 Funding" (last modified September 11, 2023), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-organizations/national-multisport-service/funding.html>.

In addition, some national Multisport Service Organizations are examined in other sections of the report. For instance, U SPORTS and the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association are briefly examined under the Sport and school environments section of Chapter 3.

Also, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada are discussed under Chapter 15 because their roles relate to dispute resolution and the administration of safe sport complaints.

Canadian Olympic Committee

The Canadian Olympic Committee represents Canada at the International Olympic Committee.[224] The current President of the Canadian Olympic Committee has been elected to serve as a member of the International Olympic Committee.[225] The members of the International Olympic Committee are individuals who represent and promote both the interests of the International Olympic Committee and the Olympic Movement within their own countries and the organizations in which they serve.[226] It is also important to note that 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 Games.[227] In support of its work, in 2023-2024, the Canadian Olympic Committee received $3,756,612 from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.[228] It also receives additional funding from the Canadian Olympic Foundation, private and corporate donations.

The Canadian Olympic Committee is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.[229] The Committee has different classes of membership: Olympic National Sport Organizations, General Members, International Olympic Committee members and Athletes' Commission.[230]

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224 Industry Canada, "Certificate of Continuance-Mandate of the Corporation" (February 6, 2014) at 4, online (pdf): <olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Certificate-of-Continuance-Articles-of-Continuance-2014.pdf>.

225 Canadian Olympic Committee, "About Us – Tricia Smith" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://olympic.ca/board-members/tricia-smith/>.

226 International Olympic Committee, "Olympic Charter" (January 30, 2025) at 32, online (pdf): <https://stillmed.olympics.com/media/Documents/International-Olympic-Committee/IOC-Publications/EN-Olympic-Charter.pdf>.

227 Canadian Olympic Committee, "About Us" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://olympic.ca/canadian-olympic-committee/>.

228 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada 2024 Volume II Details of Expenses and Revenues" (2024), online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol2-eng.pdf>.

229 Government of Canada, "Federal corporation informatio" (last modified June 24, 2025), online : < https://ised-isde.canada.ca/cc/lgcy/fdrlCrpDtls.html?p=0&corpId=348911&crpNm=canadian%20olympic%20committee&crpNmbr=&bsNmbr=&cProv=&cStatus=&cAct= >.

230 Canadian Olympic Committee, "Governance" (last visited June 2025) at Role of COC Members, online: <https://olympic.ca/canadian-olympic-committee/governance/>.

The Canadian Olympic Committee has more than 3,500 members and represents a variety of individuals and organizations in the Olympic Movement in Canada, including all Olympic athletes and coaches.[231]

The Canadian Olympic Committee 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 governance codes of other nations, research best practices in the sports and business worlds, and draft a governance code.[232] The resulting Canadian Sport Governance Code was presented to National Sport Organizations for feedback before being finalized in April 2021. The Canadian Sport Governance Code is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

In 2022, the Canadian Olympic Committee announced a $10M investment to advance safe sport.[233] Their 2023 Impact Report highlighted the following developments:

- The investment of over $4M in direct-to-National Sport Organization to advance their safe sport commitments and to address root causes of unsafe sport.
- The development of safe sport e-learning modules for various stakeholders including health care practitioners, athletes, and volunteers, among others.
- The signing by all National Sport Organization as program signatories to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. This initiative was supported by funding and legal support from the Canadian Olympic Committee. The Universal Code is discussed in more detail in Chapter 15.
- 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.[234]

231 Canadian Olympic Committee, "Governance" (last visited June 2025) at Role of COC Members, online: <https://olympic.ca/canadian-olympic-committee/governance/>.

232 Canadian Olympic Committee, *Canadian Sport Governance Code* (Toronto: COO, April 2021), online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Canadian_Sports_Governance_Code.pdf>.

233 Canadian Olympic Committee, Press Release, "COC Announces $10-million for Safe Sport" (June 12, 2022), online: <https://olympic.ca/press/coc-announces-10-million-for-safe-sport/>.

234 Canadian Olympic Committee, "2023 Impact Report" (2023), online (pdf): <https://olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/COC-Impact-Report-2023.pdf>.

Canadian Paralympic Committee

The Canadian Paralympic Committee represents Canada at the International Paralympic Committee.[235] It operates in close partnership with 28 National Sport Organization members in Canada to foster an inclusive world through Paralympic sport.[236]

The Canadian Paralympic Committee is a not-for-profit incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.[237]

In 2023-2024, the Canadian Paralympic Committee received $6,313,700 from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.[238] The Committee receives additional funding from the Paralympic Foundation of Canada, private and corporate donations.

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 established in Canada.[239] The Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network partners with National Sport Organizations to deliver world-class performance services through expert leadership, specialized programs, and integrated sport science and sport medicine services.[240] 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.[241]

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235 International Paralympic Committee, "Operational Structure" (last visited June 2025) at National Paralympic Committees (NPCs), online: <www.paralympic.org/ipc-structure>; International Paralympic Committee, "Canadian Paralympic Committee" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.paralympic.org/canada>.

236 Canadian Paralympic Committee, "About the CPC" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://paralympic.ca/about/overview/>; Canadian Paralympic Committee, "Member NSOS" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://paralympic.ca/about/member-nsos/>.

237 Canadian Paralympic Committee, "By-Law No.1" (June 4, 2024), online (pdf): <https://paralympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/20240604-GOV-CPCBylawsApproved-EN.pdf>.

238 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada-2024-Vol 3, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2024) at 26, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

239 Government of Canada, "Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Centres and Institutes" (last modified April 6, 2021), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-organizations/canadian-olympic-paralympic.html>.

240 Canadian Sport Institute Pacific, "Supporting The Quest For The Podium: The Power Of The Canadian Olympic And Paralympic Sport Institute Network" (last visited June 2025) at What is the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network?, online: <www.csipacific.ca/features/supporting-the-quest-for-the-podium-the-power-of-the-canadian-olympic-and-paralympic-sport-institute-network/>.

241 Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network, "Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network" (last visited June 2025) at About COPSIN, online: <https://copsin.ca/#about>.

The Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network is recognized and funded (in part) by Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.[242] 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 (located in Manitoba and Saskatchewan).[243]

Own the Podium

Own the Podium plays a unique role among Multisport Services Organizations and at the national level of the Canadian sport system.

The organization was formed in 2005, in anticipation of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.[244] Own the Podium 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.[245]

Own the Podium received considerable recognition for their efforts after Canada won 26 medals at Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games and achieved a top three medal count in the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Games with 19 medals.[246]

Own the Podium continues to review athlete, national team and National Sport Organization performances, and makes recommendations for funding to Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee and Canadian Paralympic Committee, with the objective of increasing Canadian medal counts at Olympic and Paralympic Games.[247] Own the Podium works towards making Canada a world leader in high-performance sport at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and to inspire Canadians to participate in sport.[248]

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242 Government of Canada. "Canadian Sport Centre - Sport Support Program" (November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/sport-centre.html>.

243 Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network, *COPSIN Brochure* (2023), at p.4, online (pdf): <https://copsin.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/COPSIN-Brochure-EN-202309.pdf>.

244 Own the Podium, "About Own the Podium" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ownthepodium.org/en-CA/Notre-organisation>.

245 Own the Podium, "About Own the Podium" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ownthepodium.org/en-CA/Notre-organisation>.

246 Government of Canada, News Release, "Government of Canada Announces Own the Podium Advisory Board" (May 18, 2010), online: <www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2010/05/government-canada-announces-own-podium-advisory-board.html>.

247 Government of Canada, News Release, "Government of Canada Announces Own the Podium Advisory Board" (May 18, 2010), online: <www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2010/05/government-canada-announces-own-podium-advisory-board.html>.

248 Own the Podium, "Strategic Plan" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://www.ownthepodium.org/about-us/strategic-plan>.

Own the Podium is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.[249] The members of the organization are its Directors. Own the Podium receives funding from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program. In 2023-2024, Own the Podium received $2,810,000 through this program.[250] It also receives funding from the Canadian Olympic Committee/Canadian Olympic Foundation and the Canadian Paralympic Committee.[251]

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.[252] Its mission is to strengthen the Commonwealth sport movement in Canada and to support high-performance athletes achieve excellence at Major Games.[253]

The Commonwealth Games are fully integrated: they are the only major games to integrate a parasport program and have all athletes participate in the same games and are on the same team.[254] The 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester marked a historic milestone as the first fully integrated games.[255] The Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games are expected to be the largest integrated parasport program in the Games history, with a record 47 medals in para disciplines.[256]

Of note, the Commonwealth Sport Movement has shown leadership in Indigenous reconciliation in sport by adopting the *Commonwealth Sport Lekwungen Declaration on Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples* in 2023.[257] This was later endorsed by Commonwealth Sports Ministers in 2024.[258]

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249 Government of Canada, "Federal Corporation Information - 806955-7" (last modified May 23, 2025), online: <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/cc/lgcy/fdrlCrpDtls.html?p=0&corpId=8069557&crpNm=8069557&crpNmbr=&bsNmbr=&cProv=&cStatus=&cAct=>.

250 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada-2024-Vol 3, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2024) at 25, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

251 Own the Podium, "Financial Statements of 8069557 Canada Association (Operating as Own the Podium)" (March 31, 2024) at p.8, online (pdf): <https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/673b4cfd30366d9faec1cbd4/6840926336879f60ec39771a_OTP-2024-03-31-FS-Final.pdf>.

252 Commonwealth Sport Canada, "Sport With Social Purpose" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://commonwealthsport.ca/about-cgc/sport-social-purpose.html>.

253 Commonwealth Sport Canada, "Sport With Social Purpose" (last visited June 2025) at Our Mission, online: <https://commonwealthsport.ca/about-cgc/sport-social-purpose.html>.

254 Commonwealth Sport Canada, "Sport With Social Purpose" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://commonwealthsport.ca/about-cgc/sport-social-purpose.html>.

255 Commonwealth Sport, News Release, "Largest ever Para Sport Medal Event Programme announced" (February 6, 2025), online: <www.commonwealthsport.com/news/4211556/glasgow-2026-announces-largest-ever-para-sport-medal-event-programme>.

256 Commonwealth Sport, News Release, "Largest ever Para Sport Medal Event Programme announced" (February 6, 2025), online: <www.commonwealthsport.com/news/4211556/glasgow-2026-announces-largest-ever-para-sport-medal-event-programme>.

257 Commonwealth Sport, "CGF embraces historic Declaration on Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples" (November 15, 2023), online: <www.commonwealthsport.com/news/3786113/d>.

258 Commonwealth Sport, "Governments welcome the Declaration on Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous peoples" (July 25, 2024), online: <www.commonwealthsport.com/news/4066241/declaration-on-reconciliation>.

The Commonwealth Indigenous Sport Declaration Working Group that developed the Declaration was comprised of Canadian Indigenous representatives.[259]

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 Sport Lekwungen Declaration on Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples*.[260] The Declaration highlights the comprehensive benefits of sports for Indigenous communities, calling for ten specific actions by stakeholders in the sports sector including:

- promoting the holistic physical, cultural, spiritual, and mental well-being and life skills benefits of sport to Indigenous Peoples
- supporting the development of inclusive and sustainable sports policies and programs
- investing in coaching and mentorship for Indigenous youth, and advancing knowledge on Indigenous Peoples, culture history and sports
- integrating Indigenous sports into school and community-based programs[261]

Commonwealth Sport Canada is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.[262] Its membership is comprised 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.[263]

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259 Commonwealth Sport, "Commonwealth Sport L Lək̓ʷəŋən Declaration on Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples" (last visited June 2025), online (pdf): < https://resources.cwg-qbr.pulselive.com/qbr-commonwealth-games/document/2025/02/05/9957ebc5-1475-4d49-b3d6-6736a382aa36/Commonwealth-Sport-L-k-n-Declaration-on-Reconciliation-and-Partnership-with-Indigenous-Peoples.pdf>; Commonwealth Sport, "Governments welcome the Declaration on Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous peoples" (July 25, 2024), online: <www.commonwealthsport.com/news/4066241/declaration-on-reconciliation>.

260 Commonwealth Sport Canada, "Canada Becomes the First Commonwealth Games Association Signatory to the Commonwealth Sport Lekwungen Declaration on Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples" (February 24, 2025), online: <https://commonwealthsport.ca/news/featured/canada-becomes-first-commonwealth-games-association-signatory-commonwealth-sport-lekwungen-declaration-reconciliation-and-partnership#:~:text=%E2%80%9CCSC%20is%20committed%20to%20showing,of%20Indigenous%20youth%20through%20sport.%E2%80%9D>.

261 Commonwealth Sport, "Commonwealth Sport L Lək̓ʷəŋən Declaration on Reconciliation and Partnership with Indigenous Peoples" (last visited June 2025) at 2, online (pdf): < https://resources.cwg-qbr.pulselive.com/qbr-commonwealth-games/document/2025/02/05/9957ebc5-1475-4d49-b3d6-6736a382aa36/Commonwealth-Sport-L-k-n-Declaration-on-Reconciliation-and-Partnership-with-Indigenous-Peoples.pdf>.

262 Commonwealth Sport Canada, "By-Law No. 4 Commonwealth Games Association of Canada Inc./L'Association canadienne des jeux du commonwealth (the "Corporation")" (September 21, 2024), online (pdf): <https://commonwealthsport.ca/sites/default/files/docs/cgac_by-law_en_-_2024.0921active.pdf>.

263 Commonwealth Sport Canada, "Membership" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://commonwealthsport.ca/about-cgc/membership.html>.

In 2023-2024, Commonwealth Games Canada received $390,300 from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program, and receives additional funding from other sources including National Sport Organizations.[264]

Canada Games Council

The Canada Games Council was created by Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments to steward the growth of the Canada Games Movement.[265] The Canada Games Council is a responsible for the ongoing development of the Canada Games.

Alternating between winter and summer, the Canada Games span more than 30 different sports and are held under the stewardship of the Canada Games Council who provide continuity, leadership and support.[266] The 2025 Canada Summer Games will be in St. John's and the 2027 Canada Winter Games will be in Quebec City.[267] The Canada Games bring together more than 2,000 athletes, including athletes with physical and intellectual disabilities, for the largest amateur multi-sport event in the country.[268]

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 Sport Organizations, governments and the corporate sector.[269] The Canada Games Council fosters ongoing partnerships with organizations at the municipal, provincial and national levels. The Canada Games Council is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. Its members are its Directors.[270]

In 2023-2024, the Canada Games Council received $1,240,452 from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program,[271] and received funds from other sources including game fees and sponsorships.[272]

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264 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada-2024-Vol 3, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2024) at 26, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

265 Canada Games Council, "Inspiring Canada Through Sport, Canada Games Council Strategic Plan 2022-2027" (last visited June 2025) at 3, online: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kV-cDofKDSZw47dBK9klm-gA2Jmtclee/view>.

266 Canada Games Council, "About" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.canadagames.ca/about>.

267 Canada Games Council, "The Games St. John's 2025" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.canadagames.ca/future-games/st-johns-2025>; Canada Games Council, "The Games Québec 2027" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.canadagames.ca/future-games/quebec-2027>.

268 Canada Games Council, "About" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.canadagames.ca/about>.

269 Canada Games Council, "Partners" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.canadagames.ca/about/partners>.

270 Canada Games Council, "Schedule`B' Bylaws relating generally to the conduct of the affairs of Canada Games Council" (September 11, 2020), s 3.1, online (pdf): <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JXwpIMT-XoV285S_0TbNjISc8V_Fh6dk/view>.

271 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada 2024 Volume III, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2024) at 25, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

272 Canada Games Council, "Canada Games Council 2023-2024 Annual Report" (last visited June 2025) at 32, online (pdf): <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1G5B1H2Y46NkOzTKlR95FUC90XM0-zhof/view>.

Coaching Association of Canada

The Coaching Association of Canada is a multisport service organization which 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."[273]

The Coaching Association of Canada was established in 1970 as a result of the recommendations from the Task Force on Sport for Canadians.[274] It has prime responsibility for coordinating and setting 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 National Coaching Certification Program 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 National Coaching Certification Program 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 National Coaching Certification Program Instruction stream in which primary goals of coaches are to teach sport-specific skills to participants of various ability levels and interact with them in a primarily non-competitive situation.[275]

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.[276]

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.[277] These include:

- **Coaching Athletes with a Disability**: an eLearning module designed primarily for coaches who have never coached, or who are new to coaching, athletes with a disability.[278]

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273 Coaching Association of Canada, "About the CAC" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/about-us/about-cac>.

274 Coaching Association of Canada, "About the CAC" (last visited June 2025) at History, online: <https://coach.ca/about-us/about-cac>.

275 Coaching Association of Canada, "About the NCCP" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/new-coaching/about-nccp>.

276 Coaching Association of Canada, "About the NCCP" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/new-coaching/about-nccp>.

277 Coaching Association of Canada, "Equity Diversity and Inclusion" (last visited June 2025) at Programs, online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/equity-diversity-and-inclusion>.

278 Coaching Association of Canada, "NCCP Coaching Athletes with a Disability" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/module/nccp-coaching-athletes-disability>.

- **Creating a Positive Sport Environment**: an eLearning module that explains how and why to use participant-centred coaching and explains the harms that can result from misusing power as well as how to respond to suspicions or knowledge of maltreatment.[279]
- **Anti-Racism in Coaching**: an eLearning module that allows coaches to build knowledge of issues related to race and racism in Canada that affect coaching, expand their understanding of how to be an anti-racist coach, and cultivate their skills in supporting racialized participants in sport.[280]
- **Safe Sport Training Module**: 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.[281]
- **Concussion Awareness**: offers general and sport-specific eLearning modules ("Making Headway in Sport") on the latest concussion protocols and how to prioritize participant safety.[282]
- **Support Through Sport**: eLearning modules that help coaches recognize the signs and take action to prevent and address gender-based violence and teen dating violence.[283]
- **Return to Sport**: eLearning modules designed to help coaches lead a safe and adaptive transition back to sport participation, including advice to apply when creating return-to-sport plans.[284]

As will be further discussed in Chapter 14, the Coaching Association of Canada takes part in several other safe sport initiatives, including the Quality Coaching Campaign to raise awareness about their resources available for coaches, administrators and parents, and the Responsible Coaching Movement, which encourages sport organizations, parents, and coaches to implement responsible coaching practices across Canada. It has also created resources to help sport organizations develop their background screening procedures.

In addition, the Coaching Association of Canada also has several mentorship and apprenticeship programs, as well as research and resources to encourage diversity among coaches and power coaches from all backgrounds.[285]

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279 Coaching Association of Canada, "NCCP Creating a Positive Sport Environment" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/module/nccp-creating-positive-sport-environment>.

280 Coaching Association of Canada, "Anti-racism in Coaching" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/module/anti-racism-coaching>.

281 Coaching Association of Canada. "Safe Sport Training" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/safe-sport-training>.

282 Coaching Association of Canada, "Concussion Awareness" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/concussion-awareness>.

283 Coaching Association of Canada, "Support Through Sport: Gender-based Violence in Sport" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/module/support-through-sport-gender-based-violence-sport>.

284 Caching Association of Canada, "Leading a Return to Sport Participation" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/module/leading-return-sport-participation>.

285 Coaching Association of Canada, "Mentorship and Apprenticeships" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/programs-and-initiatives/mentorship-and-apprenticeships>.

The Coaching Association of Canada receives funding from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program, in the amount of $4,764,750 in 2023-2024.[286] In addition to core funding from Sport Canada, the Coaching Association of Canada has also received funding from other federal government sources to support specific projects. In this respect, the Public Health Agency of Canada announced in 2022 that $2.8 million would be provided to support their work to increase mental health literacy among coaches and community sport leaders,[287] and in 2025 Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) provided over $1.1 million to enable the launch of the Women and Gender Equality in Coaching Program.[288] Furthermore, provincial and territorial governments subsidize costs through their designated program delivery agencies to promote and implement the National Coaching Certification Program.[289]

AthletesCAN

AthletesCAN is an independent athlete led organization which 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.[290] AthletesCAN's mission is to unite and amplify the voices of Canadian national team athletes.[291]

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.[292] In 2023-2024, AthletesCAN received $709,926 funding from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.[293]

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286 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada-2024-Vol III, Section 6: Transfer Payments" at 27, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

287 Public Health Agency of Canada, News Release, "Government of Canada invests $2.8 million to increase mental health literacy among Coaches and Sports Leaders" (December 13, 2022), online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2022/12/government-of-canada-invests-28-million-to-increase-mental-health-literacy-among-coaches-and-sports-leaders2.html>.

288 Coaching Association of Canada, News Release, "Coaching Association of Canada Secures Funding to Advance Gender Equity in Coaching" (January 13, 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/news/coaching-association-canada-secures-funding-advance-gender-equity-coaching>; Government of Canada, "Grants and Contributions, Advancing Gender Equity in Sport Coaching through Communities of Practice and Mentorship" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://search.open.canada.ca/grants/record/wage,001-2024-2025-Q2-00219,current>.

289 Coaching Association of Canada, "Coaching Association of Canada Mandate 2022-2025" (2022) at Appendix 2, s 2, online (pdf): <https://coach.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2024-06/cac-mandate-agreement-2022-2025.pdf>.

290 AthletesCan, "Strategic Plan" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://athletescan.ca/strategic-plan/>.

291 AthletesCan, "About" (last visited June 2025) at Our Story, online: <https://athletescan.ca/about/>.

292 AthletesCan, "Membership" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://athletescan.ca/membership/>.

293 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada-2024-Vol III, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2024) at 25, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

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.[294] Since 2005, the organization has helped more than 3 million Canadian children.[295] In 2023, it awarded 1,016 community development grants and 29,748 individual child grants to improve affordability of sport.[296]

Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities also provides support to sport organizations to develop resources to improve the quality of sport,[297] and makes available Respect in Sport training modules to successful Jumpstart grantees.[298] 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 & Sport to produce the *Rally Report*[299] and with the Aspen Institute to produce the *Jumpstart State of Play Youth Report 2024*.[300]

Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. In 2023-2024, the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities received $759,400 from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.[301] 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.[302]

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294 Jumpstart, "About Us" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://jumpstart.canadiantire.ca/pages/about>.

295 Government of Canada, "National Multisport Service Organizations" (last modified September 11, 2023) at Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-organizations/national-multisport-service.html>.

296 Jumpstart, "2023 Annual Report" (2023) at 6, online (pdf): <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0122/8124/9892/files/Jumpstart_Annual_Report_2023_Final_ENGLISH.pdf?v=1719584330>.

297 See e.g. *The Belonging Playbook*, developed in partnership with the Ottawa Sport Council and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. (Ottawa Sport Council, "Ottawa's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Resource Hub for Sport" (last visited June 2025) online: <www.ottawabelongingplaybook.ca/>.)

298 Jumpstart, "Resources for Sport Organizations" (last visited June 2025) at Safe Sport Training, online: <https://jumpstart.canadiantire.ca/pages/resources-for-organizations>.

299 Canadian Women and Sport, "Rally Report 2024" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://womenandsport.ca/rally-2024/>.

300 Jumpstart, "Jumpstart State of Play Youth Report" (April 2024), online (pdf): <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0122/8124/9892/files/State-of-Play-2024-EN.pdf?v=1713368242>.

301 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada-2024-Vol III, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2024) at 25, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

302 Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, "Financial Statements", (December 31, 2023) at 3, online (pdf): <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0122/8124/9892/files/Canadian_Tire_Jumpstart_Charities_2023-12-31_FS.pdf?v=1709743340>.

KidSport Canada

KidSport Canada provides financial assistance for sport registration fees and equipment costs to children.[303] Through a confidential application process, KidSport provides grants of between $250 and $500. In 2024, the organization assisted 48,145 children.[304]

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.*[305] The organization is currently governed by a 13-person volunteer board of directors.[306] In 2023-2024, Kidsport Canada received $200,700 under the Sport Support Program, ad other government grants, donations and corporate support,[307] 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.[308]

The organization works across the country, engaging with sport organizations, leaders and governments. Their aim is to drive changes in policy and practices, thereby creating safer, more equitable, and more inclusive environments and opportunities for women and girls in sport.[309]

Canadian Women and Sport has numerous programs including the Gender Equity Playbook which teaches sport leaders and organizations how to make sport more inclusive.[310] Another program is the Retaining Girls in Sport & Physical Activity, a workshop designed to help sport leaders to create lasting solutions to keep girls and women

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303 KidSport Canada, "Annual Report 2024" (2024) at 2, online (pdf): <https://kidsportcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/Annual-report-2024-ENG-combined.pdf>.

304 KidSport Canada, "Annual Report 2024" (2024) at 3, online (pdf): <https://kidsportcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/Annual-report-2024-ENG-combined.pdf>; KidSport Canada, "What we do" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://kidsportcanada.ca/what-we-do/>.

305 Government of Canada, "Federal Corporation Information – 428259-1" (last modified May 23, 2025), online: <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/cc/lgcy/fdrlCrpDtls.html?p=0&corpId=4282591&crpNm=kidsport&crpNmbr=&bsNmbr=&cProv=&cStatus=&cAct=>.

306 KidSport Canada, "National Leadership" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://kidsportcanada.ca/national-leadership/>.

307 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada-2024-Vol 3, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2024) at 26, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

308 Canadian Women and Sport, "Vision, Mission, and Values" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://womenandsport.ca/about/vision-mission-values/>.

309 Canadian Women and Sport, "Vision, Mission, and Values" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://womenandsport.ca/about/vision-mission-values/>.

310 Canadian Women and Sport, "The Gender Equity Playbook" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://womenandsport.ca/work-with-us/gender-equity-playbook/>.

in sport and physical activity.[311] 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."[312]

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 current Directors of the corporation, and persons who were Directors in the four years preceding the annual meeting of the corporation.[313]

In 2023-2024, Canadian Women and Sport received $1,458,660 from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program.[314] 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.[315] Canadian Women and Sport is also supported by some provincial governments, and numerous other organizations including Jumpstart.[316]

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. It is worth noting that some Provincial and Territorial Multisport Service Organizations are branch organizations of national Multisport Service Organizations.

In some provinces and territories, there are Multisport Service Organizations focusing on particular demographics or communities. For example, to address financial barriers, KidSport Ontario provides financial assistance to children for sport registration fees.[317]

Additionally, with the exception of Alberta and Ontario, all provinces and territories have their respective Multisport Service Organizations. They are also referred to as federations and are member-based, not-for-profit organizations that promote and advance amateur sport in their province or territory. Federations primarily support

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311 Canadian Women and Sport, "Retaining Girls in Sport & Physical Activity" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://womenandsport.ca/learning-opportunities/presentations/long-term-development-for-women-and-girls/>.

312 Both reports were created in partnership with Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, and the *2024 Rally Report* was also created in collaboration with IMI Consulting. (Canadian Women and Sport, "Rally Report 2024" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://womenandsport.ca/rally-2024/>; Canadian Women and Sport, "Rally Report 2022" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://womenandsport.ca/rally-report-2022/>.)

313 Canadian Women and Sport, *Canadian Women & Sport Bylaws* (July 2023), s 8, online (pdf): <https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Canadian-Women-and-Sport-Bylaws_July-2023.pdf>.

314 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada-2024-Vol III, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2024) at 26, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

315 Government of Canada, News Release, "Government of Canada announces funding to improve economic security for women in professional sport" (November 14, 2023), online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/news/2023/11/government-of-canada-announces-funding-to-improve-economic-security-for-women-in-professional-sport.html>.

316 Canadian Women and Sport, "Our Partners" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://womenandsport.ca/about/partners/#:~:text=AthletesCAN%2C%20Canada%20Games%20Council%2C%20Canadian,%2C%20Ministry%20of%20Tourism%2C%20Culture%20%26>.

317 KidSport, "About KidSport Ontario" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://kidsportcanada.ca/ontario/>.

Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations in their respective jurisdictions.[318] Some federations also provide support to other Multisport Service Organizations.

Generally, the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations who are the governing body for their sport are the members of the federations. In some cases, other Multisport Service Organizations, other than federations, can also form a part of the membership. Some federations also have individual members who typically do not have voting rights.[319]

Although the responsibilities of federations vary per jurisdiction, key activities can include providing administrative support and centralized resources (including resources on safe sport) for their member organizations, learning opportunities and policy guidance. Some governments, like the Government of British Columbia, have also delegated the responsibility to provide funding and grants to their sport federation.[320]

Community Multisport Service Organizations

The Commission was not able to examine all Multisport Service Organizations operating at the community level of sport. However, we acknowledge that many such organizations exist throughout Canada.

Local and community sport councils provide a wide array of services to their communities. Dedicated to enhancing the sporting experience in municipalities, they provide support to sport participants by developing and sharing learning opportunities and education programs, advocating for high-quality sporting participation experiences and providing grants and funding.

Participant perspectives on Multisport Service Organizations

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 duplications of services, including education, training, certifications and other administrative services.

We were advised that the role 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, leading to accountability challenges and misalignment with national objectives.

Many told us that too many Multisport Service Organizations are delivering education programs. The multiplicity of programs makes it difficult to know which program needs to be completed. For example, the Canadian Centre for Ethics and Sport and the Coaching Association of Canada both deliver education for safe sport. This can lead

318 Sport Information Resource Centre, "Canadian Sport Landscape" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://sirc.ca/canadian-sport-101/canadian-sport-landscape/>.

319 Sport Newfoundland and Labrador, "Articles of Association of Sport Newfoundland and Labrador" (November 16, 2019), online (pdf): <https://sportnl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/SportNL-Amended-Constitution-16-Nov-20196.pdf>.

320 Government of British Columbia, "Sport Funding" (last modified January 25, 2024), online: <www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/sports/sport-funding>.

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 the international games like the Olympics, Paralympics and the 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 among the athletes, coaches and other stakeholders who participate in these games. It was suggested that these Multisport Service Organizations could be consolidated into a single organization.

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, circumscribed resources have made such attempts challenging, as 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, suggesting that efficiency could be found through the potential amalgamation of some of these organizations.

Role and structure of Multisport Service Organizations

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, as all these organizations are required to have their own governance structures, services and staff. As will be discussed in greater detailed in Chapter 6, these persisting issues related to the fragmented nature of the sport system led some participants to suggest that that these organizations should be centralized or consolidated into a single entity.

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 it has changed the culture of sport and the way that sport is developing in Canada.

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, and fostering a sport culture from the ground up, and placing more emphasis on grassroots and entry into sport.

It was noted that Own the Podium has shifted its purpose to focus on "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 questioning 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 the time, it now leaves the impression that winning medals is the only priority in sport. It was suggested that it does not reflect the current beliefs of Canadians, who also value increased participation in sport and creating inclusive 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 athletes with disabilities and parasports 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 the ability of National Sport Organizations to support their athletes and maintain accountability.

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 key stakeholders. It was also noted that there was no clear transparency as to how the funds were allocated or applied.

OTHER SPORT AND NON-SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

A significant proportion of sport organizations in Canada fall outside of the "sport system" described above. We will also briefly outline other organizations that have an impact on amateur sport. These actors include schools and post-secondary 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. The importance of elementary school physical education classes and playground recreational sport was described by many organizations and individuals as a critical introduction to sport for children. Sport also plays an important role at the high school, college and university levels, where there is an increased focus on competitiveness and training for high performance athletes.

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. Furthermore, 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.

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.

School boards[321] are the legal creations of their provincial and territorial governments and have no independent constitutional status.[322]

Physical education teachers and coaches 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. However, not all physical education classes are taught by specialized physical education teachers.

We note that some school boards have introduced specialized schools. These schools allow students already engaged in high-performance athletic training programs to attend school with adapted schedules and with specialized support.[323] Private schools focusing on athletic training and excellence have also emerged in recent years.

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321 In Quebec, it involves school service centres and school boards.

322 See e.g. Karen L. Robson, *IN REMEDIATION: Sociology of Education in Canada* (Ontario: Pressbooks, last visited June 2025), at ch 4: The Structure of Education in Canada, online: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/socedcanada/chapter/__unknown__-4/?>.

323 See e.g. Toronto District School Board, "Accommodating High Performance Athletes" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Going-to-High-School/High-Performing-Athletes/Secondary-HPA-Programs>; Toronto District School Board, "Accommodating Elementary High Performance Athletes" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Going-to-High-School/High-Performing-Athletes/Elementary-HPA>.

Universities and colleges

While university and college sport programs are the largest employer of coaches in Canada, and they represent the single largest sector within the Canadian sport world, universities and colleges remain largely disconnected, if not entirely separate from the sport system, including National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

Some universities are members of U SPORTS and some colleges are members of the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association. U SPORTS and the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association are national Multisport Service Organizations. Both receive funding from Sport Canada through the Sport Support Program. In 2023-2024, U SPORTS received $959,850 and the Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association received $406,700 through this program.[324]

U SPORTS is the national governing body for Canadian university sport. U SPORTS oversees 21 annual national championships.

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 as well as to participate in national championships.[325]

U SPORTS also provides scholarship opportunities to assist student-athletes fund their studies.[326] The members of U SPORTS are Canadian universities, divided into four regional Conferences: Canada West, Ontario University Athletics, Reseau du Sport Étudiant du Québec, and Atlantic University Sport.[327] There are currently 58 member universities, covering approximately 15,000 athletes and 700 coaches.[328]

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: Pacific Western Athletic Association in British Columbia, Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference in Alberta and Saskatchewan, Manitoba Colleges Athletic Conference in Manitoba, Ontario Colleges Athletic Association in Ontario, Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec in Québec, and Atlantic Collegiate Athletic Association in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.[329]

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324 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada-2024-Vol III, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2024) at 26, 27, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

325 U SPORTS, "FISU World University Games" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://en.usports.ca/sports/Team_Canada/MAINPAGEWUG>.

326 U SPORTS, "U SPORTS Strategic Plan 2025-2029", online (pdf): <https://d2o2figo6ddd0g.cloudfront.net/z/0/ql51rb3ae68uqe/USPORTS_Strategic-Plan_2025_EN.pdf>.

327 U SPORTS, "Conferences & Members" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://en.usports.ca/HQ/Members/U_SPORTS_Members>.

328 U SPORTS, "History of USPORTS" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://universitysport.prestosports.com/information/about_cis/cishistory>.

329 Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association, "About the CAA" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ccaa.ca/information/about_the_ccaa>.

In total, the Association caters to 7,500 intercollegiate athletes, over 900 coaches, and more than 150 sport administrators. Its membership consists of a wide variety of post-secondary institutions, including community colleges, universities, university-colleges, CEGEPs[330] and technical Institutes.

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. These organizations differ from others in the sense that 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. Such organizations 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."[331]

A notable example is Commonwealth Sport Canada (discussed above). 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.[332] Commonwealth Sport Canada has led over 125 international initiatives that focus on empowering women and girls, promoting gender equity, developing, raising awareness and preventing HIV/AIDS, and building sport capacity.[333]

Sport for development and peace is also used domestically. Many sport organizations utilize sport for development and peace at the community level of sport. 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 were "youth can develop as people."[334]

We also note that other organizations operate in Canada outside the traditional sport ecosystem. These organizations offer single or multi-sport services at the community level and include 2SLGBTQI+ led initiatives, Indigenous-led sport and recreation organizations and programs, and volunteer-run programs.

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330 CEGEP is an acronym from the French term Collège d'enseignement general et professionnel, which means General and professional teaching college. In Quebec, CEGEP's are a public school that provides the first level of post-secondary education, comparable to Grade 12/13 or university entry.

331 Simon C. Darnell, Russell Field & Bruce Kidd, "Sport for Development and Peace in Canada Over the Last 50 years" (November 27, 2023), online (blog): <https://sirc.ca/articles/sport-for-development-canada-50-years/>.

332 Commonwealth Sport Canada, "Sport With Social Purpose" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://commonwealthsport.ca/about-cgc/sport-social-purpose.html>.

333 Commonwealth Sport Canada, "SportWORKS" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://commonwealthsport.ca/sportworks/sportworks-home.html>.

334 Bryan Heal, Marika Warner & Luciano Lombardi, "A culture change is coming in youth sport: How sport organizations can incorporate Sport for Development strategies" (April 24, 2023), online (blog): <https://sirc.ca/articles/sport-for-development-strategies/>.

Private for-profit clubs and institutes

There is a growing number of private for-profit clubs and institutes worldwide. These have grown in response to a rising demand from parents and young athletes who are eager to access sport, particularly 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 play.[335] As a result, there has been a proliferation of private basketball clubs. A growing number of private clubs has also been observed in gymnastics, martials arts, cheer, figure skating, golf and equestrian.

Although not specific to private for-profit clubs, the "Jumpstart State of Play Youth Report 2024" notes that a higher proportion of youth are registered to play sport at clubs compared to afterschool programs, recreation centres or schools.[336] Some of these for-profit clubs and institutes are home grown. Others are from other countries or encourage participants to attend foreign (particularly the United States) colleges and universities on athletic scholarships. For-profit clubs and institutes generally operate at the community level of sport.

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, book, student 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 Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. A few National Sport Organizations such as Basketball Canada and Canada Soccer programs to accredit or license clubs. For example, Canada Basketball has the club Verification Program and Canada Soccer has its Club Licensing Program.[337]

Generally, the purpose of these programs is to enhance the professionalism of clubs by increasing accountability, and setting standards to create safe sport environments by requiring, for example, safe sport training and the adoption of policy suites.[338] During the first year of operation of Canada Basketball's Verification Program, 38 of the 300 local basketball clubs were verified.[339]

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335 Daniel Wigfield & Sandy MacIntosh, "Enhancing accountability and alignment within Canadian Basketball clubs through collaborative governance" (November 8, 2023), online (blog): <https://sirc.ca/articles/accountability-canadian-basketball-governance/>.

336 Jumpstart, "Jumpstart State of Play Youth Report" (April 2024) at 46, online (pdf): <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0122/8124/9892/files/State-of-Play-2024-EN.pdf?v=1713368242>.

337 Canada Soccer, "Club licensing program" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://canadasoccer.com/play-landing/club-licensing-program/>.

338 Daniel Wigfield & Sandy MacIntosh, "Enhancing accountability and alignment within Canadian Basketball clubs through collaborative governance" (November 8, 2023), online (blog): <https://sirc.ca/articles/accountability-canadian-basketball-governance/>; Canada Basketball, "Verification Program" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.basketball.ca/en/development/verified>.

339 Daniel Wigfield & Sandy MacIntosh, "Enhancing accountability and alignment within Canadian Basketball clubs through collaborative governance" (November 8, 2023), online (blog): <https://sirc.ca/articles/accountability-canadian-basketball-governance/>.

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 particularly 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, the Major League Baseball, the Women's National Basketball League, the National Basketball Association, the National Lacrosse League, the Canadian Football League, the Major League Soccer, the Canadian Premier League, and the Northern Super League.

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. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that such aspirations become reality for only a small number of athletes.

The growth of women's professional sport leagues in Canada has also been notable 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.[340]

Participant perspectives on other sport and non-sport organizations

School environments

Throughout our engagement activities, the importance of scholastic and varsity sports was highlighted by many participants including student-athletes. Yet, for the most part, universities and colleges exist outside of the sport system. 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 only exist as "clubs."

We heard that university and college sport should become more integrated with National Sport Organizations and their programs to ensure greater accountability of these institutions. The absence of parasports from university and college sport was also noted, and it was recommended that the programming of post-secondary sports should be expanded to include parasports.

Schools have historically been important sources of free or low-cost youth sport opportunities. In this respect, the Commission heard many regrets from many parts of the sport world about the diminishing hours of mandatory physical education in elementary schools and the lack of consistent mandatory physical education in secondary schools.

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340 Canadian Women & Sport, News Release, "Canada's Women's Sport Boom and the Case for Accelerated Action" (March 4, 2025) by Allison Sandmeyer-Graves, online: <https://womenandsport.ca/canadas-womens-sport-boom-and-the-case-for-accelerated-action/>.

Although sport programs offered by schools still exist, we were advised that these programs are in decline. In addition to recommending the reinstatement of these programs and increasing the 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 also 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 very poorly organized sport with unstructured approaches. This was also highlighted as a problem because regular teaching staff do not necessarily have the pedagogic, sport and coaching knowledge or experience required to teach sport and create safe sport environments in schools.

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 actors in schools who are on the front lines of delivering sport programs in such settings. It was suggested 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. They provide opportunities for youth to access sport and movement, fostering lifelong benefits and ensuring that everyone starts on a level playing field.

On a similar topic, participants recommended that parasport be included in the physical education curricula for all children and that the necessary equipment be made readily available, such as sport chairs and storage space for personal adaptive equipment.

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 for a multitude of factors, including the lack of teachers having the capacity to take on the additional and unpaid role of coaching a school team. Where school sport is not available, the alternative is club sports which can be costly.

A lack of facilities was identified as a barrier to the ability of clubs and other organizations to provide opportunities to participate in sport. 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 as community gyms and that schools should facilitate community access.

Typically, access to schools and their sport facilities is controlled by school boards. In some communities, appropriate partnerships between school boards and Community Sport Organizations develop and they

successfully share facilities. Some boards have policies which allow local clubs and associations to use the fields and gyms after school hours during evenings, weekends and the summer.

Yet, 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.

Not-for-profit organizations

The Commission was frequently told of the invaluable nature of not-for-profit organizations that bring together communities 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 population.

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 of the utmost importance 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 culturally or community based organizations.

Instead of "formalizing" not-for-profit organizations, it was 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, standards regarding safety, coaching, and accessibly could be created to guide and support not-for-profit organizations 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.

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 a significant growth in Academies associated with professional and semi-professional sport teams. The sheer scale and growth of this sector are not necessarily apparent to many in Canada and 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, it was suggested, 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, it was affirmed that the goals of these private associations are incompatible with what is known to be best for children. It was also asserted that community focused, not-for-profit clubs and organizations and schools were often better suited to provide overall sport programing for kids.

We also heard issues related to the governance of private clubs. On several occasions, we were told that the boards of directors of these organizations 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 with the lack of oversight over these for-profit associations, as 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.

It has been noted that private organizations may be owned by coaches who impose rules and conditions that are restrictive, limit parental participation, and mandate non-disclosure agreements. This can result in the arbitrary expulsion of children whose parents express concerns over 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.

We learned that National Sport Organizations do not have the resources to monitor, oversee or compel clubs nor mechanisms to collaborate or communicate with them. The lack of relationship between National Sport Organizations and private clubs, and their increasing number, threatens to further fragment the sport system.

CHAPTER 4:
Alignment in sport system structures

SPORT SYSTEM STRUCTURES: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As outlined in the previous section on the sport system, there are too many National Sport Organizations vying for too few resources (both financial and human). This has created competition rather than collaboration within the sport system.

Furthermore, the sheer number of National, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations creates redundancies. They all have boards of directors, staff and coaches. Many also have their own internal legal, human resources, communications, information technology (IT) and accounting departments or are required to purchase these services elsewhere.

Despite the rules of competition for each sport permeating from the national level all the way to the grassroots, National Sport Organizations seem to generally have limited policy and programs influence across the other levels of their sport. A further challenge to alignment in the sport system is the emergence and growth of private entities, typically not affiliated with sport organizations.

There is also inconsistency across and within provinces and territories with regard to the number of Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and the integration of parasport with other sports. It is important to recognize that the integration of parasport may not always be optimal. This is due to the unique realities of athletes with disabilities, which include the need for disability-specific expertise and equipment.

The Commission recognizes that the funding of the Canadian sport system is a fundamental concern, made more complex by the current fiscal and geopolitical context. The funding of the sport system is discussed in Chapter 5, where the Commission recommends, among other things, that the federal government increase and stabilize the funding provided to National Sport Organizations. We would like to emphasize that increasing funding does not remove the need to find efficiencies and create synergies within the sport system.

In this chapter, we outline several 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 also consider the opportunity to enhance the services and support afforded to parasport athletes and organizations.

Horizontal alignment: preliminary findings

Horizontal alignment generally refers to the coordination of efforts within a specific level of an organization or system (for example, national or provincial level).[341] For the reasons outlined below, the Commission is of the view that horizontal alignment could be achieved in several ways. This includes the amalgamation of National Sport Organizations and the sharing and standardization of common services across these organizations.

Recognizing that the amalgamation of National Sport Organizations may require significant time and effort, the Commission is of the view that a phased approach should be considered to allow sport organizations to adapt and evolve in a measured way.

Therefore, the Government of Canada could first encourage National Sport Organizations to develop and establish a horizontal shared services model. This model would aim to create efficiencies and synergies within and among National Sport Organizations. Establishing a horizontal shared services model would centralize common services that are not specific to any sport or organization. These services could include, among others, information technology (IT) support, human resources, legal, translation, and other professional services.

As a second step, the federal government could then work with National Sport Organizations to encourage and incentivize them to explore potential amalgamations.

Amalgamation of National Sport Organizations

The suggestion that National Sport Organizations be amalgamated is by no means 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."[342] A steering committee considered potential areas of formal and informal collaboration, exploring everything from athlete- and coach-development pathways, operating models and revenue generation. Their work led to the creation of the Nordic Strategy.

The efforts needed to create the Nordic Strategy were extensive. Four working groups were formed with members from each National Sport Organization to make 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 the Boards of Directors of each National Sport Organization, and met with sport partners including Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee and Own the Podium.[343]

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341 Ravi Kathuria, Joshi Maheshkumar & Stephen Porth, *Organizational Alignment and Performance: Past, Present and Future* (2007) 45:3 Management Decision 503 at 510, online: <https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1091&context=business_articles>.

342 Sport Information Resource Centre, News Release, "Canada's Four Nordic Sports Sign Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to Explore Joint Opportunities to Achieve Performance and Operational Goals" (July 30, 2020), online: <https://sirc.ca/news/canadas-four-nordic-sports-sign-memorandum-of-understanding-mou-to-explore-joint-opportunities-to-achieve-performance-and-operational-goals/>.

343 Nordiq Canada, Media Release, "Nordic Strategy Update: Canada's four Nordic sports provide check-in on exploration of joint opportunities" (November 9, 2020), online: <https://nordiqcanada.ca/news-item/nordic-strategy-update-canadas-four-nordic-sports-provide-check-in-on-exploration-of-joint-opportunities/>.

The Steering Committee concluded that:

> [...] the best way forward [was] 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.[344]

Additional resources were invested in this project, and an external consultant was hired to build a more detailed business case for a single national sport organization model. This work involved conducting a comprehensive review of all four National Sport Organizations and facilitating a stakeholder engagement process.[345]

Despite significant work, the four Nordic sports could not agree on amalgamation terms. As such, they continue to operate as separate entities. The Commission was told that the outcome would likely have been different if the government had offered incentives, such as additional funding to encourage amalgamation and recognize the efficiencies it would create.

Some participants provided options for the amalgamation of National Sport Organizations, but many National Sport Organizations were averse to this approach. They expressed concerns about various potential losses, including:

- Loss of sport-specific funding, whether through contributions from governments or membership fees.
- Loss in voting power, whether at the board level of a combined sport entity or with Multisport Service Organizations like the Canadian Olympic Committee.
- Loss of sport-specific technical expertise.

Government officials and several National Sports Organizations noted that there is little motivation for amalgamation and suggested that funding incentives could serve to encourage organizations to consider such an option.

Those who supported the amalgamation of National Sport Organizations, including some sport organizations, felt that aligning the Canadian sport system with the international sport federations would reduce expenses and standardize sport programs in similar disciplines.

It was pointed out, however, that simply because sports fall under the same International Federation, it does not automatically mean that they should be amalgamated at the national level. Some expressed that their sport at

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344 Sport Information Resource Centre, News Release, "New Vision for Nordic Sport in Canada to Undergo Expert Review and Community Consultation" (May 4, 2022), online: <https://sirc.ca/news/new-vision-for-nordic-sport-in-canada-to-undergo-expert-review-and-community-consultation/>.

345 Sport Information Resource Centre, News Release, "New Vision for Nordic Sport in Canada to Undergo Expert Review and Community Consultation" (May 4, 2022), online: <https://sirc.ca/news/new-vision-for-nordic-sport-in-canada-to-undergo-expert-review-and-community-consultation/>.

the international level was not getting the same attention as other sports under the same International Sport Federation.

Others suggested that amalgamation should 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.

The Commission recognizes that amalgamation of National Sport Organizations or, any form of consolidation, will have an impact on those involved in the Canadian sport system. These impacts do not mean that sectoral and organizational change should not be undertaken, but rather that it should be undertaken carefully and thoughtfully.

Such an approach would lead to centralization of services and improved alignment, thereby producing greater consistency and efficiencies in the sport system. It would also create new opportunities, afford more stable employment, and permit more strategic approaches to the development of additional financial resources.

Any strategy to amalgamate National Sport Organizations should include incentives from the Government of Canada. A commitment to provide additional funding to support organizations undertaking an amalgamation process, and additional funding to newly amalgamated National Sport Organizations, would serve to both stimulate and reward those who embarked on such an organizational journey.

Shared services by National Sport Organizations

A shared services model by National Sport Organizations could improve not only the operations of sport organizations, but also collaboration between them.

The Commission notes that collaboration is already happening 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 as the Summer Sports Caucus and Winter Sports Caucus, respectively.

In addition, in the 1980s and 1990s, Sport Canada required many National Sport Organizations to have their national office in Ottawa as a condition to receive funding. At that time, these offices were co-located at the Canadian Sport and Fitness Administration Centre.[346]

While no longer required to the same degree, similar structures exist today. In some cases, co-working spaces, meeting rooms and collaborative spaces for sport organizations exist.[347] Access to these spaces is provided to member organizations, which can include National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations,

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346 Lisa M. Kikulis, Trevor Slack, & C.R. Hinings, "Towards an Understanding of the Role of Agency and Choice in the Changing Structure of Canada's National Sport Organizations" (1999) 9:2 J Sport Management 135.

347 RA Centre, "House of Sport" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.racentre.com/house-of-sport.html>.

as well as provincial and territorial, and local sport organizations.[348] The motivation behind these spaces is to facilitate knowledge and information-sharing, and to leverage operational efficiencies. Some of these spaces provide services, which can include information technology (IT) support and access to meeting rooms.[349]

It was suggested that shared services could be implemented within each of the Canadian sport system's jurisdictions. For example, the Commission was informed that Sport Québec, a provincial multisport service agency responsible for oversight and leadership of sport in the Province of Quebec, offers payroll services and legal counsel to smaller provincial sport organizations. A similar approach could be initiated at the federal level.

No matter how services are shared, it was agreed that doing so would reduce expenses for sport organizations and allow them to focus on the delivery of programs. This was supported by nNational Sport Organizations and National Parasport Organizations.

It was also felt that, if a new organization was created based solely around the sharing of services, its funding should be assured independently of the membership fees collected by National Sport Organizations. In other words, those fees should stay within the sport. A commitment to the ongoing financial support of this new organization was seen as essential to building trust within the sport system in order to achieve any such change.

Below are options the Commission considered to strengthen horizontal alignment across all levels of sport in Canada. These options could be implemented individually as standalone solutions or combined to achieve a greater overall impact.

Horizontal alignment: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

1. The Government of Canada, through incentives, encourage National Sport Organizations to amalgamate.
2. The Government of Canada, through incentives, encourage National Sport Organizations to establish and implement a horizontal shared services model to centralize common services among these Organizations, such as information technology (IT) support, human resources, legal services, translation services, insurance provision, and a shared foreign exchange strategy.
3. The Government of Canada, through incentives, encourage National Parasport Organizations to establish and implement a shared services model tailored to the needs of the parasport community.
4. The Government of Canada create a strategic transformation fund to support National Sport Organizations, including National Parasport Organizations, through the horizontal amalgamation and/or shared services process.

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348 RA Centre, "House of Sport" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.racentre.com/house-of-sport.html>.

349 RA Centre, "House of Sport" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.racentre.com/house-of-sport.html>.

Parasport alignment: preliminary findings

The parasport system is not immune to issues of alignment and efficiencies both at the national and provincial and territorial levels.

At the national level, four parasport organizations are recognized and funded by the federal government. There are also other national-level parasport organizations that operate independently within the broader sport system, such as Canadian Blind Hockey, a charitable organization.[350]

There has been a push to integrate within the same national governing body parasport and non-parasport. As such, many National Sport Organizations responsibilities extend to parasport.

A similar combination of organizations operates at the provincial and territorial level and at the community level of sport, providing opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in sport. Ultimately, parasport is delivered by a wide variety of organizations, with differing mandates, capacities and geographical reach. These organizations generally have similar objectives.

Some suggestions have been made to improve the efficiency and cohesion of the parasport system in Canada. These include integrating parasport organizations within non-para sport organizations while establishing clear policy and program frameworks to ensure that the parasport community is appropriately served.

While the integration of parasport organizations into their sport equivalent has already occurred in some settings at the national level, other parasport athletes and sport administrators were overwhelmingly against further integration. They stated that within integrated sport organizations, parasport programs may get lost and are often not viewed through a parasport lens resulting in the loss of a perspective necessary to ensure that the needs of parasport athletes, like, travel accommodation and equipment, are appropriately met.

We also understand that while financial incentives to integrate may be offered, there is no guarantee that they will follow. This creates a risk that potential integration could be seen as leading to reduced funding.

Many parasport organizations and athletes are not in favour of any further efforts to integrate parasports. At present, as has been noted, both integrated and non-integrated sports exist, thereby creating inconsistencies across all levels of the sport system.

The structure of parasport organizations in Canada makes vertical alignment more difficult to achieve. While at the national level, parasport organizations and programs are sport-specific, whether they are integrated or non-integrated sports, at the provincial and territorial level, they are frequently administered and overseen by a variety of sport organizations. At the community level, a combination of multisport organizations and sport-specific sport organizations, both integrated and non-integrated, provide services, in addition to those offered by local charitable and not-for-profit organizations.

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350 Canadian Blind Hockey, "Canadian Blind Hockey" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://canadianblindhockey.com/>.

The Commission heard about these nuances and the disability-specific needs of athletes. In particular, it was 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 these athletes would receive high performance, sport-specific coaching and support.

At the grassroots level, however, the focus would shift to the disability needs of athletes because individuals with the same disabilities will, generally, have similar equipment and sport needs. As an example, a high-performance para-athlete who competes at the international level in sprinting may need to work with a coach who not only understands their disability needs but also the specific circumstances and challenges of their sport. A community-level para-athlete 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 sport participation and sport for development, disability needs may take priority over specialized sport considerations. For example, an athlete in a wheelchair may be able to try and learn wheelchair basketball and 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 recognizes the unique circumstances of parasport organizations. One important consideration is that, for some sports, the participant base is small because of the prevalence of a specific disability within the Canadian population. In addition, we are aware that the needs of athletes with disabilities differ, not only from those of athletes without disabilities, but also among athletes with disabilities. The Commission did hear of the need for parasport expertise when it comes to services such as classification and travel arrangements. We also recognize that this may be true in other instances, such as event planning and communications.

Alignment and consistency in the way parasport is structured may not be optimal given the unique circumstances and needs of para-athletes. We recognize that parasport involves additional costs due to the unique needs of its athletes. Therefore, additional funding should be allocated to National Parasport Organizations. This recommendation is addressed in the Funding Chapter (Chapter 5).

In addition, the Commission is of the view that a national parasport specific policy and program framework should be developed in collaboration with the parasport community.

Parasport alignment: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

5. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with the parasport community at the national, provincial and territorial levels, develop a national parasport strategy. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.

Vertical alignment: preliminary findings

As discussed in the previous section, horizontal alignment aims to improve efficiency across a single level of an organization or system. Vertical alignment refers to improving the functioning across hierarchical levels of a system or organization.[351] For example, within one sport, from National Sport Organizations to Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and then to the community level.

As outlined below, to create efficiencies and synergies within and among sports, and to strengthen alignment between the levels of sport, the Commission is of the view that:

- National Sport Organizations should seek broad application of policies across all levels of their sport.
- Common services for National Sport Organizations and their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations should be centralized in a shared services model.
- Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations should be considered in any amalgamation efforts undertaken by their National Sport Organization counterpart.

Roles and responsibilities

The Commission heard that the relationship between National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations can vary significantly. While these organizations work well together in some sports, they do not in others. This also varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Part of this tension could be attributed to the differing goals and objectives of National, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations as they relate to increasing participation. It is true that Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations (and their community sport organizations members) develop athletes who may ultimately earn medals on an international stage. But this is not their primary objective.

The tension can also be attributed to a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities among sport organizations at different levels. This often creates duplication and inefficiencies in the sport system.

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351 Ravi Kathuria, Joshi Maheshkumar & Stephen Porth, "Organizational Alignment and Performance: Past, Present and Future" (2007) 45:3 Management Decision 503 at 505, online: <https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1091&context=business_articles>.

There is a common misconception that National Sport Organizations have control over their sport from the national level to the grassroots. In reality, a vast majority of National Sport Organizations have very little oversight and control over their provincial and territorial member organizations, and even less over clubs as most national organizations are disconnected from the grassroots.

As things currently stand, there is a need for greater clarity around the roles and responsibilities of sport organizations at each level of the sport structure. Amalgamation would not only eliminate duplication in the Canadian sport system and enhance the relationships between and among such organizations it would also assist in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the organizations.

Shared services

Just as we discussed implementing a shared services model at the national level, a similar approach could be adopted at the provincial and territorial level. A single entity would provide all Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations with the provision of the common services they all require.

We recognize that this would demand considerable collaboration and effort. The services shared in this model, similar to that of the horizontal model, could include information technology (IT) support, human resources, legal services, translation services, and insurance provision.

Another possibility raised was the sharing of services between the national and provincial and territorial levels of a sport. This approach could standardize common practices and requirements within a sport. These services could include, for example, event planning, training and education, membership registration, program development, and policy development.

Vertical amalgamation

Finally, the possibility of vertical amalgamation was raised with the Commission, namely amalgamation between the National Sport Organization with all of its Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. However, the Commission heard that the Canada Games create a dependency on the existing provincial and territorial sport organization structure. This is because the Canada Games require provinces and territories to compete separately, with athletes from their respective Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations; thereby, encouraging the maintenance of the current structure. It was suggested that Canada Games requirement could be changed. As an alternative, a new region-based model was suggested, dividing competitors by areas like the East, West, Central, and North.

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 AusCylcing. The result was a single member-controlled national governing body.[352] 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 the administration of the new organization.[353] The resulting annual administrative cost savings are estimated at $186,000.[354] Such an approach demonstrates the ability to reduce the number of sport organizations, create efficiencies, and cut costs.

Vertical alignment: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

6. The Government of Canada encourage National Sport Organizations to seek broad consistency in the application of their policies across all levels of their sport.
7. The Government of Canada, through incentives, encourage National Sport Organizations to amalgamate with their respective provincial and territorial sport organizations to form a single national organization for each sport, with provincial and territorial branches.
8. The Government of Canada, through incentives, 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. This model would centralize common services among these organizations, such as information technology (IT) support, human resources, legal services, translation services, insurance provision, and a shared foreign exchange strategy.
9. The Government of Canada create a strategic transformation fund to support National Sport Organizations, and National Parasport Organizations, as they undertake the development of a vertical amalgamation and/or shared services process.

352 Australian Institute of Company Directors, "AusCycling: Inside Australia's biggest sporting merger" (April 1, 2021), online: <www.aicd.com.au/good-governance/organisational-strategy/mergers-acquisitions-takeover-strategies/auscycling-inside-australias-biggest-sporting-merger.html>.

353 Australian Institute of Company Directors, "AusCycling: Inside Australia's biggest sporting merger" (April 1, 2021), online: <www.aicd.com.au/good-governance/organisational-strategy/mergers-acquisitions-takeover-strategies/auscycling-inside-australias-biggest-sporting-merger.html>.

354 Australian Institute of Company Directors, "AusCycling: Inside Australia's biggest sporting merger" (April 1, 2021), online: <www.aicd.com.au/good-governance/organisational-strategy/mergers-acquisitions-takeover-strategies/auscycling-inside-australias-biggest-sporting-merger.html>.

CHAPTER 5:
Funding in the sport system

CANADIAN SPORT IS FACING A FINANCIAL CRISIS

In Canada, amateur sport primarily receives funding from the federal government and, to a lesser extent, the provincial and territorial governments. Nevertheless, the funding provided by the various levels of governments has failed to increase with the rate of inflation. At the national level, for example, core funding provided by Sport Canada, which is intended to support the day-to-day operations of National Sport Organizations, has remained the same since 2005. This has left many National Sport Organizations severely under-resourced and facing considerable financial difficulties.

In addition, the Commission heard a great deal of concerns regarding the disproportionate amount of funding dedicated to high-performance sport rather than to more broadly accessible and inclusive community sport programs. The need for more federal funding for community programming and grassroots sport was frequently raised. Many expressed concern that funding to support sport at the community level was inadequate. This view was consistently expressed by those who were members of racialized groups, participated in parasport, residents of Indigenous communities or representative of newcomer organizations.

In this chapter, we examine the various programs the federal government has created to support sport organizations, their athletes and the hosting of sporting events. We also provide a brief overview of how provincial, territorial, and municipal governments fund sport.

Following this, we share the perspectives we gathered from participants regarding funding. We conclude by outlining our preliminary recommendations with respect to funding levels, rebalancing funding priorities and funding stability.

To provide context, we will first briefly discuss the various sources and levels of sport funding in Canada.

SOURCES AND LEVEL OF FUNDING

Funding for sport, physical activity and recreation in Canada comes from a variety of government and non-governmental sources.

Government funding from Sport Canada is the primary source of revenue for many National Sport Organizations.[355] The amount of funding provided for sport and physical activity by provincial and territorial governments varies considerably across the country, as do the mechanisms that are used to distribute these funds.

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355 Canadian Olympic Committee, Press Release, 30, "Canadian Olympic Committee and Canadian Paralympic Committee release budget request 2024" (March 4, 2024), online: <https://olympic.ca/press/canadian-olympic-committee-and-canadian-paralympic-committee-release-budget-request-2024/#:~:text=The%20COC%20and%20CPC%20are%20now%20releasing%20the,the%20Government%20of%20Canada%20and%20the%20Official%20Opposition.>.

According to a Deloitte study commissioned by the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee, 90% of National Sport Organizations depend on government funding as their primary source of revenue.[356] On average, government funding represents between 47% to 50% of the revenue of National Sport Organizations that receive government funds. According to the same study, a few larger National Sport Organizations operate with minimal reliance on government funding. This is only possible because they have other substantial sources of revenue including memberships fees, donations and sponsorships, event revenue, and merchandising agreements. On average, government funding accounts for approximately 9% of total annual revenue for these larger National Sport Organizations.

In addition, some National, Provincial, Territorial, and Community Sport Organizations have been effective in securing private funding from sponsorships, merchandising agreements, and corporate and individual donations. Some sport organizations also issue tax receipts which can be helpful in securing donations.[357]

Below, we explore in more detail the various sources of funding for sport, starting with the federal government funding.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

The Government of Canada transfers money to funding recipients, whether individuals or organizations, through two key instruments: grants and contributions. A grant is generally used for recurring funding, provided the recipient is in good standing. The amount of the funding is often smaller and intended for less complex activities. 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 and reporting requirements.[358] Whether a funding program uses a grant or a contribution is determined by the terms and condition of the program as approved by the Treasury Board.[359]

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356 Canadian Olympic Committee & Canadian Paralympic Committee, "Budget 2024 Request – National Sport Organizations" (2024) at 5, online (pdf): <https://olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Budget-Request-2024_COC-CPC.pdf>.

357 National Sport Organizations can qualify as a Registered Canadian Amateur Athletic Association under the Income Tax Act. Registered Canadian Amateur Athletic Associations are exempt from income tax and can issue official donation receipts for gifts received from individuals or corporations. (*Income Tax Act*, RSC 1985, c 1, online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/I-3.3/>.)

358 Government of Canada, "Directive on Transfer Payments" (last modified December 20, 2024) at Appendix B: Core Design Elements paragraph 9, online: <www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=14208#appB>.

359 Government of Canada, "Directive on Transfer Payments" (last modified December 20, 2024) at Appendix B: Core Design Elements paragraph 9, online: <www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=14208#appB>; Government of Canada, "Policy on Transfer Payments" (last modified December 20, 2024) at Requirements para 6.1.1, online: <www.tbs-sct.canada.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=13525>.

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 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, still impact their organization. This would include, for example, the Canada Summer Jobs wage subsidy that supports creating employment opportunities for youth.[360]

The following section reviews Sport Canada's three funding programs as well as notable funding programs from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Sport Canada has three funding programs that target primarily sport organizations and individuals operating at the national level of the Canadian sport system. They aim to achieve the following objectives:

- **Sport Support Program:** supports the development of the Canadian sport system, in alignment with the goals of the Canadian Sport Policy.[361]
- **Athlete Assistance Program:** provides direct financial assistance to Canadian high-performance athletes to relieve some of the financial pressures of training and competing.[362]
- **Hosting Program:** assists sport organizations with hosting the Canada Games as well as international multi-sport and single-sport events in Canada.[363]

360 Government of Canada, "Canada Summer Jobs wage subsidy" (last modified June 10, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/canada-summer-jobs.html>.

361 Government of Canada, "Sport Support Program" (last modified December 23, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support.html>.

362 Government of Canada, "Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified December 30, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance.html>.

363 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines - International Single Sport Event Component" (last modified April 26, 2024) at Hosting Program, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program/international-single-sport-events/contribution-guidelines.html#a1>.

Over the past five years, through these three programs, the Government of Canada has invested a total of $1,315,991,663, with an average of $263,198,333 per fiscal year.[364] The Sport Support Program makes up much of this funding. Appendix 3 contains a breakdown of Sport Canada funding since the 2020-2021 fiscal year for each of Sport Canada's programs.

We note that in 2022-2023, approximately 0.082% ($327.1 million CAD) of the Government of Canada's budget was allocated to sport,[365] and in 2023, sport represented only a 0.3% share of the Canadian total Gross Domestic Product.[366]

Sport Support Program ($212.6M in 2023-2024)[367]

The Sport Support Program is the most significant Sport Canada funding program for National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes. In addition, the Sport Support Program also supports grassroots sport through its Community Sport for All Initiative, and Indigenous communities through the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component. Through all of its streams, the program aims to achieve four objectives:

- increase opportunities to participate in quality sport activities for all Canadians, including underrepresented 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[368]

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364 See Appendix 3 for more details on the Government of Canada's investment in sport. Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada 2021 Volume II Details of Expenses and Revenues" (2021), online (pdf): <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2021/P51-1-2021-2-eng.pdf?nodisclaimer=1>; Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada 2022 Volume II Details of Expenses and Revenues" (2022), online (pdf): <https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2022/spac-pspc/P51-1-2022-2-eng.pdf>; Government of Canada "Section 6 Public Accounts of Canada 2022-2023" (2023), online (pdf): https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2023/cpc-pac-ds6-pdf-eng.pdf>; Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada 2023 Volume II Details of Expenses and Revenues" (2023), online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2023/pdf/2023-vol2-eng.pdf>; Government of Canada, "Details and Transfer payment programs – Departmental Plan 2024-25" (last modified April 18, 2024) at core Responsibility 3, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/corporate/publications/plans-reports/departmental-plan-2024-2025/details-transfer-payment.html#a1c>.

365 In 2022-2023, the Government of Canada's proposed budget was $397.58 billion CAD (p. I-3) of which approximately $327.1 million was allocated to sport (p. II -59). Canada, "2022-23 Estimates: Parts I and II The Government Expenditure Plan and Main Estimates" (2022) at I-3, II-59, online (pdf): <www.canada.ca/content/dam/tbs-sct/documents/planned-government-spending/main-estimates/2022-23/estimates-eng.pdf >; Statistics Canada, "Culture and sport gross domestic (GDP) as a share of the total economy, 2023" (last modified June 2, 2025), online: <www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250602/t001a-eng.htm>.

366 Statistics Canada, "Culture and sport gross domestic (GDP) as a share of the total economy, 2023" (last modified June 2, 2025), online: <www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250602/t001a-eng.htm>.

367 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada-2024-Vol III, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2024) at 26, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

368 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024) at Objectives and expected results for the Sport Support Program, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a1>.

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 and discussed together. Following this, we examine the Community Sport for All Initiative and the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component.

Funding framework

The federal government developed a Sport Funding and Accountability Framework to determine which National Sport Organizations and Multisport Services Organizations were eligible for funding from the Sport Support Program. The first Framework was introduced in 1995-1996, with updates being introduced about every four years.[369] The Sport Funding and Accountability Framework V (2016-2020) incorporated the goals of the Canadian Sport Policy 2012.[370]

In November 2024, Sport Canada's new application guidelines for the Sport Support Program were released in conjunction with the Sport Integrity Framework,[371] which is addressed above in the section on policies. These new guidelines have replaced the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework.

Funding for National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes

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.[372]

- **Core funding** supports the day-to-day operations of sport organizations. This funding includes amounts provided to targeted National Sport Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes based on the recommendations of Own the Podium through the "Enhanced Excellence" and "Next Generation" initiatives.
- **Project funding** is given to organizations to cover the cost of one-time activities that support the Canadian sport system and do not require ongoing funding.

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369 Government of Canada, "Sport Funding and Accountability Framework" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/202/301/strategie_developpement_durable_pc/2001-2003/progs/sc/prog/cfrs-sfaf/index_e.cfm?nodisclaimer=1>.

370 Peter Donnelly, *Sport Policy in Canada* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press 2013) at ch VI, para 30, online: <https://books.openedition.org/uop/708>

371 Government of Canada, "Sport Integrity Framework" (last modified April 15, 2025) at Governance, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/safety-integrity-ethics-sport/sport-integrity-framework.html#a5g>.

372 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024) at Eligible Types of Funding, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a5>.

Funding received through the Sport Support Program can be used towards a variety of expenses including expenses related to the delivery of services and programs like coaching, facility rentals and equipment purchases. Other eligible expenses include costs related to the advancement of safe sport, administrative costs, translation and language training, salaries, legal costs, and travel. However, there are limits to some 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.[373]

The current application guidelines state that multi-year funding for organizations will be available to support day-to-day operations.[374]

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.[375] The following considerations are worth noting:

- National Sport Organization 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.[376]
- National Multisport Service Organizations are required to offer programs or services that are nationwide, extending beyond a province or territory.[377]
- Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes must be members of the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network.[378]

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373 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

374 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

375 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

376 Government of Canada, "National Sport Organization - Sport Support Program" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/national-organization.html>.

377 Government of Canada, "National Multisport Services Organization — Sport Support Program" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/multisport.html>.

378 Government of Canada, "Canadian Sport Centre - Sport Support Program" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/sport-centre.html>.

Moreover, several sports and sport activities are ineligible for Sport Canada funding, including professional or commercial components of sports, motorized sports, games of skill, sports that are not "distinct sports" even if they are organized independently from the recognized National Sport Organization, and competitive activities that are not regulated through a National Sport Organization or governing body.[379]

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.[380]

As of April 1, 2025, all National Sport Organizations must also meet the five governance requirements outlined in the program guidelines to receive funding.[381] These governance requirements, which are explored in more detail in Chapter 7, 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, among other requirements, adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program.[382] The Canadian Safe Sport Program is discussed in more detail in Chapter 16.

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379 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

380 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024) at Who can apply, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a4>.

381 According to the Application Guidelines, the same will be required of Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres as of April 2026. Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a4>.

382 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

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.[383] This involves an evaluation of the following evaluation criteria:

- impact of the organization's activities on the Canadian sport system
- organizational capacity to undertake the activities
- evaluation of the requested budget in relation to the expected outcomes[384]

These evaluation criteria are further detailed in the application guidelines.[385] For example, when evaluating the impact of the organization's activities on the Canadian sport system, the guidelines provide that the evaluation committee considers the extent to which the organization's activities advance 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 competition" and "a systemic approach to develop and support participants that will positively impact the development of the Canadian Sport system."[386]

The extent to which an organization has "reach across Canada's sport system" [387] is noted as a criterion to measure the impact of its activities on the Canadian sport system, but it is not clear how an organization's "reach" is defined or measured.

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383 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

384 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

385 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), at Evaluation Criteria, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a13>.

386 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

387 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

Several other factors are taken into consideration when prioritizing 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)[388]
- whether sports programming is being delivered to a specific underrepresented group[389]
- whether sports programming can help to achieve other Government of Canada priorities, as articulated, for example, through the Budget or Speech from the Throne[390]

Furthermore, as discussed under Chapter 3, Own the Podium makes funding recommendations to Sport Canada, which provides the funding.[391] These recommendations are based on podium probabilities, athlete progress tracking, and the identification of the next generation of podium-potential athletes.[392] We note that Own the Podium does not itself fund high-performance sport. This is a common misconception about the role of this Multisport Service Organization.

Sport Canada can audit funding recipients in accordance with funding agreements. Additionally, sport organizations are also required to submit a final report detailing the results of their activities to Sport Canada at the end of their project.[393] Depending on the conditions of the funding agreement, some sport organizations also need to submit interim reports.[394]

388 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

389 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

390 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

391 Government of Canada, News Release, "Government of Canada Announces Own the Podium Advisory Board" (May 18, 2010), online: <www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2010/05/government-canada-announces-own-podium-advisory-board.html>.

392 Own the Podium, "Strategic Plan 2024-2028" (last visited June 2025) at 8, online (pdf): < https://www.ownthepodium.org/about-us/strategic-plan >.

393 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

394 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

Additionally, Sport Canada has a Compliance and Accountability function. It is responsible for the enhanced monitoring of funded National Sport Organizations for compliance with the requirements of their funding contribution agreements.[395] This includes the implementation of good governance practices and safe sport requirements.[396] 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 cycle of their contribution agreement as an ongoing condition of funding. This process allows clear objectives and expectations to be set for National Sport Organizations where gaps have been identified, and to monitor the progress of implementation.

In addition to the core funding, the federal government has also provided time-limited funding for special targeted initiatives. This project funding is generally provided for three to five years. These initiatives have addressed, among other matters, safe sport, inclusion, diversity, and accessibility. They have also increased funding for Indigenous sport.

For example, in 2023, the Government of Canada announced specific project funding for initiatives aiming to achieve gender equity, diversity and inclusion at all levels of sport through the Sport Support Program.[397] 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.[398]

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395 Government of Canada, "Backgrounder: Minister St-Onge announces new measures to improve accountability and foster a safe and sustainable culture change in sport" (last modified May 12, 2023), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2023/05/backgrounder-minister-st-onge-announces-new-measures-to-improve-accountability-and-foster-a-safe-and-sustainable-culture-change-in-sport.html>.

396 Government of Canada, "Safety in Sport" (last modified April 15, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/safety-integrity-ethics-sport.html>; Government of Canada, "Questions and Answers - Sport" (last modified April 10, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/corporate/transparency/open-government/standing-committee/qualtrough-pch-dec-2023/questions-answers-sport.html>.

397 Government of Canada, "Equity, diversity, inclusion and participation in sport" (last modified July 8, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-participation.html>.

398 Government of Canada, "Equity, diversity, inclusion and participation in sport" (last modified July 8, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-participation.html>.

Community Sport for All Initiative ($10.5M over 2024-2026)[399]

As a component of the Sport Support Program, the Community Sport for All Initiative announced in Budget 2021 aims to remove barriers and increase participation rates of under-represented groups in sport.[400] In particular, the Community Sport for All Initiative supports community programming for Black, Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQI+, low-income people, persons with a disability, newcomers and seniors.[401]

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, within all five regions of Canada.[402] This means that an organization does not have to operate in or reach every province and territory in order to be eligible for funding.

Projects funded under the Community Sport for All Initiative are expected to be affordable for participants, results-oriented with the aim of increasing participation and retention, focused on organized sport, green, accessible, and available in underserved communities.[403] In addition, Sport Canada 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.[404]

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399 Government of Canada, News Release, "Government of Canada invests in sport to break down barriers, boost participation, and build stronger and healthier communities" (March 21, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2025/03/government-of-canada-invests-in-sport-to-break-down-barriers-boost-participation-and-build-stronger-and-healthier-communities.html>.

400 Government of Canada, *Budget 2021: A Recovery Plan for Jobs, Growth, and Resilience* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2021) at 201, online (pdf): <www.budget.canada.ca/2021/pdf/budget-2021-en.pdf>; Government of Canada, "Community Sport for All Initiative – Sport Support Program" (last modified March 21, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/community-sport-initiative.html>.

401 Government of Canada, "Community Sport for All Initiative – Sport Support Program" (last modified March 21, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/community-sport-initiative.html>.

402 "An organization must be a national-level organization or other organization with the scope and capacity to reach the target under-represented group(s) in multiple jurisdictions, within all 5 regions of Canada, have the ability to deliver quality programs, projects and/or services relevant to the goals of the Canadian Sport Policy; be a federally or provincially incorporated not-for-profit organization; and, be able to administer and disburse funding to community organizations that align with the objectives of the Community Sport for All Initiative." (Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines- Who Can Apply" (14 November 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/community-sport-initiative/application-guidelines.html#a4>.)

403 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines - Community Sport for All Initiative" (last modified November 14, 2024) at Objectives and expected results for the Community Sport for All Initiative Component, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/community-sport-initiative/application-guidelines.html#a2>; Government of Canada, "Backgrounder: Minister Qualtrough announces funding to remove barriers and increase sport participation" (February 6, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2024/02/backgrounder-minister-qualtrough-announces-funding-to-remove-barriers-and-increase-sport-participation.html>.

404 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines - Community Sport for All Initiative" (last modified November 14, 2024) at Objectives and expected results for the Community Sport for All Initiative component, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/community-sport-initiative/application-guidelines.html#a2>.

Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities ($24.2M in 2024-2026)[405]

The Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities is a component of the Sport Support Program. It was created by the federal government in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice.[406] Through this program, Indigenous organizations receive funding to deliver sport and recreation projects in Indigenous communities in Canada.[407]

The three streams of the program aim to achieve various social development goals. Streams One[408] and Two[409] are targeted towards initiatives that improve health and education, increase employability and reduce at-risk behaviour in Indigenous communities. 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+).[410]

The Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities component aims to achieve its goals through a variety of sports and physical activities. This can include traditional and cultural sports, as well as physical activities that have a recreational or wellness component.[411] Ultimately, it is up to the Indigenous organizations and communities receiving project funding to determine what is appropriate for their needs.[412]

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405 Canadian Heritage, News Release, "Government of Canada investing $24.2 million in Indigenous sport programs to empower First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities" (February 7, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2025/02/government-of-canada-investing-242-million-in-indigenous-sport-programs-to-empower-first-nations-inuit-and-metis-communities.html>.

406 Only Stream 3 of the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities was created in response to the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (Government of Canada, "Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/social-development-indigenous-communities.html>.)

407 Government of Canada, "Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/social-development-indigenous-communities.html>.

408 Government of Canada, "Stream One - Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/stream-one.html>.

409 Government of Canada, "Stream Two- Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/stream-two.html>

410 Government of Canada, "Stream Three- Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/stream-three.html>.

411 Government of Canada, "Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities-Definition of Sport" (last modified May 14, 2025) at Definition of Sport, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/social-development-indigenous-communities.html>.

412 Government of Canada, "Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities-Definition of Sport" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/social-development-indigenous-communities.html>.

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 3. The amount of funding allocated to each is determined based on a funding formula. Appendix 4 provides a breakdown of this funding.

Streams Two and Three are available to Indigenous governments, communities, and not-for-profit Indigenous organizations. In some instances, they are also available to non-Indigenous organizations that support Indigenous communities.

Athlete Assistance Program ($31.7M in 2023-2024)[413]

The Athlete Assistance Program is a federal government grant program that provides financial assistance directly to high-performance athletes. The purpose of this program is to alleviate some of the financial pressures experienced by athletes preparing for and competing in international events while maintaining their academic pursuits or professional careers.[414]

The support provided through the Athlete Assistance Program can take the form of a living and training allowance, tuition support, or supplementary support.[415] Every year, approximately 1,900 high-performance athletes in 90 sport disciplines receive support through this program.[416] The amount that an athlete receives for their living and training allowance varies between $1,305 and $2,175 per month.[417] With respect to tuition support, a carded athlete may receive up to $5,500 per carding cycle with a $27,500 lifetime maximum amount.[418] In addition, supplementary funding may be provided to an athlete who medals at a Major Games, for Paralympic athletes with high needs, to support child dependents, as well as for moving, new parents and retirement assistance.[419] This assistance is limited to a maximum of $16,410 per carding cycle.[420]

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413 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada 2024, Vol II, Details of Expenses and Revenues" (2024) at 163, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol2-eng.pdf> .

414 Government of Canada, "Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified December 30, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance.html>.

415 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html>.

416 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 1.1, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a2a>.

417 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html>.

418 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html>.

419 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 8.4, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a10>.

420 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 8.4, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a10>.

There are two sets of criteria applicable to determine eligibility for funding under the Athlete Assistance Program.[421] 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.[422] The National Sport Organizations must meet the national team and high-performance minimum delivery or performance standards evaluation criteria.[423]

To be eligible, athletes must generally be Canadian citizens or a permanent resident. 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.[424] They also need to be part of a National Sport Organization's high-performance program.[425]

However, athletes attending foreign post-secondary educational institutions, including National Collegiate Athletic Association institutions, who are receiving an athletic scholarship, are not eligible for Athlete Assistance Program funding for the months in which they are attending these institutions. This also applies if the National Collegiate Athletic Association affiliated institutions school is in Canada.[426] However, they may still receive Living and Training support when they are involved in national team training and competition activities and are not attending the school.[427]

Athletes in Olympic and Paralympic sports that 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 an upcoming Olympic or Paralympic Games.[428]

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421 For the complete list of eligibility requirements, see: "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 2, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a3>.

422 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 2.2, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a3a1>.

423 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 2.2, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a3a1>.

424 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 2.3, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a3b>.

425 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 2.1, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a3a>.

426 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 2.5.1, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a3d>; Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 2.5.2, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a3d>.

427 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 2.5.2, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a3d>.

428 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 2.5.5, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a3d>.

Some athletes are ineligible for Athlete Assistance Program support.[429] This includes athletes who have signed contracts with professional leagues. However, athletes on contract or regularly competing in leagues other than the National Basketball Association, the National Hockey League and Major League Basketball may be eligible for nomination for Program support under specific circumstances.[430]

Funding under the Athlete Assistance Program is available to athletes who meet what is referred to as "carding criteria."[431] The carding process, which includes establishing carding criteria, 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 re-nominated) 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, the 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 and the hearing and appeal procedure that will be used in any dispute between the carded athlete and the National Sporting Organization.

Athletes approved for carding receive support for the period in which they are approved. The carding cycles are normally 12 months long. Sometimes, the timing of major events may require that the carding cycle be shorter or longer than 12 months in which case an organization may negotiate a shorter or longer carding cycle with Sport Canada.[432]

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429 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 2.4, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a3c>; Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 5.4.2, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a6d>.

430 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html>.

431 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), s 2.3, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a3b>.

432 Government of Canada, "Policies and Procedures - Athlete Assistance Program" (last modified February 12, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html>.

Hosting Program ($26.3M in 2023-2024)[433]

The Hosting Program provides financial support to sport organizations that are hosting international sport events and the Canada Games. The objectives of the Hosting Program 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 under-represented groups through contributions to international bidding and hosting events.
- To strengthen the economic, social, cultural and community impacts of supported bidding and hosting projects.[434]

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
- International Multisport Sport Games for Aboriginal Peoples and Persons with a Disability like the North American Indigenous Games or the Deaflympics)
- the Canada Games[435]

The *Federal Policy for Hosting International Sport Events* provides the guiding principles of the Hosting Program. From a funding perspective, and subject to the budget of the Hosting Program and the necessary approvals, the Government of Canada may provide support for:

- 2 International Major Multisport Games every 10 years
- 1 Large International Single Sport Event every 2 years
- 30 or more Small International Single Sport events each year
- ongoing funding for International Multisport Games for Aboriginal Peoples and Persons with a Disability[436]

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433 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada 2024, Vol II Details of Expenses and Revenues" (2024) at 164, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol2-eng.pdf>.

434 Government of Canada, "Application guidelines - International Single Sport Event component" (last modified April 26, 2024) at Objectives of the Hosting Program, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program/international-single-sport-events/contribution-guidelines.html#a2>.

435 Government of Canada, "Hosting Program" (last modified July 4, 2022), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program.html>.

436 Government of Canada, "Federal Policy for hosting international sport events" (last modified January 11, 2025), s 3, online <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-policies-acts-regulations/policy-hosting-international-sport-events.html#a3>.

The application process and requirements for each type of event vary. For example, applications for funding for International Major Multisport Games must be submitted prior to initiating a hosting bid.[437] This requirement does not apply for other international events.

Similarly, general applications can usually be made on an ongoing basis.[438] 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.[439]

Other specific elements concerning International Multisport Games for Aboriginal Peoples are worth noting. In particular, funding for the North American Indigenous Games is a federal-provincial/territorial hosting rotation and a bid process, typically run by the North American Indigenous Games Council or the Aboriginal Sport Circle.[440] The level of federal funding provided is based on a federal-provincial/territorial framework.[441] In addition, 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.[442]

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.[443] The level of funding provided is also based on a federal-provincial/territorial framework.[444]

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437 Government of Canada, "International Major Multisport Games — Hosting Program" (last modified December 18, 2024) at Application deadline, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program/international-major-multisport-games.html>.

438 See e.g. Government of Canada, "International Major Multisport Games - Hosting Program" (last modified December 18, 2024) at Application deadline, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program/international-major-multisport-games.html>; and, Government of Canada, "Canada Games-Hosting Program" (last modified December 18, 2024) at Application deadline, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program/canada-games.html>.

439 Government of Canada, International Multisport Games of Aboriginal Peoples and Persons with a Disability - Hosting Program" (last modified December 18, 2024) at Application deadline, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program/international-multisport-games-aboriginal-disability.html>.

440 Government of Canada, International Multisport Games of Aboriginal Peoples and Persons with a Disability - Hosting Program" (last modified December 18, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program/international-multisport-games-aboriginal-disability.html>.

441 Government of Canada, International Multisport Games of Aboriginal Peoples and Persons with a Disability - Hosting Program" (last modified December 18, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program/international-multisport-games-aboriginal-disability.html>.

442 Government of Canada, International Multisport Games of Aboriginal Peoples and Persons with a Disability - Hosting Program" (last modified December 18, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program/international-multisport-games-aboriginal-disability.html>.

443 Government of Canada, "Canada Games - Hosting Program" (last modified December 18, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program/canada-games.html>.

444 Government of Canada, "Canada Games - Hosting Program" (last modified December 18, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program/canada-games.html>.

Sport Canada provides funding to the Canada Games Council for the travel costs of participants, except for those from the host province or territory.[445]

Bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories

As previously noted in Chapter 3, the federal government supports provinces and territories through bilateral agreements. This support is generally provided under the Sport Support Program and the Hosting Program.[446]

The purpose of these agreements is to encourage sport participation and physical activity among children and youth.[447] Appendix 5 provides a breakdown of the funding amounts provided to provinces and territories under the Sport Support Program and the Hosting Program from the 2020-2021 fiscal year to 2023-2024.

Public Health Agency of Canada and other sources of federal funding

As discussed in Chapter 3, the mandate of the Public Health Agency of Canada is to share information about and promote the benefits of being active, develop guidelines for physical activity and provide information for injury prevention and management in sport and physical activity, including concussion prevention.[448]

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.[449] In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, over $5 million was provided to ParticipACTON to promote the benefits of physical activity through public education campaigns, research, and the development of tools and programs to help Canadians become more active.[450] Under the ParticiPARKs program, the design phase of four outdoor parks was completed. These parks are located in La Ronge (Saskatchewan), Winnipeg (Manitoba), Brampton (Ontario) and Fredericton (New Brunswick).[451]

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445 Government of Canada, "Canada Games - Hosting Program" (last modified December 18, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/hosting-program/canada-games.html>.

446 Government of Canada, "Bilateral Agreements with the Provinces and Territories" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-participation/bilateral-agreements-provinces-territories.html>.

447 Government of Canada, "Bilateral Agreements with the Provinces and Territories" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-participation/bilateral-agreements-provinces-territories.html>; Canada, Library of Parliament, *Sport Canada and the Public Policy Framework for Participation and Excellence in Sport*, 43, No 2020-12-E (23 January 2020) at 4–5, online: <https://lop.parl.ca/staticfiles/PublicWebsite/Home/ResearchPublications/BackgroundPapers/PDF/2020-12-e.pdf>.

448 Government of Canada, "Promoting physical activity" (last modified October 1, 2018), online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/being-active/promoting-physical-activity.html>.

449 ParticipACTION, "Financial Statements of ParticipACTION and Independent Auditor's Report thereon Year ended March 31, 2024" (September 2024) at 11–12, online: <www.participaction.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/ParticipACTIONAFSYearendedMarch312024.pdf?x19167>. ParticipACTION also receives funding under Sport Canada's Sport Support Program.

450 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada-2024-Vol III, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2024) at 153, online (pdf): <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/pdf/2024-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

451 ParticipACTION, "2023-2024 Impact Report" (2024) at 8, online (pdf): <www.participaction.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/PA-ImpactReport2024-Final-v2.pdf?x17089>.

Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund

The Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund supports specific initiatives that reduce the risk factors of chronic disease.[452] One of three behavioural risk factors targeted by this program is physical inactivity. Funding is offered to a wide variety of organizations, including private and non-profit organization, governments and agencies, Indigenous organizations, health authorities, and schools and universities. Organizations may request from $200,000 to $3,000,000 in funding for projects 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."[453] 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.[454] While this matched funding does not have to be confirmed at the time of application, 50% of the total matched funding must be secured before a funding agreement can be signed. The remaining 50% is required before the project's final year.[455]

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.[456]

The program also aims to fund a diversity of projects, meaning that decisions take into consideration the location of the project, the communities and populations that will be served, the funding stream (i.e., the behavioural risk factor that is targeted) and the size of the organization.[457]

Intersectoral Action Fund

The Intersectoral Action Fund supports policy-level initiatives aimed at targeting the social determinants of health, including access to environments that promote physical activity.[458]

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452 Government of Canada, "Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund" (May 10, 2024) at About our program, online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/programs/healthy-canadians-communities-fund.html>.

453 Government of Canada, "Applicant guide: Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund" (last modified November 15, 2022) at Matched-funding details and requirements, online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/funding-opportunities/grant-contribution-funding-opportunities/healthy-canadians-communities-fund-overview/applicant-guide.html#a3>.

454 Government of Canada, "Applicant guide: Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund" (last modified November 15, 2022) at Matched-funding details and requirements, online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/funding-opportunities/grant-contribution-funding-opportunities/healthy-canadians-communities-fund-overview/applicant-guide.html#a3>.

455 Government of Canada, "Applicant guide: Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund" (last modified November 15, 2022) at Matched-funding details and requirements, online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/funding-opportunities/grant-contribution-funding-opportunities/healthy-canadians-communities-fund-overview/applicant-guide.html#a3>.

456 Government of Canada, "Applicant guide: Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund" (last modified November 15, 2022) at Application assessment criteria, online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/funding-opportunities/grant-contribution-funding-opportunities/healthy-canadians-communities-fund-overview/applicant-guide.html#a4>.

457 Government of Canada, "Applicant guide: Healthy Canadians and Communities Fund" (last modified November 15, 2022) at Application assessment criteria, online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/funding-opportunities/grant-contribution-funding-opportunities/healthy-canadians-communities-fund-overview/applicant-guide.html#a4>.

458 Government of Canada, "Overview: The Intersectoral Action Fund" (last modified June 18, 2024) at About the Intersectoral Action Fund, online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/funding-opportunities/grant-contribution-funding-opportunities/call-for-

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 who had ideas to improve healthy living in their school, notably through physical activity.[459]

Under the School Health Grant for Youth, micro-grants of $1,000 were awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.[460] To receive funding, projects needed to meet specific program eligibility criteria.[461] 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.[462]

Other sources of federal funding

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.[463]

PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL 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, as well as community initiatives. Each program has its own eligibility requirements and conditions of funding. As will be discussed in greater detail later in the report, this can include the requirement for sport organizations to adopt safe sport policies (Chapter 15) and good governance practices (Chapter 7).

For example, the Government of Ontario administers the Ontario Amateur Sport Fund which provides funding to recognized Provincial Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations in the province.[464] Under the

applications-intersectoral-action-fund/overview.html#a2>.

459 Government of Canada, "School Health" (last modified October 12, 2022) at School Health Grant for Youth, online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/child-infant-health/school-health.html#a4>.

460 Applications were accepted until the funds are fully expended, or until December 20, 2024. (Government of Canada, "School Health Grant for Youth: Apply Now" (last modified December 23, 2024) at Application deadline and timeframe, online <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/child-infant-health/school-health/grant-youth/apply-now.html>.)

461 Applications were accepted until the funds are fully expended, or until December 20, 2024. (Government of Canada, "School Health Grant for Youth: Apply Now" (last modified December 23, 2024) at Application deadline and timeframe, online <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/child-infant-health/school-health/grant-youth/apply-now.html>.)

462 Government of Canada, "School health Grant for Youth: Previously funded projects" (last modified December 20, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/child-infant-health/school-health/grant-youth/previously-funded-projects.html>.

463 Examples of these programs include the Women's Program, which provides funding for organizations advancing women's equality, addressing and removing systemic barriers that impede their progress (Government of Canada. "Grants and Contributions- Commercial Women's Sport Initiative" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://search.open.canada.ca/grants/record/wage,001-2023-2024-Q1-00076,current>) and the Canada Summer Jobs program which provides summer employment opportunities for youth aged 15 to 30 years (Government of Canada, "Canada Summer Jobs Applicant Guide-What This Program Offers" (last modified November 19, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/canada-summer-jobs/overview.html>.)

464 Government of Ontario, "Ontario Amateur Sport Fund" (last modified May 22, 2025) at Overview, online: <www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-amateur-sport-fund>.

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.[465] Additionally, Provincial Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations need to be endorsed by a National Sport Organization funded by Sport Canada.[466] The Ministry is responsible for granting recognition status to sport organizations and monitors their compliance with the recognition criteria and obligations.[467]

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.[468] Typically, these organizations become responsible for funding Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations, as well as administering other programs.[469]

With respect to the sources of provincial and territorial funding, as noted above, provinces and territories are recipients of federal funds under bilateral agreements with the federal government.[470] Some provinces and territories also rely on third-party funding, like the profits from the sale of lottery tickets, to support their sports sector.[471]

It is difficult to accurately analyze the available data on the exact amounts allocated to sports per 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

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465 Government of Ontario, "Sport recognition policy for provincial and multi-sport organizations" (last modified May 22, 2025), online: <www.ontario.ca/page/sport-recognition-policy-provincial-and-multi-sport-organizations>; Government of Ontario, "Ontario Amateur Sport Fund" (last modified May 22, 2025), online: <www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-amateur-sport-fund>.

466 Government of Ontario, "Sport recognition policy for provincial and multi-sport organizations" (last updated May 22, 2025) at Endorsement from a national sport organization, Safe sport, & Administration, online: <www.ontario.ca/page/sport-recognition-policy-provincial-and-multi-sport-organizations#section-2>.

467 Government of Ontario, "Sport recognition policy for provincial and multi-sport organizations" (last updated May 22, 2025) at compliance, online: <www.ontario.ca/page/sport-recognition-policy-provincial-and-multi-sport-organizations#section-1>.

468 Government of British Columbia, "Sport Funding" (last modified January 25, 2024), online: <www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/sports/sport-funding>; Government of Saskatchewan, "Government's Role in Sport and Recreation" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/parks-culture-heritage-and-sport/sport-and-recreation/governments-role-in-sport-and-recreation>.

469 Government of British Columbia, "Frequently Asked Questions" (last modified January 6, 2021) at What is the difference between the Sport Branch, viaSport and Sport BC?, online <www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/sports/sport-frequently-asked-questions>.

470 Government of Canada, "Bilateral Agreements with the Provinces and Territories" (last modified May 14, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-participation/bilateral-agreements-provinces-territories.html>.

471 For example, in Saskatchewan, the provincial government uses revenue from lottery ticket sales to support sports through the Sask Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation, administered by Sask Sport Inc., Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association, and SaskCulture. (Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association, "Sask Lotteries" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.spra.sk.ca/membership/saskatchewan-lotteries/>.)

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.[472] While not direct government funding for sport, these tax credits do provide financial assistance to parents for enrolling children and youth in sport and physical activities. We also note that many provinces invest in capital infrastructure for sport and recreation.

MUNICIPAL FUNDING

We briefly note that municipal governments can also offer grants and contributions to support recreation in their community. The purpose of these grants can include increasing access to recreation programs or improving facilities.

PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES ON FUNDING

Funding crisis

There is broad consensus that the sport system is underfunded. Time and time again, we heard the same thing: the core federal funding has not increased since 2005. We were told that National Sport Organizations require a $104 million increase in annual federal government funding.[473] According to the Canadian Olympic Committee and Canadian Paralympic Committee Budget 2024 Request, a five-year forecast shows that the National Sport Organizations will accumulate a collective deficit of roughly $134 million attempting to deliver on their core mandate.[474] Some have suggested that the deficit is in fact higher.

There have been many calls for the federal government to increase funding for National Sport Organizations. This need gained public attention, with the media briefly reporting on the funding crisis in 2024 and 2025.[475]

In 2024, for instance, there were media stories which covered the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee's call for an additional in $104 million in federal funding. These organizations had also released the results of a study conducted by Deloitte on the financial health of Canadian National Sports Organizations, which illustrated the extent of the funding crisis impacting these organizations.[476]

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472 Revenu Québec, "Tax Credit for Children's Activities" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.revenuquebec.ca/en/citizens/tax-credits/tax-credit-for-childrens-activities/>; Government of Nova Scotia, News Release, "Reminder to Claim Children's Sports, Arts Tax Credit", online: <https://news.novascotia.ca/en/2023/02/21/reminder-claim-childrens-sports-arts-tax-credit>.

473 Canadian Olympic Committee / Canadian Paralympic Committee, "Budget 2024 Request – National Sport Organizations" (2024) at 2, online (pdf): <https://olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Budget-Request-2024_COC-CPC.pdf>.

474 Canadian Olympic Committee / Canadian Paralympic Committee, "Budget 2024 Request – National Sport Organizations" (2024) at 2, online (pdf): <https://olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Budget-Request-2024_COC-CPC.pdf>.

475 "On the brink of a crisis: Canadian Olympic, Paralympic Committees call for additional athlete funding", *CBC News* (March 4, 2024), online: <www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics-canada-nso-funding-1.7133637>; "Scarcity behind the medals: Canada's Olympic sport facing funding crisis", *CBC News* (February 5, 2025), online: <www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics/canada-national-sport-organizations-running-deficits-1.7451792>.

476 "On the brink of a crisis: Canadian Olympic, Paralympic Committees call for additional athlete funding", *CBC News* (March 4, 2024), online: <www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics-canada-nso-funding-1.7133637>.

In their 2024 Budget Request, the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee outlined some challenges facing National Sport Organizations. They noted that purchasing power has decreased by 33 % since the last funding increase in 2005.[477] It was emphasized that that a new injection of funds was critical to address the funding shortfalls.[478] The 2024 Budget Request also outlined some of the economic benefits of sport for Canada. Two of the benefits mentioned were that sport tourism generated $7.4B for Canada's economy in 2019 and that a 1% increase in physical activity can save $1 billion annually.[479]

In 2025, the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee appeared before the House of Common's 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.[480] The Standing Committee subsequently recommended that the core funding allocated to National Sport Organizations be increased to adjust for inflation since 2005.[481]

The Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee were not alone in expressing concerns about the enormous funding shortfall that all sport organizations are facing. 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 particular need for increased funding for Indigenous sport organizations and initiatives in parasports.

We were advised that the freeze on core federal funding places immense inflationary pressures on all those involved in sport in Canada, including rising costs for facilities, equipment, insurance, staffing.

We were told that adequate funding is essential in the sport sector, as it directly influences the quality of facilities, access to training resources, and overall athletic performance. It was highlighted on numerous occasions that the chronic lack of funding creates pressure on sport organizations who are not able to deliver their programs and services.

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477 Canadian Olympic Committee / Canadian Paralympic Committee, "Budget 2024 Request – National Sport Organizations" (2024) at 5, online (pdf): <https://olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Budget-Request-2024_COC-CPC.pdf>.

478 Canadian Olympic Committee / Canadian Paralympic Committee, "Budget 2024 Request – National Sport Organizations" (2024), online (pdf): <https://olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Budget-Request-2024_COC-CPC.pdf>.

479 Canadian Olympic Committee / Canadian Paralympic Committee, "Budget 2024 Request – National Sport Organizations" (2024) at 13–12, online (pdf): <https://olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Budget-Request-2024_COC-CPC.pdf>.

480 "Scarcity behind the medals: Canada's Olympic sport facing funding crisis", *CBC News* (February 5, 2025), online: <www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics/canada-national-sport-organizations-running-deficits-1.7451792>.

481 *House of Commons, Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2025 Budget, Report of the Standing Committee on Finance*, (December 2024) (Peter Fonseca), online: <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FINA/Reports/RP13466781/finarp21/finarp21-e.pdf>.

For instance, public reports have 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[482]

Many National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations shared with us that they often worry that they will not be able to meet payroll. Some National Sport Organizations may even be forced to shut down if the funding gaps are not addressed. Most of these organizations cannot fulfil 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 sport environments and that sport organizations cannot fulfil their roles of ensuring safe and inclusive sport without an increase in funding. 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 the hiring of qualified coaches and support staff, contributing to improved athlete development and performance.

Additionally, we were informed that athletes and para-athletes are also struggling with insufficient funding and inflationary pressures. Many told us that the funds provided through the Athletes Assistance Program are not enough to support them. We were told that support for para-athletes is often not top of mind. For example, when there was an increase to the Athletes Assistance Program, there was initially no corresponding increase for high-needs athletes supplementary support. This situation was only corrected at the insistence of parasport organizations.

We learned that many cannot afford basic necessities, and some are living below the poverty line. A common concern expressed was that uncertain funding caused significant stress. Many were considering leaving their sport due to inadequate financial support.

On various occasions, we were advised that the financial strain placed on sport organizations is being passed onto sport participants. For example, athlete fees have generally increased. It was also brought to our attention that some athletes are required to provide some of their carding money to their National Sport Organizations. The Commission also learned of many athletes having to pay their own travel costs and fees to attend necessary trial events for national and international tournaments, and having to subsidize their training and nutrition programs. These realities underscore the significant financial challenges experienced by Canada's high-performance

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482 "Scarcity behind the medals: Canada's Olympic sport facing funding crisis", *CBC News* (February 5, 2025), online: <www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics/canada-national-sport-organizations-running-deficits-1.7451792>.

athletes. These challenges, which are powerful disincentives, impede access to high-quality sporting competition and represent costs that may be prohibitive for many.[483]

Although 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,[484] significant financial pressures continue to exist for all high-performance athletes, including para-athletes.

Finally, some participants suggested that Canada may not be investing in sport to the same extent as other sport leading countries. We were advised for example that, in Australia, sport represents nearly 0.09% (624 million AUD) of the federal Australia budget in 2022-2023[485] which coincides with a contribution of sport to the country's Gross Domestic Product in the amount of $26 billion (AUD).[486] This amounts to approximately 1% of the Australian total Gross Domestic Product.[487]

Funding priorities

On various occasions, we were told the federal government funding allocation disproportionality prioritizes winning medals and high-performance athletes, as opposed to increasing sport participation.

Similarly, as previously explained, 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 the final decision on funding allocation, it was suggested that Own the Podium had an inordinate influence and authority over National Sport Organizations. A common sentiment was that Own the Podium is responsible for the emphasis on medals for funding and the culture of "winning at all cost." However, some we spoke to felt the focus on winning was the product of the federal government's decisions.

Critics of a performance-based model for funding noted that when the focus is on winning, it becomes the only measure of success. This can come at the expense of other values, including a willingness to report and address allegations of maltreatment and abuse. Many we spoke with expressed concern that the culture of "winning

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483 "Scarcity behind the medals: Canada's Olympic sport facing funding crisis", *CBC News* (February 5, 2025), online: <www.cbc.ca/sports/olympics/canada-national-sport-organizations-running-deficits-1.7451792>.

484 Government of Canada, News Release, "Minister Qualtrough announces major funding boost for Canada's high-performance athletes" (October 11, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2024/10/minister-qualtrough-announces-major-funding-boost-for-canadas-high-performance-athletes.html>.

485 In 2022-2023, the Australian government invested $624 million of its $653.8 billion budget in sport. (The Commonwealth of Australia, "Part 1: Australian Government Budget Outcome 2022-2023" (n.d.) at 3, online (pdf):<https://archive.budget.gov.au/2022-23-october/fbo/download/01_part_1.pdf> and The Commonwealth of Australia, "Budget October 2022-23, Budget Strategy and Outlook, Budget Paper No. 1" (October 25, 2022) at 194, online (pdf): <https://archive.budget.gov.au/2022-23-october/bp1/download/bp1_2022-23.pdf>.)

486 Statista, "Australia: sports and recreation industry financial figures 2023" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1193701/australia-sports-and-recreation-industry-financial-figures/>.

487 In 2023, the Australian Gross Domestic Product was approximately 1,725.46 billion USD and the amount contributed by sport was approximately 17.16 billion USD. (Statista, "Australia: sports and recreation industry financial figures 2023" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1193701/australia-sports-and-recreation-industry-financial-figures/>.)

at all costs" fostered an environment where victims, survivors and witnesses of abuse and maltreatment were silenced. We were also advised that many were afraid to report maltreatment to Sport Canada and Own the Podium, fearing they would lose their funding.

Although Own the Podium has shifted their focus to supporting Olympic and Paralympic athletes in "winning well," many were skeptical that the 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.

With this in mind, we heard a broad consensus that it was time to shift funding priorities to be more inclusive and focused on increasing participation in sport. Many expressed a desire for increased support for community physical activity and sport to be more inclusive of a range of participants. 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.

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 not enough given the increasing cost of hosting the games due to inflation. It was also noted that provinces and territories should increase their investments to ensure the sustainability of these games.

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 are not providing adequate support for Indigenous people living in urban areas.

Short-term funding and cash flow challenges

Overall, a critical issue 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.

With respect to targeted or special project funding, the Commission was informed of significant concerns about its temporary nature. Although sport organizations very much welcomed receiving funding to address issues such as diversity, equity and inclusion, Indigenous sport or safe sport, many noted that short-term funding was an inappropriate means to address these issues. These issues are long-term priorities and require sustained, core funding so organizations can make 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 only told that new funds were available shortly before the fiscal year end, and that they were required to spend the money in a matter of weeks. This practice undercuts the organizations' ability to plan and spend funds responsibly.

It was suggested that a clear, long-term strategic policy is needed to provide greater certainty and stability to the sport system. This policy should serve as the foundation for clearly articulated funding criteria for core, multi-year funding. It was further suggested that a regular funding schedule be established to ensure that sport organizations receive their funding on a consistent and timely basis.

Other sources of funding

Many participants expressed that the federal government needs to diversify its sources of revenue to sustain federal funding for sport. A variety of proposals were shared during our engagement activities. Some suggested that the existing funds within multiple ministries should be redirected to supporting the sport organizations and athletes. Without being exhaustive, some other suggestions were that:

- The Department of Justice 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 the integration and well-being for refugees and newcomers.
- The Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations could invest in sport programs that promote reconciliation efforts.
- The Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat could contribute to sport programs that help address barriers among Indigenous Peoples, racialized communities and religious minorities.
- The Black-led Philanthropic Endowment Fund could provide funding to black-led, black-focused or black-serving sport organizations.

Others suggested looking beyond the federal purse for additional funding for sport. In this regard, many noted the significant potential of sport-betting revenues if dedicated to sport and physical activity. The Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee previously recommended to the House of Common's Standing Committee on Finance that the federal government recognize that federal tax revenues from single sport betting would offset the investments required to stabilize the Canadian sport system.[488] This suggestion was repeated by many during our engagement activities.

488 Canadian Olympic Committee/Canadian Paralympic Committee, "2025 Pre-Budget Brief for Standing Committee on Finance" (2025), online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FINA/Brief/BR13229376/br-external/CanadianOlympicCommittee-e.pdf>.

The Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Committees 2024 Budget Request notes that in 2023, the federal government raised, just in Ontario, over $60 million in Goods and Services Tax revenue from sport betting, and that this figure was project to grow substantially in the coming years.[489] We were advised that provincial and territorial governments receive significant revenues from sport betting. It was also highlighted that many Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations receive funding from provincial and territorial lottery funds.

Additionally, the Commission was informed of other countries who 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, totalling around 400 million USD 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. We were advised that Japan designates three-quarters of its lottery sales profits towards diverse sports projects, with the Sports Promotion Lottery channeling 102 million USD annually into community sport. In the United States, we were informed that Colorado has allocated lottery proceeds to fund recreation space.

We heard a range of opinions about the value and ethics of lottery and sport 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. On the other hand, some felt that given governments have chosen to legalize gambling and lotteries, the tax proceeds derived from such activities might well be dedicated to supporting healthy lifestyle programs, like sport and physical activity programming.

A wide variety of other potential funding sources were noted to the Commission, including 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 sport betting and lotteries.

Beyond expanding governmental funding, it was also suggested that sport organizations should be responsible for finding other sources of funding, as government spending alone cannot sustain the entirety of the sport system. In this respect, we understand that National Sport Organizations have attempted to diversify their revenue sources with varying levels of success.

Most sport organizations are recipients of donations and corporate sponsorships. 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.

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489 Canadian Olympic Committee/Canadian Paralympic Committee, "Budget 2024 Request – National Sport Organizations" (2024) at 3, online (pdf): <https://olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Budget-Request-2024_COC-CPC.pdf>.

It remains that most sport organizations rely largely on government funding and membership fees. We note that many expressed a deep appreciation for the corporations and donors who currently support sport at all levels. Nevertheless, for National Sport Organizations, these other sources of revenue are insufficient to bridge the funding gap caused by the stagnation in federal government contributions.

Application and reporting process

The Commission heard from many organizations about a variety of administrative burdens and the funding challenges that were encountered when applying for funds from Sport Canada. We were informed by participants from all levels of sport that 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.

The perception of many federally funded organizations was 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 the 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 amount of detail and the extensive nature of the application, and more with the fact that the applications were frequently being 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 an additional 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 an unnecessary duplication of efforts by sport organizations.

Monitoring and compliance

Participants shared significant concerns with a perceived lack of monitoring of sport organizations by Sport Canada. They told us that Sport Canada was not providing adequate oversight over funding recipients. In this respect, we understand that Sport Canada reviews the reports submitted by sport organizations in accordance with their contribution agreements before releasing funds. There are also ongoing conversations with sport organizations as a part of the funding cycle regarding their compliance with these agreements.

Provincial, territorial and grassroots levels of sport

With respect to funding at the provincial, territorial and grassroots level of sport, many 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 organizations that are 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 the availability and affordability of programming, as additional costs are often passed on to families through memberships and fees.

Provincial and territorial governments also noted that sport is becoming increasingly expensive and unattainable for many. Even where registration is affordable, the high cost of the equipment can pose challenges to participation.

FUNDING IN THE SPORT SYSTEM: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Funding for National Sport Organizations: preliminary findings

Based on our engagement with members of the Canadian sport system, recent studies and reports, and our own independent review, there is no doubt that National Sport Organizations are facing a financial crisis. The core funding for National Sport Organizations provided by the federal government has been frozen since 2005, and it goes without saying that the cost of living has dramatically increased since then. The extensive research into the financial health of National Sport Organizations, which the Commission received, confirms that these organizations are suffering significant financial hardship.

An examination of Canada's spending in sport is critical. In 2022-2023, approximately 0.082% ($327.1 million) of the Government of Canada's budget was allocated to sport.[490] At the provincial and territorial level, on average, less than 0.1% of total government budgets are allocated to sport and recreation.

The Commission also recognizes that it is important to consider how Canada compares to other countries in terms of its investment in sport, particularly in light of participants suggesting that Canada may not be investing in sport to the same extent as other sport leading countries. The Commission will further address this issue in its Final Report.

Almost all National Sport Organizations depend on federal support to fulfill their leadership responsibilities for their sport. These responsibilities include providing professional development for coaches, selecting and managing of 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 by additional sources is insufficient to bridge the funding gap. As a result, sport organizations are often left with shrinking budgets and growing deficits.

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490 In 2022-2023, the Government of Canada's proposed budget was $397.58 billion CAD (p. I-3) of which approximately $327.1 million was allocated to sport (p. II -59). Canada, "2022-23 Estimates: Parts I and II The Government Expenditure Plan and Main Estimates" (2022) at I-3, II-59, online (pdf): <www.canada.ca/content/dam/tbs-sct/documents/planned-government-spending/main-estimates/2022-23/estimates-eng.pdf >; Statistics Canada, "Culture and sport gross domestic (GDP) as a share of the total economy, 2023" (last modified June 2, 2025), online: <www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250602/t001a-eng.htm>.

Additionally, National Sport Organizations are facing increasing demands. They are tasked with creating safer 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 contributes to the safe sport crisis and hinders the ability of National Sport Organizations to fulfill their basic functions. It negatively affects the accessibility and quality of the programs. In the face of this funding crisis, many organizations have had to reduce programs and activities. Some may even be forced to cease operating entirely if the funding gaps are not addressed.

Moreover, there is a need for greater certainty in funding. The current funding model is short-term, ad hoc, and offers limited visibility. This model makes it difficult for sport organizations to adequately plan and expend their funds. Delays in the payment of certain funding programs further increase these difficulties.

We recognize that the federal government has taken positive steps to improve the application process. However, more needs to be done. The funding applications that sport organizations must complete are complex, not user-friendly, costly, and time-consuming. There is also a significant amount of duplicated efforts for sport organizations applying to multiple federal programs, as most programs require separate applications.

The complicated nature of these processes increases the administrative burden on sport organizations, their staff, and volunteers, who are already under significant strain. Furthermore, some programs have different reporting requirements and processes, adding further administrative burdens and challenges to the search for additional funding.

There is a lack of adequate monitoring and oversight of sport organizations receiving federal funding through the Sport Support Program. Despite the creation of the 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 the conditions of their funding agreements, including those that require the implementation of good governance practices. We also heard that sport organizations are using funds for reasons other than the designated purposes.

Fundamentally, it is essential to have confidence that the oversight of federally funded organizations also involves appropriate levels of monitoring or auditing. It is also important that sport organizations understand their responsibility and, most importantly, comply with the conditions of funding, including requirements related to governance and safe sport.

As detailed below, our preliminary recommendations for funding seek to:

- urgently increase the core funding to National Sport Organizations and national parasport organizations
- centralize the sources of federal funding
- develop a long-term funding strategy for sport
- improve the application process, and its and auditing monitoring processes
- increase funding to provinces and territories for the purpose of improving safe sport

Timing of Funding for National Sport Organizations: preliminary findings

It is clear to the Commission that there is an urgent need for increased funding to support National Sport Organizations. The fact that core funding for National Sport Organizations has not increased has contributed to a financial crisis. As previously noted above, the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee requested, on behalf of 63 National Sport Organizations, a $144 million annual increased 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.[491]

We heard that an immediate injection of funds is required for federally funded sport organizations to be able to fulfil their mandates. It is important to realize that the underfunding of the sport system has contributed to the safe sport crisis. Appropriate funds are required for sport organizations to create safe sport environments by, for example, implementing governance best practices, developing safe sport education and training programs for their participants, implementing screening procedures, and introducing mechanisms to address maltreatment. Providing appropriate support to federally funded sport organizations is essential to protect the safety of everyone involved in the sport system. A safe sport system benefits society at large; an unsafe one poses a threat to all.

In our view, there is an urgent need for an injection of funds to ensure that National Sport Organizations can continue operating. This need is especially pressing for winter sports, given the upcoming Olympics and Paralympics Winter Games in 2026. This injection of funds should, among other things, take into consideration the impact of global factors on National Sport Organizations, such as inflation, tariffs, and international exchange rates.

As previously discussed in Chapter 4, the Commission acknowledges the unique circumstances of parasport organizations. We recognize that additional costs are involved in parasport to meet the unique needs of these athletes. Therefore, we believe that additional funding should be allocated to National Parasport Organizations.

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491 Canadian Olympic Committee/Canadian Paralympic Committee, "2025 Pre-Budget Brief for Standing Committee on Finance" (2025) at 2, online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FINA/Brief/BR13229376/br-external/CanadianOlympicCommittee-e.pdf>.

Additionally, the amount of funding required to support sport organizations and to achieve long-term priorities, such as improving safe sport, will change as the financial landscape and the needs of these organizations evolve. A regular, ongoing analysis of the effectiveness of government funding across the Canadian sport system would provide the federal government with crucial information to determine whether government funding is achieving its intended objectives and if it aligns with the current needs of the sport system.

While it is clear that the sport system is underfunded, increasing funding is not a silver bullet. Money, by itself, will not resolve all the underlying issues in the Canadian sport system. All involved in the sport system have a responsibility and duty to carefully review their funding allocation and spending practices. This certainly applies to National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes receiving federal funding. It is important that these organizations seek efficiencies within their own organizations and across the sport system.

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 believe it should explore alternative revenue sources that can be directly invested into the sport system. During our engagement activities, the proposal to invest taxation revenues generated from sport betting and lotteries was frequently suggested. We further note that the federal government has previously used the funds from a lottery ticket scheme to raise money for the sport sector.[492]

In addition, national-level sport organizations should be creative in diversifying their revenue streams, all while ensuring that increased costs are not passed on to sport participants or volunteers. This includes exploring opportunities for partnerships, collaborations, and sponsorships. 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.

492 The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Lottery" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/lottery>.

Funding for National Sport Organizations: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

10. The Government of Canada urgently increase the core funding allocated to National Sport Organizations under the Sport Support Program to account for inflation since 2005. The funding needs to be adequate to support core operational requirements and address long-term priorities, including improving safe sport.

    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."[493]
11. The Government of Canada allocate additional funding to specifically support National Parasport Organizations.
12. The Government of Canada increase the core funding allocated to National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Centres for Sport and Institutes, and periodically review the core funding allocated to these organizations to determine whether the funding is adequate to support core operational requirements and address long-term priorities.
13. The Government of Canada, following a reasonable grace period, require 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.
14. The Government of Canada study additional sources of government revenue to ensure it has sustainable means to support federally funded sport organizations. These sources of revenue include, but are not limited to, tax revenues from single sport betting.
15. All sport organizations, including National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes, explore and diversify their sources of revenue and examine processes and practices to ensure enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.

493 *House of Commons, Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2025 Budget, Report of the Standing Committee on Finance* (December 2024) (Chair: Peter Fonseca) at 125–126, online: <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FINA/Reports/RP13466781/finarp21/finarp21-e.pdf>.

Centralization of federal funding for sport: preliminary findings

Currently, 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 may double the reporting requirements and potentially result in inconsistencies in governance and oversight.

It is also important to note 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 Commission is of the view that the Centralized Sport Entity (further described in Chapter 6) 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.

Centralization of federal funding for sport: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

16. The Centralized Sport Entity as outlined in Chapter 6, once it is established, be responsible for receiving, allocating, distributing and overseeing all federal sport 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 organizations;
    e. developing and monitoring a compliance and auditing regime to ensure effective use of funds.

Funding application process: preliminary findings

Many participants suggested that the application process and procedures need to be simplified and streamlined to increase the efficiency of the delivery of public funds. This would also serve to reduce the administrative burden on sport organizations.

In this respect, the Commission wishes to acknowledge the recent improvements made to the funding application process by Sport Canada. As described above, 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 sport organizations can apply for multi-year core funding.

Nevertheless, the application process itself remains very long, complicated, and costly for sport organizations that are already under considerable financial and administrative strain. Some noted that a simplified application process would enable sport organizations to focus on fulfilling their mandates rather than constantly seeking financial support. Others suggested that standardizing the applications would make the process easier.

We also wish to highlight that the Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women recommended that the "Government of Canada accelerate its review of the criteria it uses to grant funding to sports organizations [...]."[494]

Funding application process: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

17. The Government of Canada ensure that the funding applications and procedures to receive federal grants and contributions are clear, efficient, and accessible. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.

Monitoring and auditing of funded sport organizations: preliminary findings

Where governments do provide public funds to sport organizations, this money cannot be freely given without oversight and accountability. It is important the Canadians 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. 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.

The Commission believes that improved monitoring and auditing of sport organizations is essential to ensure the appropriate use of funds provided by the federal government. The monitoring and auditing of sport organizations that receive federal funding should be proactive and regular. Such audits should ensure that sport organizations are meeting all the conditions of their contribution agreements, including the implementation of good governance practices as described below in Chapter 7, and the appropriate allocation of public funds. These examinations should also thoroughly assess the financial health and sustainability of funding recipients, the organization operational efficiency, the cost of sport participation, and the degree to which past Sport Canada funding has achieved the desired results.

Without ongoing auditing and accountability, funding designed to advance important objectives like improving safe sport often remains ineffective or misapplied. The effective and efficient monitoring of federally funded sport organizations is fundamental to improving the sport system and safe sport in Canada.

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494 House of Commons, *Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada* (June 2023) (Chair: Karen Vecchio) at 51, online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Reports/RP12528102/feworp07/feworp07-e.pdf>.

Consideration should also be given to the monitoring process itself. The current monitoring process, like the funding application process, can place an unnecessary administrative burden on sport organizations. To help reduce this burden, it was suggested that the monitoring process be standardized and simplified. We heard that this was particularly important for small and medium National Sport Organizations with limited human resources. This could, for example, include annual check-ins and standardized performance metrics. 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 the development of their sport.

Monitoring and auditing of funded sport organizations: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

18. The Government of Canada regularly and proactively monitor and audit federally funded sport organizations. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.
19. The Government of Canada 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 6 once it is established.

Long-term funding strategy for sport and physical activity in Canada: preliminary findings

The Commission is 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.

As noted above, 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. Nevertheless, there is a common perception that the federal government's funding priorities have disproportionately supported high-performance and winning medals, to the detriment of advancing other sport and physical activity priorities that are important for Canadians.

For this reason, many suggested that 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, and that reflects a greater emphasis on health and physical activity. We also heard that evidence-based insights and analysis should directly inform such a policy, its design, implementation and evaluation.

Such a 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.

In this respect, the Commission wishes to highlight the Calls to Action 88 and 90.i. from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 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.[495]

In addition to providing a long-term vision for Canadian sport, the federal government's funding strategy should 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 expressed that the federal government, by its overreliance on project funding, 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 the ability of sport organizations 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 sport 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 is meant 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.

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495 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (Winnipeg: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) at Calls 88, 90 i, online (pdf): <https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf>.

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 the core funding blocks, as referenced under the previous funding framework, were described 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 what is referred to as "binge spending," which limits the ability of sport organizations 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.

Furthermore, the Commission believes that the federal government should use its spending power to influence the development of sport and physical activity programs in Canada. This can be achieved in two ways.

First, the federal government can, and does, attach conditions to the funding it provides to sport organizations and athletes. These conditions are part of contracts referred to as contribution agreements. Second, the federal government can continue to influence the behaviour of sport organizations by carefully considering the criteria it uses to decide who is eligible for funding and how that funding is allocated.

In other chapters of this Report, we have made preliminary recommendations that include the imposition of new funding conditions and evaluation criteria for the allocation of funds to sport organizations that receive federal funding. We believe these recommendations would improve both the sport system and safe sport in Canada. They can be found in the following chapters: Chapter 7, 14 and 17.

Long-term funding strategy for sport and physical activity in Canada: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

20. The Government of Canada develop a comprehensive multi-year and evidence-based funding strategy focussed 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 6 once it is established.
21. 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 6 once it is established.

Funding to provinces and territories: preliminary findings

The sport system is intricate, complex and interconnected. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters, 7, 8 and 16, problems that exist at the national level of sport, such as issues related to the governance of sport organizations and the prevalence of maltreatment, permeate the entire sport system, from the grassroots to the national level.

To meaningfully address these issues and improve the sport system for all Canadians, we believe that all governments need to come together and collaborate to implement innovative and lasting solutions.

The federal government should collaborate with each province and territory to implement measures that improve the sport system and safe sport in every jurisdiction. To achieve this, the federal government should leverage its spending power and increase the funding it provides to the provinces and territories.

In other chapters of this Preliminary Report, we have made preliminary recommendations on the conditions that should be attached to these funds. These conditions aim to harmonize the approach to safe sport and sport governance across the country. In other cases, we have specifically set out the types of provincial and territorial initiatives that should be funded.

Our preliminary recommendations on these matters can be found in:

- Chapter 7 (Governance in sport organizations)
- Chapter 14 (Prevention strategies: education, training and background)
- Chapter 17 (Public registries of sanctioned individuals)

Funding to provinces and territories: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

22. The Government of Canada increase the funding it provides to provinces and territories for the development of sport and physical activity for the purpose of improving the sport system and safe sport in Canada.

CHAPTER 6:
New leadership in Canadian sport: the Centralized Sport Entity

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S LEADERSHIP IN SPORT

Our previous chapters highlighted the confusing array of jurisdictions, accountabilities, governance and information sharing mechanisms among sport entities and oversight of organizations at all levels.

An overwhelming consensus emerged in our conversations with participants that no one is truly leading sport in Canada. Many shared their concerns of a longstanding 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 "issues of the moment." This has led to a lack of clarity, cohesion, and strategic depth in Canada's current sport policy framework. These shortcomings have resulted in inconsistent outcomes and unclear benefits for Canadians, despite significant investments.

The lack of a national strategy for sport and leadership, combined with a reactive approach to sport in Canada, has resulted in the proliferation of National Sport Organizations, Multisport Service Organizations, and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations in an uncoordinated manner. Each of these organizations operates with its own board of directors, chief executive officer or executive director. They each require administrative support, including human resource services, information technology (IT) support, accounting services, translation services, and insurance.

Given the overlapping mandates of sport organizations within the Canadian sport system, the national roles and responsibilities of each sport organization are unclear. These organizations are effectively working in silos. As a result, redundancies, duplication of efforts, misalignment of goals and the inefficient use of resources within the system have been observed.

As outlined in Chapter 5, the core funding to National Sport Organizations has not increased since 2005. This has created an environment in which organizations, often with increasing mandated responsibilities, are competing for support amidst an unchanging pool of funds.

Many organizations and individuals that engaged with the Commission also heavily criticized the current funding's focus on performance and medals. They expressed that the shift to a performance-focussed system placed unhealthy pressure on athletes, coaches, and organizations. It was also observed that this focus on performance shifted funding and organizational priorities towards achieving medals, rather than encouraging a broad, inclusive and accessible culture of physical activity and sport across Canada.

As such, it is not surprising that many individuals and organizations expressed to the Commission that the time is right for a review. They believe that there should be a rebalancing of priorities between high-performance and grassroots sport and physical activity, as part of developing a comprehensive new vision for sport in Canada.

Participants also voiced frustrations with the federal government's funding processes for sport. We frequently heard that Sport Canada often releases funds to sport organizations well into their fiscal year but still requires them to spend these funds before the end of the same period. While this approach to providing supplemental resources may be well intentioned, it can place significant, and sometimes impossible, expectations on already overburdened organizations who must scramble to meet the requirements associated with such funding.

We were advised that ministers are often motivated by short-term political or circumstantial objectives, rather than addressing more strategic longer-term goals. We also understand that delays occur while awaiting ministerial approval for funding. A recurring concern was the changing approaches or visions that often emerge 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.[496] This instability has resulted in a lack of clear direction and vision, causing delays and confusion as priorities are re-examined or re-established.

This was evident, for example, when an initial announcement was released in 2023 stating that National Sport Organizations would be required to fully comply with the Canadian Governance Code by April 1, 2025.[497] In November 2024, a subsequent announcement was made by a different minister stating that only certain governance requirements, rather than the entire Code, would become mandatory conditions for funding. Given the initial announcement, several National Sport Organizations had already dedicated resources and expended significant effort to ensure complete compliance with that Code.

The delayed release of the Canadian Sport Policy serve as another example of the complicated and prolonged processes in the Canadian sport system. The Commission recognizes that time and effort is 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.

It is also important to note that the Sport portfolio has remained an entry-level minister position. In some instances, a Secretary of State or Minister of State holds this portfolio, diminishing its importance at the Cabinet table. For over 20 years, sport has been addressed within the Department of Canadian Heritage, a department responsible for promoting Canadian identity and values and celebrating Canada's history and heritage. Not surprisingly, sport is therefore seen as a vehicle to foster and promote a sentiment of national pride, and high-performance success may become the primary focus, rather than the growth and stewardship of a vibrant national sport system.

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496 House of Commons, "Departments and Roles: 1867 - Today" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://bdp.parl.ca/sites/ParlInfo/default/en_CA/Federal/areasResponsibility?permalink=21089>.

497 Government of Canada, News Release, "Minister St-Onge announces new measures to improve accountability and foster a safe and sustainable culture change in sport" (May 11, 2023), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2023/05/minister-st-onge-announces-new-measures-to-improve-accountability-and-foster-a-safe-and-sustainable-culture-change-in-sport.html>.

CALL FOR A CENTRALIZED SPORT ENTITY

The absence of clear leadership and the lack of a single entity responsible for providing strategic vision and leadership for sport and physical activity in Canada was identified as a significant shortcoming. Throughout our conversations with participants, a compelling need became apparent for a centralized entity, independent from government and political cycles, to provide comprehensive oversight of the national sport and physical activity system.

Participants proposed different models or structures for what we will initially refer to as a Centralized Sport Entity. Various foundational principles for such a structure were identified in discussions, submissions and academic articles. These principles reflect concepts of centralization, autonomy and independence, transparency and accountability, and the importance of a structure grounded in federal legislation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A CENTRALIZED SPORT ENTITY

Given the current lack of leadership and the absence of a comprehensive, cohesive, national strategy for sport and physical activity in Canada, a centralized approach to the development and leadership by and for the sport and physical activity communities in Canada would allow for a dynamic new path forward. The federal government would fund such an entity and retain responsibility for distant oversight.

A centralized entity would allow a thoughtfully creative and transparent approach to policy development. It would lead to better efficiencies, reduce redundancies, and clarify responsibilities by uniting Canada's sport and physical activity organizations that do similar work. This would create a synergy between sport and physical activity programs.

As sport currently resides within a ministerial department, decisions may be motivated by political objectives and data. The importance of an evidence-based approach to decision making in sport and physical activity is fundamental. This approach would be reinforced through a centralized sport entity with greater autonomy and independence from the government. The principles of open and accountable decision-making processes and financial responsibility are also essential to give credibility to any entity and to ensure it maintains public trust and confidence.

Finally, for stability and continuity, consideration should be given to creating an entity that is grounded in legislation. This would ensure a clear mandate and would assist in preventing changes when a new government is elected, or a new minister is appointed.

SPORT MODELS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Before turning to what a Centralized Sport Entity in the Canadian context may look like, we explore the models adopted in other countries. For this Preliminary Report, we considered the models in place in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Each of these jurisdictions has designed their sport system using different models, with varying structures.

As will be discussed below, Australia brings together the responsibility for high-performance sport and broader participation at the national level under one entity. On the other hand, the United Kingdom separates these responsibilities, with a nationwide approach to high-performance and a regional approach to broad participation. New Zealand's approach reflects a mix of both of these models.

Australia

Australia is a federal state 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.[498] 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. The federal government, the states and territories share power 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, 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.[499]

Australia's sport funding mechanisms are 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 located within the Department of Health's Office for Sport which oversees sport development.[500] The Ministry of Sport supervises the Australian Sports Commission responsible for mass sport participation. The mandate of the Commission is to: "[…] lead, support and provide opportunities for all communities to be involved in sport, while growing elite success and representation, inspiring future generations."[501]

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498 Parliament of Australia, "Infosheet 20 – The Australian system of government" (last visited May 30, 2025), online: <www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/House_of_/Powers_practice_and_procedure/00_-_Infosheets/Infosheet_20_-_The_Australian_system_of_government>.

499 Parliamentary Education Office, "Three levels of government: governing Australia" (last visited May 30, 2025), online: <https://peo.gov.au/understand-our-parliament/how-parliament-works/three-levels-of-government/three-levels-of-government-governing-australia>.

500 Project Play Aspen Institute "Australia World's Leading Sport Systems" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://projectplay.org/world-sport-systems/australia#:~:text=The%20Australian%20Government%E2%80%99s%20Ministry%20of%20Sport%2C%20housed%20in,the%20primary%20entity%20responsible%20for%20guiding%20sport%20development.>.

501 Australian Government - Australian Sports Commission, "About Us" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ausport.gov.au/about>.

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.[502] The other, *High Performance 2032+ Sport Strategy*, is focused on high-performance sport.[503] Both strategies fall under the umbrella of the Australian Sports Commission. 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 identified above.

In line with its mandate, the Australian Sports Commission works with various stakeholders to create opportunities from grassroots community level to high performance. These stakeholders include sport institutes and academies, sport clubs, schools, recreation centres, national sport organizations, and the Australian Olympic Committee. The Commission works across the local, state, territorial, and national levels of sport.[504]

The Australian Institute of Sport, which is an element of the Australian Sports Commission, performs a variety of functions, including the development of a sport excellence program, conducting research, providing sport medicine and sport science services, and addressing issues relating to facilities.[505]

The Australian Institute of Sport functions as a hub for sport science and research, with a specific focus on high-performance and serving the needs of national and international-level athletes and teams. Additionally, State Institutes of Sport exist within Australian states and territories, fulfilling similar roles but addressing the needs of athletes within their respective state or territorial structures.[506]

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.[507]

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502 Australian Government - Australian Sports Commission, "Play Well" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ausport.gov.au/playwell>.

503 Australian Government - Australian Sports Commission, "Win Well" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.winwell2032.au/>.

504 Australian Government - Australian Sports Commission, "About Us" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ausport.gov.au/about>; Australian Government - Australian Sports Commission, "Annual Report 2023-24" (September 26, 2024), online (pdf): <www.sportaus.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1165258/Annual-Report-2023-24.pdf>.

505 *Australian Sports Commission Act 1989*, No 12, ss 7,9, online: <www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A03760/latest/text>.

506 Clearinghouse for Sport, "Structure of Australian Sport" (last modified March 19, 2024) at National Institute Network (NIN), online: <www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/kb/structure-of-australian-sport>; Australian Government - Australian Sports Commission, "About us" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ausport.gov.au/about>.

507 Australian Government - Australian Sports Commission, "About us" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ausport.gov.au/about>.

The Australian Sports Commission is a Government Commonwealth Corporate Entity. This means that it is a corporate body with a separate legal personality from the Commonwealth of Australia. It was established through legislation and is subject to the *Public Governance Performance and Accountability* Act.[508] The Australian Sports Commission was created by the *Australian Sports Commission Act, 1989*.[509] This enabling statute prescribes the Commission's objectives, functions and powers, among other things. This statute also has a section outlining the circumstances in which the Minister may give directions to the Commission.[510]

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, decides on allocation of resources and on policy for delegated decisions. The Board is accountable to the Minister for Sport.[511] As a Corporate Commonwealth Entity, the Australian Sports Commission is funded by the Australian Government to support and invest in sport at all levels.[512]

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy. The constitution is mainly un-codified.[513] 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 codified in devolution legislation.[514]

Devolution in the United Kingdom has occurred asymmetrically, meaning that certain regional Parliaments have greater legislative and executive power than others.[515] In general, certain powers are "reserved" to the United Kingdom Parliament, such as defence, foreign affairs, and matters that concern the United Kingdom as a whole.[516]

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508 Australian Government Department of Finance, "Corporate Commonwealth entity (CCE)" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.finance.gov.au/about-us/glossary/pgpa/term-corporate-commonwealth-entity-cce>.

509 *Australian Sports Commission Act 1989*, No 12, online: <www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A03760/latest/text>. Australian Government - Australian Sports Commission, "About us" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ausport.gov.au/about>.

510 *Australian Sports Commission Act 1989*, No 12, s 11, online: <www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A03760/latest/text>.

511 Australian Government - Australian Sports Commission, "About us" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ausport.gov.au/about>.

512 Australian Government - Australian Sports Commission, "About us" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ausport.gov.au/about>.

513 Dorothy Whitelock & Michael Charles Prestwich, "United Kingdom" (last modified May 30, 2025), online: <www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom/Local-government>.

514 UK, House of Commons Library, *Introduction to devolution in the United Kingdom* (research briefing) by David Torrance (May 21, 2024), online: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8599/CBP-8599.pdf>.

515 UK, Civil Service, *Introduction to Devolution* (2013), online: <assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c37319aed915d731281fe13/IntroductionToDevolution.pdf>.

516 UK, House of Commons Library, *Reserved matters in the United Kingdom* (research briefing) by David Torrance (June 20, 2022), online: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8544/CBP-8544.pdf>.

Matters devolved to regional governments include health and social services, education, economic development, and agriculture.[517] Further certain powers have also been given to local and city administrations, allowing greater control over local administration. These powers also vary by region, with powers split differently 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.[518]

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.[519] The Department's sport policy promotes sport from an early age and encourages sport throughout life.[520]

UK Sport, a government arm's length body that serves all of the United Kingdom, is responsible for high-performance sport. This entity has no direct involvement in community or school sport.[521] UK Sport is funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and The National Lottery.[522] Its primary mission is to lead and support Olympic and Paralympic sport in the UK, ensuring British athletes achieve sustained world-class success.[523] As such, UK Sport works closely with the British Olympic Association.[524] UK Sport is accountable to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.[525]

In contrast, promoting and implementing the sport policy from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport 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. Each of these entities, established in varying ways, is responsible for, among other things, the promotion of mass participation in their respective countries.[526]

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517 UK, Civil Service, *Introduction to Devolution* (2013), online: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c37319aed915d731281fe13/IntroductionToDevolution.pdf>.

518 Dorothy Whitelock & Michael Charles Prestwich, "United Kingdom" (last modified May 30, 2025), online: <http://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom/Local-government>.

519 Project Play Aspen Institute, "United Kingdom World's Leading Sport systems" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://projectplay.org/world-sport-systems/united-kingdom>.

520 UK Sport, "Our Funders" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/about-us/our-funders>.

521 GOV.UK, "About Us - UK Sport" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-sport/about>.

522 GOV.UK, "About Us - UK Sport" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-sport/about>.

523 GOV.UK, "About Us - UK Sport" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-sport/about>.

524 Project Play Aspen Institute, "United Kingdom World's Leading Sport systems" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://projectplay.org/world-sport-systems/united-kingdom>.

525 GOV.UK, "About Us - UK Sport" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-sport/about>.

526 Sport England, "About us" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportengland.org/about-us#whoweare-12165>; Sport Wales, "What is Sport Wales?" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sport.wales/what-is-sport-wales/>; Sportscotland, "Who we are"(last modified June 10, 2024), online: <https://sportscotland.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are>; Sport Northern Ireland, "About Us" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportni.net/about-us/>.

New Zealand

New Zealand is a constitutional monarchy. It is established through various statutes and conventions. New Zealand does not have states or provincial governments. New Zealand's 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.[527]

The central government is responsible for areas such as housing, welfare, education, health, justice, and immigration.[528] The powers of local governments are defined by various legislation. Their powers include providing local services, levying of property taxes, process building and environmental consents, and other regulatory tasks.[529] Local governments are independent of, but subordinate to, the central government.[530]

Sport New Zealand is the Crown entity responsible for promoting, encouraging, and supporting physical recreation and sport in the country.[531] It was established by the *Sport and Recreation New Zealand Act.* Sport New Zealand also includes High Performance Sport New Zealand, which leads the high-performance sport system, supporting 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.[532]

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 of Directors. The Board sets and guides the Sport New Zealand strategic direction. The board is also ultimately responsible for implementing sport strategies that aim to improve physical activity and well-being. Sport New Zealand has 2 main strategic directions: *Every Body Active: strategic direction 2020-2032,*[533] focused on broad body activity, and *High-Performance Sport New Zealand 2025-2028 Strategic Plan*, focussed on high-performance.[534]

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527 New Zealand Immigration, "Central Government" (last modified July 14, 2022), online: <www.live-work.immigration.govt.nz/live-in-new-zealand/history-government/central-government>.

528 New Zealand Immigration, "Central Government" (last modified July 14, 2022), online: <www.live-work.immigration.govt.nz/live-in-new-zealand/history-government/central-government>.

529 John Wilson, "Nation and Government – Local Government" (last modified September 1, 2016), online: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/nation-and-government/page-8>.

530 New Zealand Immigration, "Central Government" (last modified July 14, 2022), online: <www.live-work.immigration.govt.nz/live-in-new-zealand/history-government/central-government>.

531 Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa, "Who we are and what we do" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://sportnz.org.nz/about/who-we-are/>.

532 High Performance Sport New Zealand, "About HPSNZ" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://hpsnz.org.nz/about-hpsnz/about-us/>.

533 Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa, "Every Body Active Strategic Direction 2020-2023, Strategic Plan 2020-2024" (last visited June 2025), online (pdf): <https://sportnz.org.nz/media/1160/strategy-doc-201219.pdf>.

534 High Performance Sport New Zealand, "Strategic Plan 2025-2028"(last visited June 2025), online (pdf): <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c37319aed915d731281fe13/IntroductionToDevolution.pdf>.

The national government funds Sport New Zealand to promote play, active recreation and sport, with a focus on system leadership and national well-being.[535] At the same time, New Zealand is comprised of 11 regional councils and 67 territorial authorities.

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 recreational facilities. They are recognized as encouraging locally led decision-making and community development.[536]

CENTRALIZED SPORT ENTITY: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Centralized Sport Entity: preliminary findings

As outlined in this chapter, the "system" in its current form is rife with inefficiencies and redundancy. This is evident in the operations of National Sport Organizations and national Multisport Service Organizations that each require, for example, a board of directors, legal services, human resources, accounting services and information technology (IT) services.

There is also a clear lack of consistent policy direction, which leads to confusion. As previously described in this report, 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, has jurisdiction related to the encouragement, promotion and development of sport.[537] Meanwhile, Health Canada, through the Public Health Agency of Canada, aims to improve the physical activity levels of those living in Canada through various initiatives.[538] In addition, the number of National Sport Organizations is increasing, alongside a multitude of national Multisport Service Organizations that often have similar mandates.

While establishing a Centralized Sport Entity would require strong governmental leadership, we believe the time is right to bring a renewed focus, energy, expertise, and commitment to sport and physical activity in the country.

As such, the Commission is of the view that a Centralized Sport Entity should be created. In addition, given the interdependence between sport and physical activity, they should reside under the same Government Department. The interdependence of sport and physical activity is illustrated by the fact that both are addressed

535 Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa, "Who we are and what we do" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://sportnz.org.nz/about/who-we-are/>.

536 Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa, "Locally Led Approach" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://sportnz.org.nz/resources/locally-led-approach/>.

537 *Department of Canadian Heritage Act*, SC 1995, c 11, s 4(2)(f), online: <www.laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-17.3/>.

538 Government of Canada, "The Public Health Agency of Canada 2024-25 Departmental Plan" (last modified August 20, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/public-health/corporate/transparency/corporate-management-reporting/reports-plans-priorities/2024-2025-departmental-plan.html>.

in one statute: the *Physical Activity and Sport Act.* In our view, they must be integrated to operate effectively and to ensure a consistent approach from the grassroots to the national level.

Centralized Sport Entity: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

23. The Government of Canada integrate the functions of sport and physical activity under the same Department.
24. The Government of Canada create a Centralized Sport Entity to provide strategic leadership, coordination, administration and oversight of sport and physical activity across the Canadian sport system. It would also ensure the effective coordination and collaboration of the range of Canadian sport organizations currently serving Canadians and the sport community.
25. The Centralized Sport Entity develop, deliver and oversee a cohesive national sport and physical activity strategy with clearly defined priorities. This function, currently held by Sport Canada, should be carried out in collaboration with interested groups, including the provinces and territories, Indigenous groups, athletes and sport and physical activity organizations.
26. The Centralized Sport Entity be responsible for:
    a. Developing and implementing a national coaching certification.
    b. Supporting research relevant to the health and well-being of Canadians, and to the success of sport and physical activity and programs under its jurisdiction.

    These responsibilities are currently performed by other Multisport Service Organizations.
27. The Centralized Sport Entity be responsible for functions and responsibilities related to funding for sport and physical activity by the Government of Canada, the governance of sport organizations, safe sport, as well as a national parasport strategy. The specific elements of these responsibilities are described in other chapters of this report.

MODEL OPTIONS FOR THE CENTRALIZED SPORT ENTITY

A Centralized Sport Entity could take several different forms. Participants to our engagement activities proposed different model options for this new entity, namely: a ministerial department; a ministerial departmental agency; a crown corporation; a not-for-profit organization created by federal legislation; or a not-for-profit third-party delivery organization. We discuss these options in turn below, comparing their varying levels of independence from government and how they would be created.

Ministerial department

Ministerial departments, otherwise referred to as departments, operate under the control and direction of a minister who receives their authority for the management and direction of the department by statute.[539]

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 Associate Deputy Minister.

Although the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages is responsible for the Department of Canadian Heritage, their authority related to sport has been delegated to the Secretary of State (Sport).[540] With regards to sport and physical activity, these responsibilities were respectively allotted to the Secretary of State (Sport) and the Minister of Health.[541]

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, either because of the specialized skills involved in their work, or because they perform regulatory functions which must remain free of political influence.

In general, such organizations are created by legislation that set out their mandate, authorities and organizational structure.[542] Some agencies are structured on a corporate model in which decision-making powers are vested in a board or commission.[543] Examples of departmental agencies include the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Crown Corporation

Crown corporations are not-for-profit government organizations created by federal legislation, but they operate at arm's length of the government.[544] Examples of Crown Corporations include the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Telefilm Canada and the Canada Council for the Arts.

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539 Government of Canada, "Guide Book for Heads of Agencies: Operations, Structures and Responsibilities in the Federal Government" (last modified February 22, 2018) at 1. Departments, online: <www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/services/publications/guide-book-heads-agencies-operations-structures-responsibilities-federal-government.html>.

540 Government of Canada, "Cabinet" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.pm.gc.ca/en/cabinet>; PC 2025-0470, (2025), online: <https://orders-in-council.canada.ca/attachment.php?attach=47293&lang=en>.

541 PC 2025-0494, (2025), online: <https://orders-in-council.canada.ca/attachment.php?attach=47313&lang=en>.

542 Government of Canada, "Guide Book for Heads of Agencies: Operations, Structures and Responsibilities in the Federal Government" (last modified February 22, 2018) at 2. Agencies, Boards and Commissions, online: <www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/services/publications/guide-book-heads-agencies-operations-structures-responsibilities-federal-government.html>.

543 Government of Canada, "Guide Book for Heads of Agencies: Operations, Structures and Responsibilities in the Federal Government" (last modified February 22, 2018) at 2. Agencies, Boards and Commissions, online: <www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/services/publications/guide-book-heads-agencies-operations-structures-responsibilities-federal-government.html>.

544 Government of Canada, "Guide Book for Heads of Agencies: Operations, Structures and Responsibilities in the Federal Government" (last modified February 22, 2018) at 3. Crown Corporations, online: <www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/services/publications/guide-book-heads-agencies-operations-structures-responsibilities-federal-government.html>.

The Canada Council for the Arts is Canada's national arts funder. It offers a broad range of grants to Canadian artists and arts organizations.[545] It is worth noting that the creation of the Canada Council for the Arts was a recommendation made by the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences led by the Right Honourable Vincent Massey.[546] A parallel to sport can be drawn from the recommendation resulting from this Commission because, like sport, culture is a matter of shared jurisdiction between the federal and the provincial and territorial legislatures. In creating the Canada Council for the Arts, the federal government ascertained their 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.

Most Crown Corporations operate in an industrial, commercial or financial environment. This often requires them to have more flexibility in financial and management matters compared to other government bodies. 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.[547]

While this model provides maximum decision-making autonomy from government, Crown Corporations remain accountable to Parliament for the conduct of its affairs. They do so by reporting to the Minister assigned to oversee them. This Minister has authority to approve the corporation's corporate plan and budgets, and is responsible for recommending potential board members to the Governor in Council.[548]

While these entities operate at arm's length of government, they are subject to the government's human resource and administrative policies that apply to departments.[549]

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 of 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.*[550]

545 See Canada Council for the Arts, "Grants" (last consulted June 13, 2025), online: <https://canadacouncil.ca/funding/grants>.

546 Library and Archives Canada, " Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts" (1951)", ch XXV, par 379, online: <www.collectionscanada.ca/massey/h5-452-e.html>.

547 Government of Canada, "Guide Book for Heads of Agencies: Operations, Structures and Responsibilities in the Federal Government" (last modified February 22, 2018) at 3. Crown Corporations, online: <www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/services/publications/guide-book-heads-agencies-operations-structures-responsibilities-federal-government.html>.

548 Government of Canada, "Guide Book for Heads of Agencies: Operations, Structures and Responsibilities in the Federal Government" (last modified February 22, 2018) at 3. Crown Corporations, online: <www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/services/publications/guide-book-heads-agencies-operations-structures-responsibilities-federal-government.html>.

549 Government of Canada, "Guide Book for Heads of Agencies: Operations, Structures and Responsibilities in the Federal Government" (last modified February 22, 2018) at 3. Crown Corporations, online: <www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/services/publications/guide-book-heads-agencies-operations-structures-responsibilities-federal-government.html>.

550 *Physical Activity and Sport Act*, SC 2003, c 2, s 9, online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/P-13.4/>.

Not-for-profit third-party delivery organization

Another model that is used in some cases is a third-party delivery arrangement model. This approach is usually chosen when specialized knowledge specific to the programs is required.

In this context, a third-party organization enters into a contribution agreement with the Department, receives funds and disburses the funds to one or multiple ultimate recipients in compliance with the contribution agreement. Under this model, the third party would be created to respond to a need identified by the federal government and be accountable to the federal government department it entered into a contribution agreement with.

This model provides more flexibility to the entity in terms of determining its mandate. It also allows for collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, as they 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 the Sport Canada's Sport Support Program, as well as other entities like the Canada Media Fund.

MODEL FOR A CENTRALIZED SPORT ENTITY: PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

On one end of the spectrum of options, we find the current model where sport sits within the Ministerial Department. At the opposite end is the Not-for-Profit Third-Party Delivery Organization, which receives government funding to achieve outcomes outlined in a contribution agreement.

It is evident that the current model has proven ineffective. We also note that the strict not-for-profit model, which is not rooted in legislation, raises concerns about consistent and stable funding. The situation in which many National Sport Organizations find themselves in serves as an example of this instability.

In considering these options, the Commission is of the view that it is crucial to find the right balance between ensuring independence for decision-making on sport-specific issues, while also accounting for government policy direction and oversight.

As a result, the Commission is of the view that consideration should be given to a Centralized Sport Entity in the form of either a Crown Corporation or a Not-for-Profit created by federal legislation. This federal legislation could provide for the responsibilities of the Centralized Sport Entity.

In addition, this legislation must also clearly define the circumstances in which the Minister responsible for the entity can intervene. As seen in other jurisdictions, ministerial interventions may be limited to exceptional circumstances where the entity demonstrated it was unable to resolve an issue and that intervention by the assigned Minister is required in the public's interest. This mechanism further provides for a balance between independence from government and decision-making powers.

The Commission looks forward to discussing these preliminary recommendations to find a unique, made in Canada solution that will bring a united vision and central leadership to physical activity and sport across the country.

CHAPTER 7:
Governance in sport organizations

URGENT NEED FOR GOVERNANCE REFORM

Many of the issues that led to the Commission's creation reflect a fundamental failure of governance in the sport system. We also noted that many individuals we engaged with highlighted these same governance shortcomings.

While past efforts have been made to address governance deficiencies, mainly at the level of National Sport Organizations, it is clear that governance is an issue at all levels of the sporting world. This includes National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and community sport groups, clubs and leagues.

Many National and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations are complex entities, with some managing significant budgets. To operate their organizations, National Sport Organizations rely heavily on volunteers in various roles, including as board members. These volunteers often join with backgrounds as former athletes, parents of athletes, or sport officials without any governance experience or expertise.

In particular, there is typically insufficient awareness of the complexities surrounding the needs of children and youth in vulnerable situations. Similarly, there is often a limited understanding of the need to address allegations of maltreatment and abuse within their organizations.

While it is recognized that volunteers play a critical and valuable role in the sport system and make an incalculable "in-kind" financial contribution to the sector, they are not always well versed in the principles of good governance. They typically lack the expertise, skills and training to be effective decision-makers, especially when overseeing increasingly complex issues and challenges within sport organizations.

In the current system, governments as funders may establish governance guidelines as stand-alone tools or as conditions of funding. Therefore, sport organizations may have to follow governance rules and requirements attached to their funding agreements. They must also adhere to the requirements of either federal, provincial or territorial not-for-profit corporation legislation. However, these not-for-profit legislations only provide basic statutory requirements with respect to governance, such as key duties for directors, and the duties and rights of members.

A further challenge to appropriate governance and oversight in the sport system is the emergence and growth of private clubs, leagues and organizations. These entities fall outside the traditional sport system and are beyond the reach of National and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

Therefore, it is not surprising that there has been a significant lack of consistency surrounding approaches to governance in the sporting world. In addition, there has been little to no effective monitoring of compliance with existing governance rules. These factors have led to a sport system in which poor governance practices and inadequate governance structures led to the mishandling of abuse, maltreatment and safe sport complaints.

In this section we will outline:

- the current governance framework and generally accepted practices in the Canadian sport system
- good governance practices emanating from studies and reports on good governance within the sport system
- the issues identified within the current sport governance framework
- possible solutions to address these governance gaps

WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

As stated in the 2022 Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review by the Honourable Thomas Cromwell, the term "governance" has many definitions and "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."[551] 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 and the Governance Centre of Excellence, an initiative of the Ontario Hospital Association, responsible for the Guide to Good Governance. However, these recognized practices are not consistently reflected within the sport sector which appears to have fallen behind and is operating under obsolete standards.

551 The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 50, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>.

CURRENT GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Legislation

While the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act* is the governing legislation for all federally funded National Sport Organizations, it only provides a broad foundation for sport organizations' governance. It is also important to note that the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* offers no direction whatsoever on governance for sport organizations. As a result, since the governance requirements provided in legislation are rudimentary, it is necessary to look beyond these laws to find guidance on governance.

Generally accepted best practices

Generally accepted best practices for not-for-profit organizations are outlined in the Guide to Good Governance.[552] This Guide was referenced by the Honourable Thomas Cromwell in his 2022 Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review, and by other governance experts. It provides specific and practical guidelines that help not-for-profit organizations implement governance practices best suited to their needs. At the core of these accepted best practices and guidelines lies 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.

Policies and frameworks

The Canadian Sport Governance Code and Sport Canada's 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. Their task was to review governance codes of other nations, research governance best practices in sport and discuss the approach to drafting a code and best practices to be included in a Canadian Sport Governance Code.

Broad engagement efforts were made to elaborate and develop the Code.[553] A series of meetings with National Sport Organizations were held to seek their feedback and input.[554] Following this engagement phase, the Canadian Sport Governance Code was released online in April 2021.[555]

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552 Anne Corbett & James M Mackay, *Guide to Good Governance: Not-for-Profit and Charitable Organizations: Fourth Edition* (Ontario: Ontario Hospital Association, 2025), online (pdf): <www.oha.com/Legislative%20and%20Legal%20Issues%20Documents1/Guide%20to%20Good%20Governance%2c%20Fourth%20Edition.pdf>.

553 Canadian Olympic Committee, *Canadian Sport Governance Code* (Toronto: COO, April 2021), online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Canadian_Sports_Governance_Code.pdf>.

554 Canadian Olympic Committee, *Canadian Sport Governance Code* (Toronto: COO, April 2021), online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Canadian_Sports_Governance_Code.pdf>; Canadian Olympic Committee, "COC-NSO Sport Governance Code Webinars" (December 3, 2020, and January 6, 2021), online: <https://nso.olympic.ca/coc-nso-sport-governance-code/>.

555 Canadian Olympic Committee, *Canadian Sport Governance Code* (Toronto: COO, April 2021), online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Canadian_Sports_Governance_Code.pdf>.-

To support the implementation of the Canadian Sport Governance Code, the Canadian Olympic Committee also prepared the Good Governance Framework.[556] This framework links the principles of the Code to the Sport Canada Governance Report Card Matrix. The he Sport Canada Governance Report Card has since been discontinued but will be discussed in the section below.

The Canadian Sport Governance Code aims to enhance governance practices within National Sport Organizations and improve accountability, transparency, and ethical conduct in Canadian sport. The Code was structured to apply to all National Sports Organizations representing sports on the Olympic Program. A statement in the Code encourages all other National Sport Organizations to adopt the governance requirements it sets out.[557]

The Canadian Sport Governance Code allows National Sport Organizations with fewer than four full-time employees to adopt alternative standards in some areas, although full compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code is encouraged.[558]

All National Sport Organizations covered by the Canadian Sport Governance Code are governed by the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*.[559] It is the Commission's understanding that applying the Code to Olympic Program National Sport Organizations was intended as a first step to harmonize governance practices, starting with this targeted group of National Sport Organizations.

In May 2023, an initial announcement was made by the former Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec.[560] This announcement stated 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.

Many National Sport Organizations began making necessary changes to comply with the Code by April 1, 2025. However, as discussed above, in November 2024, following a change in minister, the Sport Integrity Framework, a revised set of guidelines, was released. This Framework indicated that the "good governance principles" would be integrated into existing accountability mechanisms for federally funded organizations. This meant that the Canadian Sport Governance Code would not be made mandatory for all federally funded National Sports Organizations.[561]

556 Canadian Olympic Committee, "Good Governance Framework" (September 1, 2021), online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Good-Governance-Framework-Sept-2021-1.pdf>.

557 Canadian Olympic Committee, *Canadian Sport Governance Code* (Toronto: COO, April 2021) at Application, online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Canadian_Sports_Governance_Code.pdf>.

558 Canadian Olympic Committee, *Canadian Sport Governance Code* (Toronto: COO, April 2021) at Application, online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Canadian_Sports_Governance_Code.pdf>.

559 Canadian Olympic Committee, *Canadian Sport Governance Code* (Toronto: COO, April 2021) at A, online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Canadian_Sports_Governance_Code.pdf>.

560 Government of Canada, News Release, "Minister St-Onge announces new measures to improve accountability and foster a safe and sustainable culture change in sport" (May 11, 2023), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2023/05/minister-st-onge-announces-new-measures-to-improve-accountability-and-foster-a-safe-and-sustainable-culture-change-in-sport.html>.

561 Government of Canada, "Sport Integrity Framework" (last modified April 15, 2025) at Governance, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/safety-integrity-ethics-sport/sport-integrity-framework.html>.

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 National Sport Organizations were left to explain to their members why all this work had been undertaken.

The Government maintains that the Governance Code, while not mandatory, remains a source of established best practices in sport organization governance. As of April 2025, federally funded National Sport Organizations must only meet five fundamental governance requirements.[562] These are part of the evaluation criteria for eligibility for the Sport Support Program (details on Sport Canada funding programs, processes, eligibility criteria and evaluation criteria are discussed in Chapter 5).[563] Federally funded national Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres have an additional year, until April 2026, to meet the same requirements.[564]

The 5 fundamental governance requirements are:

1. A Business Plan/Strategy that provides mission/mandate, vision, values, objectives, roles and responsibilities of 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.[565]

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562 Government of Canada, "Sport Integrity Framework" (last modified April 15, 2025) at Governance, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/safety-integrity-ethics-sport/sport-integrity-framework.html>.

563 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024) at Evaluation Criteria, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a13>.

564 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024) at Evaluation Criteria, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a13>.

565 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024) at Evaluation Criteria, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a13>.

It is worth noting that all but one governance requirement for the Sport Support Program's eligibility criteria are reflected in the Canadian Sport Governance Code. The single requirement missing from the Code is the need to establish a discipline and appeal policies and procedures that includes access to independent dispute resolution through the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada.

The Sport Canada Governance Report Card and the Program Risk Assessment Tool (PRAM)

In 2019, Sport Canada developed the Sport Canada Governance Report Card as an oversight mechanism under the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework. The purpose of the report cards was to assess how federally funded sport organizations were aligning 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.[566] The second phase, issued in 2021, focused on good governance principles.[567] Organizations were required to submit evidence of compliance, receiving numeric scores and feedback on areas for improvement.[568]

The Report Card was intended to provide guidance on best practices and influenced how resources were allocated, as "organizations [were] encouraged to use the results of the Report Card to prepare upcoming funding applications to Sport Canada."[569] 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.[570]

Sport Canada now uses a standardized risk assessment tool called the Program Risk Assessment and Mitigation Tool (more commonly called the "PRAM"). This tool is used to assess the risk of applicants before deciding whether to provide funding. Through this risk assessment, Sport Canada considers a number of factors, including whether the applicant has successfully completed other funded projects, if they kept the Department informed of their progress, whether the applicant operates effectively on a daily basis, and if they have good governance procedures.

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566 The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 39, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>.

567 The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 39, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>.

568 The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 39–40, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>.

569 The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 40, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>.

570 Grant Robertson, "Sport Canada shelves report-card system that gave high marks to troubled organizations", The *Globe and Mail* (29 December 2023) online:<www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-sport-canada-report-cards-shelved/>.

The Program Risk Assessment and Mitigation Tool examines issues under two categories: external environment (which includes governance) and risk relating to the activity. The result of the risk assessment evaluation of a funding application will determine the conditions to be included in 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 several payments. It could also include additional reporting requirements and outline specific monitoring activities that must be undertaken.

While this risk assessment tool is standardized and utilized at the Department of Canadian Heritage, it is our understanding that it is not tailored specifically for the assessment of National Sport Organizations.

Reports and studies on governance in the sport system

In 2022, a number of important reports and studies were released, focusing on governance issues identified within three major federally funded National Sport Organizations: Canada Soccer, Hockey Canada and Gymnastics Canada. The 2022 reports by McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc. on Canada Soccer,[571] Justice Thomas Cromwell's Governance Review of Hockey Canada,[572] and McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc. report to Gymnastics Canada,[573] all offer thoughtful and detailed recommendations about sport governance.

Some recommendations from these studies were echoed in reports of the two House of Commons Standing Committees which undertook studies related to safe sport. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage tabled a report entitled "Safe Sport in Canada"[574] in 2024, and the Standing Committee on the Status of Women tabled a report entitled "Women and Girls in Sport"[575] in 2023.

Several of these recommendations 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 for several governance-related responsibilities.

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571 McLaren Global Sport Solutions, *McLaren Independent Canada Soccer Review: Final Report* (Toronto: McLaren Global Sport Solutions, 2022), online (pdf): <www.mclarenglobalsportsolutions.com/pdf/CanadaSoccerReview_MGSSFinalReport_July28_2022.pdf>.

572 The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 40, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>.

573 McLaren Global Sport Solutions, *A Framework for Change: How to Achieve a Culture Shift for Gymnastics in Canada* (Toronto: McLaren Global Sport Solutions, January 25, 2023), online (pdf): <www.mclarenglobalsportsolutions.com/pdf/Gymnastics-Report-Jan-22-2023.pdf>.

574 House of Commons, *Safe Sport in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage* (June 2024) (Chair: the Honourable Hedy Fry), online: <www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/CHPC/report-12>.

575 House of Commons, *Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada* (June 2023) (Chair: Karen Vecchio), online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Reports/RP12528102/feworp07/feworp07-e.pdf>.

For example, the Cromwell Report[576] recommended that the board of directors adopt statements to, for example, clarify roles and responsibilities, define the nature of discretionary voting rights, and adopt a governance model. These documents also recommend that boards adopt or establish various processes and procedures with respect to a number of things such as staggering board member terms, annual board review processes, board Chair recruitment processes, and Board meeting processes and procedures. It should be noted that the same practice is included in the Guide to Good Governance.[577]

A strong recommendation also emerged for meaningful representation of athletes within sport organizations' governance structure and decision-making processes.

Finally, these reports and studies highlighted the need for openness and transparency when it comes to the use of public funds. This led to the Government of Canada to require comprehensive financial disclosure from National Sport Organizations.

CURRENT GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK AT THE PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL LEVEL

Legislation

The governing legislation for Provincial and Territorial sport organizations is either the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act* or the 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 or leave it to the discretion of the sport organization.

Similar to federal not-for-profit incorporation legislation, 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, the Yukon has legislatively imposed governance requirements on its Territorial Sport Organizations as a condition for funding through the *Recreation Regulations* [578] made under the *Recreation Act*.[579]

Other provinces and territories impose governance requirements on their Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations that go beyond the requirements of the applicable not-for-profit legislation through policy, rather than legislative intervention, where compliance is required for funding eligibility.

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576 The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 173–76, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>.

577 Anne Corbett & James M Mackay, *Guide to Good Governance: Not-for-Profit and Charitable Organizations: Fourth Edition* (Ontario: Ontario Hospital Association, 2025) at 17, online (pdf): <www.oha.com/Legislative%20and%20Legal%20Issues%20Documents1/Guide%20to%20Good%20Governance%2c%20Fourth%20Edition.pdf>.

578 *Recreation Regulations*, OIC 1986/143 (September 9, 1986), s 5, online: <https://laws.yukon.ca/cms/images/LEGISLATION/SUBORDINATE/1986/1986-0143/1986-0143.pdf>.

579 *Recreation Act*, RSY 2002, c 193, online (pdf): <https://laws.yukon.ca/cms/images/LEGISLATION/acts/recreation.pdf>.

Therefore, when examining governance issues, it is important to look at generally accepted best practices such as those outlined in the Guide to Good Governance.[580]

Quebec Governance Code

Quebec is the only province or territory that has developed a governance code specifically tailored for not-for-profit sport and leisure organizations. This is the Code de gouvernance des organismes à but non lucratif (OBNL) québécois de sport et de loisir, published in May 2024.[581]

The Code provides guidelines in terms of sport policy and best governance practices for sport organizations. Compliance with the Quebec Code is a requirement for receiving funding from the recreation and sport division of the ministère de l'Éducation (Ministry of Education).

The Quebec Code provides that the board of directors must adopt a statement that describes its role and responsibilities. These include, among others, strategic planning, evaluation of organizational performance, supervision of the affairs of the organization, management of finances, governance, and hiring and evaluating of the Chief Executive Officer. It must also specify the responsibilities and what is expected of the directors.[582]

The federal and Quebec government governance requirements are effective only because they are tied to funding. Beyond these funding conditions, the governments have no direct control over sport organization governance.

A review of what currently exists in terms of sport governance frameworks reveals that what is in place at the federal level is not necessarily replicated at the provincial and territorial level or beyond.

GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Several countries adopted governance codes and frameworks related to sport and/or physical activity. For this Preliminary Report, we refer to sport governance frameworks in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

These four countries have taken varying approaches to sport governance. They demonstrate the importance of an intentional and standardized approach to sport governance structures and framework within a country. Such an approach fosters a strong sport culture and mitigates a governance system's vulnerabilities.

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580 Anne Corbett & James M Mackay, *Guide to Good Governance: Not-for-Profit and Charitable Organizations: Fourth Edition* (Ontario: Ontario Hospital Association, 2025), online (pdf): <www.oha.com/Legislative%20and%20Legal%20Issues%20Documents1/Guide%20to%20Good%20Governance%2c%20Fourth%20Edition.pdf>.

581 Government of Quebec, *Code de gouvernance des organismes à but non lucratif (OBNL) québécois de sport et de loisir* (Québec: Government of Quebec, 2020), online (pdf): <www.golfquebec.org/uploads/file/ComiteGouvernance/Gouv2021/CodeDeGouvernance_WEB_FINAL.pdf>.

582 Government of Quebec, *Code de gouvernance des organismes à but non lucratif (OBNL) québécois de sport et de loisir* (Québec: Government of Quebec, 2020), s 8.13, online (pdf): <www.golfquebec.org/uploads/file/ComiteGouvernance/Gouv2021/CodeDeGouvernance_WEB_FINAL.pdf>.

New Zealand

Sport New Zealand established a governance framework designed specifically for sport and recreation organizations.[583] While not mandatory, sport organizations are encouraged to align with the framework's principles. They are incentivized to do so through an accreditation program call the "Governance Quality Mark." Through this program, a sport organization that meets specific governance standards will be accredited and able to use and display a governance standard symbol.[584]

In addition to this framework, Sport New Zealand developed the Nine Steps to Effective Governance,[585] a component part of their capability building program. This resource provides an overview of some of the key elements that individuals involved in the governance of play, active recreation and sport organizations should consider when addressing governance.[586]

United Kingdom

UK Sport and Sport England launched the Code for Sport Governance. This Code sets out mandatory governance requirements for sport organizations who seek Government and National Lottery Funding from UK Sport and/or Sport England.[587]

The Code for Sport Governance sets out the required levels of transparency, diversity and inclusion, accountability and integrity. Although mandatory, the Code achieves flexibility by using a tiered approach to the adoption of its requirements.[588] As UK Sport and Sport England invest in different types of organizations and the size of the investments differ, they apply the Code proportionally using three Tiers.

Each Tier has a different level of mandatory governance requirements.[589] UK Sport and Sport England, at exercising their sole discretion, place an organization into the Tier they consider most appropriate.

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583 Sport New Zealand, "Governance Framework for the New Zealand Sport and Recreation Sector" (last visited June 2025), online (pdf): <https://sportnz.org.nz/media/1835/3034-snz-governance-framework-hyperlinks-v2-spreads.pdf>.

584 Sport New Zealand, "Governance Framework for the New Zealand Sport and Recreation Sector" (last visited June 2025), online (pdf): <https://sportnz.org.nz/media/1835/3034-snz-governance-framework-hyperlinks-v2-spreads.pdf>.

585 Sport New Zealand, "Nine Steps to Effective Governance" (4th Edition) (2021), online (pdf): <https://sportnz.org.nz/media/kwdjeum0/nine-steps-fourth-edition-final-version.pdf>.

586 Sport New Zealand, "Nine Steps to Effective Governance" (4th Edition) (2021), online (pdf): <https://sportnz.org.nz/media/kwdjeum0/nine-steps-fourth-edition-final-version.pdf>.

587 UK Sport, "A Code for Sports Governance" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/resources/a-code-for-sports-governance>.

588 UK Sport, "A Code for Sports Governance" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/resources/a-code-for-sports-governance>.

589 UK Sport, "A Code for Sports Governance" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/resources/a-code-for-sports-governance>.

This decision considers the circumstances of the investment and the organization, and is in accordance with an established broad definition of the Tiers.[590]

In 2021, UK Sport published its *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*. 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[591]

Principle 2 in the Code for Sport Governance provides that sport organizations should recruit and engage with people from diverse backgrounds.[592] The specific requirement varies depending on the sport organization's Tier categorization. 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
- 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

For Tier 1 organizations, it is also stated that an assessor from UK Sport or Sport England may reach out to the organization to confirm their compliance and determine if they are genuinely committed to diversity and inclusion.[593]

For Tier 3 organizations, the requirements are more stringent. They must publish their objective to ensure their leadership represents and reflects the diversity of the community they serve.[594] On a yearly basis, they must create a Diversity and Inclusion Action plan and submit it for approval to UK Sport or Sport England.[595]

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590 UK Sport, "A Code for Sports Governance" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/resources/a-code-for-sports-governance>.

591 UK Sport, News Release, "UK Sport outlines new Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy" (June 24, 2021), online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/news/2021/06/24/new-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy>.

592 UK Sport, "The Principles" (last visited June 2025) at Principle 2, online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/resources/a-code-for-sports-governance/the-principles>.

593 UK Sport, "Tier 1 Requirements" (last visited June 2025) at Principle 2, online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/resources/a-code-for-sports-governance/tier-1?tab=Tier%201%20Requirements>.

594 UK Sport, "Introducing Tier 3" (last visited June 2025) at Principle 2: People, online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/resources/a-code-for-sports-governance/tier-3>.

595 UK Sport, "Introducing Tier 3" (last visited June 2025) at Principle 2: People, online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/resources/a-code-for-sports-governance/tier-3>.

The plan must outline the organization's proposed actions to achieve leadership diversity and must be posted on their website. In addition, the organizations must publish an annual update on their Action Plan.[596]

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.

It is worth noting that within its own structure, UK Sport's Diversity and Inclusion Plan provides that

> (b)y 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% 2SLGBTQI+, as well as people with different lived, regional and socio-economic experiences.[597]

These targeted national demographic benchmarks are based on the 2021 census.

Australia

In Australia, the Sport Governance Principles were co-designed through a sector-wide engagement process.[598] 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.[599]

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.[600] To help sport organizations with the implementation of these governance principles, the Australian Sports Commission established a dedicated team. This Sport Governance and Organizational Enhancement team provides advisory support to the boards of national sport organizations,[601] assisting them in developing sport governance practices in line with the Sport Governance Principles and Standards. [602]

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596 UK Sport, "Introducing Tier 3" (last visited June 2025) at Principle 2: People, online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/resources/a-code-for-sports-governance/tier-3>.

597 UK Sport, "Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2021-2026" (2021) at 3, online (pdf): <www.uksport.gov.uk/-/media/files/our-work/equality-diversity-inclusion/uk-sport-diversity-and-inclusion-action-plan-2021_2026-april-2025-update.ashx>.

598 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Principles" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance/principles>.

599 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Principles" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance/principles>.

600 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Principles" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance/principles>.

601 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance and Organisational Enhancement" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance>.

602 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance and Organisational Enhancement" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance>.

The Sport Governance Standards were also established following a sector-wide engagement process. These standards are measures by which sport organizations can evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of their respective governance systems and processes.[603] There are 35 Standards with a 4-point scale for each (1 representing low maturity and 4 representing the highest level of maturity).[604] Each Standard aligns to a Sport Governance Principle.[605]

National and State sport organizations are invited to self-evaluate their governance against each Standard using the scoring scale described above.[606] 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 identifies needs.[607] As a result, the Australian Sport Commission can redirect its priorities in terms of support, education and resources for the sector.[608]

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the expected governance maturity of a sport organization in Australia is based on the financial investment it receives from its funder (either the Australian Sports Commission or the State and Territory Agencies for Sport and Recreation) as well as their generated revenue.[609] In essence, the expectations placed on sport organizations depend on their overall internal capacity.[610] The Australian Sports Commission makes it clear that expectations refer to the anticipated maturity level rather than a strict compliance level.[611]

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603 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance and Organisational Enhancement" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance>.

604 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance and Organisational Enhancement" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance>; Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards Benchmarking Report 2024" (2024) at 2, online (pdf): <www.sportaus.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/913515/SGS-2024-Final.pdf>.

605 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance/standards>; Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards Benchmarking Report 2024" (2024) at 2, online (pdf): <www.sportaus.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/913515/SGS-2024-Final.pdf>.

606 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance/standards>; Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards Benchmarking Report 2024" (2024) at 2, online (pdf): <www.sportaus.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/913515/SGS-2024-Final.pdf>.

607 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance/standards>; Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards Benchmarking Report 2024" (2024) at 2, online (pdf): <www.sportaus.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/913515/SGS-2024-Final.pdf>.

608 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance/standards>.

609 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance/standards>; Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards Benchmarking Report 2024" (2024) at 2, online (pdf): <www.sportaus.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/913515/SGS-2024-Final.pdf>.

610 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance/standards>; Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards Benchmarking Report 2024" (2024) at 2, online (pdf): <www.sportaus.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/913515/SGS-2024-Final.pdf>.

611 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportaus.gov.au/governance/standards>; Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards: Benchmarking Report 2024" (2024) at 2, online (pdf): <www.sportaus.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/913515/SGS-2024-Final.pdf>.

Principle 4 of the Sport Governance Standards provides that a board should be composed of diverse individuals with different perspectives and experiences to ensure for improved decision-making.[612] The standards for this principle state that the board selection matrix should provide for a mix of skills, expertise and experiences.[613] Goals should also be set with respect to board composition that 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.[614]

Australia recently launched the National Gender Equity in Sport Governance Policy.[615] 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.[616] Equity, diversity and inclusion are also a key focus of *Australia's Sport Participation Strategy – Play Well*[617] and Australia's *2032+ High Performance Sport Strategy.*[618]

Netherlands

In 2005, the Netherlands Olympic Committee introduced a Code of Good Sports Governance.[619] This followed the 2003 publication of a Code of Conduct in the corporate sector, which provided recommendations on several governance related matters to restore investor and citizen confidence in the corporate world.

The Code of Good Sports Governance targeted members of the Netherlands Olympic Committee. It was updated in 2021 and is based on four principles: responsibility, democracy, society and transparency.[620] All sport organizations in the Netherlands are now expected to comply with the Code.[621]

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612 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards" (2025) at 7, online (pdf): <www.sportaus.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1179654/SGS-2025-Final.pdf>.

613 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards" (2025) at 7, online (pdf): <www.sportaus.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1179654/SGS-2025-Final.pdf>.

614 Australian Sports Commission, "Sport Governance Standards" (2025) at 7, online (pdf): <www.sportaus.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1179654/SGS-2025-Final.pdf>.

615 Clearninghouse for Sport, "National Gender Equity in Sports Governance Policy" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/networks/gender-equity>.

616 Clearninghouse for Sport, "National Gender Equity in Sports Governance Policy" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/networks/gender-equity>.

617 Australian Sports Commission, "Play Well" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.ausport.gov.au/playwell>.

618 Australian Sports Commission, "Win Well HP2032" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.winwell2032.au/>.

619 Nederlands Olympisch Comité*Nederlandse Sport Federatie & Sport 4 Good Governance, "Good Governance in the Netherlands" (last visited June 2025) at 2, online: <https://nocnsf.nl/media/2103/presentation-on-the-development-and-contents-of-the-good-governance-code-as-part-of-the-s4gg-project.pdf>.

620 Nederlands Olympisch Comité*Nederlandse Sport Federatie, "Code Goed Sportbestuur" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://nocnsf.nl/goed-sportbestuur/code-goed-sportbestuur>.

621 Nederlands Olympisch Comité*Nederlandse Sport Federatie, "Code Goed Sportbestuur" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://nocnsf.nl/goed-sportbestuur/code-goed-sportbestuur>.

However, compliance with the Code is based on the "comply and explain" principle. The Code therefore offers room for flexibility according to each organization's own context. In this way, the Code provides a compass for the integrity and socially responsible governance of every sports organization in the Netherlands.[622] Directors and supervisors of sports organizations in the Netherlands account for compliance with the Code during the general meeting and in the annual report.[623]

GOVERNANCE IN SPORT ORGANIZATIONS: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To recognize and solidify the importance of good and effective governance across the sport system, we outline below the Commission's preliminary recommendations and rationale. These recommendations aim to address the current shortcomings related to good governance within the sport system. We are of the view that it is essential that sport organizations' governance structures reflect specific competencies, capacities and consciousness to effectively address the array of complex issues that might emerge in sport settings.

In accordance with the Commission's Terms of Reference, these preliminary recommendations are being shared to give participants an opportunity to reflect on them and provide feedback, whether through the National Summit or other forms of engagement, before the Commission submits its final recommendations to the Government of Canada. The Commission looks forward to continuing this important dialogue.

Our preliminary recommendations centre around four important concepts:

- Mandatory Governance Standards
- Enhanced Mandatory Governance Standards
- Governance Standards Compliance Oversight
- Harmonized Approach to Governance Standards Across the Sport System

Mandatory governance standards: preliminary findings

The Commission consistently heard that governance within the sport system is volunteer-led, with numerous directors on National Sport Organization boards being volunteers. Participants repeatedly stated that these volunteers often come from within the sport they represent (e.g., former athletes, coaches, parents of athletes, administrators). Given this reality, it is not surprising to learn about the significant governance challenges that exist within the sport system.

These challenges include a lack of essential skills, training and understanding of directors' responsibilities, as well as the presence of real and perceived conflicts of interest. Furthermore, the lack of diversity, in terms of gender and ethnicity, highlights the necessity for a wider range of perspectives and experiences within the decision-making process. The lack of specific expertise in parasport within para boards of directors was also highlighted.

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622 Nederlands Olympisch Comité*Nederlandse Sport Federatie, "Code Goed Sportbestuur" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://nocnsf.nl/goed-sportbestuur/code-goed-sportbestuur>.

623 Nederlands Olympisch Comité*Nederlandse Sport Federatie, "Code Goed Sportbestuur"" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://nocnsf.nl/goed-sportbestuur/code-goed-sportbestuur>.

Participants also shared that the workload for boards of directors varies, depending on the size of the National Sport Organization, the directors' skill set and governance experience. We understand that these individuals typically hold these positions in addition to their respective full-time employment, leaving them with limited time to commit to these positions. Given this reality, concerns have been shared with us that mandating standard sport governance requirements would add to the already demanding work for boards of directors to achieve compliance.

We were also informed that some National Sport Organizations might find it difficult, or even impossible, to comply with mandatory governance requirements due to their current governance structures. For example, if a current by-law does not align with the governance requirement, the sport organization would need to seek a change to the by-law. This is subject to the vote of the organization's membership, often comprised of Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. National Sport Organizations indicated that forcing these changes would be challenging. In other cases, it was suggested that a sport organization may be restricted from complying due to the specific requirements of its International Federation.

On the other hand, many of the issues participants raised regarding sport organizations could be resolved by implementing good governance practices. 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 webpage.

In instances where a sport organization faced scrutiny, leading to an audit or examination, it often resulted in a review of the sport organization, including its governance structure. The reports stemming from these reviews provide recommendations to the organization to rectify and prevent the identified shortcomings. With respect to good governance, the recommendations usually refer to basic and accepted good governance principles, many of which are captured in the Canadian Sport Governance Code.

Further recognizing the importance of these governance requirements, it is worth noting that following the Minister's announcement in 2023, some National Sport Organizations started working towards compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. Now, Sport Canada requires all federally funded National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres to comply with four governance requirements outlined within the Code. In fact, the Commission was informed that at least 33 National Sport Organizations have now reported their compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code.

It is clear to the Commission that mandatory governance standards would increase consistency across all sport organization governance structures. This would provide guidance to boards of directors with varying degrees of sophistication in governance. With time, proper support, and compliance oversight, this would result in a stronger and more effective governance structures and practices within the sport system.

While compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code may present challenges, the Commission is of the view that measures can be implemented to alleviate these challenges. For example, the Canadian Sport

Governance Code could incorporate language and approaches that recognize the differences, unique realities and varying internal governance and decision-making processes of sport organizations, which may currently prevent their compliance.

In addition, a transition period could 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 period. The length of this period could also take into consideration the capacity of a sport organization to comply. For example, a smaller sport organization may require a longer transition period than a larger sport organization.

Finally, recognizing that it may be a challenge for some organizations to achieve compliance with the Code, proper support and guidance should be made readily available to them to assist and accompany 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, delivered through a university-affiliated school of business. These resources should be leveraged by all sport organizations across Canada.

Mandatory governance standards: preliminary recommendations

Given the importance of governance, the Commission urges the Government of Canada to implement the recommendations 28 to 31 once the Commission's Final Report is issued. This would begin the process of ensuring sport organizations comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code.

Once the Centralized Sport Entity discussed in Chapter 6 is established and operating, these responsibilities should be transferred to that Entity.

The Commission therefore recommends that:

28. The Government of Canada, mandate that all federally funded sport organizations adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. This will require revisions to the Canadian Sport Governance Code, which is currently tailored to National Sport Organizations. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.
29. A reasonable transition period be provided to allow federally funded sport organizations to comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code without affecting their funding. This transition period should 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.
30. The Government of Canada 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 6 once it is established.

31. The Government of Canada be the custodian of the Canadian Sport Governance Code and be responsible 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 6 once it is established.

Enhanced governance standards: preliminary findings

Several participants and governance experts have identified governance requirements that are not currently captured by the Canadian Sport and Governance Code or that do not go far enough in what is required of sport organizations. Support for enhancing the Canadian Sport Governance Code is found in the Cromwell Report, the Guide to Good Governance as well as reports from both the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Amending the requirements of the Canadian Sport Governance Code raises concerns similar to those discussed in the "Mandatory Governance Standards" section above. However, the Commission is of that view that when the Canadian Sport Governance Code becomes mandatory, certain amendments to the Code should be considered. We highlight below four amendments that should be considered.

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 Color (BIPOC).[624] Despite this demographic, it was noted during our engagement activities that diversity is still not consistently reflected in the membership of sport organizations' boards of directors.

Many shared with the Commission a concern regarding the lack of diverse voices at the decision-making tables, noting that several boards remain very insular and that the same individuals are repeatedly making the same decisions. Others expressed that boards of directors are not always a welcoming and inclusive environment for racialized individuals. For example, we heard of situations where racialized board members had to justify their experience and skill set for positions as director or officers. They were also overtly subjected to racism.

Diversity must be reflected at all levels of the sport system, including within boards of directors. For individuals from diverse communities to see themselves within a sport, they must see themselves within all structures of the sport, and more importantly, within leadership positions such as boards of directors. Change occurs at the decision-making table, and meaningful change is less likely to occur without diversity represented at that table.

624 Statistics Canada, *Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, November 15, 2023), online: <www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&DGUIDList=2021A000011124&GENDERList=1,2,3&STATISTICList=1,4&HEADERList=0&SearchText=Canada>.

Even if the Canadian Sport Governance Code is not mandatory, the Commission emphasizes that the Code does provide the following:

> [...] 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.[625]

It was suggested that to bring about change, there needs to be clear expectations for board diversity. This would involve making diverse representation on boards of directors mandatory and creating opportunities for racialized individuals in leadership positions. Indeed, this was suggested by many.

Without a clear mandate, organizations are likely to respond that they are unable to achieve diverse representation. If it was a mandatory requirement, sport organizations would have no choice but to find a way to comply.

It was however acknowledged that the first racialized individuals to join boards of directors after the implementation of a mandated requirement might be perceived by some as reflecting tokenism rather than representing a merit-based appointment and the infusion of new skills. Despite this concern, members of racialized communities still believed that such an approach was necessary to achieve real change.

They also urged that any consideration for mandated representation of racialized people on boards of directors 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 a racialized diversity is appointed.

Many have suggested that mandating the representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour on board of directors would result in a board composition that is truly reflective of Canadian society. An alternative to this approach was also suggested: requiring boards of directors to adopt a statement outlining their strategy to achieve diversity at the board level, with a target of at least 30% of directors from the Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour communities.

To ensure that boards of directors fulfill their responsibilities to address diversity, it was suggested that sport organizations be required to report annually on the composition of their boards of directors. This report would be submitted to the organization's governmental funder and to its membership at the annual general meeting.

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625 Canadian Olympic Committee, *Canadian Sport Governance Code* (Toronto: COO, April 2021) at B.5, online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Canadian_Sports_Governance_Code.pdf>.

The value and importance of diverse boards of directors are not a new concept. Both the Cromwell Report[626] and the reports from the Standing Committee on the Status of Women[627] noted the importance of ensuring that boards of directors reflect diversity.

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 largely not resulted in the desired changes ensuring a diversity of racialized representation on boards of directors.

Evidently, relying solely on voluntary or discretionary efforts has been insufficient to achieve racially diverse representation. To accelerate meaningful and measurable progress in board diversity, and to increase the representation of Black, Indigenous, People of Colour on sport organization boards of directors, the Commission is of the view that racial diversity must be included as an element in the skills matrix for board member selection.

In addition, to cultivate a welcoming, inclusive and safe board environment, anti-racism and inclusion board training must be delivered regularly. We are of the view that the proposal to mandate the representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour on boards directors, merits further reflection and serious consideration given the importance of these matters.

Athlete representation

Athletes shared with the Commission that they hold a unique position within National Sport Organizations, given that these organizations exist to serve them. However, athletes are often not considered members of these sport organizations and have historically been excluded from formal governance structures, especially from boards of directors.[628]

Throughout our engagement activities, athletes have advocated for their representation within governance structures, complete with voting rights. Other participants noted the need to recognize the pluralities of individual stakeholders in the sport system, including coaches, officials and administrators.

Nevertheless, several participants raised concerns regarding athlete representation within National Sport Organization governance structures.

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626 The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 58–59, online (pdf): < https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>.

627 House of Commons, *Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada* (June 2023) (Chair: Karen Vecchio) at Recommendation 9, online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/44-1/FEWO/report-7>.

628 AthletesCan, *The Future of Athlete Representation within Governance Structures of National Sport Organizations* (Kelowna: AthletesCan, November 20, 2020), online (pdf): <https://athletescan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/the_future_of_athlete_representation_in_canadavf-en3.pdf.>.

Some participants 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 with their sport might lead to conflicts of interest in decision-making. Some have suggested that conflicts of interest could be mitigated by having retired athlete representatives as opposed to active athletes. Others have 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 only possible where the sport is integrated.

Another consideration identified by National Sport Organizations was the challenge raised by their current governance structures. The Commission learned that in some governance structures, by-laws prescribe that directors are elected by the National Sport Organization's membership, which is comprised of Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. These by-laws do not currently include a requirement for an athlete representative to serve as a director.

In this context, a vote of the membership would be necessary to change the by-laws to require that one of the directors be an athlete representative. Some National Sport Organizations expressed 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, arguably, it could lessen their ability to advance their own concerns at the National Sport Organization level.

These organizations explained that if an athlete representative position is mandated, candidates seeking to hold that position would only be competing with others vying for the same position. Some described this as the athlete representative effectively being elected without the "popular vote". As an alternative to athlete representation on board of directors, some have suggested mechanisms to seek input from athletes and have athletes involved in committee work.

The *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*, which forms the legislative framework, permits athlete representation on a board. This is allowed as long as the athlete representative meets the qualifications to be a director, and is either elected by the members or appointed by the board in accordance with the requirements of the Act.[629] It is also possible for a National Sport Organization to appoint an athlete representative to the position of board observer.

The Canadian Sport Governance Code, released in 2021, recognizes that meaningful athlete representation in the governance structure is fundamental.[630] While the Code strongly encourages National Sport Organizations to have an athlete representative on their board of directors, the decision on how to best achieve meaningful representation in the governance structure is left to each board.[631]

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629 *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*, SC 2009, c 23, online: <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-7.75/>.

630 Canadian *Olympic Committee, Canadian Sport Governance Code* (Toronto: COO, April 2021) at B.6, online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Canadian_Sports_Governance_Code.pdf>.

631 Canadian Olympic Committee, *Canadian Sport Governance Code* (Toronto: COO, April 2021) at B.6, online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Canadian_Sports_Governance_Code.pdf>.

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 selected by the board, a process for selecting an athlete representative with significant input from that sport's athletes must be developed.[632]

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.[633]

Confusion and uncertainty surrounding the requirement of athlete representation on board of directors remains present. The importance of meaningful and true athlete representation within a sport governance structure and the decision-making processes was recognized in the Cromwell Report[634] and the reports of both Standing Committees. Given this recognized importance, we understand that some National Sport Organizations and national Multisport Service Organizations have taken steps to effect this change within their governance structures.

For all these reasons, the Commission is of the view that athlete representation on the board of directors of National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes as elected directors, with full voting rights, should be mandatory.

Mandatory training on preventing and addressing maltreatment in sport

The Commission heard numerous accounts from victims and survivors who felt that their experiences were inadequately addressed by the management or the board of directors of their sport organization. As a result, many felt they were often left without any clear guidance, and struggling to obtain recourse, redress or direction on how to proceed.

We heard numerous tragic accounts of athletes being silenced or shunned by organizations for having raised allegations of abuse or maltreatment. Sadly, these athletes were often considered troublemakers or accused of seeking retribution for their own shortcomings in training or performance.

The experiences shared with the Commission, combined with the findings and recommendations from the two Standing Committee's studies on safe sport, the Cromwell Report, and the two McLaren Reports, all demonstrate that every individual within a National Sport Organization, including members of the board of directors, must have a comprehensive understanding of maltreatment issues and of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

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632 Canadian Olympic Committee, *Canadian Sport Governance Code* (Toronto: COO, April 2021) at B.6, online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Canadian_Sports_Governance_Code.pdf>.

633 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

634 The Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 82–83, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>.

Support for such mandatory training is also found in Recommendation 17 of the Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Both the Canadian Sport Governance Code[635] and the Sport Support Program funding eligibility criteria[636] require mandatory orientation and training for members of boards of directors on the fundamentals of good governance and board responsibilities.

The Commission is 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 organization's boards of directors.

Financial transparency

As recipients of public funding, sport organizations are accountable not only to their funder but, more importantly, to Canadians. On numerous occasions, the Commission heard from participants who were unable to find key financial documents, such as annual statements, on sport organization websites. This lack of transparency and readily available information diminishes public trust.

We heard from many, including athletes, who advocated for full financial transparency regarding funds received from Sport Canada and the provision of detailed information as to how those funds are spent.

Maximizing transparency aligns with the principles of openness and accountability, which form the basis for one of the main good governance and leadership principles.[637] 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. It was also referenced in the Cromwell Report,[638] as well as within Recommendation 4 of the Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.[639]

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635 Canadian Olympic Committee, *Canadian Sport Governance Code* (Toronto: COO, April 2021) at B.11, online (pdf): <https://nso.olympic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Canadian_Sports_Governance_Code.pdf>.

636 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified October 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html>.

637 Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report – Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 65, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>; Anne Corbett & James M Mackay, *Guide to Good Governance: Not-for-Profit and Charitable Organizations: Fourth Edition* (Ontario: Ontario Hospital Association, 2025) at ch 4, online (pdf): <www.oha.com/Legislative%20and%20Legal%20Issues%20Documents1/Guide%20to%20Good%20Governance%2c%20Fourth%20Edition.pdf>.

638 Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report – Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 65, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>.

639 House of Commons, *Safe Sport in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage,* Ottawa: House of Commons, June 2024 (The Honourable Hedy Fry) at Recommendation 4, online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/CHPC/Reports/RP13203713/chpcrp12/chpcrp12-e.pdf>.

For these reasons, the Commission is of the view that consideration should be given to require sport organizations to post on their website the following three documents:

- board meeting minutes
- a document outlining all public funds received with a description of their respective usage
- an annual report describing the organization's activity and progress

Enhanced governance standards: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

32. The Government of Canada enhance the Canadian Sport Governance Code by adding the following mandatory practices for all federally funded sport organizations:
    a. Racial diversity must be included as an element in the skills matrix used for selecting board members.
    b. All board members must receive regular training on anti-racism and inclusion.
    c. The board of directors must include an athlete representative to serve as a director with full voting rights.
    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 Recommendation 37, the national safe sport education program, which would fall within the function of the Centralized Sport Entity once established, would address this requirement.
    e. Sport organizations publicly post the following on their website:
        i. minutes of all board meetings;
        ii. an annual disclosure of all public funds received, along with an accounting of their usage;
        iii. 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, by-laws, annual financial statements, minutes of members meetings, board mandate, all committees' terms of reference, and an annual report on diversity.

Governance standards oversight and compliance: preliminary findings

Participants in our engagement process noted that there is a clear lack of oversight over National Sport Organization governance practices. Such oversight is necessary to ensure compliance with good governance requirements. Some have raised concerns that Sport Canada dispenses public funds to these organizations

without any oversight function. They are therefore calling for audits to verify that governance standards and best practices are in fact being applied. Many have also pointed out that while policies, practices, and procedures exist on paper, they are not always put into practice.

As stated above in the report, we recognize that a compliance function was created at Sport Canada. However, ensuring the implementation of good governance practices requires more than just asking sport organizations to self-report on compliance and submit supporting documentation. The verification process must go further to ensure that mandatory governance requirements are met. It is equally important to ensure that when a sport organization is struggling to fulfill its responsibilities that guidance and support should be provided to assist in remediation of any deficiencies.

To ensure compliance, the Commission believes it is crucial to conduct random and periodic governance audits examining sport organizations' level of adherence to the Canadian Sport Governance Code. Given that these organizations receive significant taxpayer money, it is imperative to establish formal oversight mechanisms that consistently enforce the Code. This would ensure that National 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 6.

The Canadian Sport Governance Code appears to currently reside on the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Sport Information Resource Centre websites. Several participants with whom the Commission met could not pinpoint the entity currently responsible for the Code, suggesting that it belongs to the sport community at large. Others believed that Sport Canada was the custodian of the Code. The lack of clarity on this point further demonstrates an absence of leadership in sport.

Collaboration, cooperation and engagement are important when developing a governance code. These principles ensure the code considers and reflects the realities of the organizations that it will govern. However, for a governance Code to stay relevant and have credibility within the sport community, it is essential that it resides with a single entity.

The Commission is of the view that an Independent Entity responsible for the governance compliance oversight of National Sport Organizations should also be the custodian of the Canadian Sport Governance Code and its regular review.

Governance standards oversight and compliance: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

33. The Government of Canada conduct regular audits of federally funded sport organizations to ensure the implementation of and the compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.

Governance at all levels of sport: preliminary findings

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. Some also explained that Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations are often members within their governance structure. As members, these Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations elect the board of directors.

National Sports Organizations pointed out that this structure gives them little power or control beyond their national governance structure, which leads to ineffective governance throughout. Some participants told us that there is a "bottleneck" at the provincial and territorial level, explaining that efforts made at the national level barely filter down to the provincial and territorial level, even less to 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. The Commission acknowledges that to ensure a consistent approach to governance across the sport system, requirements that apply to National Sport Organizations should also apply to Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and the Community Sport Organizations. In fact, many participants the Commission met with advocated such an approach.

In Chapter 3 of this report, we provided an overview of the division of powers between the federal government and provinces and territories as outlined in the *Constitution Act 1867.* [640] Given this division of powers, we believe that standardizing and harmonizing sport governance practices can only be achieved through meaningful collaboration between both levels of government.

Below are options the Commission considered to align governance standards across all levels of sport in Canada. The purpose of this exercise is to provide participants an opportunity to deliberate on the proposed approaches, whether at the National Summit or through other forms of engagement, before the Commission submits its final recommendations to the Government of Canada.

As we discuss options for the standardization of sport governance practices across the sport system, from the national to the provincial, territorial and community level, we recognize that provinces and territories have their own legislation governing not-for-profit organizations and their own funding requirements. While some of these requirements may prevent a provincial or territorial sport organization from fully adopting the Canadian Sport and Governance Code, an amended version of the Code (the "amended version") tailored to the particularities of each province or territory could be adopted.

640 *Constitution Act, 1867* (UK), 30 & 31 Vict, c 3, s 91, reprinted in RSC 1985, Appendix II, No 5.

Governance at all levels of sport: preliminary recommendations

Option 1: Using the spending power to implement uniform governance standards

The Commission therefore recommends that:

34. The Government of Canada use its spending power to achieve greater uniformity of sport governance standards between the federal and the provincial and territorial levels of sport. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.

To standardize and strengthen all sport governance structures so they can competently and effectively manage and respond to maltreatment and safe sport complaints, the Commission strongly endorses the implementation of the Canadian Sport Governance Code at all levels of the sport system.

Each of the elements discussed below would improve sport governance issues on its own. However, an approach combining each of these elements would have the most comprehensive impact. This approach would help address the persistent issues of internal governance of sport organizations in a consistent manner across national, provincial and territorial sport governing bodies and this throughout the Canadian sport system.

We note that the approach outlined in the first three elements below has been previously put forward and supported by leading scholars in the field of sport.[641]

Compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code as a membership condition for federally funded National Sport Organizations

As already outlined in Recommendation 28, the Government of Canada should mandate that all sport organizations receiving federal funding adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. Additionally, the Government of Canada could mandate that federally funded National Sport Organizations modify their membership rules to require that their members (the Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations) also adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code or its amended version as a condition of membership.

We recognize that this approach would have a limited reach. It would only encompass federally funded National Sport Organizations and their respective Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations, leaving out several unfunded sport organizations. In addition, some larger, well-funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations may not need to be affiliated with their National Sport Organizations.

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641 While the following articles focus on the UCCMS, the authors state that the implementation of good governance in sports should also be considered following this approach. Marcus Mazzucco & Hilary Findlay, *A Code for ALL Levels of Sport: Implementing the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) Across Canada* (Ottawa: SIRC, October 21, 2024), online: <https://sirc.ca/articles/a-code-for-all-levels-of-sport-implementing-the-universal-code-of-conduct-to-prevent-and-address-maltreatment-in-sport-uccms-across-canada/>; Marcus Mazzucco, *Implementing the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) at all Levels of Canadian Sport: Policy Brief* (Toronto: University of Toronto, Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education, 2024); Marcus Mazzucco & Hilary Findlay, *Finding a Way Forward: Addressing Organizational Factors Contributing to Systemic Maltreatment in Canadian Sport* (2024) 47:8 P Manitoba LJ, online (pdf): <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4916097>.

They could therefore refuse to comply with this membership requirement and revoke their membership. This approach, on its own, may therefore not result in meaningful change.

Adoption of the Canadian Sport Governance Code as a funding condition for Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations

To further expand the scope of adoption and compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code or its amended version, the Government of Canada could use its spending power to indirectly impose governance requirements on Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations and Community Sport Organizations.

This could be achieved through the 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 its amended version.[642] Once again, if successful, this approach would have limited impact as it would only apply to Provincial, Territorial and Community Sport Organizations receiving federal funding.

For an even broader application of the Canadian Sport Governance Code or its amended version, the Government of Canada could also encourage provincial or territorial government to mandate that all provincial or territorial sport organizations adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code or its amended version as a condition of receiving provincial or territorial funding.

Provinces and territories could also mandate that provincially or territory funded sport organizations modify their membership rules to require that all their members (the Community Sport Organizations) adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code or its amended version as a condition of membership. This approach would broaden the application of sport governance standards beyond Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations that are members of federally funded National Sport Organizations.

Incentives for National, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations

To incentivize National Sport Organizations to change their membership requirements, the Government of Canada could allocate funding according to the extent to which their members have adopted and complied with the Canadian Sport Governance Code or its amended version.

Finally, through its funding, the Government of Canada could incentivize provinces and territories to determine the level of funding they allocate to Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations based on the extent to which their members adopted and complied with the Canadian Sport Governance Code or its amended version.

Additional funding to help with compliance

National Sport Organizations, provinces and territories may not have the resources and capacity to monitor governance compliance by their members or funded sport organizations. Therefore, the Government of Canada could allocate additional funding for this purpose.

642 Peter Hogg & Wade Wright, *Constitutional Law of Canada*, 5th Ed (Toronto: Carswell, 2019), s. 32:2.

Option 2: Using collaboration to establish uniform governance standards

The Commission therefore recommends that:

35. The Government of Canada collaborate with the provincial and territorial governments to establish and legislate similar federal and provincial/territorial sport governance standards. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.

Another option would be for the Government of Canada to reach an agreement with the provincial and territorial governments for a collaborative framework. Through this framework, both levels of government would each enact legislation prescribing similar sport governance standards based on the Canadian Sport Governance Code.

This approach would require significant coordination and collaboration. However, if successful, it could harmonize and standardize sport governance practices across all levels of sport at the national, provincial, territorial, and community levels. Given this approach is collaborative in nature, it is possible that some provinces or territories refuse to "opt-in" and choose to legislate in their respective jurisdiction.

CONCLUSION ON GOVERNANCE

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. Complying with good governance should not be seen as a burden, but rather as a basic standard that serves to protect society and benefits all those involved in the sport system. By implementing good governance principles, organizations will mitigate risks and improve the way they respond and handle maltreatment and safe sport complaints.

However, we are also mindful that volunteers lead the governance structures within sport organizations. It is increasingly difficult to recruit and retain these dedicated individuals, who tirelessly serve the sport organizations they govern. Consequently, imposing new governance requirements will demand significant time, effort, and resources. Appropriate resources will have to be allocated to ensure compliance with these requirements.

PART II
SAFE SPORT IN CANADA

CHAPTER 8:
A game of contradictions: sport's benefits and harms, progress and inconsistency

Sport and physical activity occupy a special place in our society. As outlined earlier in this report, they provide many well-documented benefits for our physical and mental health, our economy and our communities. Sport can help individuals grow, strengthen community cohesion, and build national pride. Many people involved in sport at all levels in Canada have made significant positive contributions to society and to the lives of many. This is how, for example, coaches, referees, officials, administrators, staff and countless volunteers have fostered personal development, provided leadership and support, and built a sense of community and belonging.

However, beneath this positive image lies a troubling reality: sport has long been plagued by various forms of maltreatment. In recent years, many studies and reviews were conducted by parliamentary committees and independent investigators because victims, survivors and witnesses asked for action, resulting in important reports. These public outcries and reports have revealed how widespread abuse and maltreatment are within athletic environments across the country—at all levels, from grassroots participation to the national stage.

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 suffered. Their willingness to speak out not only demonstrates how widespread maltreatment is but also emphasizes the need for lasting change. Such stories, while difficult to hear, remind us of the courage it takes to confront past injustices.

These stories also reveal the darker side of the sporting world: a culture of silence that often discourages individuals from speaking out. This can be due to fear of retribution, such as being excluded or losing opportunities. Indeed, when people do report maltreatment, they are frequently labelled as troublemakers, which perpetuates the cycle of abuse and makes it harder to foster safe and supportive environments. This is equally true for para-athletes.

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

The sport environment may be slowly changing. Efforts such as safe sport policies and educational tools have contributed to creating a 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.

CHAPTER 9:
The Commission's proposed approach to safe sport: prevention, response and support

As outlined earlier in this report, the Commission's mandate is two-fold as it is 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 actions relating to policy, funding structures, governance, reporting, accountability, conflicts of interest, systems alignment, culture and legal considerations.[643]

In the first part of this Preliminary Report, we reviewed the sport system and made preliminary recommendations that, if put into action, will improve the Canadian sport system so that all Canadians can feel confident and have trust in it. Building a robust, well-governed sport system is necessary to creating and maintaining safe sport environments. Without good governance in the organizations that form the sport system, no safe sport initiative can succeed, no matter how good people's intentions are.

In this second part, we focus on safe sport. The Commission recognizes that eliminating maltreatment in sport may not be 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 often manifest themselves in sport as well.

However, it is important to put effective prevention measures in place to reduce how often maltreatment happens 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.

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.

643 Government of Canada, "Terms of Reference – The Future of Sport in Canada Commission" (last modified November 28, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/future-sport/about/terms-reference.html>.

- Support emphasizes the importance of providing appropriate support for those affected, namely in the complaint management and investigation processes.[644]

The Commission believes that together, these pillars form the foundation for a comprehensive and sustainable safe sport strategy. They constitute the basis for the preliminary recommendations we are putting forward for consideration.

In view of the interconnectivity of the Canadian sport landscape on one hand, and the division of powers between the federal and provincial/territorial jurisdictions on the other (discussed in Chapter 3), we believe that improving safe sport in Canada can only truly be achieved through meaningful collaboration between both levels of government. While the Government of Canada must take the lead in driving change, active collaboration from its provincial and territorial counterparts is also essential.

CHAPTER 10:
Roadmap for Part II of this Preliminary Report

In this second part of the Preliminary Report, the Commission:

- Shares some of the experiences that victims and survivors of maltreatment in sport shared with it (Chapter 11).
- Defines safe sport and maltreatment for the purposes of its mandate (Chapter 12).
- Explores the broader significance of safe sport for Canadians (Chapter 13).
- Reviews prevention strategies that currently exist to foster safe sport environments and prevent maltreatment (Chapter 14).
- Reviews safe sport policies and codes of conduct existing at different levels of the Canadian sport system (Chapter 15).
- Reviews various complaint mechanisms created to administer safe sport policies and codes of conduct, along with their complaint management process (Chapter 16).
- Assesses the current state of public registries of sanctioned individuals implemented at different levels of sport (Chapter 17).

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644 Prevention, Response and Support were the three core pillars of Bill C-65, an Act to amend the *Canada Labour Code* (harassment and violence), the *Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act* and the *Budget Implementation Act*, 2017, No.1. The Act, which received Royal Assent in October 2018, modified existing provisions of the *Canada Labour Code, R.S.C. 1985, c. L-2.* to strengthen the existing framework for harassment and violence prevention, including sexual harassment and sexual violences, in workplaces under federal jurisdiction (see Marya Perez-Leclerc, *Legislative Summary – Bill C-65: An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (harassment and violence), the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1* (Ottawa: Library of Parliament, 2019), online (pdf): <https://lop.parl.ca/staticfiles/PublicWebsite/home/ResearchPublications/LegislativeSummaries/PDF/42-1/c65-e.pdf>.

Through Chapters 11 to 17, we summarize the perspectives, experiences and insights shared with the Commission by a wide range of participants, including victims and survivors, experts, academics, advocates, athletes, sport organizations, and government representatives.

Our preliminary findings and recommendations on prevention strategies to create safe and inclusive sport environments and reduce the risk of maltreatment are presented in Chapters 14 and 17. Those regarding safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms to respond to maltreatment are outlined in Chapter 16. Finally, our preliminary recommendations regarding the necessary support for those involved in the complaint management process are also included in Chapter 16. A list of our preliminary recommendations can be found in Appendix 11 of this Preliminary Report.

Many of the preliminary recommendations outlined in this Part II of the Preliminary Report aim to address issues or gaps identified by participants during our engagement process, including in the written submissions received by the Commission. Our preliminary recommendations are also shaped by observations and suggestions received from individuals with varied academic background and field experience and by the Commission's own independent review and research.

In accordance with the Commission's Terms of Reference, these preliminary recommendations are being shared to give participants an opportunity to reflect on them and provide feedback, whether at the National Summit or through other forms of engagement. This feedback will be considered before the Commission submits its final recommendations to the Government of Canada. The Commission looks forward to continuing this important dialogue.

CHAPTER 11:
Breaking the silence: victims and survivors speak out

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, racism, body-shaming, bullying and discrimination. Victims and survivors described feeling humiliated, degraded and broken.

Despite increased awareness and numerous studies and reports aimed at exploring and addressing these issues, maltreatment in sport is still pervasive. We describe below some of the accounts that were shared with us by victims, survivors and witnesses.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF MALTREATMENT

The Commission heard stories about body-shaming, fat-shaming, inappropriate weighing, food restriction and other harmful weight control tactics, all of which have long-lasting psychological and physical effects and frequently lead to eating disorders.

Victims and survivors who experienced this type of psychological abuse, many of whom were children at the time, shared how these practices impacted them for the rest of their lives. We now know how harmful these practices are, even though they were once considered normal. Still, weight-related maltreatment remains common in sport, especially in artistic sports and sports where athletes must compete within specific weight classes.[645]

Victims, survivors and witnesses shared harrowing accounts of sexual maltreatment including sexual assault, violence and harassment.

The Commission heard that these examples of sexual misconduct often involve grooming, which happens before the abuse and causes lasting and corrosive harm. We were told how grooming is a gradual process that may appear at first as a special opportunity, such as getting extra attention from individuals in positions of authority and more play time on the field leading to better performance. But these "special opportunities" are part of the harmful grooming process. They are deliberately used by individuals who hold positions of trust and power over the athletes to legitimize access and time with the athletes and gain more control over them. In fact, it leads to a betrayal of trust by those people in positions of power.

These issues and others such as 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. They undermine the very principles of fairness and inclusivity that sport is meant to uphold.

Indeed, the Commission was frequently informed of racism happening both on and off the field of play. Athletes shared experiences of opposing players and administrators hurling racial slurs or using stereotypes. Some were told they only made the team to fill a "quota." Racial stereotypes have also been used to maintain the status quo or explain the lack of diversity in the sport system. We heard of abuse perpetrated against Indigenous people in sport, including in residential schools.

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

Power dynamics within the sport system mean that maltreatment can be carried out by various individuals. This includes coaches, officials, parents, other athletes, members of medical teams, employees of sport

645 See Véronique Boudreault et al, "Extreme weight control behaviors among adolescent athletes: Links with weight-related maltreatment from parents and coaches and sport ethic norms" (2022) 57:3 Intl Rev Sociology Sport 421, online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/10126902211018672>.

organizations and administrators like board members. The victims are equally diverse and include more than just athletes. Individuals who are in positions of trust, who have privileged roles within the sport system and are expected to behave ethically, sometimes misuse their positions to exert power and control.

From a young age, athletes' lives can become very closely tied to their athletic pursuits, sometimes at the expense of a more balanced lifestyle. This can create an environment where athletes feel pressured and controlled, especially in sports where they have only one coach.

Coaches become mentors, but also gatekeepers for the athletes' career and identity, which can lead to an unhealthy dependency relationship. This can make athletes more vulnerable to abuse, particularly psychological abuse, by individuals in positions of trust who may exploit the existing power imbalance.

Many of these victims and survivors who met with us were children when the incidents of maltreatment occurred. Now adults, they continue to live with the devastating and life-altering consequences of these actions. These harmful behaviours not only impact individual athletes but can also tarnish the integrity of the entire sporting community. The prevalence of such maltreatment underscores the urgent need for systemic changes to ensure a safe environment for everyone involved in sport, no matter their role.

As we look closely at the complexities of maltreatment in sport, we must recognize that these issues are not isolated incidents. Some of these incidents of maltreatment are a symptom of a larger systemic problem, including issues related to the governance of sport organizations. Understanding the multifaceted nature of abuse and the environments that allow it to thrive is essential to collectively create safe, respectful, and supportive sporting environments for all participants.

NEW FORMS OF MALTREATMENT

Not only does maltreatment manifest itself in different forms, but these forms have 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, have changed. In some cases, it now causes a second layer of harm because smartphones and online platforms are easily accessible. The Commission has heard that these technological changes have in some cases made abusive behaviour easier and have been used to pressure and intimidate those involved.

Also, the increase in online communication has 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, contributing to a culture of shame, fear and intimidation.

Another example of a newly emerging form of maltreatment relates to the issue of competition manipulation in Canada. Competition manipulation is generally seen as a serious threat to sport integrity but also to athlete safety as it can lead to exploitation and abuse.[646]

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646 Sport Information Resource Centre, "All that glitters is not gold: the rising threat of competition manipulation" (May 24, 2023), online: <https://sirc.ca/articles/rising-threat-of-competition-manipulation/>.

CULTURE OF SILENCE

A culture of silence exacerbates maltreatment in sport. Conflicts of interest and favouritism within the system often allow abuse to remain unchecked and unresolved. Coaches and administrators may prioritize winning above player welfare. Power imbalances between the different actors in sport are often present in hierarchical structures, like sport organizations, and 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 came true when victims, survivors and witnesses did raise concerns or report maltreatment.

On several occasions, individuals were aware of what was happening but chose to do nothing to stop it. Additionally, 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 the concern about financial instability is stronger than the need to report misconduct. This culture perpetuates cycles of abuse, making it difficult for victims to come forward and seek help or justice.

Furthermore, the shame felt by victims contributes to a perception that speaking out may be seen as causing trouble. This can lead victims to doubt themselves and reinforces the harmful idea that they are to blame, not the perpetrator. These compounded fears silence victims and witnesses, which ultimately hinders the progress needed to address maltreatment in sport.

The above-noted accounts shared with us illustrate the ongoing and pervasive nature of maltreatment in sport. While these behaviours and practices are obviously unacceptable, they continue to happen today.

CHAPTER 12: Defining safe sport

The meaning of "safe sport" has evolved. Originally, it focused on preventing physical injuries. This led, for example, to legislation about concussion prevention in Canada.[647] The scope of what constitutes "safe sport" continues to change alongside changes in sport and broader societal influences and social concerns.[648]

647 See *Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), 2018*, SO 2018, c 1, online: <www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/18r01>.

648 Joseph John Gurgis, Gretchen Kerr & Anthony Battaglia, "Exploring Stakeholders' Interpretations of Safe Sport" (2022) 47:1 *J Sport & Soc Issues* 75 at 83, online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/01937235221134610>.

ACADEMIC DEFINITION OF SAFE SPORT

A safe sport environment is an environment that is "respectful, equitable and violence-free for all individuals involved in sport."[649] Academics have identified three key components to a safe sport environment:

1. Physical safety: an environment that is free from issues of physical danger.
2. Relational safety: relationships that are free from abuse or neglect.
3. Optimized sport programs: programs that prioritize positive development, rights of inclusion, accessibility, fairness, and safety.[650]

While there may not be one single definition of safe sport, several behaviours that go beyond physical safety have been identified as unacceptable in sport and create unsafe sport environments.

But defining safe sport is complex because what is considered acceptable or unacceptable behaviour can be subjective. For example, what one person sees as a rite of passage as part of team building (such as carrying equipment as a rookie) may be considered hazing by another (such as acting as a personal servant).[651]

Participants in the Commission's processes, including experts, drew attention to 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 increased injury risk and premature sport specialization, when athletes focus on one sport to the exclusion of others at a very young age. Current and former athletes noted that frequent training and competition, along with high-performance expectations, can heighten the risk of both immediate and long-lasting injuries.

Attention was also drawn to the importance of allowing enough time for psychological, mental and physical recovery. It was emphasized that recovery must be understood as a holistic process, not just physical healing.

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649 Sport Information Resource Centre, *Safe Sport and Safeguarding in Canada* (Ottawa: SIRC, 2023) at 1, online (pdf): <https://sirc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Safe-Sport-Lit-Review.pdf>.

650 Joseph John Gurgis, Gretchen Kerr & Anthony Battaglia, "Exploring Stakeholders' Interpretations of Safe Sports" (2023) 47:1 J Sports & Soc Issues 75, online; <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/01937235221134610>.

651 R Brian Crow & Eric MacIntosh, "Conceptualizing a Meaningful Definition of Hazing in Sport" (2009) 9:4 *European Sport Management Quarterly* 433 at 442, online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/16184740903331937>.

GOVERNMENT DEFINITION OF SAFE SPORT

In February 2019, the 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*.[652] 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.
- 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.[653]

As further discussed in Chapter 15, 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 to promote a respectful sport culture. Its purpose is to advance "a respectful sport culture that delivers quality, inclusive, accessible, welcoming and safe sport experiences."[654]

The Universal Code of Conduct provides that individuals have a right to participate in sport "in an environment that is free from all forms of maltreatment and that treats every individual with dignity and respect."[655] It also provides standard definitions for various forms of maltreatment, referred to as "prohibited behaviours." These prohibited behaviours include:

- psychological maltreatment
- physical maltreatment
- neglect
- sexual maltreatment
- grooming
- boundary transgression
- discrimination[656]

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652 Conference of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation, *Red Deer Declaration – For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport* (Red Deer: February 14-15, 2019), online: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/red-deer-declaration-for-the-prevention-of-harassment-abuse-and-discrimination-in-sport/>.

653 Conference of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation, *Red Deer Declaration – For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport* (Red Deer: Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat, February 14-15, 2019), online: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/red-deer-declaration-for-the-prevention-of-harassment-abuse-and-discrimination-in-sport/.>"

654 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 1.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

655 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 1.2, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

656 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), ss 5.2-5.8, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

The Universal Code of Conduct also outlines a range of behaviours that, while not maltreatment themselves, are also prohibited. These include:

- 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[657]

It can therefore be inferred that, under the Universal Code of Conduct, a safe sport environment is one that is free from all forms of maltreatment.[658]

LACK OF CONSENSUS ABOUT SAFE SPORT

Overall, we learned that there was a lack of consensus on what "safe sport" means.

Participants in our engagement process generally agreed on the overarching characteristics of a safe sport environment. Safe sport environments were frequently described as inclusive, respectful and welcoming spaces. They were described as spaces which contribute to better mental health for all those involved and lay the foundation for athletes to perform to the best of their abilities. Athletes and researchers also frequently associated safety with qualities like trust and respect. These views suggest that safe sport should be built on positive values.

However, the lines became blurred when assessing whether particular behaviours should 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 and 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 safe limits was essential for improving performance or advancing in their sport.

Most participants recognized that high-performance sport is challenging and can be grueling. In some circumstances, athletes may choose to compete when injured or 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 about being pushed in a way that preserves their dignity and autonomy. The difficulty is drawing the line between what is acceptable

657 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), ss 5.9-5.14, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

658 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 2.3.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

and unacceptable behaviour.

Many participants also noted that the meaning of safe sport has evolved over time and so have the norms in sport environments. As noted above, what once may have been considered as a normal coaching practice is now considered by many to be a form of maltreatment. For example: weighing athletes in artistic sports, making athletes run laps as punishment for failure or mistakes, using verbal abuse or berating after errors in play or training, isolating or intentionally neglecting athletes as punishment, and forcing athletes to perform or practise while injured.

Despite conflicting perspectives on what constitutes acceptable coaching methods and unacceptable behaviours, participants generally agreed that "safe sport" and all that it encompasses is not clear. The Commission heard many different terms and a call for clearer definitions. When discussing safe sport, many spoke of the importance of "safeguarding" and eliminating "maltreatment."

NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS OF SAFE SPORT

In recent years, the term "safe sport" has taken on a negative connotation for many. 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 even as a weapon. As a result, the original purpose of safe sport, which is to create sport environments where all are respected and welcomed, is weakened, and the sense of urgency to prevent maltreatment is lost.

For some, particularly coaches, safe sport now causes anxiety and a sense of dread. Several described a feeling of constantly walking on eggshells, afraid of making mistakes and concerned that the concept has become "weaponized." Many shared that it is even being used as a verb — 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, particularly due to its cost and the high administrative burden involved in an environment where funding for sport organizations has remained stagnant, as described above. This is especially true for smaller sport organizations with limited resources.

SAFE SPORT FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

For the purpose of the Commission's mandate, we adopted the definition of Safe sport as articulated in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. Accordingly, when we refer to a "safe sport environment," we mean an environment that is free from maltreatment. We likewise understand maltreatment to encompass all forms of maltreatment defined under the Universal Code of Conduct, including psychological, physical and sexual maltreatment, neglect, grooming, boundary transgressions and discrimination.

CHAPTER 13:
Why safe sport is important

The Commission's work reveals that maltreatment in sport is pervasive. Maltreatment not only harm victims and survivors, but can also cause long-term psychological, cognitive, social and physical impacts that go beyond the playing field.

There is no doubt that 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 lives.

Victims and survivors of maltreatment shared that they continued to deal with the life-altering consequences of abuse years after it stopped. They described feelings of shame, embarrassment and guilt, as well as thoughts of suicide and self-harm that lasted long after the periods of abuse and maltreatment.

Abuse was framed by victims as a "virus," highlighting how it can "infect" not only the victims themselves, but also other athletes, their families and an entire community. The Commission also heard from parents whose children were victims and survivors of abuse. They repeatedly shared that the abuse and the process of reporting it had impacted the entire family. It was described as "devastating." Various participants expressed deep disappointment and "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 without transparency. Parents become less willing to enroll their children in organized sport, and young athletes may withdraw entirely, leading to measurable declines in participation across age groups and disciplines.

Moreover, we learned that maltreatment disproportionately affects marginalized groups, 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 competitive success but also the social and community-building power of sport itself.

A truly safe sport system is one where every participant, regardless of age, gender, background, or level of ability, feels respected, included, and supported. It is an environment in which individuals can engage fully, learn new skills, 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. But these benefits can only be fully realized when safety is 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.

CHAPTER 14:
Prevention strategies: education, training and background screening

In addressing the prevention of maltreatment in sport, the Commission heard about several prevention strategies. This chapter focuses on education and training on one hand and background screening processes on the other, two preventative measures which were most frequently highlighted by participants throughout the Commission's work.

We begin by examining safe sport education and training programs and initiatives, followed by an overview of existing background screening policies across the sport system. For both topics, we share the input received from participants in our engagement process. We then briefly explore the duty to report in sport.

We conclude this chapter with our preliminary findings and recommendations as they relate to safe sport education, training and background screenings. These preliminary recommendations further the goal of building capacity for prevention in the sport system.

In addition to education, training and background screening, we recognize that national sport organizations and other sport bodies may implement additional prevention measures and tools tailored to their specific contexts. These efforts, while not the focus of this chapter, are important components of a broader safe sport strategy.

We also recognize that clear and comprehensive safe sport policies are another important tool for prevention. We review the current state of safe sport policies and codes of conduct in Chapter 15 and address policy considerations alongside our preliminary recommendations related to safe sport complaint mechanisms in Chapter 16.

Another effective mean of preventing maltreatment in sport is the use of databases or registries that track individuals whose eligibility to participate in sport has been restricted. We outline the existing registries and share our preliminary recommendations in relation to them in Chapter 17.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

Education and training are essential to the prevention of maltreatment in sport and the promotion of safe and inclusive sport environments for all. There is a wide range of education and training initiatives specific to safe sport currently in place across the Canadian sport system. These initiatives span all levels, from grassroots to high-performance, and reflect efforts by various sport organizations to promote safer, more respectful, and inclusive sport environments.

Given the breadth and diversity of these initiatives, the Commission was not able to examine all of them within the scope of its mandate. The following sections therefore outline a selection of notable safe sport education and training programs, projects and movements that were most frequently referenced by participants in our engagement process, or that illustrate trends and practices in this field. For each of them, we provide the perspectives shared with us by participants.

National Coaching Certification Program

The Government of Canada, through Sport Canada, supports the Coaching Association of Canada in the development and harmonization of coaching education across the nation.[659] As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Coaching Association of Canada partners with most National Sport Organizations to deliver coaching education in the form of the National Coaching Certification Program.[660] It also works with Provincial and Territorial Coaching Representatives who deliver the program in their respective jurisdictions. In fact, all the provinces and territories have a regional representative.[661]

The National Coaching Certification Program is used across 65 sports and provides a standardized coach education and certification program.[662] Notably, one of its training modules is the Safe Sport Training module. This module teaches coaches to "make decisions that promote athletes' physical and mental well-being."[663] It takes the form of a 90-minute eLearning which addresses:

- 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
- information on the duty to report
- the scope of application of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport
- roles and responsibilities[664]

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659 Isabelle Cayer & Peter Niedre, "The Coaching Association of Canada's Journey Towards Safer Sport" in Julie Stevens, ed, *Safe Sport: Critical Issues and Practices,* (St. Catharines: Brock University, 2022), online: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/safesport/chapter/inspiring-a-nation-through-safe-sport-2/>.

660 Coaching Association of Canada, "Our Partners" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/about-us/our-partners#nso>.

661 Coaching Association of Canada, "Our Partners" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/about-us/our-partners#ptcr >; see Alberta Sport, "Coaching" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://albertasport.ca/coaching/>.

662 Coaching Association of Canada, "About the NCCP" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/new-coaching/about-nccp>.

663 Coaching Association of Canada, "Safe Sport Training" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/safe-sport-training>.

664 Abuse-Free Sport, "Safe Sport Training" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://abuse-free-sport.ca/safesport/training>.

At the national level of sport, the Government of Canada requires National Sport Organization coaches to possess certain certifications from the National Coaching Certification Program. This is a condition for the sport organization to receive funding for coaching salaries and professional development under the Sport Support Program.[665] To be eligible for this funding, coaches must meet the following training requirements:

- Complete the Safe Sport Training Module of the National Coaching Certification Program.
- Complete the Make Ethical Decisions (MED) training of the National Coaching Certification Program.
- Be certified within the National Coaching Certification Program Competition, a coaching stream which helps participants of all ages develop competitive abilities in their sport over the long term.[666]

Coach training requirements 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 that is either conducted through the National Coaching Certification Program or another approved equivalent.[667]

Another example is Alberta, which requires Provincial Sport Organizations to follow "appropriate" leadership and training standards for coaches, like "those exemplified in the National Coaching Certification Program or equivalent program."[668] Meeting these standards is a condition to be considered for provincial funding under the Association Development Grant Program (core funding).[669]

Moreover, grassroots or local level sport organizations such as clubs and associations may also require their coaches to get specific certifications or complete trainings.

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665 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canada Sport Centre" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a3>; Government of Canada, "Sport Canada funding requirements for coaching and technical leadership salaries" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/funding-requirements-coaching-leadership-salaries.html>.

666 Government of Canada, "Sport Canada funding requirements for coaching and technical leadership salaries" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/funding-requirements-coaching-leadership-salaries.html>; See also Coaching Association of Canada, "About the NCCP" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/new-coaching/about-nccp>.

667 Government of Ontario, "Sport recognition policy for provincial and multisport organizations" (last modified May 22, 2025), online: <www.ontario.ca/page/sport-recognition-policy-provincial-and-multi-sport-organizations>.

668 Government of Alberta, "Provincial Sport Organization – Association Development Program Eligibility" (September 20, 2021), online (pdf): <www.alberta.ca/system/files/custom_downloaded_images/cms-provincial-sport-oganization-association-development-program-eligibilty.pdf>.

669 Government of Alberta, "Provincial Sport Organization – Association Development Program Eligibility" (September 20, 2021), online (pdf): <www.alberta.ca/system/files/custom_downloaded_images/cms-provincial-sport-oganization-association-development-program-eligibilty.pdf>.

Safe sport education under the Abuse-Free Sport Program and the Canadian Safe Sport Program

As outlined in Chapter 5, effective April 1, 2025, the adoption of the Canadian Safe Sport Program is a mandatory requirement for National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes to receive funding from Sport Canada under the Sport Support Program.[670] We examine the Canadian Safe Sport Program in detail in Chapter 16.

The Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules provide that adopting sport organizations must ensure that all participants to the program complete the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's Safe Sport e-learning module.[671] These participants generally include an adopting sport organization's national and international level athletes, employees and board members, national level coaches and athlete support personnel.[672]

The Safe Sport e-learning module provides education on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (discussed in Chapter 15) and on the complaint mechanism of the Canadian Safe Sport Program (Chapter 16).[673]

We also note that similar education requirements existed under the Abuse-Free Sport Program.[674] However, instead of offering its own education program like the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner accredited existing trainings 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.[675]

Other safe sport education programs

Many other safe sport education programs and trainings are offered by a range of organizations. 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.

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670 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a17>.

671 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules 2025* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at 4.3 (d), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

672 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Safe Sport Education" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/safe-sport-education>.

673 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Safe Sport Education" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/safe-sport-education>.

674 Abuse-Free Sport, "Education" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://abuse-free-sport.ca/education>.

675 Abuse-Free Sport, "Education" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://abuse-free-sport.ca/education>.

- Respect in Sport for Official by Respect Group Inc.
- Respect for 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[676]

We note that the above-mentioned education programs were accredited safe sport education or trainings under the Abuse-Free Sport Program.[677] We were informed that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport intends to continue to accredit education programs that meet national standards.

Participant perspectives on education and training programs

Many participants in our activities emphasized that education is crucial for 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, boards of directors and volunteers). Participants also emphasized the need for prevention at the grassroots level of sport.

It was also suggested that safe sport training should be mandatory for all athletes and coaches (including full-time and part-time coaches, independent contractors, volunteers, apprentices), and that 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 from parents having unrealistic expectations for their children.

Participants suggested that everyone, from athletes to parents, should receive the same information. This would help everyone recognize inappropriate behaviour.

Content of the safe sport training

While many participants believe that safe sport training is beneficial, we have learned that the existing training has flaws. A common concern, particularly among coaches, is that it tends to focus too much on what not to do, and not enough on what to do to create safe sport environments. We were told that safe sport training needs to clearly explain which behaviours are inappropriate and give coaches and others the practical tools they need to succeed, such as best practices and examples of positive behaviours to follow.

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676 Abuse-Free Sport, "Abuse-Free Sport Education Library" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://abuse-free-sport.ca/education_library>.

677 Abuse-Free Sport, "Abuse-Free Sport Education Accreditation Program" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://abuse-free-sport.ca/education/accreditation/call-for-applications>; Abuse-Free Sport, "Abuse-Free Sport Education Library" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://abuse-free-sport.ca/education_library>.

Furthermore, we were advised that the content of some training programs had not been updated for years. This content should be modernized to reflect current society's expectations. For example, we were repeatedly told that most trainings do not address racism, sexism, hazing, digital harms, social media or how to coach kids.

Participants proposed that safe sport education should include information and training on the following topics:

- 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

In addition to the points above, more education is needed on the complaint management processes. Athletes, coaches, parents and other participants suggested that safe sport education should focus on the complaint process, which includes how to file a complaint, what it means to file a complaint, and what a valid complaint is.[678]

Finally, we heard that at the university and college level, the safe sport training provided is often a general program applicable to all post-secondary sports. It often lacks information specific to each institution, which can leave students unaware of the complaint mechanism(s) available to them.

Effectiveness of safe sport training

Beyond the content of the training programs, we were told that their current format is not effective. Most trainings are delivered through online courses or e-Learning. Some participants described these trainings as useless and often referred to them as mere "check box exercises."

Some felt that there should be in-person learning opportunities, while others indicated that the virtual option could be beneficial but needed to have interactive components. Numerous participants believed that a 90-minute e-Learning course was not enough to truly understand safe sport. Multisport Service Organizations and safe sport educators who offer in-person training explained that this format helped participants understand safe sport better.

It was noted 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 if it is merely a "performative" exercise.

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678 Shelina Neallani, *Report to Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner* (Southern Butler Price LLP, 2024) at 42, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/2024-10-29_OSIC_Sport_Environment_Assessment_Report_-_Gymnastics_Canada.pdf>.

Volume and duplication of training

Participants noted the absence of coordination of safe sport education and uniform national standards on what constitutes 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 meant participants were frequently asked to take very similar safe sport courses offered by different groups, one after another.

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 for coaches is 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. For example, in some cases, National Sport Organizations require their coaches to complete the National Coaching Certification Program and a coaching certification program offered by the National Sport Organization. It was suggested that training needs to be practical for parents and not daunting or unreasonable.

We note that the concerns about the volume and cost of required training were regularly raised by sport participants at the grassroots level of sport, where most coaches are volunteers. In fact, many of these coaches are parents who are coaching "on the side of their desk."

Project Lighthouse

Project Lighthouse was a collaborative initiative led by the Canadian Olympic Committee with support from Sport Canada. The initial funding of Project Lighthouse was announced on May 1, 2023. Its goal was to promote and align safe sport through education, collaboration, and communication.[679] Through Project Lighthouse, $2 million was invested in creating or improving safe sport education modules, providing grants and financial support, and helping provincial collaboration work.

The Canadian Olympic Committee worked with partners from multiple levels of sport to accelerate safe sport initiatives in a coordinated way. These partners included:[680]

- Coaching Association of Canada
- Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport
- Sport Nova Scotia
- ViaSport (British Columbia)
- Sport'aide (Quebec)

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679 True Sport, "True Sport Newsletter" (November 2024), online (newsletter): <https://mailchi.mp/truesportpur/nov2024-newsletter>.

680 True Sport, "True Sport Newsletter" (November 2024), online (newsletter): <https://mailchi.mp/truesportpur/nov2024-newsletter>.

As part of Project Lighthouse, the Coaching Association of Canada launched the Quality Coaching Campaign.[681] This campaign raised awareness of the resources available for coaches, administrators and parents, such as their e-learning modules and training programs. These 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:

1. **Safe Sport 2025**, an e-learning module on the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (discussed in Chapter 15) and on the Centre's independent complaint mechanism (discussed in Chapter 16).
2. **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.
3. **Health Care Practitioners Module**, a module that was mandatory for the health care practitioners at the 2024 Paris Olympics. It provided 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 which 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.

For example, this collaboration led to:

- Over 20 safe sport awareness workshops and presentations from Sport'Aide being available 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 workingin education engage with safe sport.

Participant perspectives on Project Lighthouse

Project Lighthouse was the first attempt to coordinate safe sport education. In this respect, participants in our engagement process, including provinces, expressed a desire and need for better harmonization and coordination of safe sport education and awareness.

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681 Sport Information Resource Centre, "The Coaching Association of Canada launches a new campaign focused on creating safe, accessible and positive sport environments" (November 6, 2024), online: <https://sirc.ca/news/the-coaching-association-of-canada-launches-a-new-campaign-focused-on-creating-safe-accessible-and-positive-sport-environments-lassociation-canadienne-des-entraineurs-lance-une-nouvelle-cam/>.

Participants also affirmed that leadership and support are needed because of the fragmented nature of the sport system. There is concern that Project Lighthouse is ending and they noted that investments are needed to further 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.[682] It was founded to promote ethical practices and values-based behaviours in sport and 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.[683]

Until February 2025, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport administered the True Sport program, based on education and community engagement. 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.[684]

Through educational campaigns, resources and partnerships with various organizations, True Sport helped to develop a shared understanding of ethical behaviour in sport, creating a space where participants could thrive.[685]

Practically speaking, the True Sport Movement engaged a broad range of stakeholders, including sport organizations, schools, community organizations, coaches, teams, athletes, officials and event organizers, to commit to fostering and demonstrating a culture of "good sport," values-driven sport.[686] Individuals and organizations were required to sign the True Sport Declaration to formalize the agreement among all members to uphold the True Sport Principles.[687] 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.[688] The program was widely adopted in many levels of sport across Canada, from grassroots organizations to professional sport leagues.[689]

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682 True Sport, "History of True Sport" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://truesportpur.ca/history-true-sport>.

683 True Sport, "History of True Sport" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://truesportpur.ca/history-true-sport>.

684 True Sport, "What is True Sport?" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://truesportpur.ca/aboutus>.

685 True Sport, "What is True Sport?" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://truesportpur.ca/aboutus>.

686 Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations, *True Sport Engagement Kit for School Championship and Tournament Convenors: A guide on how to Join, Live and Grow True Sport in School Championships and Tournaments* (Toronto: OFSAA, 2011) at 4, online (pdf): <tsengagement-kitofsaaconvenor2011e.pdf>.

687 Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations, *True Sport Engagement Kit for School Championship and Tournament Convenors: A guide on how to Join, Live and Grow True Sport in School Championships and Tournaments* (Toronto: OFSAA, 2011) at 5, online (pdf): <tsengagement-kitofsaaconvenor2011e.pdf>.

688 Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations, *True Sport Engagement Kit for School Championship and Tournament Convenors: A guide on how to Join, Live and Grow True Sport in School Championships and Tournaments* (Toronto: OFSAA, 2011), online (pdf): <tsengagement-kitofsaaconvenor2011e.pdf>.

689 True Sport, "What is True Sport?" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://truesportpur.ca/aboutus>.

True Sport also offered a variety of online resources and tools to help True Sport Members promote True Sport and activate values-based sport. These resources included:

- a True Sport Multimedia Toolkit
- a four-episode podcast series exploring Tue 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 value-based programing
- social media tiles that promote the True Sport Principles
- a three-volume resource for educators of children from age 6 to young adolescence that facilitates learning the True Sport Principles with a focus on ethical and physical literacy[690]

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.[691] It stated that it was due to a conflict of interest arising from its expanding role in the administration of the complaint mechanism and its collaborative work with sport organizations through the True Sport Program.[692] During the Commission's discussions with participants, many echoed this concern, stating that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport could not effectively maintain independence while also engaging in close partnership with the sport community.

Participant perspectives on the True Sport movement

The importance of prevention was highlighted during many of our meetings. Many participants, including one provincial government, mentioned True Sport as being a model vehicle to share exemplary approaches to safe sport. We were told by many that True Sport was about 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 noted the wide reach of the program. 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 received information indicating that there were 5,640 True Sport members as of October 9, 2024. These members include 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.

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690 True Sport, "Resources" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://truesportpur.ca/resources>.

691 True Sport, "Letter to the True Sport Community" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://truesportpur.ca/letter-true-sport-community>.

692 True Sport, "Letter to the True Sport Community" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://truesportpur.ca/letter-true-sport-community>.

We 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 a great program, it did not get a lot of uptake. This was partly attributed to the abstract nature of the concept of "values-based" sport.

Nevertheless, there is 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 who already has 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.[693] 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.[694]

The Responsible Coaching Movement invites all coaches and sport organizations to learn and apply consistent safety principles.[695] 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.[696] We understand that these principles have been adopted by sport organizations across the country to prevent maltreatment in sport.

A common practice that was frequently brought to our attention is the Rule of Two. This rule requires two responsible adults (coach, staff, parent or screened volunteer) be present with a sport participant at all times.[697] The goal of the Rule of Two is to ensure all interactions and communications are open, observable and justifiable.[698]

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693 Coaching Association of Canada, "Responsible Coaching Movement" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/responsible-coaching-movement>.

694 Coaching Association of Canada, "Responsible Coaching Movement" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/responsible-coaching-movement>.

695 Coaching Association of Canada, "Responsible Coaching Movement" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/responsible-coaching-movement>.

696 Coaching Association of Canada, "Responsible Coaching Movement" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/responsible-coaching-movement>.

697 Coaching Association of Canada, "Rule of Two" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/responsible-coaching-movement/rule-two>.

698 Coaching Association of Canada, "Understanding the Rules of Two" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/module/understanding-rule-two>.

Participant perspectives on the Rule of Two

We understand that the Rule of Two is considered a helpful and, by some, 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 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.

Moreover, 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, a local level coach explained that while coaches were familiar with the rule, the families they work with were not. Additionally, it was noted that the Rule of Two could prevent participation by creating transportation challenges in rural or remote communities.

BACKGROUND SCREENINGS

Background screenings serve a vital role in creating and maintaining safe environments, including work and sport environments.[699] A background screening is a process to ensure that individuals in positions of trust or authority within sport organizations, such as coaches, staff and volunteers, meet certain requirements to participate in sport.[700] This process helps identify individuals who may pose a risk to the organization or its participants.[701]

As will be discussed below, sport organizations across the country have developed policies and procedures to screen their coaches, staff and volunteers.[702] In certain jurisdictions, sport organizations are required to implement screening policies to receive government funding.

Although it may not always be required, background screening has become a common practice in the sport community.[703] Nevertheless, as noted in the Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage entitled "Safe Sport in Canada," the use of background checks remains inconsistent across the country.[704]

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699 Public Safety Canada, *Best Practice Guidelines for Screening Volunteers* (Canada: Public Safety Canada, 2022) at 3, online (pdf): <www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/bpg-scrng-vls/bpg-scrng-vls-eng.pdf>.

700 Coaching Association of Canada, "Background Screening" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/responsible-coaching-movement/background-screening>.

701 See for example Swimming Canada, *National Screening Policy* (Ottawa: Swimming Canada, 2023), online (pdf): <www.swimming.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/NationalScreeningPolicy-Final_EN.pdf>.

702 Coaching Association of Canada, "Background Screening" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/responsible-coaching-movement/background-screening>.

703 See e.g. Nordiq Canada, *Nordiq Canada Screening Policy* (Alberta: Nordiq Canada, January 2024), online (pdf): <https://nordiqcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/Nordiq-Canada-Screening-Policy-002.pdf>; "Lorraine Lafreniere reacts to findings regarding sexual assault in amateur sports and gives tips to parents", *CBC* (2019), online (video): <www.cbc.ca/player/play/video/1.5013619>.

704 House of Commons, *Safe Sport in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage* (June 2024) (Chair: the Honourable Hedy Fry) at 117, online: <www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/CHPC/report-12>.

The Coaching Association of Canada has developed resources to help sport organizations develop their background screening procedures.[705] 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.[706]

In essence, the Association encourages sport organizations to assess the level of risk of each applicant coach, staff or volunteer, and to adapt their screening measures accordingly.[707] The highest level of risk is generally associated with paid head coaches, travel team coaches and team managers.[708]

Screening tools

The screening tools namely 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[709]

There is an important distinction between a criminal record check and a vulnerable sector check. Criminal record checks determine if a person has been convicted of a crime.[710] In contrast, vulnerable sector checks are a specific type of police information check that includes a search for any pardons or record of suspensions related to sexual

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705 The Coaching Association of Canada is a not-for-profit Multisport Service Organization which educates, certifies and celebrates coaches. See Coaching Association of Canada, "About the CAC" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/about-us/about-cac>.

706 Coaching Association of Canada, *Background Screening Policy and Process Considerations for Sport Organizations* (Ottawa: CAC, October 2021), online (pdf): <https://coach.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2024-07/background-screening-policy-and-process-for-sport-organizations_march2023.pdf>; Coaching Association of Canada, *Screening Policy Template* (Ottawa: CAC, 2024), online (pdf): <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fcoach.ca%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fdocuments%2F2024-07%2Fscreening-policy-template_oct2021-en.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>.

707 Coaching Association of Canada, *Background Screening Policy and Process Considerations for Sport Organizations* (Ottawa: CAC, October 2021), online (pdf): <https://coach.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2024-07/background-screening-policy-and-process-for-sport-organizations_march2023.pdf>;

708 Coaching Association of Canada, "Responsible Coaching Movement: Background Screening Matrix" (last visited May 2025), online (pdf): <https://coach.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2024-07/cac-rcm-background-screening-matrix-en.pdf>.

709 See e.g. Sask Sport, "Sask Sport Safe Sport Policy Manual for PSOs Template" (last visited May 2025) at Appendix C – Screening Disclosure Form, online (doc): <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sasksport.ca%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2023%2F12%2FSask-Sport-Safe-Sport-Policy-Manual-for-PSOs-TEMPLATE.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK> ;Coaching Association of Canada, "Responsible Coaching Movement: Background Screening Matrix" (last visited May 2025), online (pdf): <https://coach.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2024-07/cac-rcm-background-screening-matrix-en.pdf>.

710 Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "Types of certified criminal record checks" (last modified March 7, 2025), online: <https://rcmp.ca/en/criminal-records/criminal-record-checks/types-certified-criminal-record-checks>.

offences.[711] Vulnerable sector checks were created to protect children and vulnerable persons. These checks can only be conducted by the police agency where the applicant lives.[712]

More generally, some sport organizations rely on private companies that offer background check solutions.[713] For example, the Coaching Association of Canada has partnered with Sterling Talent Solutions to provide online criminal record checks.[714]

Screening requirements

There is no legislative requirement for National Sport Organizations to implement screening policies. We understand, however, that most of the National Sport Organizations have adopted screening policies.[715]

It is also important to note that coaches working for National Sport Organizations must provide a police record check for the organization to receive federal funding for their salaries. More specifically, coaches must submit one of the following, or an equivalent, to their National Sport Organization:

- Enhanced Police Information Center check
- Vulnerable Sector Search
- Vulnerable Sector Verification
- Vulnerable Sector Check[716]

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711 Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "Vulnerable sector checks" (last modified May 21, 2025), online: <https://rcmp.ca/en/criminal-records/criminal-record-checks/vulnerable-sector-checks>.

712 Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "For police – Dissemination of Criminal Record Information policy" (last modified May 22, 2025), online: <https://rcmp.ca/en/criminal-records/police-dissemination-criminal-record-information-policy>; The British Columbia Records Review Program is the authorized body for conducting vulnerable sector checks in British Columbia. See Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "Vulnerable sector checks" (last modified May 21, 2025), online: <https://rcmp.ca/en/criminal-records/criminal-record-checks/vulnerable-sector-checks>.

713 For example, the CAC refers to Sterling Talent Solutions. See Coaching Association of Canada, "Background Screening: Protecting People" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/responsible-coaching-movement/background-screening>; Triton advertises itself to sport organizations. See Triton, "Sport Organizations: Ensure Safe Sport Environment While Cutting the Red Tape" (September 11, 2024), online: <www.tritoncanada.ca/background-checks-for-sport-organizations-to-ensure-safe-sport-environments/>.

714 Coaching Association of Canada, "Background Screening: Protecting People" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/sport-safety/responsible-coaching-movement/background-screening>.

715 See e.g. Nordiq Canada, *Nordiq Canada Screening Policy* (Alberta: Nordiq Canada, January 2024), online (pdf): <https://nordiqcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/Nordiq-Canada-Screening-Policy-002.pdf>; Field Hockey Canada, *Screening Policy* (Ottawa: FHC, 2021), online (pdf): < www.fieldhockey.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FHC-Screening-Policy-Approved-March-2-2021.pdf?_gl=1*1wft1bp*_ga*ODE4NjQxMzY3LjE3NDU5NTgzMTE.*_ga_EET7SN5GKF*MTc0NTk1ODMxMS4xLjEuMTc0NTk1ODMxNi4wLjAuMA >.

716 Government of Canada, "Sport Canada requirements for coaching and technical leadership salaries" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/funding-requirements-coaching-leadership-salaries.html>.

Screening policies are required in certain jurisdictions. For instance, in Ontario, Provincial Sport Organizations must have a "screening" policy in order to be recognized by the province and receive government funding.[717] 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."[718]

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.[719]

Participant perspectives on screenings

There is a broad consensus that background screenings, often referred to by participants 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 especially crucial 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 is also a general 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 persons with disabilities.

Sport organizations often require background checks as a part of their onboarding process for coaches and other persons in positions of authority, like officials and referees. Notably, most National Sport Organizations have screening policies that require criminal record checks for individuals interacting with the public and vulnerable persons.

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717 Government of Ontario, "Sport recognition policy for provincial and multi-sport organizations" (last modified May 22, 2025), online: <www.ontario.ca/page/sport-recognition-policy-provincial-and-multi-sport-organizations>.

718 ViaSport, *Designation Program Policy* (British Columbia: viaSport, March 2024) at 4, online (pdf): <https://viasport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Designation-Program-Policy_approved_April2024.pdf>.

719 For example, the Abbotsford Soccer Association requires a criminal record check for "everyone working with players in [their] organization." See Abbotsford Soccer Association, "Criminal Records Check (CRC)" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.abbotsfordsoccer.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/CRIMINAL-RECORDS-CHECK-2-1.pdf>; Another example is the South Huron Minor Hockey Association, whose *Police Record Check Policy* states that "[all] individuals holding the titles of coach, assistant coach, trainer, assistant trainer, manager, on ice official and any one else determine by the South Huron Minor Hockey Executive shall be subject to Criminal Record Checks which include the Vulnerable Sector Screening and search of the National Sex Offender Registry." See South Huron Minor Hockey Association, "Police Record Check Policy" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://southhuronminorhockey.ca/Pages/3179/Police_Record_Check_Policy/>; See e.g. Toronto Ultimate Club, "Volunteer Screening – Police Reference Check Policy" (last modified January 15, 2020), online: <www.tuc.org/policies/volunteer-screening-reference-check>.

That said, while screening practices are common in sport, participants expressed concern that there are no standardized screening requirements across the country. In this respect, 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.

To remedy the inconsistent screening policies, participants suggested establishing standard national screening practices and guidelines that would apply consistently across all jurisdictions. Others recommended implementing mechanisms to make screenings transferable between jurisdictions and sport organizations, reducing the burden of separate screenings.

Throughout our discussions, many 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 raising 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 for it to be revealed later 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. It appears that in most cases, background checks are only conducted when an individual first joins an organization. This could be insufficient as some individuals remain with organizations for many years.

We also observed that sport organizations are increasingly relying on private companies, rather than the local police services, to conduct criminal background checks. This is due to the fact that private companies can process these checks online with a fast turnaround time. It was also noted that vulnerable sector checks, which can only be carried out by local police services, are significantly more expensive than standard criminal background checks.

THE DUTY TO REPORT IN SPORT

We note that other tools and mechanisms exist to assist in detecting and addressing maltreatment in sport. The duty to report in sport is one of them.

Canadian child welfare laws impose, under certain circumstances, a legal duty to report suspected or known child abuse or neglect to local child welfare services, provincial/territorial social service ministries or departments or local police.[720]

Outside of child protection legislation, the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport also provides for a duty to report concerns of inappropriate conduct in sport. As will be further discussed in Chapter 15, the Universal Code of Conduct sets harmonized rules to be adopted by national level sport organizations funded by the Government of Canada 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 Code states that failing to report possible maltreatment is a prohibited behaviour.[721] The Code thus establishes a contractual obligation for every adult participant who adheres to its principles to report any instance of prohibited behaviour (as defined in the Code) committed by another participant against a person.

Consequently, an adult participant violates the Code if they knew, or reasonably ought to have known, about another participant's prohibited conduct and failed to report it. Such failure to report may result in sanctions, whose scope and severity are detailed in section 7 of the Universal Code of Conduct.[722]

Despite the existence of these protective mechanisms, we were told about numerous situations in which individuals were aware of maltreatment or abuse and chose not to report it.

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720 Public Health Agency of Canada, *Provincial and Territorial Child Protection Legislation and Policy 2018* (Ottawa: Public Health Canada, March 2019), online (pdf): <www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/health-risks-safety/provincial-territorial-child-protection-legislation-policy-2018/64-03-18-2245_Child-Protection_EN-FINAL02.pdf>.

721 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.11, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

722 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 7, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

PREVENTION OF MALTREATMENT IN SPORT: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many participants emphasized, and the Commission agrees, that prevention of maltreatment in sport settings is as important, if not more important, than reacting to it after it has occurred.

Prevention is the cornerstone of a sustainable and effective safe sport strategy. A system that focuses solely on remediation can never truly be safe as it waits for harm to occur before acting. In contrast, prevention creates a culture and a framework designed to minimize the risk of maltreatment occurring in the first place.

It is imperative to note that emphasis on prevention is not only about ensuring safety within 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 a broader societal importance.

Strengthening prevention efforts is also urgent. Ensuring the safety of children and other vulnerable participants in sport is a critical step that cannot wait any longer. Without a stronger focus on preventing harm, we risk continuing cycles of maltreatment that impact individuals and communities alike.

Throughout the Commission's work, participants identified two main strategies for preventing maltreatment in sport: education and training, and rigorous background screening protocols. These critical strategies help athletes, parents, officials, coaches, and other stakeholders recognize unhealthy behaviours and act before situations escalate.

Education and training: preliminary findings

The Commission found that a wide range of safe sport education and training initiatives are currently in place across the Canadian sport system. These initiatives, implemented by various sport and multisport service organizations, extend from the grassroots level to high-performance sport. They reflect a collective effort to promote safer, more respectful, and inclusive sport environments. Despite the numerous safe sport education and training efforts, the Commission's work highlights several areas for improvement.

Delivering education and training to all stakeholders

Safe sport education and training must be delivered to all stakeholders across the sport system. This includes not only to coaches and athletes, but also to parents, officials, administrators, volunteers, support staff, and even children in age-appropriate ways. Everyone involved in sport plays a role in creating and maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment. Limiting education to only certain groups undermines the collective responsibility required to prevent and respond to maltreatment.

Going beyond identifying maltreatment in sport

Safe sport education and training should be more comprehensive. We need to move beyond a narrow focus on identifying maltreatment in sport. While it is essential to understand abuse, harassment and other forms of harm, modern safe sport programs must also include training on broader social issues that impact athlete well-being and safety. This includes, for example, informed consent, anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion.

These topics are essential for fostering respectful and supportive sport environments.

In our view, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's True Sport initiative, developed to encourage ethical practices and values-based behaviours in sport, played, and could continue to play, a significant role in improving sport environments. Although this initiative does not specifically focus on safe sport issues, it promotes social change by identifying "founding values" and encouraging conduct that aligns with these values. By emphasizing fairness, respect, inclusion, and responsibility, True Sport fosters a culture of positive engagement in sport. It ultimately contributes to a safer and more supportive environment for all participants.

Varying education and training formats

Relying mostly on online modules and e-learning formats has proven ineffective in fostering meaningful engagement and behaviour change. More interactive and in-person training sessions are needed to encourage dialogue, reflection, and learning among athletes, coaches, and sport leaders.

Coordinating the approach to delivering safe sport education

The current delivery model of safe sport education programs is fragmented and often ineffective. Multiple organizations offer overlapping or duplicative courses that lead to confusion and inefficiencies. There is a clear need for a more coordinated and centralized approach to delivering safe sport education programs throughout the country to ensure consistency in messaging, reduce redundancy, and improve the overall impact of education and training.

A good example of a more targeted and structured effort is Project Lighthouse. In our view, Project Lighthouse demonstrates how a unified approach can improve both the reach and effectiveness of safe sport education. As we will discuss below, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport also intends to develop a safe sport education plan.

Participants, including provincial and territorial governments, also cited the fragmented nature of the sport system to emphasize the need for leadership and support in safe sport education and training. In the Commission's view, it is critical that the Government of Canada takes a leadership role in improving harmonization and coordination, reach, content and efficiency of safe sport education and training across the sport system.

We also note that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, in its 2023 Report entitled "Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for all Athletes in Canada," outlined different ways the Government of Canada can address maltreatment in sport. In relation to education and training, the Standing Committee notably 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.[723]

723 House of Commons, *Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada* (June 2023) (Chair: Karen Vecchio) at Recommendation 11, online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Reports/RP12528102/feworp07/feworp07-e.pdf>.

- 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.[724]
- 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.[725]
- The Government of Canada ensure athletes receive information about their rights and available services they can access should they experience maltreatment in sports.[726]
- 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.[727]

Education and training: preliminary recommendations

At the federal level, the Commission recommends that:

36. The Government of Canada partner with stakeholders such as Multisport Service Organizations and launch a national public awareness campaign to inform the public about safe sport, including (i) best practices and good behaviours to foster safe sport environments and (ii) the various forms of maltreatment in sport, including abuse, harassment and discrimination.

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724 House of Commons, *Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada* (June 2023) (Chair: Karen Vecchio) at Recommendation 17, online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Reports/RP12528102/feworp07/feworp07-e.pdf>.

725 House of Commons, *Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada* (June 2023) (Chair: Karen Vecchio) at Recommendation 18, online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Reports/RP12528102/feworp07/feworp07-e.pdf>.

726 House of Commons, *Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada* (June 2023) (Chair: Karen Vecchio) at Recommendation 19, online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Reports/RP12528102/feworp07/feworp07-e.pdf>.

727 House of Commons, *Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada* (June 2023) (Chair: Karen Vecchio) at Recommendation 20, online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Reports/RP12528102/feworp07/feworp07-e.pdf>.

37. The Government of Canada (i) take a leadership role, (ii) partner with stakeholders such as Multisport Service Organizations and (iii) provide the necessary resources in order to develop a single comprehensive, interactive and efficient national safe sport education program. This program must include chapters tailored to meet the needs of all stakeholders involved in sport. This will ensure safe sport education is consistent, accessible and specific to each role across the entire sport system. The stakeholders include athletes (children and adults), parents, coaches, volunteers, employees, referees, officials, administrators and members of board of directors.
38. The Government of Canada engage and collaborate with its provincial and territorial counterparts and Indigenous groups, to develop the national safe sport education program.
39. The Government of Canada:
    a. mandate that all individuals involved in sport organizations receiving federal funding, namely athletes (children and adults), parents, coaches, volunteers, employees, referees, officials, administrators and members of board of directors, complete the appropriate chapter of the national safe sport education program; and
    b. provide the resources necessary to deliver the program to federally funded sport organizations.
40. The Government of Canada:
    a. mandate that all National Sport Organizations receiving federal funding modify their membership rules to require of their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations that all individuals involved in their respective sport organization, namely athletes (children and adults), parents, coaches, volunteers, employees, referees, officials, administrators and members of board of directors, complete the appropriate chapter of the national safe sport education program; and
    b. provide the resources necessary to deliver the program to the member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations of federally funded National Sport Organizations.
41. The Government of Canada, in determining the level of funding allocated to National Sport Organizations, take into account the extent to which the national safe sport education program is delivered to their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

At the provincial and territorial level, the Commission recommends that:

42. The Government of Canada:
    a. encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to mandate that all individuals involved in sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding, namely athletes (children and adults), parents, coaches, volunteers, employees, referees, officials, administrators and members of board of directors, complete the chapter of the national safe sport education program relevant to their roles; and
    b. provide the resources necessary to deliver the program to sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding.

43. The Government of Canada:
    a. encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to mandate that Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding modify their membership rules to require of their member Community Sport Organizations that all individuals involved in their respective sport organization, including athletes (children and adults), parents, coaches, volunteers, employees, referees, officials, administrators and members of board of directors, complete the appropriate chapter of the national safe sport education program; and
    b. provide the resources necessary to deliver the program to the member Community Sport Organizations of provincially and territorially funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.
44. The Government of Canada encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to consider, in determining the level of funding allocated to Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, the extent to which the national safe sport education program is delivered to their member Community Sport Organizations.
45. The responsibility for developing, updating and delivering the National Safe Sport Education Program across all levels of sport be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity (outlined in Chapter 6). Until the Government of Canada establishes this entity, these responsibilities should reside with the Multisport Service Organization(s) mandated by Sport Canada, under the supervision of Sport Canada.

The Commission also recommends that:

46. The Government of Canada ensure the continued delivery of the True Sport Program. With the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport no longer delivering the program, responsibility for True Sport should be transferred to an independent organization capable of advancing its mission and expanding its reach across the Canadian sport system. This responsibility should also be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity external to Sport Canada (referenced in Chapter 6) once it is established. In the meantime, True Sport should be transferred to an independent Multisport Service Organization.

Background screenings: preliminary findings

The work of the Commission highlights a strong consensus that screening processes for coaches, officials, referees, staff, and volunteers, are essential to maintaining safe and secure sport environments. Screening processes include criminal record checks, vulnerable sector checks, screening disclosure forms, letters of reference and interviews.

As for education and training, sport organizations across the country have developed policies and procedures to screen their coaches, staff and volunteers. Sometimes they do this because it is a mandatory requirement for funding, and sometimes it is on a voluntary basis. That said, the implementation and scope of such procedures remain inconsistent nationwide.

For example, Sport Canada requires National Sport Organizations to obtain background checks from coaches as a condition for receiving federal funding for coaches' 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."[728]

At the provincial and territorial level, Ontario requires that Provincial Sport Organizations have a "screening" policy to be recognized by the province and receive government funding.[729] The same goes for British Columbia, which requires that its designated provincial sport organizations implement criminal record checks for employees and volunteers.[730]

As for the scope of these policies, the Commission observes that most National Sport Organizations have screening policies requiring criminal record checks for individuals who interact with the public and vulnerable persons. However, it has come to light that 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 only be conducted by local Canadian police services.

We believe that ensuring safe sport environments requires the consistent implementation of harmonized background screening procedures across all levels of sport, and that the Government of Canada has a vital leadership role to play in establishing and supporting this national standard.

Background screenings: preliminary recommendations

In its 2024 report entitled "Safe Sport in Canada," the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage recommended that "all organizations in Canada receiving federal money require a vulnerable sector police check for all volunteers, coaches and employees in contact with athletes and that an audit mechanism be set up to prove that such checks have been carried out."[731]

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728 Government of Canada, "Sport Canada funding requirements for coaching and technical leadership salaries" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/funding-requirements-coaching-leadership-salaries.html>; See also Coaching Association of Canada, "About the NCCP" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://coach.ca/new-coaching/about-nccp>.

729 Government of Ontario, "Sport recognition policy for provincial and multi-sport organizations" (last modified May 22, 2025), online: <www.ontario.ca/page/sport-recognition-policy-provincial-and-multi-sport-organizations>.

730 ViaSport, *Designation Program Policy* (British Columbia: viaSport, March 2024) at 4, online (pdf): <https://viasport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Designation-Program-Policy_approved_April2024.pdf>.

731 House of Commons, *Safe Sport in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage* (June 2024) (Chair: the Honourable Hedy Fry) at Recommendation 1, online: <www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/CHPC/report-12>.

The Commission strongly endorses the implementation of mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks as a vital measure to protect and uphold safe sport environments. We also believe that these checks must be subsidized by the Government of Canada.

Consequently, at the federal level, the Commission recommends that:

47. The Government of Canada:
    a. mandate that all sport organizations receiving federal funding conduct Vulnerable Sector Checks for all coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees in contact with athletes, and require that these checks be conducted periodically; and
    b. subsidize the cost of the mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks for all sport organizations receiving federal funding.

48. The Government of Canada:
    a. 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 conduct Vulnerable Sector Checks for all coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees in contact with athletes and require that these checks be conducted periodically; and
    b. subsidize the cost of the mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks for member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations of federally funded National Sport Organizations.

49. The Government of Canada, in determining the level of funding allocated to National Sport Organizations, consider the extent to which the mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks are conducted by their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

At the provincial/territorial level, the Commission recommends that:

50. The Government of Canada:
    a. encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to mandate that all sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding conduct Vulnerable Sector Checks for all coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees who have direct contact with athletes, and require that these checks be conducted periodically; and
    b. provide conditional grants to provinces and territories to allow them to subsidize the cost of mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks for all sport organizations receiving provincial and territorial funding.

51. The Government of Canada:
    a. encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to 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 conduct Vulnerable Sector Checks for all coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees in contact with athletes, and require that these checks be conducted periodically; and
    b. provide conditional grants to provinces and territories to allow them to subsidize the cost of mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks for member Community Sport Organizations of provincially and territorially funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

52. The Government of Canada encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to consider, in determining the level of funding allocated to Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, the extent to which the mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks are conducted by their member Community Sport Organizations.
53. Responsibility for (i) subsidizing the cost of mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks for federally funded sport organizations and member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations of federally funded National Sport Organizations and (ii) providing conditional grants to provinces and territories (to allow them to subsidize the cost of mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks for sport organizations receiving provincial and territorial funding and for member Community Sport Organizations of provincially/territorially funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations) be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity (discussed in Chapter 6). Until this entity is established, these responsibilities should reside with Sport Canada.

Considering that Vulnerable Sector Checks may not be required for all coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees in all circumstances, the Commission considered an alternative: the development and implementation of a standardized background screening policy. This alternative would offer more flexibility in terms of screening tools and would likely reduce the administrative burden on sport organizations.

Thus, alternatively, at the federal level, the Commission recommends that:

54. The Government of Canada take a leadership role, and collaborate with Multisport Service Organizations, its provincial and territorial counterparts and Indigenous groups to develop a standardized background screening policy.
55. The Government of Canada:
    a. mandate that all sport organizations receiving federal funding adopt and implement the standardized screening policy; and
    b. subsidize the cost of implementing the standardized background screening policy for all sport organizations receiving federal funding.

56. The Government of Canada:
    a. 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 and implement the standardized screening policy; and
    b. subsidize the cost of implementing the standardized background screening policy for member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations of federally funded National Sport Organizations.

57. The Government of Canada, in determining the level of funding allocated to National Sport Organizations, consider the extent to which the standardized background screening policy is adopted and implemented by their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

Thus, alternatively, at the provincial/territorial level, the Commission recommends that:

58. The Government of Canada:
    a. encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to 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 and implement the standardized background screening policy; and
    b. provide conditional grants to provinces and territories to allow them to subsidize the costs of implementing the standardized background screening policy for member Community Sport Organizations of provincially and territorially funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

59. The Government of Canada encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to consider, in determining the level of funding allocated to Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, the extent to which the standardized background screening policy is implemented by their member Community Sport Organizations.
60. The development and stewardship of a standardized background screening policy be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity to be established by the Government of Canada (discussed in Chapter 6). Until that entity is in place, this responsibility should rest with Sport Canada. This includes the subsidization of implementation costs for federally funded sport organizations and member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations of federally funded National Sport Organizations, as well as the provision of grants to provinces and territories to support their own cost-sharing efforts.

Finally, in terms of data collection, the Commission recommends that:

61. The Government of Canada establish a comprehensive national tool to regularly collect and analyze data on key indicators to measure and assess the health and safety of sport environments in Canada. Sport participation, safe sport complaints and their outcomes must be part of the data collected.

CHAPTER 15:
Safe sport policies and codes of conduct

In the previous chapters, we defined safe sport environments and examined preventative strategies to address and reduce maltreatment in sport. In this chapter, we focus on the safe sport policies adopted by various sport organizations 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 this chapter by discussing the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (also called the "UCCMS"). This Universal Code of Conduct is the main safe sport policy at the national level. We also review government safe sport policies from provinces and territories and briefly touch on those adopted by National Sport Organization, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and Community Sport Organizations. For all these topics, we incorporate feedback received during our engagement process.

This chapter lays the foundation for Chapter 16, which addresses the various complaint mechanisms created to administer these policies. Because our preliminary findings and recommendations on safe sport policies and codes of conduct are closely intertwined with those concerning complaint mechanisms, they are presented together, in a single set of preliminary findings and recommendations, at the end of Chapter 16.

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 in 2019, the Universal Code of Conduct is a policy aimed at creating a safe, respectful and inclusive sport environment.

As we will discuss below, the Universal Code of Conduct sets standard definitions of various forms of maltreatment and prohibits maltreatment in sport. It applies directly to all federally funded National Sport Organization and Multisport Service Organizations, who are required to adopt it as a condition to receive 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 to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport

In February 2019, the 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*. This declaration commits both levels of government to eliminating abuse, discrimination and harassment in sport.[732]

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732 "Conference of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation, *Red Deer Declaration – For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport* (Red Deer: Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat, February 14-15, 2019), online: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/red-deer-declaration-for-the-prevention-of-harassment-abuse-and-discrimination-in-sport/.>"

The Coaching Association of Canada then hosted a series of provincial and territorial safe sport summits, which led to 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.[733] It was also agreed that an independent body would be chosen to implement this harmonized and universal code.[734]

In response, Sport Canada asked the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to draft the key components of a universal code. This included guiding principles, definitions of misconduct, prohibited behaviours including all forms of abuse (sexual, physical, and psychological), and related sanctions.[735] The Canadian Centre for Ethics and Sport then partnered with the Sport Information Resource Centre to lead an extensive engagement process.[736]

The first version of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport was published by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport in 2019 (version 5.1).[737] 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).[738] 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).[739] Our understanding is that there are 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, as will be further discussed in Chapter 16.

Content and purpose of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport

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."[740]

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733 Coaching Association of Canada, News Release, "National Sport Organization Safe Sport Working Group presents consensus statements on pan-Canadian Safe Sport on the prevention of abuse and harassment" (May 10, 2019), online: <https://coach.ca/news/national-sport-organization-safe-sport-working-group-presents-consensus-statements-pan>.

734 Coaching Association of Canada, News Release, "National Sport Organization Safe Sport Working Group presents consensus statements on pan-Canadian Safe Sport on the prevention of abuse and harassment" (May 10, 2019), online: <https://coach.ca/news/national-sport-organization-safe-sport-working-group-presents-consensus-statements-pan>.

735 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, News Release, "CCES Leading Development of Draft Universal Safe Sport Code" (June 20, 2019), online: <https://cces.ca/news/cces-leading-development-draft-universal-safe-sport-code>.

736 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, News Release, "CCES Leading Development of Draft Universal Safe Sport Code" (June 20, 2019), online: <https://cces.ca/news/cces-leading-development-draft-universal-safe-sport-code>.

737 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport: Version 2022 (6.0)* (Montreal: SDRCC, 2022) at 1, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/UCCMS-v6.0-20220531.pdf>.

738 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport: Version 2022 (6.0)* (Montreal: SDRCC, 2022) at 1, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/UCCMS-v6.0-20220531.pdf>.

739 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Appendix 1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

740 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

The Universal Code of Conduct defines and prohibits various forms of maltreatment, referred to as prohibited behaviours. It also outlines additional behaviours that, although not considered maltreatment, are nonetheless prohibited. The Universal Code of Conduct then provides a framework for applying appropriate sanctions once such prohibited behaviours are identified.[741]

The various forms of maltreatment under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport are:

- psychological maltreatment[742]
- physical maltreatment[743]
- neglect[744]
- sexual maltreatment[745]
- grooming[746]
- boundary Transgressions[747]
- discrimination[748]

The list of other prohibited behaviours is:

- subjecting a participant to the risk of maltreatment[749]
- aiding and abetting the commission of maltreatment or other prohibited behaviour[750]
- failure to report possible maltreatment or other prohibited behaviour[751]

741 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 7, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

742 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.2, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

743 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.3, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

744 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.4, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

745 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.5, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

746 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.6, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

747 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.7, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

748 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.8, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

749 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.9, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

750 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.10, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

751 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0*

- intentionally reporting a false allegation[752]
- interference with or manipulation of an investigation or disciplinary review[753]
- retaliation[754]

The possible sanctions are:

- verbal or written apology[755]
- verbal or written warning[756]
- education[757]
- probation[758]
- suspension[759]
- eligibility Restrictions[760]
- permanent Ineligibility[761]
- other discretionary sanctions (for example, loss of the right to attend or spectate sport events, a fine or a monetary payment to compensate for direct losses, or no contact directives)[762]

The Universal Code of Conduct defines rules and violations for "Participants." As such, only individuals are subject to the Code.

(Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.11, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

752 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.12, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

753 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.13, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

754 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 5.14, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

755 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 7.2.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

756 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 7.2.2, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

757 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 7.2.3, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

758 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 7.2.4, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

759 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 7.2.5, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

760 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 7.2.6, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

761 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 7.2.7, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

762 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 7.2.8, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

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.[763] This registry is currently maintained by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport[764]. The Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry is further addressed in Chapter 17.

The Universal Code of Conduct provides that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is responsible for its administration.[765] However, it 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 will be discussed in Chapter 16.

Finally, the Universal Code of Conduct does not apply automatically.[766] Sport organizations need to adopt the Code for it to apply to their participants.

Applicability of the Universal Code of Conduct to national level sport organizations

As mentioned in Chapter 5, 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.[767]

As will be further discussed in Chapter 16, the Canadian Safe Sport Program allows the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to independently administer and enforce 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.[768]

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763 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 8, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

764 Donna Spencer, "Responsibility for safe sport flips to Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport" *Lakeland Today* (March 11, 2025), online: <www.lakelandtoday.ca/politics/responsibility-for-safe-sport-flips-to-canadian-centre-for-ethics-in-sport-10359306>; Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "FAQ: Safe Sport" (last visited March 19, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/faq-safe-sport>.

765 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Annotated Version (CCES),* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 1.1, online (pdf): <CCES-UCCMS-Annotated-FINAL-E.pdf>.

766 See e.g. Marcus Mazzucco & Hilary Findlay, "Jurisdiction" in Julie Stevens, ed, *Safe Sport: Critical Issues and Practices* (St. Catharines: Brock University, 2022), online (pdf): <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/safesport/>.

767 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a3>.

768 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 1.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

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) into their internal policies and procedures.[769]

As also outlined in Chapter 16, the Canadian Safe Sport Program only applies to a limited group of individuals within a sport organization,[770] and only in specific situations.[771]

Applicability of the Universal Code of Conduct to sport organizations below the national level

The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport can apply indirectly to sport organizations that are not national. This is due to the hierarchical nature of sport in Canada, where a "flow-through" system allow rules from the national level to extend to every level of sport, down to the grassroots.[772]

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 do the same with their members, which are generally local clubs and associations.[773]

Organizations outside of this hierarchy and not federally funded, like universities (further discussed below), can choose to voluntarily adopt the Universal Code of Conduct and then require their participants to follow it.

We further note that some organizations only partially adopt the Universal Code of Conduct. For example, this is what Trent University's Department of Athletics has done. Their Student-Athlete Handbook states that the Department of Athletics adopted sections 1 to 5 of the Universal Code of Conduct,[774] 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.[775]

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769 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 4, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

770 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rules 3.1-3.2, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

771 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 3.3, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

772 Marcus Mazzucco & Hilary Findlay, "Jurisdiction" in Julie Stevens, ed, *Safe Sport: Critical Issues and Practices* (St. Catharines: Brock University, 2022), online (pdf): <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/safesport/>.

773 Marcus Mazzucco & Hilary Findlay, "Jurisdiction" in Julie Stevens, ed, *Safe Sport: Critical Issues and Practices* (St. Catharines: Brock University, 2022), online (pdf): <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/safesport/>.

774 Section 1 to 5 of the *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport* sets out the purpose, general principles and commitment, objectives, scope of applications and prohibited behaviours. Trent University has not adopted the provisions that establish the framework regarding sanctions. Trent University, *Student-Athlete Handbook 2023–24* (Oshawa: Trent University, 2023) at 1, online (pdf): <https://trentexcalibur.ca/2023-24_Varsity_Student-Athlete_Handbook_-_July_2023_-_Final.pdf>.

775 Trent University, *Student-Athlete Handbook 2023–24* (Oshawa: Trent University, 2023) at 11, online (pdf): <https://trentexcalibur.ca/2023-24_Varsity_Student-Athlete_Handbook_-_July_2023_-_Final.pdf>.

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 the expected behaviours for individuals involved with the organization and when disciplinary action might occur.[776] 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 organization programs and activities.[777]

We also note that many elements of a sport organization's code of conduct may 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 their 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 will explore this process further in Chapter 16.

Meanwhile, federally funded National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations that adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program refer reports of maltreatment and other prohibited behaviours that fall within the jurisdiction of the Canadian Safe Sport Program to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. The Canadian Safe Sport Program is explored in detail in Chapter 16.

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, equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies or strategies.[778]

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776 See e.g. Volleyball Canada, *Code of Conduct and Ethics* (Ottawa: Volleyball Canada, 2020), online (pdf): <https://volleyball.ca/uploads/Policies/2020/Pan_Canadian_Policy_-_Code_of_Conduct_and_Ethics_-_Oct_2020.pdf>; Sail Canada, *Safe Sport Policy Package*, *Code of Conduct* (Kingston: Sail Canada, 2022), online (pdf): <www.sailing.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Sail-Canada-Safe-Sport-Policy-Package-v2-january-2023-ENG.pdf>.

777 For example, Swimming Canada's Code of Conduct and Ethics provides that minors and adults are to refrain from consuming tobacco products, cannabis (subject to protections available under the human rights legislation) or recreational drugs while participating in the programs, activities, competitions, or events of Swimming Canada or a Member. See Swimming Canada, *Board Policy: Code of Conduct and Ethics* (Ottawa: Swimming Canada, 2022), online (pdf): <www.swimming.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2022_Code-of-Conduct-UCCMS-Compliant_20221206_final-1.pdf>.

778 Athletics Canada, *Athletics Canada Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy* (Ottawa: Athletics Canada, 2020), online (pdf): < https://athletics.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Athletics-Canada-Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Policy-July-2020.pdf>; Gymnastics Canada, "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy", (last visited June 2025), online: <Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy | Gymnastics Canada>; AthletesCan, *Diversity, Equity and Access Policy,* (Toronto: AthletesCan 2021), online (pdf): <Microsoft Word - Diversity, Equity and Access Policy - EN.docx >; Skate Canada, "Education Plan for Anti-Racism and EDIA" (last visited June 2025), online: < https://skatecanada.ca/about/edia/education-plan-for-anti-racism-and-edia/>; Canadian Women and Sport, "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy" (May 2020), online: < https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Canadian-Women-Sport-Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Policy_EN.pdf>.

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 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 Organizations and its provincial and territorial counterparts.

Considering the above, provinces and territories have implemented three main approaches to safe sport policies. They are discussed in more detail below:

1. **The government or the provincial or territorial federation of sport organizations develops a universal code of conduct or safe sport policy**. Sport organizations in the province or territory are then required to adopt the code or policy to receive funding (British Columbia and Saskatchewan).
2. **There is no universal code of conduct or safe sport policy, but Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations are required to adopt their own.** This requirement comes either from a statute (Quebec) or as a condition to receive funding (New Brunswick).
3. **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 to implement or not their own universal code or safe sport policy.

Provinces and territories with universal safe sport policies or codes of conduct

There are universal codes or policies to address maltreatment in sport in both British Columbia and Saskatchewan. There are also centralized initiatives in the Northwest Territories and Manitoba.

British Columbia

The provincial government and ViaSport created the "British Columbia Universal Code of Conduct." All provincially funded sport organizations in British Columbia must comply with this code.[779] It notably incorporates key elements of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.[780]

The enforcement of the British Columbia Universal Code of Conduct is currently decentralized. Each sport organization is responsible for investigating violations of the Code and handling the disciplinary process.

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779 ViaSport, *ViaSport Policy: Designation Program Policy* (Vancouver: viaSport, 2024), online (pdf): <https://viasport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Designation-Program-Policy_approved_April2024.pdf>.

780 ViaSport, *British Columbia Universal Code of Conduct* (Vancouver: viaSport, 2021), s 1.2, online (pdf): <https://viasport.ca/resources/bc-universal-code-of-conduct/>.

This has to be done as outlined in their Discipline and Complaints Policy (or equivalent).[781]

However, as we will discuss in Chapter 16, the Government of British Columbia has announced its intention to establish an independent not-for-profit organization to administer an independent complaint mechanism.[782]

Saskatchewan

Sask Sport has made the adoption of its "Safe Sport Manual and Procedures" mandatory for all Provincial Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations under its membership.[783] Its adoption is required in order to receive funding from Sask Sport.

Importantly, this manual incorporates the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport as a foundational document, and member sport organizations must adopt it.[784]

Northwest Territories

The Northwest Territories adopted a Safe Sport Framework in 2022 which outlines the government's safe sport strategy.[785]

This framework, which is not mandatory, aims for all Territorial Sport Organizations and recreation organizations to use aligned or equivalent policies to ensure consistency. This mission is to be supported by creating a Safe Sport Policy Suite template. Furthermore, the framework recommends using an Independent Third Party to hear safe sport complaints in the territory.

Manitoba

Provincial Sport Organization recognized by Sport Manitoba are currently required to incorporate safe sport principles into their policies.[786] However, on March 6, 2025, the Government of Manitoba introduced Bill 21 – *The Protecting Youth in Sports Act.*[787] If enacted, the Act would require Sport Manitoba to establish a safe sport policy "that is

781 ViaSport, *British Columbia Universal Code of Conduct* (Vancouver: viaSport, 2021), s 6.2, online (pdf): <https://viasport.ca/resources/bc-universal-code-of-conduct/>.

782 British Columbia Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, Information Bulletin, 2024TACS0012-000623, "Province Moves Ahead on a Safer Amateur Sports System" (April 24, 2024), online: <https://archive.news.gov.bc.ca/releases/news_releases_2020-2024/2024TACS0012-000623.pdf>.

783 Sask Sport, "Sask Sport Safe Sport Manual for PSOs" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.sasksport.ca/member-services/policies-procedures/sask-sport-safe-sport-manual-for-psos/>.

784 Sask Sport, "Safe Sport Policy Manual" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sasksport.ca%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2023%2F12%2FSask-Sport-Safe-Sport-Policy-Manual-for-PSOs-TEMPLATE.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>.

785 Government of Northwest Territories, Ministers' Statements and Speeches, "Shane Thompson: Safe Sport" (October 28, 2022), online: <www.gov.nt.ca/en/newsroom/shane-thompson-safe-sport>.

786 Sports Manitoba, "Safe Sport Policies" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.sportmanitoba.ca/safesport-policies/#:~:text=Policies%20and%20Templates,communicating%20expected%20standards%20of%20behaviour>.

787 Bill 21, *The Protecting Youth in Sports Act*, 2nd Sess, 43nd Leg, Manitoba, 2025 (committee reading May 8, 2025), online: <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/43-2/b021e.php>; Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, "Status of Bills" (last consulted May 13, 2025), online: <https://manitoba.ca/legislature/business/billstatus.pdf>.

designed to ensure that all young athletes have a safe and positive experience when participating in sports."[788]

The policy would need to establish procedures for complaints and investigations. It would also outline the disciplinary measures that may be imposed if an individual is found to have engaged in maltreatment or behaviour contrary to the policy.[789] All Provincial Sport Organization recognized by Sport Manitoba would be required to adopt and implement the policy.[790]

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.[791]

Provinces and territories without universal safe sport policies or codes of conduct

Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations that operate in provinces and territories without a universal safe sport code or policy (other than Quebec) are generally not required to implement their own safe sport policies.

Quebec is an exception because the province passed a law, the *Act respecting safety in recreation in sports*,[792] that requires Provincial Sport Organizations in the province to adopt safe sport regulations.[793]

In some jurisdictions, like Ontario and Alberta, Provincial Sport Organizations must adopt a code of conduct or policy that addresses abuse as a condition for receiving government funding.[794]

There are also jurisdictions where there is no requirement at all to adopt a safe sport code or policy.

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788 Bill 21, *The Protecting Youth in Sports Act*, 2nd Sess, 43nd Leg, Manitoba, 2025 (committee reading May 8, 2025), online: <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/43-2/b021e.php>; Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, "Status of Bills" (last consulted May 13, 2025), online: <https://manitoba.ca/legislature/business/billstatus.pdf>.

789 Bill 21, *The Protecting Youth in Sports Act*, 2nd Sess, 43nd Leg, Manitoba, 2025 (committee reading May 8, 2025), online: <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/43-2/b021e.php>; Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, "Status of Bills" (last consulted May 13, 2025), online: <https://manitoba.ca/legislature/business/billstatus.pdf>.

790 Bill 21, *The Protecting Youth in Sports Act*, 2nd Sess, 43nd Leg, Manitoba, 2025 (committee reading May 8, 2025), online: <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/43-2/b021e.php>; Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, "Status of Bills" (last consulted May 13, 2025), online: <https://manitoba.ca/legislature/business/billstatus.pdf>.

791 Bill 21, *The Protecting Youth in Sports Act*, 2nd Sess, 43nd Leg, Manitoba, 2025 (committee reading May 8, 2025), online: <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/43-2/b021e.php>; Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, "Status of Bills" (last consulted May 13, 2025), online: <https://manitoba.ca/legislature/business/billstatus.pdf>.

792 *An Act Respecting Safety in Recreation and Sports*, CQLR c S-3.1, online: <www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/S-3.1?target=>.

793 *An Act Respecting Safety in Recreation and Sports*, CQLR c S-3.1, online: <www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/S-3.1?target=>.

794 Government of Ontario, "Sport Recognition Policy for Provincial and Multi-Sport Organizations" (Toronto: Government of Ontario, January 23, 2025), online: <www.ontario.ca/page/sport-recognition-policy-provincial-and-multi-sport-organizations>; Ministry of Culture and Status of Women, *Provincial Sport Organization: Association Development Program Eligibility* (Edmonton: Government of Alberta, 2021), online (pdf): <www.alberta.ca/system/files/custom_downloaded_images/cms-provincial-sport-oganization-association-development-program-eligibilty.pdf>; New Brunswick, *Core Support Policy for Provincial Sports, Multi-Sport and Recreation Organizations* (Fredericton: Government of New Brunswick, 2025), online (pdf): <www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/thc-tpc/pdf/SportRecreation-SportLoisirs/core-support-policy.pdf?random=1732848364812>.

This is the case in Prince Edward Island, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.[795]

Finally, some Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations may need to adopt safe sport policies due to their affiliation with a National Sport Organization, rather than because of provincial requirements.[796] These policies may directly reference 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.[797]

Like National Sport Organizations, many Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations have integrated anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies into their rules, in addition to their existing code of conduct.[798]

SAFE SPORT POLICIES AND CODES OF CONDUCT IN COMMUNITY SPORT ORGANIZATIONS, UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE

Community Sport Organizations

At the local and grassroots level of sport, clubs, associations and community sport programs may have their own safe sport policies. However, at this level of sport, organizations 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, in Quebec, some grassroots and local organizations may be considered "sport bodies" under the *Act Respecting Safety in Recreation and Sports*. Sport associations, leagues and clubs that fall under this definition are required to adopt safety regulations according to the Act and its associated regulations.[799]

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 discussed earlier, they may even have to adopt the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.

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795 The Bylaws of Sport PEI state that member Provincial Sport Organizations may need to have policies as prescribed by the Board of Directors. Sport PEI, *Constitution and Bylaws* (Charlottetown: Sport PEI, 2021), art 1.2.13, online (pdf): <https://sportpei.pe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Constitution-Bylaw-May-2021-Approved.pdf>; Sport North Federation, *Sport North Federation Policy – Sport Membership Policy, Version 6.0* (Yellowknife: Sport North Federation 2019), online (pdf): <www.sportnorth.com/sites/default/files/sport_membership_policy_version_6.0.pdf>; Yukon Government, *Yukon Sport Action Plan 2015 – 2022* (Whitehorse: Yukon Government, 2022), online (pdf): <https://open.yukon.ca/sites/default/files/Yukon%20Action%20Plan_Web%20Version%20%283%29FINAL.pdf>.

796 Marcus Mazzucco & Hilary Findlay, "Jurisdiction" in Julie Stevens, ed, *Safe Sport: Critical Issues and Practices* (St. Catharines: Brock University, 2022) at 148, online (pdf): <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/safesport/>.

797 Volleyball Canada, *Abuse Policy* (Ottawa: Volleyball Canada, 2022), online (pdf): <https://volleyball.ca/uploads/Policies/2023/Pan_Canadian_Policy_-_Abuse_Policy_-_Approved_October_11%2C_2022.pdf>.

798 Swim Ontario, "Governance – Swim Ontario Policies" (last visited June 2025), online (pdf): <https://admin.swimontario.com/documents/419/SwimOntarioPolicies.pdf>; BC Alpine, "BC Alpine Files" (last modified February 4, 2019), online (pdf): <https://bcalpine.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/websitepublicfiles/EYarADliYRRDpUCU3KcjahsB-9UmQm99NsBnskFqlujTA?rtime=Pdbg_5W83Ug>; Basketball Nova Scotia, "Equity and Access Policy" (last visited June 2025), online (pdf): <http://basketballnovascotia.msa4.rampinteractive.com/content/Equity-and-Access-Policy>.

799 *An Act Respecting Safety in Recreation and Sports*, CQLR c S-3.1, online: <www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/S-3.1?target=>.

Even without these requirements, grassroots and local sport organizations may still choose to voluntarily implement their own codes of conducts or policies. Naturally, the content of the safe sport policies and codes of conduct at the local and grassroots level will vary from one organization to another.

According to a survey conducted by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute in 2020-2021, 74% of sport organizations, including National Sport Organizations, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and Community Sport Organizations, have written policies or guidelines on abuse and harassment in sport while slightly more than half have policies that address discrimination.[800]

University and college sport

Generally speaking, while there are many common themes and shared best practices among universities and colleges, each has its own set of safe sport policies, procedures and enforcement mechanisms.

Universities and colleges 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 this Code 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 the Universal Code of Conduct.[801]

For instance, this is the case for 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 the Canadian Safe Sport Program and the Universal Code of Conduct.[802]

That said, not all universities and colleges are members of these governing bodies. As of June 2025, U Sports had 58 member universities,[803] and the Canadian College Athletic Association had 98 members.[804] The Canadian College Athletic Association's members include colleges, universities, technical institutes and cegeps located in nine provinces.

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800 Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, "Policies and Standards Within Sport Organizations" (last visited June 2025), online: <https://cflri.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CFLRI_Summary-1-Policies-Standards.pdf>.

801 Under Rule 4.3 of the UCCMS, the UCCMS applies when (i) the Prohibited Behaviour occurs within an Adopting Organization's environment, (ii) when the participant alleged to have committed a Prohibited Behaviour was engaging in an Adopting Organization's activities, (iii) when the Participants involved interacted or were known to each other due to their involvement in an Adopting Organization's activities or (iv) outside of an Adopting Organization's environment where the Prohibited Behaviour has serious and detrimental impact on another person or could undermine the integrity of sport or bring the Canadian sport system into disrepute. Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

802 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Adopting Sport Organizations" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/adopting-sport-organizations>.

803 U Sports, "U Sports Conferences and members" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://en.usports.ca/HQ/Members/U_SPORTS_Members>.

804 Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association, "About the CCAA" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://www.ccaa.ca/information/about_the_ccaa>.

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 conducts and policies against violence, harassment and discrimination, all of which may address various aspects of safe sport.

It is important to note that not all universities and colleges adopt sport-specific policies. In such cases, only generally applicable policies would apply. Moreover, other workplace policies and collective agreements might prevail for employed individuals such as coaches.

PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES ON SAFE SPORT POLICIES AND CODES OF CONDUCT

We heard mixed opinions from participants regarding the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and address Maltreatment in Sport. However, it was generally welcomed as a positive advancement because it provides standard definitions of maltreatment.

Most of the people with whom we engaged felt that it is important to have a shared understanding of what constitutes maltreatment in sport and to have clear guidelines on which behaviours are inappropriate.

Content of the Universal Code of Conduct

Sport organizations, athletes, coaches and other participants have voiced criticism regarding the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. They find it too complicated and difficult to understand. They noted that the Code was written in dense legalese, making it difficult for the average reader to understand, and called for it to be rewritten in an easily accessible, plain language.

Participants also stated that the Universal Code of Conduct should:

- Be regularly reviewed and modernized, noting that some forms of maltreatment like cyberbullying and digital exploitation 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.
- 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, and the rules must be interpreted contextually to ensure that the unique requirements of athletes with high support needs are not overlooked.

Some National Sport Organizations and national level athletes also commented that the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport had too broad a scope. They noted that it addressed "grievances" and "trivial matters" rather than issues of maltreatment or abuse.

It was mentioned that the "one size fits all" definitions are not adapted to 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.

Limited reach of the Universal Code of Conduct

Concerns were consistently raised about the limited reach of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. Although we understand that the purpose of the Universal Code of Conduct was to have 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.

It was reported that the Universal Code of Conduct essentially finds no application at the local and grassroots level of sport. This was particularly concerning for participants who emphasized that a significant majority of maltreatment occurs at the grassroots level.

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 limited subset of the persons associated with these sport organizations.

Application of the Universal Code of Conduct

Overall, participants found it difficult to understand when or if the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport 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 occurred when, for example, a club, a provincial sport organization and a national sport organization each have their own code.

Other policies and codes of conduct at all levels of sport

Aside from the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, participants expressed serious concern that no one reads safe sport policies and that 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, equity, diversity and inclusion policies (DEI).

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. Moreover, a recurring comment was that safe sport policies, although varying among organizations, need to extend beyond the field of play, which is not always the case. For example, these policies should apply to team travel and virtual communications between coaches and athletes.

CHAPTER 16:
Safe sport complaint mechanisms

In the previous chapter, we reviewed the existing safe sport policies in Canada. A key point is that these policies generally do not include the procedures to handle complaints of maltreatment. Instead, these policies are administered and enforced through separate complaint mechanisms.

In this chapter, we first review the national level complaint mechanisms that were created to implement 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 up until August 1, 2025.
- **The Canadian Safe Sport Program**, through which the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport 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**, engaged by national level sport organizations to administer safe sport complaints within their organization that fall outside the jurisdiction of the former Abuse-Free Sport Program and the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

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 directly hired by provincial or territorial sport organizations. We also examine complaint mechanisms operating at the local and grassroot level and highlight the various barriers that hinder the reporting of maltreatment in sport. We share participants' perspectives throughout the various topics we discuss.

We conclude this chapter by presenting our preliminary findings and recommendations on (i) safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms and (ii) complaint management processes and procedures.

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 held in 2019. At this summit, participants also agreed that an independent body would need to be identified to implement such a code.[805]

805 Coaching Association of Canada, News Release, "National Sport Organization Safe Sport Working Group presents consensus statements on pan-Canadian Safe Sport on the prevention of abuse and harassment" (May 10, 2019), online: <https://coach.ca/news/national-sport-organization-safe-sport-working-group-presents-consensus-statements-pan>.

Later, as 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 Organization, the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network, and subject matter experts.[806]

In June 2020, the Leadership Group, with support from the Sport Information Resource Centre, hired a private contractor. This contractor was tasked to independently analyze existing complaint mechanism models. Their goal was to identify the most appropriate and effective mechanism to independently administer the Universal Code of Conduct for federally funded sport organizations.[807] The firm McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc. was chosen to complete the analysis, develop recommendations and deliver a final report to the Leadership Group.[808]

The final report prepared by McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc., titled "Aiming High: Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent Maltreatment in Sport in Canada" was published on October 5, 2020.[809]

In total, the Aiming High report included 101 recommendations that addressed a variety of topics from recommendations on the organizational structure of the independent mechanism, to its procedures and funding. A list of the recommendations from the Aiming High report is attached as Appendix 6.

The Aiming High report eventually led to the creation of the Abuse-Free Sport Program.

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806 McLaren Global Sport Solutions, *Aiming High: Final Report on Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in Canada ("UCCMS")*, Richard H McLaren, Bob Copeland & Diana Tesic, (Toronto: McLaren Global Sport Solutions, 2020) at 2, online (pdf): <https://sirc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/MGSS-Report-on-Independent-Approaches-December-2020-rev.pdf>.

807 McLaren Global Sport Solutions, *Aiming High: Final Report on Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in Canada ("UCCMS")*, Richard H McLaren, Bob Copeland & Diana Tesic, (Toronto: McLaren Global Sport Solutions, 2020) at 2, online (pdf): <https://sirc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/MGSS-Report-on-Independent-Approaches-December-2020-rev.pdf>; Sport Information Resource Centre, "Request for Proposals – Analysis of Existing Research and Best Practices Supporting the Implementation of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport" (June 1, 2020), online: <https://sirc.ca/news/rfp-uccms-analysis/>.

808 McLaren Global Sport Solutions, *Aiming High: Final Report on Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in Canada ("UCCMS")*, Richard H McLaren, Bob Copeland & Diana Tesic, (Toronto: McLaren Global Sport Solutions, 2020) at 3, online (pdf): <https://sirc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/MGSS-Report-on-Independent-Approaches-December-2020-rev.pdf>.

809 The *Aiming High: Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent Maltreatment in Sport in Canada* report noted that both the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada and the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport had previously made proposals to Sport Canada to implement a complaint mechanism (prior to the launch of the Independent Safe Sport component of the Sport Support Program in November 2020). McLaren Global Sport Solutions, *Aiming High: Final Report on Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in Canada ("UCCMS")*, Richard H McLaren, Bob Copeland & Diana Tesic, (Toronto: McLaren Global Sport Solutions, 2020),online (pdf): <https://sirc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/MGSS-Report-on-Independent-Approaches-December-2020-rev.pdf>.

THE ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM: CREATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNCTIONING

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.[810]

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.[811]

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.[812]

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner officially began operations three months later, on June 20, 2022.

As we will discuss further 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 fully ceased operations on August 1, 2025.

This section begins with an introduction to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, focusing on its mandate and structure. We then discuss the scope of the Abuse-Free Sport Program, 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*.[813] Its legislative mandate is to provide the sport community with a national alternative dispute resolution service for sport disputes, outside of traditional court systems. It also provides expertise and assistance regarding alternative dispute resolution.[814]

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 pursuant to the *Physical Activity and Sport Act,* and it continues to do so.

These services are the Dispute Resolution Secretariat and the Dispute Prevention Resource Centre.

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810 Canadian Heritage, "Independent Safe Sport Mechanism – Sport Support Program" (last modified December 30, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/independent-safe-sport-mechanism.html>; Canadian Heritage, News Release, "Minister Guilbeault Announces New Independent Safe Sport Mechanism" (July 6, 2021), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2021/07/minister-guilbeault-announces-new-independent-safe-sport-mechanism.html>.

811 Canadian Heritage, News Release, "Minister Guilbeault Announces New Independent Safe Sport Mechanism" (July 6, 2021), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2021/07/minister-guilbeault-announces-new-independent-safe-sport-mechanism.html>.

812 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner to launch first phase of operations on June 20, 2022" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/news/1/office-of-the-sport-integrity-commissioner-to-launch-first-phase-of-operations-on-june-20-2022>.

813 Physical Activity and Sport Act, SC 2003, c 2, online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/P-13.4/index.html>.

814 Physical Activity and Sport Act, SC 2003, c 2, s 10, online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/P-13.4/index.html>.

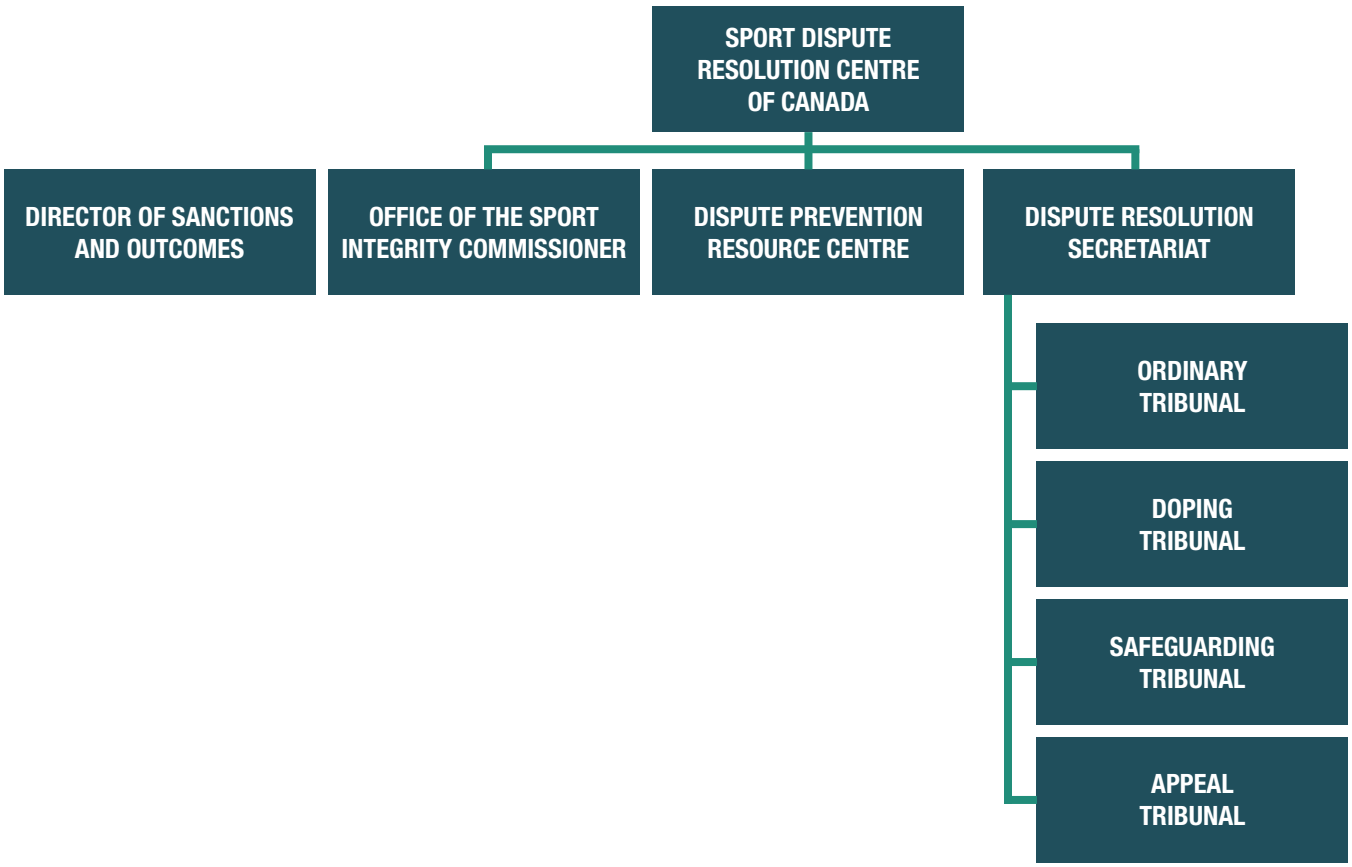

Figure I: Structure of the Sport Dispute Resolution Secretariat

(before August 1, 2025, which marks the closing of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner)

Text Version: The Sport Dispute Resolution Centre includes four main components: The Dispute Resolution Secretariat, the Dispute Prevention Resource Centre, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes. The Dispute Resolution Secretariat provides services through four divisions: the Ordinary Tribunal, the Doping Tribunal, the Safeguarding Tribunal and the Appeal Tribunal.

Dispute Resolution Secretariat

The Dispute Resolution Secretariat offers alternative dispute resolution services to the sport community. These services 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.[815]

- **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 heard by the Ordinary Tribunal are about team selection and athlete carding, but it also receives disputes related to eligibility, general discipline and governance.
- **Doping Tribunal:** The Doping Tribunal is a specialized division. It is the first instance to rule on doping violations claimed 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 Abuse-Free Sport Program. Since April 2025, it can also review 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.816

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 help all members of the sport community to prevent disputes or to minimize their severity.[817]

815 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, "Dispute Resolution Secretariat (Tribunal)" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/dispute-resolution>.

816 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Canadian Sport Dispute Resolution Code* (Brossard: Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, 2023), online (pdf): <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/Code_SDRCC_2023_-_EN.pdf>.

817 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, "Resources" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/dispute-resource>.

Among other things, the Centre provides the following:

- templates for clauses and policies, like template mediation agreements and template contractual arbitration clauses[818]
- a database of decisions from Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada arbitrators[819]
- articles and other publications[820]
- a list of lawyers and pro bono resources[821]

Jurisdiction of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and scope of the Abuse-Free Sport Program

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, which ceased to operate on August 1, 2025, was independent but was housed within the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. According to what we heard, structural safeguards had been put in place to maintain the independence of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes.[822]

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 when a sport organization was a program signatory to the Abuse-Free Sport Program.[823]

Program Signatory Agreement

To become a program signatory, a sport organization had to sign a contract, named a Signatory Agreement, with the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada.[824] By signing this agreement, the sport organization retained the services of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre for Canada to implement their safe sport program. These services included those of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes, and the Dispute Resolution Secretariat.[825]

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818 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, "Resources: Model Policies & Agreements" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/dispute-resource-contract-templates>.

819 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, "Dispute Resolution Secretariat (Tribunal): Consult Jurisprudence" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/consult-jurisprudence>.

820 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, "Resources: Publications" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/dispute-resource-publications>.

821 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, "Dispute Resolution Secretariat (Tribunal): Lawyers" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/lawyers>.

822 The Director of Sanctions in Outcomes is the person who, under the Abuse-Free Sport Program, decides if a participants committed a violation of the *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport*, and imposes sanctions, if applicable. For more information about the complaint management process under the Abuse-Free Sport Program, see Appendix 7.

823 Abuse-Free Sport, "Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://abuse-free-sport.ca/commissioner>.

824 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Executive Summary of the Signatory Agreement* (Montreal: OSIC, 2022), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/Summary_of_Program_Sig_Agreement_-_Final_-_EN.pdf>.

825 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Executive Summary of the Signatory Agreement* (Montreal: OSIC, 2022), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/Summary_of_Program_Sig_Agreement_-_Final_-_EN.pdf>.

Under the Signatory Agreement, the sport organization namely had to do the following:

- Adopt the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport and ensure that all other internal policies and procedures are 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 applies to any process related to the administration and enforcement of the Universal Code of Conduct.
- Implement the sanctions and measures that are imposed by the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes, the Safeguarding Tribunal and the Appeal Tribunal.[826]

Although sport organizations from all levels of sport could opt in to the Abuse-Free Sport program, most program signatories were federally funded National Sport Organizations and Multisport Service Organizations.[827] This is because these organizations were required to be program signatories to receive funding from the Government of Canada.

Volleyball was the only sport in which the Abuse-Free Sport program applied across all levels of the sport, namely at the national, provincial, territorial and club levels.[828]

We understand from the press release that followed the 2022 Conference of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation[829] that provinces and territories could choose to use the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner as their independent third party. We also note that Nova Scotia was the first and only province to be a Signatory of the Abuse-Free Sport Program.[830] The first Provincial Sport Organizations from Nova Scotia was expected to be onboarded by the end of 2023.[831] At the time, there was hope

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826 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Executive Summary of the Signatory Agreement* (Montreal: OSIC, 2022), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/Summary_of_Program_Sig_Agreement_-_Final_-_EN.pdf>.

827 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Program Signatories" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/signatories>.

828 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Program Signatories" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/signatories>.

829 Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat, Press Release, 831-421, "2022 Conference of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation" (August 6, 2022), online: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/2022-conference-of-federal-provincial-and-territorial-ministers-responsible-for-sport-physical-activity-recreation/>.

830 Donna Spencer, "Sport Integrity Commissioner Says Safe Sport Gaps Exposed in 1st Year of Office", *The Canadian Press* (30 August 2023), online: <www.cbc.ca/sports/sports-integrity-commissioner-says-safe-sport-gaps-exposed-1.6952865>; SDRCC, "Eighty-Six Join Abuse-Free Sport in its First Year" (2 August 2023), online: <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/_PR_2023-08-02_Abuse-Free_Sport_Year_One_Report_EN.pdf>.

831 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, News Release, "Eighty-Six Join Abuse-Free Sport in its First Year" (2 August 2023), online: <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/_PR_2023-08-02_Abuse-Free_Sport_Year_One_Report_EN.pdf>; Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Abuse-Free Sport Sans Abus: Year One Report June 2022 – June 2023* (Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, 2023) at 1, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/2023-08-02_Abuse-Free_Sport_Year_One_Report.pdf?_t=1691017763>.

this would encourage other provinces and territories to join the program. However, this hope never materialized as no other province or territory became a program signatory.[832]

As of March 2025, 90 organizations had signed onto the Abuse-Free Sport Program:

- 63 national level sport organizations
- 21 Multisport Service Organizations
- 6 Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes[833]

Consent Form

As mentioned above, all program signatories were required to obtain consent from participants to ensure they accept to be subject to the jurisdiction of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. This consent was obtained through a Consent Form.[834]

Participants could include athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, administrators, directors, employees, trainers, parents and guardians, depending on each program signatory agreement.[835] For minors under the age of 13, the Consent Form was to be signed by their parent or guardian.

Through the Consent Form, participants namely 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 through a public registry created to support the Universal Code of Conduct's objectives. This information includes their full name, their affiliated organizations, and the nature of allegations and any findings or disciplinary actions against them.[836]

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832 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, News Release, "Eighty-Six Join Abuse-Free Sport in its First Year" (2 August 2023), online: <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/_PR_2023-08-02_Abuse-Free_Sport_Year_One_Report_EN.pdf>.

833 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Program Signatories" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/signatories>.

834 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "FAQ – Informed Consent Form" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/consent-form-faq>.

835 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "FAQ – Informed Consent Form" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/consent-form-faq>.

836 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Summary of the UCCMS Informed Consent Form*, (last visited May 2025), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/Executive_Summary_UCCMS_Informed_Consent_Form_EN.pdf>.

Complaint management process under the Abuse-Free Sport Program

The 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.

In short, the complaint management process under the Abuse-Free Sport Program can be summarized as follows:

- The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner would first review complaints to ensure they fell within the jurisdiction of the Abuse-Free Sport program.
- Next, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner would proceed with mediation (if the parties consented) and an investigation.
- Once the investigation was complete, the complaint would be transferred to the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes. They would determine if any violations of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport occurred, then impose sanctions.
- The decision of the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes could be reviewed by the Safeguarding Tribunal of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. Further appeal to the Appeal Tribunal was also available.

A detailed summary of the complaint management process under the Abuse-Free Sport Program is attached as Appendix 7. A flow chart illustrating the complaint management process under the Abuse-Free Sport Program is also available on the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner's website.[837]

Sport Environment Assessments

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner conducted Sport Environment Assessments for Program Signatories. These assessments followed the Guidelines Regarding Safe Sport Environment Assessments.[838]

The purpose of these assessments was to identify and address systemic issues related to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. This aimed to improve the sport environment for both current and future participants.[839]

Sport Environment Assessments identified systemic issues and remedies. They sought to understand problems and their root causes, then explored possible solutions. Each Assessment was made public and published in a report by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner.

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837 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Process Overview" (last visited May 30, 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/process/overview>.

838 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Sport Environment Assessments*, revised on July 24, 2023 (Montreal: OSIC, 2022), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/OSIC_Guidelines_Regarding_Sport_Environment_Assessment_updated_version_July_2023_final_draft_EN.pdf?_t=1691693286>.

839 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Sport Environment Assessment" (last visited March 20, 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/sport-environment-assessment>.

The reports from Sport Environment Assessments were comprehensive and included, among other items:

- An analysis of gathered information and concerns relating to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.
- The identification of any systemic issues or other issues that were identified.
- Recommendations to address the identified issues.
- Recommendations to improve the experience for current and future participants.
- Other observations and recommendations that support the objectives of the assessment.[840]

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.

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner could also initiate an Assessment on its own if it became aware of alleged systemic issues related to the Universal Code of Conduct in a specific sport environment.[841]

The Sport Environment Assessment process generally involved the following steps:

- A Sport Environment Assessment was either requested or initiated by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner.
- If a request was accepted, the scope of the assessment, including its objectives and timeframes, was defined.
- An independent assessor or assessment team then conducted the assessment and prepared a report.
- The completed report was shared with the interested 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 monitoring report on its website. This monitoring report had to be published no later than 1 year after the publication of the assessment report.[842]

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner maintained the Sport Environment Assessment Index. This Index provided information about the assessments it had initiated. As assessments progressed through the Sport Environment Assessment process, general updates were made available through the Index.[843]

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840 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Sport Environment Assessments*, revised on July 24, 2023 (Montreal: OSIC, 2022), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/OSIC_Guidelines_Regarding_Sport_Environment_Assessment_updated_version_July_2023_final_draft_EN.pdf?_t=1691693286>.

841 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Sport Environment Assessment" (last visited March 20, 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/sport-environment-assessment>; Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Sport Environment Assessment FAQ" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/sea-faq>.

842 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Sport Environment Assessments*, revised on July 24, 2023 (Montreal: OSIC, 2022), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/OSIC_Guidelines_Regarding_Sport_Environment_Assessment_updated_version_July_2023_final_draft_EN.pdf?_t=1691693286>.

843 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Sport Environment Assessments*, revised on July 24, 2023

Trauma-informed approach

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner had committed itself to administering the Abuse-Free Sport Program in a trauma-informed manner.[844]

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."[845] Such processes were also described as being compassionate, efficient, and "[providing] fairness, respect and equity to all parties involved."[846]

In this context, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner established the Abuse-Free Sport Legal Aid Program. This Program provided eligible individuals, both complainants or respondents, with free and confidential access to legal advisors.[847] These legal advisors could provide advice at every step of the complaint management process, from the intake to the final appeal. They could also assist during the first stage of the Sport Environment Assessment process.

THE CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM: CREATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNCTIONING

On May 2, 2024, the Government of Canada announced that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner would cease administering the Abuse-Free Sport Program.[848] 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 stated 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.[849]

In this respect, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport began to implement the Universal Code of Conduct through the Canadian Safe Sport Program on April 1, 2025. Consequently, after a transition period, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner ceased operating the Abuse-Free Sport Program on August 1, 2025.

(Montreal: OSIC, 2022), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/OSIC_Guidelines_Regarding_Sport_Environment_Assessment_updated_version_July_2023_final_draft_EN.pdf?_t=1691693286>.

844 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Vision, Mandate and Values" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/vision-mandate>; Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 2.1.1.b), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf

845 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Vision, Mandate and Values" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/vision-mandate>

846 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "About" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/about>.

847 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Legal Aid" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/legal-aid>.

848 Government of Canada, "Minister St-Onge announces new measures to improve accountability and foster a safe and sustainable culture change in sport" (last modified 19 May 2023), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/news/2023/05/minister-st-onge-announces-new-measures-to-improve-accountability-and-foster-a-safe-and-sustainable-culture-change-in-sport.html>.

849 Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, News Release, "An Update on the Transition of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the Abuse-Free Sport Program" (May 2, 2024), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/ministerstatement>.

This section begins with a description of 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 Centre to absorb the administration 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.

A table comparing the main features of the Abuse-Free Sport Program with those of the Canadian Safe Sport Program can be found in Appendix 8.

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.*[850] Its mandate is to "work collaboratively to address unethical behaviours and promote a values-based approach to sport to ensure positive sport experiences for all."[851]

As of April 1, 2025, the Centre is 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.[852]

In addition to safe sport, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's areas of activity are anti-doping and competition manipulation. With respect to anti-doping, the Centre is tasked with deterring and detecting the use of "prohibited substances and methods." This is pursued through the Canadian Anti-Doping Program,[853] a national initiative designed to "prevent, deter and detect doping in sport."[854]

With respect to competition manipulation, the Canadian Centre for Ethic in Sport's role is primarily to provide education and to advocate for the integrity of sport.[855]

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850 Government of Canada, "Federal Corporation Information - 271193-1" (last modified March 4, 2025), online: <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/cc/lgcy/fdrlCrpDtls.html?p=0&corpId=2711931&V_TOKEN=null&crpNm=Canadian%20Centre%20for%20Ethics%20in%20Sport%20&crpNmbr=&bsNmbr=&cProv=&cStatus=&cAct=>.

851 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "About Us" (last visited March 13, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/about-us>.

852 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Canadian Safe Sport Program" (last consulted May 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/canadian-safe-sport-program>.

853 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Canadian Anti-Doping Program" (last consulted March 13, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/canadian-anti-doping-program>; Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Anti-Doping Program, Version 1.1* (Ottawa: CCES, 2023), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2023-12/2021_cces-policy-cadp-2021-final-e.pdf>.

854 Canadian Anti-Doping Program, Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Anti-Doping Program, Version 1.1* (Ottawa: CCES, 2023) at 5, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2023-12/2021_cces-policy-cadp-2021-final-e.pdf>.

855 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Competition Manipulation" (last consulted May 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/competition-manipulation>.

Governance and organizational structure

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is governed by a completely independent Board of Directors. This board comprises twelve prominent individuals from various fields, including Canadian and international sport, medicine, academia, business, law, ethics and governance.[856] Board members are selected and elected by existing members of the Board of Directors.[857] 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.[858]

The Directors of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport are also its members.[859] The Centre currently has 12 Directors.[860] In accordance with the Centre's by-law, one of these members must be a retired elite sport participant.[861]

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 specific governance aspects, such as finance, risk management, and ethics.[862]

The Centre operates under a multi-year strategic plan that guides its priorities and goals. The previous plan was published in 2022. And because the Centre has taken on the responsibility of administering the Canadian Safe Sport Program, it is now working on a new strategic plan.[863]

The President and Chief Executive Officer, appointed by the Board of Directors, is responsible for implementing the strategic plans and policies of the organization.[864] The Executive Directors, who are below the President and Chief Executive Officer, lead departments focused on different aspects of the Centre's work.

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856 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Governance" (last visited March 17, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/governance>.

857 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Resolution on Independence" (last visited March 17, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/resolution-independence>; Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Governance" (last visited March 17, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/resolution-independence>; CCES By-Law, Sections 2.01, 5.01.

858 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Governance" (last visited March 17, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/governance>.

859 CCES By-law No.1, section 2.01

860 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Governance" (last visited March 25, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/governance>.

861 CCES By-Law No.1, Section 2.01.

862 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Governance" (last visited March 17, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/governance>.

863 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Strategic Priorities" (last visited April 21, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/strategic-priorities>.

864 CCES By-Law No.1, Section 7.01.

Announcement and transition from the 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.[865]

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport 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).[866]

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 Abuse-Free Sport Program but did not start any new investigations. These complaints were reviewed and provisional measures were taken when required. Complaints that did not require immediate action were held until April 1, 2025.

On April 1, 2025, the Canadian Safe Sport Program launched and 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 could finish handling complaints received before February 1, 2025[867]. Complaints that had been held during the transition were shared with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, provided the parties consented and the complaints met the new Canadian Safe Sport Program's qualifications.

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner closed on August 1, 2025. When cases it handled remained unresolved at this time, the parties were informed that their case could not be resolved under the 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.

Changes made to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport 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.

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865 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Background and Consultation Process" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/background-and-consultation-process>; Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, News Release, "An Update on the Transition of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the Abuse-Free Sport Program" (May 2, 2024), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/ministerstatement>.

866 Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, News Release, "An Update on the Transition of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the Abuse-Free Sport Program" (May 2, 2024), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/ministerstatement>.

867 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "FAQ: Safe Sport" (last visited 19 March 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/faq-safe-sport>.

Regarding governance, the Centre added two new members to its Board of Directors. These individuals possess expertise in areas crucial to safe sport and the administration of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.[868]

On January 31, 2025, the Board of Directors also approved the Resolution on Independence, thereby formalizing its independence from sport.[869] Key principles of this resolution are as follows:

- Despite collaborating with numerous National Sport Organizations, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is adamant 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 members to 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.

Regarding the changes to its organizational structure, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport also welcomed a new Executive Director, Safe Sport. This individual is responsible for overseeing the administration of the Canadian Safe Sport Program. It was publicly announced that the organization has brought on a team with a background in maltreatment and "experience working on the frontlines of a reporting mechanism."[870]

Regarding its programming, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport reviewed its organizational strategy to focus on the integrity issues of safe sport, anti-doping and competition manipulation.[871] As previously noted, the Centre also ended its involvement with the True Sport brand, citing the need to focus on its mandate as an independent regulator for sport integrity.[872]

In this respect, we were advised that the Centre 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 the Centre being responsible for both the True Sport Program and the administration of safe sport reports.

868 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "CCES Evolves Towards a Broader Sport Integrity Agency" (February 12, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/cces-evolves-towards-broader-sport-integrity-agency>; Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, Media Release, "CCES Welcomes New Board Members" (January 23, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/news/cces-welcomes-new-board-members>.

869 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Resolution on Independence" (last modified January 31, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/resolution-independence>.

870 Donna Spencer, "Responsibility for safe sport flips to Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport", *Lakeland Today* (March 11, 2025), online: <www.lakelandtoday.ca/politics/responsibility-for-safe-sport-flips-to-canadian-centre-for-ethics-in-sport-10359306>.

871 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "CCES Evolves Towards a Broader Sport Integrity Agency" (February 12, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/cces-evolves-towards-broader-sport-integrity-agency> .

872 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "CCES Evolves Towards a Broader Sport Integrity Agency" (February 12, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/cces-evolves-towards-broader-sport-integrity-agency>.

Jurisdiction of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and scope of the Canadian Safe Sport Program

As discussed in Chapter 5, 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, which will be included in the sport organization's funding agreement. One of these mandatory conditions is the adoption of the Canadian Safe Sport Program.[873]

Through the Canadian Safe Sport Program, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport independently administers and enforces the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.[874] It does so by receiving and responding to reports of prohibited behaviour.[875]

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's authority to administer the Canadian Safe Sport Program is contract-based, much like the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada's former authority to administer the Abuse-Free Sport Program.

Specifically, the program applies to sport organizations that adopt it through a formal agreement called an "Adoption Contract."[876] The program is only available to National Sport Organizations, National Multiport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centers and Institutes that receive funding from Sport Canada.[877] Under the program's current framework, Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations cannot decide to voluntarily adopt it.

The list of National Sport Organizations, National Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes who have adopted the Canadian Safe Sport Program is included in Appendix 9.

It is important to note that 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.

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873 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a17>.

874 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

875 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 1.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

876 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 4.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

877 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Definition, "Sport Organization", online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

The Canadian Safe Sport Program applies to the national level participants within the organizations that adopt the program. The list of individuals in this category is set out in Rule 3.1 of the *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules*. These individuals are:

- The 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 who is directly involved with or provides services to the Sport Organization's national team program. This includes coaches, trainers, agents, team staff, 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.[878]

Additionally, adopting organizations can designate national level events where participants are subject to the Canadian Safe Sport Program and the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. In such cases, the Canadian Safe Sport Program applies only for the duration of the individual's participation in the designated event.

The above situation is detailed in Rule 3.2 of the *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules*. It provides that the Rules may apply to other individuals (not already identified as Participants under Rule 3.1) while they are participating at certain events designated by each Sport Organization. To be authorized as a Participant in these cases, individuals must agree or otherwise 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.

The *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* explicitly mention that individuals involved with adopting sport organizations, or those participating in a specific event, must sign a Consent Form. We also note that under the Canadian Safe Sport Program, participants are required to complete the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's safe sport e-learning module before signing the Consent Form.[879]

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878 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 3.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

879 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 4,3(d), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

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*.[880] Ultimately, these Rules 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 to Prevent and Address Maltreatment or in violation of the Rules. If such a determination is made, the Centre can impose sanctions in accordance with the framework set out in the Universal Code of Conduct.

The Rules cover every step of the report process, from receiving a report of a prohibited behaviour to the investigation, the determination of the report, and the review and 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.[881]
- Any individual or sport organization can make a report of a prohibited behaviour (a "Report") through the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's reporting platform, accessible online or by telephone.[882]
- At any stage after receiving a report of alleged prohibited behaviour, the Centre has the authority to impose provisional measures.[883] These measures can include, for example, modifying training schedules or locations, or relocating individuals to avoid contact.
- The Centre provides a written notice (a "Notice of Report") to the respondent, informing them that a Report has been made against them. The Centre will also inform the relevant sport organization of the Report.[884]
- Within the 30 days following the Notice of Report being provided to the respondent, the Centre initiates one or more resolution procedures set out in Rule 13 of the *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules*. These procedures include letters of concern, a remedial resolution, the acceptance of violation, mediation facilitated by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, and a formal resolution.[885]

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880 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

881 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 6, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

882 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 6, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

883 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 12, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

884 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rules 10.2-10.3, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

885 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 13, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

- At any time after assuming jurisdiction over the Report, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport appoints an investigator to investigate the reported behaviour.[886]
- The investigator delivers an investigation report to the Centre. This report summarizes the relevant evidence, the findings of fact and credibility made by the investigator, and the reasons for those findings.[887]
- The Centre provides the investigation report to the reporting person and/or impacted person, as well as the respondent. All parties will have 10 days from receiving the report to make written submissions to the Centre.[888]
- After receiving all written submissions, the Centre determines if a violation has been committed.[889] If a violation is confirmed, the Centre imposes appropriate sanctions.[890]
- The Centre imposes sanctions on respondents according to Section 15 of the *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules*. This Section requires that sanctions must align with those outlined in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.[891]
- 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 can be reviewed by the Safeguarding Tribunal, a specialized division of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada.[892]
- If they participate in the 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 a sanction decision of the Safeguarding Tribunal. This appeal would go to the Appeal Tribunal of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada.[893]

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886 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 10, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

887 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 14.7, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

888 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rules 15.1–15.2, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

889 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 15.3, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

890 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 15.3, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

891 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 15.3.c), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>; Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 7, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

892 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 16, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

893 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 17, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

Finally, under the *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules*, sport organizations are responsible for enforcing the sanctions. These sanctions are imposed either by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, or by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada in the case of reviews and appeals.[894]

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.[895]

Sport Environment Assessments

The *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* provide for Sport Environment Assessments.[896] Though it may in the future, we understand that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is not currently offering this service.

Trauma-informed approach

The Canadian Centre of Ethics in Sport is committed to administer the Canadian Safe Sport Program in a trauma-informed manner. This commitment is explicitly stated in the *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules*.[897]

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."[898] This practice also "emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone intersecting with or working within the program."[899]

In this respect, support services are offered by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. They have a support team that can, for example, answer questions about the Canadian Safe Sport Program and share information about the report process.[900]

Furthermore, the Canadian Centre for Ethics and Sport appears to have engaged the Canadian Centre for Mental Health in Sport to provide mental health services to those involved in the program.[901]

However, according to its website, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is not currently offering legal aid. The website indicates that Sport Canada is in the process of exploring options to provide legal aid services to individuals involved in the Canadian Safe Sport Program's report process.[902]

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894 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rules 4.3.e), 22, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

895 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Report Process" (last visited May 30, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/report-process>.

896 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 1.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

897 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 2.1.1.b), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

898 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Trauma-Informed Practices" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/trauma-informed-practices>.

899 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Trauma-Informed Practices" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/trauma-informed-practices>.

900 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Support Services" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/support-services>.

901 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Mental Health Services Program" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/mental-health-services-program>.

902 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Does the CCES Offer Legal Aid?" (last visited April 21, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/faq/does-cces-offer-legal-aid>.

PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES ON THE ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM AND THE CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM

Before reviewing the participant perspectives, the Commission must emphasize that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the Abuse-Free Sport Program were created and expected to be fully operational in an extremely short amount of time. We understand that the compressed timeframe was necessary because of the urgent need for an independent complaint mechanism in view of the ongoing safe sport crisis.

We learned from many that less than a month away from the 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 lack facilities and sufficient support. Overall, several participants compared the rolling out of the Abuse-Free Sport Program to "flying a plane while building it."

Less than 3 months after its creation, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner began its operations. It took on its vast 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.[903]

The Commission recognizes that creating the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the Abuse-Free Sport Program in such a short amount of time with insufficient support was a herculean undertaking.

It is also important to note that in the McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc. report, entitled "Aiming High: Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent Maltreatment in Sport in Canada," it was recommended to phase in the complaint mechanism over a period of three years.[904] Under this proposal, among other elements, the complaint mechanism would have gradually onboarded sport organizations, beginning with 12 National Sport Organizations and 2 provincial federations of sport organizations such as Sport Manitoba and Sask Sport. Others would have been added in the following years of the pilot program.[905]

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903 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, "Office of Sport Integrity Commissioner to launch first phase of operations on June 20, 2022" (May 17, 2022), online: <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/2022-05-17_OSIC_Launch_June_20_Final_EN.pdf>.

904 McLaren Global Sport Solutions, *Aiming High: Final Report on Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in Canada ("UCCMS")*, Richard H McLaren, Bob Copeland & Diana Tesic, (Toronto: McLaren Global Sport Solutions, 2020) at 19–20, 95ff, online (pdf): <https://sirc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/MGSS-Report-on-Independent-Approaches-December-2020-rev.pdf>.

905 See Recommendations 47-51 of the "Aiming High" Report. McLaren Global Sport Solutions, *Aiming High: Final Report on Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in Canada ("UCCMS")*, Richard H McLaren, Bob Copeland & Diana Tesic, (Toronto: McLaren Global Sport Solutions, 2020) at 19–20, 95ff, online (pdf): <https://sirc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/MGSS-Report-on-Independent-Approaches-December-2020-rev.pdf>.

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, it could overwhelm the mechanism and lead to "a lack of trust, dissatisfaction, and poor adoption of the mechanisms provided by [the Independent Complaint Mechanism]."[906] In their view, a gradual approach would prevent this outcome.

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 taken into account when reading the participant perspectives below.

Limited jurisdiction of the Abuse-Free Sport Program

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, in stark contrast, we were advised that in practice the Office lacked the authority to help in most circumstances due to its limited jurisdiction. This limitation is illustrated by the low complaint acceptance rate.

For example, in its first year of operation, the Office received 193 complaints but only 66 were deemed admissible (which is approximately a 34% acceptance rate).[907]

We heard that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner's inability to hear complaints due to 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 beyond being told that the Office did not have jurisdiction.

However, it is important to understand that 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 all the way down to the club level.

To this end, we were told that Volleyball was the only sport where the Abuse-Free Program was applied at all levels of sport, including to its clubs. This was reportedly due to the uniquely strong relationship and alignment between Volleyball Canada, its member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, and the local clubs. This allowed them to develop a set of pan-Canadian policies which apply uniformly to Volleyball Canada and its provincial and territorial counterparts. We were also advised that this allowed them to implement a structure where individuals need to be members of Volleyball Canada to be members of Provincial or Territorial Sport Organizations, and vice versa.

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906 McLaren Global Sport Solutions, *Aiming High: Final Report on Independent Approaches to Administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in Canada ("UCCMS")*, Richard H McLaren, Bob Copeland & Diana Tesic, (Toronto: McLaren Global Sport Solutions, 2020) at 95, online (pdf): <https://sirc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/MGSS-Report-on-Independent-Approaches-December-2020-rev.pdf>.

907 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Abuse-Free Sport Sans Abus: Year One Report June 2022 – June 2023* (Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, 2023) at 1, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/2023-08-02_Abuse-Free_Sport_Year_One_Report.pdf?_t=1691017763>.

In fact, the first factor limiting the jurisdiction of the Abuse-Free Sport Program was precisely that most non-national sport organizations never opted into the program. When asked why, most non-national sport organizations told us that it was too expensive as the Abuse-Free Sport Program was operated on a fee-for-service model. They felt that it was more affordable to use an Independent Third Party. They also indicated that the requirement to obtain explicit consent from all their participants would be too complicated to manage. They explained that they did not have the time, resources or capacity to meet this requirement.

It came to our attention that National Sport Organizations found the consent forms were too broad and that in some cases, coaches had to be dismissed because they refused to sign the consent form.

The second issue with the jurisdiction of the Abuse-Free Sport Program was that participants needed to consent to be bound by the program. Without such consent, we understand that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner was required to reject the complaint. Many complaints were rejected because the respondent had not consented to the program.

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 relatively limited.

General concerns about the complaint management process under the Abuse-Free Sport Program

We have repeatedly heard frustration with the complaint process under the Abuse-Free Sport Program. More specifically, we heard frustration with the lack of clarity, timeliness, transparency and fairness of the process, and the lack of supports to assist the parties through the process. These factors led to a loss of trust in the process.

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 a complex legal language. On numerous occasions, participants commented that they did not understand the steps involved and what would happen next. They did not know how to navigate the system and told us that that there was no support available to help them.

Many individuals cited the absence of a clear steps to report maltreatment as an example of how unclear the overall complaint process was. 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.

Timeliness

We have heard numerous concerns that the complaint process took too long. It was often described as an endless process, especially when decisions were appealed 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.

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 for 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 matter, 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 times, 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 its members had been filed. The lack of communication meant they had no visibility once a complaint was made. They often did not know the nature or the seriousness of the allegations against 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 need to accept the liability and risk of appointing (or not appointing) a person against whom a complaint was made, without having more information on the matter.

Fairness and due process

The universal sentiment among participants was that the process needs to be procedurally fair and provide due process to all parties. In this respect, we heard the Abuse-Free Sport Program lacked due process, particularly for respondents.

Participants told us that evidence typically 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 investigation and final reports without proper explanation.

Concerns were also raised that respondents are not consistently given the right to respond to allegations of maltreatment or provided with enough information to do so effectively. For example, respondents stated that some decisions to impose provisional measures were made without giving them the opportunity to make submissions. We were advised that formal submissions were not always considered for provisional measures. In some circumstances, respondents may not have even known about the complaint 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.

For context, confidentiality rules govern the complaint management process, preventing the disclosure of ongoing matters. However, participants reported that many complainants would breach these confidentiality rules by disclosing the complaint to the media. Yet, there were no consequences for breaching these rules. Some respondents told us that even where no wrongdoing was found, their reputation was ruined.

Mental health and legal support

The Commission heard numerous accounts of complainants and respondents going through the complaint 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 and many of them went through the complaint process un-represented. We heard that hiring a lawyer was too expensive and that there is a limited number of pro bono lawyers who are willing to take complex and lengthy cases.

We were informed that limited mental health support was available when complaints were handled by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. For context, the Office had a partnership with a group of sport psychologists who offered therapy sessions.

In addition to mental health and legal support services, both complainants and respondents expressed a need for guidance through the complaint process. We heard it was important to be able to speak with a person who can provide assistance and explain the complaint process, particularly someone who is trauma informed. The importance of human contact was also noted, as opposed to only receiving digital correspondence about the next steps, which was described as feeling impersonal and cold.

Specific concerns related to the steps of the complaint management process

Participants informed the Commission on specific issues related to the triage of complaints, the investigation process, the enforcement of sanctions at the end of the process, and the need for a trauma-informed approach. These issues further undermined the trustworthiness and effectiveness of the Abuse-Free Sport Program.

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 to proceed formally. Under the Abuse-Free Sport Program, complaints underwent a triage process. However, this was done 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 be returned to the National Sport Organization or other sport organizations to be handled at this 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 is a risk that the complaint mechanism will become overwhelmed by complaints.

On the other hand, some participants noted the risks associated with triaging complaints. For instance, 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 can reveal systemic problems. These issues could be overlooked if complaints are triaged, as the initial review of a complaint may not always reveal the entire story.

Investigation process

We heard serious concerns with the investigation process. Many participants noted a lack of regulations and oversight of investigations, along with the absence of standard protocols to handle evidence. Other concerns related to the investigation process and investigators include:

- The length of the investigation process (such as investigations taking several months to complete).
- The investigation being incomplete or factually deficient (such as investigators omitting to interview key witnesses).
- Investigators not having the proper education or experience, especially when the allegation was criminal in nature, such as child abuse 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.

Overall, to varying degrees, participants did not trust the investigators. Some believe that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner should have conducted the investigations, rather than relying on external investigators.

Enforcement of sanctions

Complainants advised us that a significant problem with the Abuse-Free Sport Program was that sport organization did not always enforce sanctions, and that there was no oversight from the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner to ensure they did so. We also heard that sanctions were not effectively communicated across all levels of the sport (provincial, territorial and grassroots) with which the sanctioned individuals were involved. 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 accountability when dealing with sanctioned individuals. We also heard that provisional measures were not consistently enforced by sport organizations.

Trauma-informed process

Many participants emphasized that the complaint process needs to be trauma-informed for all parties. Victims and survivors especially 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 to respondents.

Victims and survivors noted a lack of protections throughout the complaint process. They said they were made to relive their trauma on multiple occasions as they had to write submissions, go through the investigation process, participate in mediation, and attend hearings. 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 their cross-examination.

We also heard that the complaint process was not responsive to the specific needs and realities of victims and survivors. For instance, 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 their experience.

For example, in cases of racial abuse, a barrier to disclosure may be created if there is no racialized person to hear the complaint. It was also noted that there were no disabled individuals on the roster of arbitrators and mediators, which affected the quality of decision-making in cases involving para-athletes. Concerns were expressed that, without lived experience or a deep understanding of disability-related issues, the realities of these athletes were often overlooked or misunderstood.

Perspectives on the transition from the Abuse-Free Sport Program to the Canadian Safe Sport Program

Given that the Canadian Safe Sport Program has only recently launched, we have not yet received substantive feedback on the new process from participants. We have, however, received initial general impressions on the transition.

On the one hand, some participants welcomed the transition to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. They believe 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. There is hope that the Centre will learn from the challenges that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner faced, leading to improvements in the complaint process. On the other hand, some participants feared that nothing would change and that the issues described above would persist.

Limited jurisdiction

We heard concerns regarding the limited jurisdiction of the Canadian Safe Sport Program as most occurrences of maltreatment occur below the national level of sport. We were informed that a majority of calls and inquiries received by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport during the program's first month were outside of their jurisdiction.

We note that in some cases, the jurisdiction could not be established because the nature of the complaint fell outside the scope of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. 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 informed that the Centre will require additional funding to expand the jurisdiction of the Canadian Safe Sport Program. This funding might come from the government or through a fee-for-service model. In this respect, it is important to recall that the previous 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.

Dual responsibility for anti-doping and safe sport

We were also informed that there is a perception among athletes that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's dual responsibility in anti-doping and safe sport is a source of conflict of interest. This stems from a perception that the Centre works "against" athletes in the anti-doping space yet aims to support them in safe sport.

That said, many athletes appeared to have positive views of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports 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 expressed concern about this, emphasizing that Sport Environment Assessments are an essential tool to address the root causes of unsafe sport cultures within organizations.

That said, we were advised that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport was launching the Canadian Safe Sport Program in phases, and that they 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, as outlined in the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner Guidelines Regarding Sport Environment Assessments,[908] for ongoing Sport Environment Assessments.[909]

Restorative practices

Multiple participants noted that there was a lack of opportunity to engage in restorative practices under the Abuse-Free Sport Program. They were seeking alternatives to resolve disputes beyond the formal complaint process, which involves an investigation and a full hearing. It was suggested that restorative principles should be a part of the Abuse-Free Sport Program.

NATIONAL LEVEL INDEPENDENT THIRD-PARTY MECHANISMS

As noted in earlier in this chapter, the Abuse-Free Sport Program had important limitations to its jurisdiction, frequently receiving complaints of maltreatment unrelated to Program Signatories or their participants. The Canadian Safe Sport Program faces similar problems.

For instance, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner received 299 complaints from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024. Of these, only 134 complaints were deemed admissible.[910] The remaining complaints were inadmissible, usually due to issues related to jurisdiction. Specifically:

- In 63% of these cases, the respondent was not an Abuse-Free Sport Program participant.
- In 26%, the complaint was not related to an issue addressed by the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport.
- In 8.2%, the organization was not a Program Signatory.[911]

Because of these jurisdictional issues, most National Sport Organizations maintain other complaint mechanisms to handle complaints of maltreatment that fall outside the Canadian Safe Sport Program's jurisdiction.

This happens when participants are not at the national level or because the sport organization did not adopt the program.[912] In this respect, most National Sport Organizations leverage Independent Third-Party mechanisms.

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908 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Sport Environment Assessments*, revised on 24 July 2023 (Montreal: OSIC, 2022), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/OSIC_Guidelines_Regarding_Sport_Environment_Assessment_updated_version_July_2023_final_draft_EN.pdf?_t=1691693286>.

909 "Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner of Canada, Sport Environment Assessment: Phase Two Report, Kyra Hudson (independent assessor) (Ottawa: Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner of Canada, 2025), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/2025-05-08_OSIC_Hockey_Canada_Report_SEA_Phase_2_EN.pdf>."

910 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *OSIC Activities in 2023-2024: Abuse-Free Sport Statistics 2023-2024* (Brossard: SDRCC, 2024) at 26 (p 1 of the PDF), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/2023-2024_Abuse-Free_Sport_Annual_Report.pdf>.

911 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *OSIC Activities in 2023-2024: Abuse-Free Sport Statistics 2023-2024* (Brossard: SDRCC, 2024) at 26 (p 1 of the PDF), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/2023-2024_Abuse-Free_Sport_Annual_Report.pdf>.

912 See Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 156, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>.

Independent Third-Party mechanisms

Independent Third-Party mechanisms generally refer to external individuals or agencies who are hired to independently review complaints and conduct investigations, or to direct complaints to the competent authority.[913] The jurisdiction of an Independent Third Party is generally set out in the sport organization's discipline and complaints policy (or equivalent).[914]

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.[915]

The policy further provided that the Independent Third Party, namely Sport Complaints[916], would be responsible for the administration of all complaints,[917] 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 if a violation has occurred and what appropriate discipline should be, if any[918]

Once a decision is made, 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.[919]

913 See Honourable Thomas Cromwell, *Final Report: Hockey Canada Governance Review* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2022) at 41, online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Corporate/action-plan/downloads/2022-hockey-canada-governance-review-final-report-e.pdf>.

914 See Hockey Canada, *Maltreatment Complaint Management Policy* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2023), online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Safety/Safety-Program/Downloads/maltreatment%20complaint-management-policy-e.pdf>.

915 See Hockey Canada, *Maltreatment Complaint Management Policy* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2023), online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Safety/Safety-Program/Downloads/maltreatment%20complaint-management-policy-e.pdf>.

916 Sport Complaints, "Sport Complaints" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://sportcomplaints.ca/>.

917 Complaints is defined as "allegation submitted to Hockey Canada, a Member or the ITP that an Organizational Participant or a Member Participant, as the case may be, has engaged in behaviour that constitutes Maltreatment including, without limitation, Maltreatment-related behaviour arising out of an alleged violation of a policy or code of conduct by which that Organizational Participant or Member Participant is bound." (See Hockey Canada, *Maltreatment Complaint Management Policy* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2023), online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Safety/Safety-Program/Downloads/maltreatment%20complaint-management-policy-e.pdf>.)

918 See Hockey Canada, *Maltreatment Complaint Management Policy* (Calgary: Hockey Canada, 2023), online (pdf): <https://cdn.hockeycanada.ca/hockey-canada/Hockey-Programs/Safety/Safety-Program/Downloads/maltreatment%20complaint-management-policy-e.pdf>.

919 Athletics Canada, *Athletics Canada's Commissioner's Office: Athletics Canada's Statement on Safe Sport* (Ottawa: Athletics Canada, 2021), online (pdf): <https://athletics.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/About-the-Commissioners-Office-Infographic-EN_Posted.pdf>; Athletics Canada, *Commissioner's Office - Terms of Reference* (Ottawa: Athletics Canada, March 2023), online (pdf): <https://

Certain National Sport Organizations, which 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.[920]

We also note that the policies of National Sport Organizations frequently provide for 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.[921]

Participant perspectives on Independent Third-Party mechanisms

The complaint mechanisms operated by National Sport Organizations are complex and fragmented because each organization has its own set of rules and procedures. Notwithstanding, referring complaints to Independent Third Parties, whether agencies or individuals, is a widespread practice in the sport system.

Most National Sport Organizations have an Independent Third Party. As we will discuss in greater detail below, provinces and territories, as well as Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, also use Independent Third-Party mechanisms.

Although Independent Third-Party mechanisms are omnipresent in the sport system, we note that many participants shared serious concerns about them. The perspectives we describe below on Independent Third-Party mechanisms are general and preliminary observations that apply at the national level of sport and below.

Costs

The sport community's heavy reliance on Independent Third Parties has essentially led to the creation of 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, which creates a serious financial burden on organizations who are already struggling to make ends meet.

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athletics.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Athletics-Canada-Commissioner-Office-TOR_2023_FINAL.pdf>.

920 See e.g. Orienteering Canada's Discipline and Complaints Policy (2014). According to the *Discipline and Complaints Policy*, the policy applies to discipline matters that arise in the course of Orienteering Canada (or affiliated organizations) activities and events. Complaints must be submitted in writing to the Orienteering Canada office. The dispute may be referred to a "neutral third party" (mediation). There are procedures to minor and major infractions. With respect to major infraction, the Policy provides for the appointment of a case manager and the appointment of a discipline Panel who will determine if an infraction has occurred and impose sanctions (if appropriate). Orienteering Canada, *Discipline and Complaints Policy* (Calgary: Orienteering Canada, 2014), online: <https://orienteering-canada.cdn.prismic.io/orienteering-canada/614f4e3f-4f4d-417f-bfef-632f75b7df0f_Policy_DisciplineComplaints.pdf>.

921 See e.g. Athletics Canada, *Commissioner's Office - Terms of Reference* (Ottawa: Athletics Canada, March 2023), s 14.0, online (pdf): <https://athletics.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Athletics-Canada-Commissioner-Office-TOR_2023_FINAL.pdf>; Wrestling Canada, *Safe Sport Policy Manual* (Ottawa: Wrestling Canada, 2025), s 26, online (pdf): <https://wrestling.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Safe_Sport_Policy_Manual-April-2025.pdf#page=34>.

Lack of oversight

We heard that there is no oversight or licensing body for Independent Third Parties, and many expressed concerns that these Independent Third Parties were not regulated.

Questions have been raised as to whether Independent Third-Party staff have adequate experience and knowledge to administer safe sport complaints. Indeed, we were told that many investigators working for Independent Third Parties often lack the required expertise to deal with sensitive issues, such as cases of maltreatment involving children. For instance, we were advised of investigators handling cases involving child victims despite having no experience working with children. It was also noted that some decision-makers have an insufficient understanding of the sport environment and the power imbalances within it.

There are currently no mandatory qualifications or certifications to be an Independent Third Party. Many participants agreed that training and standards for those who investigate maltreatment in sport are needed.

Conflict of interests

Some participants expressed distrust about the independence of existing Independent Third-Party mechanisms because these parties are hired by National Sport Organizations. This relationship, at the very least, causes a perception that a conflict of interest exists. Participants are worried that Independent Third Parties may be influenced to make determinations that are favourable to the organization that pays them. We heard the system being described as “very incestuous.”

Other conflicts of interests were noted, notably because Independent Third Parties are often hired by sport organizations to develop their policies, then investigate and render decisions under those very same policies. These Independent-Third Parties may also do other work for the organization.

Participants have also expressed that Safe Sport Officers within National Sport Organizations should primarily focus on promoting safe sport practices and providing education. They should not focus on receiving or managing complaints.

A significant concern raised is 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 parties involved—the complainant, respondent or others— there is a 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 believe that Independent Third Parties are ineffective and that they do not lead to satisfactory complaint resolutions. It was also noted that Independent Third Parties are not meant to focus on prevention or educating people to ensure that maltreatment does not reoccur.

General concerns about the complaint management process of Independent Third-Party Mechanisms

Overall, we heard that the procedures of Independent Third Parties are inconsistent and complicated. A part of the confusion stems from the fact that there are different Independent Third-Party agencies who operate in distinct manners.

Clarity and communication

A primary concern regarding Independent Third Parties is the lack of consistency in their procedures, which is a source of confusion for many. 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 investigator or decision-maker. 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. There is a 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." We were told that timelines were either not being imposed or enforced. Participants recounted instances where the right to appeal a decision was granted months after the deadline to do so had expired. We also heard that the appeal process before the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada takes too long.

Fairness and due process

Participants were concerned by a lack of due process within Independent Third-Party mechanisms. The policies adopted by sport organizations, 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.

These examples further illustrate some of the concerns shared with us:

- provisional measures that are imposed on respondents without providing the respondent 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
- procedural fairness, like being shown a transcript ahead of time

Support and legal services

Complainants and respondents both called for better support services in respect of the Independent Third-Party processes. They described difficulties in finding legal representation. Many are resigned to going through the process without a lawyer because retaining legal counsel is too expensive.

There is also a limited number of lawyers willing to handle long and complex cases pro bono (free of charge). However, we were advised that some National Sport Organizations provide financial support for the complainant's legal fees but offered no such support to their respondent coaches.

Interference with criminal investigations

We heard that some Independent Third Parties investigate complaints while criminal investigations are ongoing, without seemingly grasping the risk of compromising the criminal investigation.

For this reason, it was suggested that there should be a duty to report allegations of a criminal nature to the police, and that administrative investigation should be placed on hold until the criminal investigation is completed.

Enforcement

There were concerns that no one, including the National Sport Organizations, is monitoring the enforcement of sanctions imposed by Independent Third Parties. There seems to be a lack of accountability or transparency about whether sport organizations are enforcing sanctions.

For example, we learned about numerous accounts of coaches and other individuals who continue to work and volunteer in sport despite being actively suspended. This highlights a 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 of confidentiality. Privacy concerns were also raised regarding the storage of sensitive case information using cloud services such as OneDrive and SharePoint.

PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL LEVEL COMPLAINT MECHANISMS

The 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 towards the elimination of abuse, harassment, sexual violence and discrimination in sport. They agreed to implement independent third-party mechanisms in their jurisdiction to report incidents of maltreatment by 2023.[922]

922 Quebec and New Brunswick had already put in place Independent Third-Party mechanisms at this time. Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat, News Release, "2022 Conference of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation" (August 6, 2022), online: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/2022-conference-of-federal-provincial-and-territorial-ministers-responsible-for-sport-physical-activity-recreation/>.

As of today, 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 federation of sport organizations of the province (not the government) and rely on Independent Third-Party mechanisms.

As discussed below, Quebec is the only jurisdiction that has chosen to enact legislation to establish a centralized complaint mechanism. This included the creation of the recreation and sports integrity ombudsman, who is responsible for receiving and investigating integrity matters in the province.

Additionally, it should be noted that British Columbia is in the process of developing an independent complaint mechanism that will be operated by a not-for-profit organization.

A table summarizing the existing provincial and territorial complaint mechanisms, including Independent Third-Party mechanisms, is contained in Appendix 10.

Provincial statutory complaint mechanism

Quebec is currently the only jurisdiction with a statutory complaint mechanism, which was introduced in Bill 45 – *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of sports in recreation and sports*. [923] Bill 45 received royal assent on June 7, 2024, and the provision that created the recreation and sports ombudsman entered into force on June 7, 2025.[924]

A notable feature of the Quebec model is that it applies to all levels of sport, including recreation. Also, its application does not depend on the sport organization receiving public funds or being a member of a provincial or territorial sports federation.

The Act provides that the Government is to appoint a recreation and sports integrity ombudsman who is responsible for "receiving any complaint in matters of integrity and for making recommendations in that regard, in particular to a sports federation, sports body or recreation body."[925] The Act empowers the ombudsman to take action after receiving a report (a complaint) or on their own initiative.[926]

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923 Bill 45, *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*, 1st Sess, 43rd Leg, Quebec, 2024 (assented to June 7, 2024), online: <www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_client/lois_et_reglements/LoisAnnuelles/en/2024/2024C25A.PDF>.

924 Bill 45, *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*, 1st Sess, 43rd Leg, Quebec, 2024 (assented to June 7, 2024), s 41(1), online: <www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_client/lois_et_reglements/LoisAnnuelles/en/2024/2024C25A.PDF>.

925 Bill 45, *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*, 1st Sess, 43rd Leg, Quebec, 2024 (assented to June 7, 2024), s 30.9, online: <www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_client/lois_et_reglements/LoisAnnuelles/en/2024/2024C25A.PDF>.

926 Bill 45, *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*, 1st Sess, 43rd Leg, Quebec, 2024 (assented to June 7, 2024), s 30.12, 30.23, online: <www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_client/lois_et_reglements/LoisAnnuelles/en/2024/2024C25A.PDF>.

Once the recreation and sports integrity ombudsman has completed its examination of the complaint, they can "determine the conclusion" and, if applicable, make recommendations.[927] The sports federation or body can refuse to implement the recommendations and conclusion, provided they do so in writing. In such a case, the ombudsman can submit the case to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports, who then has the power to order the sports federation or body to take a measure indicated by the Minister.[928] The ombudsman is not a tribunal and cannot impose its recommendations.

The Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports can make regulations detailing the procedures for filing complaints with the ombudsman.[929] At the time of writing this report, no such regulations have been published.

Provinces and territories with a centralized complaint mechanism

The most common complaint mechanism at the provincial and territorial level are Independent Third-Party mechanisms. The following governments have delegated the responsibility of creating safe sport complaint mechanisms to their provincial Multisport Service Organizations (also referred to as provincial or territorial federations of sport organizations):

Provincial Governments	Provincial Multisport Service Organizations
Manitoba	Sport Manitoba
New-Brunswick	Sport NB
Newfoundland and Labrador	Sport NL
Quebec	Sport Quebec
Saskatchewan	Sask Sport

In turn, these federations of sport organizations have contracted Independent Third-Party agencies. For instance, Sport NB, Sport NL and Sask Sport have all partnered with ITP Sport, an independent complaints management agency.[930]

We note that access to these Independent Third-Party mechanisms is limited to the participants of the Provincial Sport Organizations who are members of these federations.

Independent Third-Party mechanisms are discussed in more detail in Chapter 16.

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927 Bill 45, *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*, 1st Sess, 43rd Leg, Quebec, 2024 (assented to 7 June 2024), s 30.34, online: <www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_client/lois_et_reglements/LoisAnnuelles/en/2024/2024C25A.PDF>.

928 Bill 45, *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*, 1st Sess, 43rd Leg, Quebec, 2024 (assented to June 7, 2024), s 30.34-30.38, online: <www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_client/lois_et_reglements/LoisAnnuelles/en/2024/2024C25A.PDF>.

929 *Act respecting safety in recreation and sport*, CQLR c S-3.1, s 55(11), online: <www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/s-3.1>.

930 Sport NL, *Sport NL Safe Sport Complaint Mechanism: Guidelines* (Mount Pearl: Sport NL, February 2025), online: <https://sportnl.ca/programs-services/safety-in-sport/>; Sport NB, "Safety in Sport" (last visited April 2025), online: <www.sportnb.com/safety-in-sport/>.

Provinces and territories without a centralized complaint mechanism

There are currently no centralized complaint mechanisms for maltreatment in sport in the following provinces and territories:

- Alberta
- British Columbia
- Northwest Territories
- Nova Scotia
- Ontario
- Prince Edward Island
- Yukon

Since there are 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 leverage Independent Third-Party mechanisms.

An independent, centralized complaint mechanism is being created in British Columbia. Sport Safeguarding BC will be an independent not-for-profit society responsible for establishing and maintaining a complaint system for amateur sport in the province.[931] Its services will only be available to the members of sport organizations designated by viaSport, British Columbia's provincial Multisport Service Organization.[932] Sport Safeguarding BC is expected to be operational in 2025.[933]

In Nova Scotia, the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage is working with Sport Nova Scotia to establish an independent third-party process regarding maltreatment in sport.

Participant perspectives on provincial and territorial complaint mechanisms

Abuse-Free Sport Program

We heard that some provincial and territorial governments considered becoming Signatories to the Abuse-Free Sport Program. There were several factors that made adopting this program difficult, if not impossible, at the provincial/territorial level. Many felt the Abuse-Free Sport program was too expensive.

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931 ViaSport, "BC Complaint Management FAQs" (March 2025), online: <https://viasport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/BC-ITP_FAQS_2025-03-14.pdf>.

932 ViaSport, "BC Complaint Management FAQs" (March 2025), online: <https://viasport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/BC-ITP_FAQS_2025-03-14.pdf>.

933 British Columbia, Ministry Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, *Information Bulletin: Province moves ahead on safe amateur sport system* (April 24, 2024), online: <https://archive.news.gov.bc.ca/releases/news_releases_2020-2024/2024TACS0012-000623.pdf>; ViaSport, "BC Complaint Management FAQs" (March 2025), online: <https://viasport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/BC-ITP_FAQS_2025-03-14.pdf>.

Some provinces and territories felt that the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, which underpins the Abuse-Free Sport Program, was designed for 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/territorial and grassroots levels of sport.

Moreover, the requirement to track the informed consent of all participants was administratively too complex. The level of tracking required to ensure informed, expressed consent was above the capacity of many Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations. The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner required a separate consent form to be read and signed by each sport participant, and they would not accept a "check the box" option during registration.

Some Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations still track their registration manually on paper or using excel sheets, and they 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 leverage restorative processes for minors.

Independent complaint mechanisms

As mentioned above, some provinces have adopted their own centralized complaint mechanisms. We heard of different reasons behind this choice, including a desire to reduce the number of complaint mechanisms in the province, the alternative being that Provincial Sport Organizations have their own complaint mechanisms. There was also a desire to standardize the procedures for complaint management.

The most common centralized complaint mechanisms at the provincial and territorial level are Independent Third-Party Mechanisms. While Third Parties maintain administrative control over these mechanisms, it was acknowledged that governments retain some form of influence over them through the funding they provide to the provincial federation of sport organizations..

The rationale that governments provided for establishing independent complaint mechanisms was to standardize and limit the variety of mechanisms across the sport system. In some jurisdictions, these mechanisms were intended to be "the full stop" for complaints from all 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 centralized complaint mechanisms. These mechanisms remove a complex responsibility from a resource-strapped sector, which is largely driven by volunteers who are worn out from significant emergencies like managing safe sport cases.

Independent complaint mechanisms seem to operate on implied consent, making awareness of the complaint processes and their jurisdictional policies 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.

Provincial and territorial complaint mechanisms, however, 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 private sport organizations, school sport and professional sport. In some instances, cases involving parents and spectators also fall outside of the system.

In addition, some provinces and territories have put in place a resource or helpline. Through these, people can receive information or a referral to the appropriate complaint mechanism.

We also note that some provinces utilize Independent Third Parties. Our observations on Independent Third Parties are found in Chapter 16.

Some jurisdictions were considering restorative approaches. We heard that these can be very Human Resources intensive and would require significant capacity building to implement. It was also noted that they were very expensive.

LOCAL AND GRASSROOTS LEVEL COMPLAINT MECHANISMS

Many different complaint mechanisms operate at the local and grassroots level of sport. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Quebec is the only jurisdiction with a centralized complaint mechanism that operates at this level. Specifically, Quebec has created 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.[934] Otherwise, there is no centralized complaint mechanism for clubs, community associations and other organizations at the grassroots level of sport.

In some cases, clubs may be required to implement a complaint mechanism due to their affiliation with a Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization. Other clubs, community associations and organizations may also choose to create complaint mechanisms. Some of these organizations have hired Independent Third Parties. We further note that universities and colleges generally have complaint mechanisms in place,[935] and these are sometimes required by statute.[936]

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934 Bill 45, *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*, 1st Sess, 43rd Leg, Quebec, 2024 (assented to June 7, 2024), online: <www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_client/lois_et_reglements/LoisAnnuelles/en/2024/2024C25A.PDF>.

935 See e.g. UOttawa, *Procedure 36-1: Complaints of Harassment/Discrimination initiated by student* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2017), online: <www.uottawa.ca/about-us/leadership-governance/policies-regulations/procedure-36-1-complaints-harassment-discrimination-initiated-students>.

936 For example, under section 17 of the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act,* some colleges and universities in Ontario are required to have a sexual violence policy that sets out the processes for how the college or university will respond to and address incidents and complaints of sexual violence involving students enrolled at the college or university. Because preventing and addressing sexual maltreatment in sport is a part of safe sport, there could be an overlap in this respect (RSO 1990, c M. 19, s 17), online: <www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90m19>.

Participant perspectives on local and grassroots complaint mechanisms

The vast majority of safe sport issues occur locally, which underscore the need for appropriate complaint mechanisms in such settings. Although some complaint mechanism and reporting procedures exist at the grassroots level, they are not widely known or effectively communicated. There is little to no oversight over these clubs and community associations, meaning that procedures may not be strictly followed or enforced.

Grassroots organizations typically do not have the resources to administer complex complaint mechanisms. Complaints are usually handled internally, and many participants emphasized that these organizations are primarily run by volunteers who do not have the expertise or experience for this task.

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 the clubs' administrators, staff or board of directors.

Participants also noted that universities, colleges and schools are mostly outside the national complaint mechanism (referring to the Abuse-Free Sport Program). This creates confusion when it comes to reporting maltreatment.

In this context, we were advised that a simple, one-stop, transparent and consistent complaint process was needed for the grassroots level of sport. This process must also ensure ease of communication, appropriate oversight and procedures that are sensitive and trauma-informed.

PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES ON CENTRALIZATION AND HARMONIZATION OF COMPLAINT MECHANISMS

Many participants asserted that safe sport complaints cannot be handled internally by sport organizations or by Independent Third Parties who are hired by sport organizations. There is a general belief 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 harmonized. They also requested new laws 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 shared with us that they would like to see a unified national complaint mechanism to administer a unified 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 are generally dependent on volunteers and that 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 can file a complaint was desirable. We also heard that there needs to be a uniform approach to sanctions, noting that sanctions are not applied the same way from one individual to another.

Some provincial and territorial governments were open to the notion of a national complaint mechanism. They acknowledged that all governments have the same goal, namely 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 across jurisdictions consistently.

On the other hand, a unified complaint mechanism was viewed as idealistic by other governments. While a need for national oversight was generally recognized, government representatives and other participants emphasized the importance of regional input and representation. They also noted a need for flexibility to allow provinces and territories to determine how to implement agreed-upon general principles.

Both advantages and disadvantages were raised regarding local-level participants using a national complaint mechanism. In small communities, for example, a national mechanism would provide increased anonymity and confidentiality. A possible barrier to reporting could be a lack of trust in or proximity to a national service.

During our engagements with participants, some commented on the wide scope of the Canadian Anti-Doping Program, noting that most anti-doping violations 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 level of funding provided to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport to administer the Canadian Anti-Doping Program only permitted its implementation in a meaningful and effective manner at the national and international level of sport.

Finally, we note that 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.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN OTHER COUNTRIES?

Like Canada, many countries have thoroughly examined the policies and procedures for handling complaints of maltreatment in sport. These extensive studies were driven by high-profile cases of athlete abuse,[937] as well as cases of child abuse and maltreatment in institutional settings.[938] As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, 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 the Canadian sport system, including Australia and the United Kingdom. We recognize the importance of the reforms undertaken in other jurisdictions and the valuable lessons that can be learned from them. Our final report will provide a more detailed discussion of developments and best practices in international jurisdictions, including those of Canada's closest geographical neighbour – the United States. For this Preliminary Report, we will focus on those countries that came up most frequently in discussions and that have undertaken extensive study and reform.

The Commission was cautioned that the ability to import best practices from other countries may be limited by Canada's large geographic footprint and the federal system of government.

Australia

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:[939]

- 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 create resources for sport and recreation.
- That oversight bodies responsible for implementing the Child Safe Standards share information with the sport and recreation sector via email.

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937 See e.g. Joan McPhee & James Dowden, *Report of the Independent Investigation: The Constellation of Factors Underlying Larry Nassar's Abuse of Athletes* (Ropes & Gray LLP, 2018), online (pdf): <www.ropesgray.com/-/media/files/usoc/ropes-gray-full-report.pdf>; UK Sport, *Whyte Review Report* (London: UK Sport, 2022), online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/resources/the-whyte-review/whyte-review-report>.

938 See especially Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, "Final Report" (last visited May 2025), at Volumes 6-8, online: <www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/final-report>.

939 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Final Report: Sport, Recreation, Arts, Culture, Community and Hobby Groups Volume 14* (Barton: Commonwealth of Australia, 2017) at 25, online (pdf): <www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_volume_14_sport_recreation_arts_culture_community_and_hobby_groups.pdf>.

As for the Wood Review, it 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.[940] 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.[941]

In addition, following the release of "Athlete A," a documentary detailing the abuse of athletes by USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar, former athletes and parents of athletes in Australia came forward via social media.[942] This led Gymnastics Australia to request an independent review of the culture of gymnastics at all levels of the sport. The report made 12 recommendations, including that Gymnastics Australia adopt the National Integrity Framework and its related policies and complaints procedures.[943]

The National Integrity Framework

Launched in 2021, the National Integrity Framework establishes a set of rules that all members of a sport need to follow when it comes to their behaviour and conduct in sport.[944] 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.[945]

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940 Government of Australia (Department of Health), *Safeguarding the Integrity of Sport – the Government Response to the Wood Review* (Sydney: Government of Australia, 2019) at 4, online (pdf): <www.sportintegrity.gov.au/sites/default/files/Government%20Response%20to%20Wood%20Review.pdf>.

941 Government of Australia (Department of Health), *Report of the Review of Australia's Sports Integrity Arrangements* (Canberra: Government of Australia, 2018) at 17, online (pdf): <www.sportintegrity.gov.au/sites/default/files/Report%20of%20the%20review%20of%20Australia%E2%80%99s%20Sports%20Integrity%20Arrangements.pdf>.

942 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Change the Routine: Independent Review into Gymnastics in Australia* (Sydney: AHRC, 2021), online (pdf): <https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/ahrc_gymnastics_review_2021_final_.pdf>.

943 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Change the Routine: Independent Review into Gymnastics in Australia* (Sydney: AHRC, 2021) at 83, online (pdf): <https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/ahrc_gymnastics_review_2021_final_.pdf>.

944 Sport Integrity Australia, *National Integrity Framework – What is the National Integrity Framework* (Fyshwick: Sport Integrity Australia, August 2023), at 1, online (pdf): <www.sportintegrity.gov.au/sites/default/files/SIA225-0823-7-NIF%20What%20is%20the%20NIF-A-4%20%5BDIGITAL%5D.pdf>. p.1

945 Sport Integrity Australia, *National Integrity Framework – What is the National Integrity Framework* (Fyshwick: Sport Integrity Australia, August 2023), at 1, online (pdf): <www.sportintegrity.gov.au/sites/default/files/SIA225-0823-7-NIF%20What%20is%20the%20NIF-A-4%20%5BDIGITAL%5D.pdf>.

The National Integrity Framework is a voluntary framework that National Sporting Organizations, National Sporting Organizations for People with Disability and other approved Sporting Administration Bodies can adopt.[946] Complaints related to the National Integrity Framework are either handled by Sport Integrity Australia or by the sport organization.[947]

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),* 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."[948] The legislation provides Sport Integrity Australia with oversight over the National Anti-Doping Scheme,[949] match-fixing,[950] and other matters related to sports integrity.[951]

While Sport Integrity Australia maintains operational independence, the Minister may provide direction to the Chief Executive Officer "in relation to the performance of his or her functions and the exercise of his or her powers."[952] In addition, the Chief Executive Officer is overseen by the Sport Integrity Australia Advisory Council. This Council provides advice to the Chief Executive Officer related to their functions and to the functions of Sport Integrity Australia.[953] This advice is strictly strategic advice and may not relate to any specific individual or case.[954]

Complaint mechanisms

The jurisdiction of Sport Integrity Australia over complaints is rooted in two sources: first, whether a sport organization has adopted the National Integrity Framework and, second, the nature of the complaint.

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946 As of May 31, 2025, 95 sporting organizations have adopted the National Integrity Framework. Sport Integrity Australia, "Sports Signed to the National Integrity Framework" (last visited May 31, 2025), online: <www.sportintegrity.gov.au/what-we-do/national-integrity-framework/sports-signed-national-integrity-framework>.

947 Sport Integrity Australia, *National Integrity Framework: FactSheet Catalogue* (Fyshwick: Sport Integrity Australia, March 2025), at 2, online (pdf): <www.sportintegrity.gov.au/sites/default/files/SIA271-0124-NIFFactsheetCatalogue-A-2-DIG.pdf>.

948 *Sport Integrity Australia Act 2020* (Commonwealth), 2006/6, s 3A (Austl), online: <https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/siaa2020315/>.

949 *Sport Integrity Australia Act 2020* (Commonwealth), 2006/6 at Part 2 – National Anti-Doping Scheme (Austl), online: <www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/siaa2020315.rtf>.

950 *Sport Integrity Australia Act 2020* (Commonwealth), 2006/6, s 21(f) (Austl), online: <https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/siaa2020315/> .

951 *Sport Integrity Australia Act 2020* (Commonwealth), 2006/6, s 21 (Austl), online: <https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/siaa2020315/>.

952 *Sport Integrity Australia Act 2020* (Commonwealth), 2006/6, s 24 (Austl), online: <https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/siaa2020315/>.

953 *Sport Integrity Australia Act 2020* (Commonwealth), 2006/6, s 25 (Austl), online: <https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/siaa2020315/>.

954 *Sport Integrity Australia Act 2020* (Commonwealth), 2006/6, s 27 (Austl), online: <https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/siaa2020315/>.

More precisely, when a sport organization adopts the National Integrity Framework, Sport Integrity Australia manages complaints related to child safeguarding and discrimination based on protected characteristics, whether of children or adults.[955] All other complaints are handled by the sporting organization in accordance with the *Complaints, Disputes and Discipline Policy* that is part of the National Integrity Framework.

Sport Integrity Australia's authority covers all levels of sport, from the national level to the grassroots level. This national authority is derived from the adoption of international legal instruments by the Australian Government, 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.* But as a federated country, with Commonwealth ("national") and State or Territory ("state/territorial") levels of governments, there are constitutional limits on the powers of each order of government.

In the context of complaints, the powers of Sport Integrity Australia are limited to investigations and support; there is no ability to issue sanctions. Rather, this decision falls to the respective sporting organization.

While guidance is offered to sporting organizations in this regard,[956] there is nevertheless the possibility of inconsistencies across the system.

United Kingdom

As discussed in Chapter 6, 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, physical activity and grassroots sport are divided up among the consistent 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.[957] 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.[958]

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955 See Sport Integrity Australia, "Tell us about a concern or issue" (last visited June 2025), online: <www.sportintegrity.gov.au/contact-us/reporting>.

956 See Sport Integrity Australia, *National Integrity Framework: Guidance for Complaint Management and Sanctioning* (Fyshwick: Sport Integrity Australia, January 2023), online: <www.sportintegrity.gov.au/sites/default/files/SIA276-0124%20NIF-GUIDANCE-FOR-COMPLAINTS-MANAGEMENT-and-SANCTIONING_ACCESSIBLE.pdf>.

957 See e.g. Child Protection in Sport Unit, *Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Young People in Sport* (London: CPSU, last visited May 2025), online (pdf): https://thecpsu.org.uk/media/xlfpox04/web_cpsustandards.pdf>; See also *The Framework for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in and Through Sport in Wales* (Wales) and *Keeping Children Safe* (Northern Ireland). Child Protection in Sport Unit, "CPSU Briefings: Duty of Care" at 4, online (pdf): <https://thecpsu.org.uk/media/445829/duty-of-care-briefing-may2020.pdf>.

958 Child Protection in Sport Unit, "CPSU Briefings: Duty of Care" at 1, online (pdf): <https://thecpsu.org.uk/media/445829/duty-of-care-briefing-may2020.pdf>.

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.[959]

Launched in May 2022, Sport Integrity consists of an independent and confidential reporting hotline and an independent investigation process.[960] It is operated by Sport Resolutions, an independent sport-specific dispute resolution service and supported by a charitable organization, Crimestoppers.[961]

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.[962] 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.[963]

Grassroot 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.[964] In addition, the Ann Craft Trust, another charitable organization, provides support to national sport organizations to strengthen the safeguarding of adults at risk.

When local organizations are not affiliated with a national governing body, there are multiple potential paths for filing 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.

Takeaways on other countries' approach

Despite best efforts, strong policies and a willingness to create change, the countries suggested to the Commission as models for the Canadian system still do not have a single point of entry for complaints and a truly unified approach to complaint management. We observed that countries have encountered jurisdictional issues to creating a uniformed code and complaint mechanism. Efforts to create such code or complaint mechanism have generally been limited to the national level or high-performance sport programs.

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959 UK Sport & Sport England, *Policy Response to the Whyte Review* (London: UK Sport & Sport England, January 2023) at 3, online (pdf): <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-01/Whyte%20Review%20Policy%20Response.pdf?VersionId=gYY6NlFnKl9JjXMuwDVec6lNq0MfRoBa>.

960 Sport Integrity, News Release, "Sport Integrity: A new independent disclosure and complaints service for Olympic & Paralympic sport" (April 7, 2022), online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/news/2022/04/07/sport-integrity-a-new-independent-disclosure-and-complaints-service>.

961 Sport Integrity, News Release, "Sport Integrity: A new independent disclosure and complaints service for Olympic & Paralympic sport" (April 7, 2022), online: <www.uksport.gov.uk/news/2022/04/07/sport-integrity-a-new-independent-disclosure-and-complaints-service>.

962 Sport Integrity, "Sport Integrity" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.sportintegrity.com/>.

963 Sport Integrity, "Sport Integrity" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.sportintegrity.com/>.

964 Child Protection in Sport Unit, "Deal with a concern" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://thecpsu.org.uk/help-advice/deal-with-a-concern/>.

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 specific legal jurisdiction, uniform systems are based on voluntary, contractual agreements and often leverage funding as a tool of persuasion. Gaps and inconsistencies continue to exist in these systems.

As mentioned previously, Canada is not alone in undertaking an extensive review of its sport system, particularly regarding 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, through the sharing of 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 of the sporting world once again.

SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO REPORTING MALTREATMENT IN SPORT

Before exploring our preliminary findings and recommendations on frameworks and mechanisms to respond to maltreatment in sport, it is important to underscore that barriers to reporting maltreatment. The culture of fear and silencing in sport is a significant reason why people do not report.

Victims, survivors and witnesses told us on countless occasions that they feared reporting maltreatment. We heard that those who speak out against maltreatment are frequently subject to retaliation, further reinforcing a culture of silence and mistrust.

Because they reported maltreatment, victims and survivors recounted many forms of retaliation:

- being cut from teams and shunned by their teammates
- being labelled as troublemakers or “problem athletes”
- given silent treatment and bullied
- losing their status as carded athletes and being expelled from sport organizations
- losing their scholarships and funding

We also heard that the complaint mechanisms were being weaponized and that complaints are filed to retaliate against those who reported maltreatment. Scare tactics are being used to control and silence children to prevent them from telling their parents. We also heard from parents who were also afraid of speaking up due to the fear of retaliation against their children. Other victims and survivors were explicitly instructed by their coaches, board members and others not to disclose or report maltreatment. This culture of fear leaves victims and survivors isolated.

The risk of losing funding if maltreatment is reported adds another layer to the culture of fear and silencing. This discourages individuals and organizations even further from reporting maltreatment. For example, sport organizations, their athletes and other participants hesitate to raise concerns to Sport Canada and Own the Podium for fear of losing their funding.

There is there also a culture of inaction and of turning a blind eye to maltreatment, which further discourages reporting. Victims, survivors and witnesses told us that when they raised concerns with coaches, parents and other adults, their complaints were not taken seriously. While many representatives of sport organizations do intervene when they see inappropriate behaviour and are aware of complaints of maltreatment, a prompt and appropriate response is often missing. This sends a message to victims and survivors that their voice does not matter and that nothing will change.

While exploring potential ways to improve safe sport, we must always keep such systemic barriers in mind.

RESPONSE TO MALTREATMENT IN SPORT: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms: preliminary findings

As explained in Chapter 15, the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport only applies to sport participants associated with sport organizations who 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 can voluntarily adopt the Universal Code of Conduct or develop their own safe sport policy or code of conduct.

As also explained earlier in this chapter, even where sport organizations adopt the Universal Code of Conduct, the Canadian Safe Sport Program is only available in certain contexts and to certain participants of federally funded National Sport Organizations, national Multiport Service Organizations, and Canadian Sport Centers and Institutes.

At the provincial and territorial level, only British Columbia and Saskatchewan adopted a mandatory and "universal" safe sport policy or framework for provincially funded sport organizations within their jurisdiction. In addition, several provinces and territories do not have a centralized complaint mechanism. Where such systems do exist, like in Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Saskatchewan, they are administered by the province's federation of sport organizations and rely on Independent Third-Party mechanisms. As for Quebec, the province has enacted legislation to establish a centralized complaint mechanism responsible for receiving and investigating sport integrity matters in the province.

In addition to the government safe sport policies and "centralized" complaint mechanisms, sport organizations maintain "private" complaint mechanisms to deal with those complaints that fall outside the jurisdiction of the centralized complaint mechanisms. In this respect, most National Sport Organizations leverage Independent Third-Party mechanisms, mostly external professionals or organizations retained to independently review complaints and conduct investigations.

The former Abuse-Free Sport Program, the new Canadian Safe Sport Program and their provincial and territorial counterparts (for those that exist) have limited applicability and reach across the Canadian sport system. They do not reach the grassroots and local levels of sport, where most instances of maltreatment take place.

Like the sport system itself, the safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms are fragmented. Sport participants are shuffled from one complaint mechanism to another and do not know where to go to file their complaints. Beyond the number of centralized complaint mechanisms and independent third-party mechanisms at all levels of sport, there appears to be no agreed-upon quality standard across the Canadian sport system. This applies to both "centralized" complaint mechanisms and Independent Third-Party mechanisms. Several participants raised concerns about the independence of organizations acting as Independent Third-Party mechanisms and about the selection, qualification and independence of adjudicators.

The Commission acknowledges the progress that has been made by the Government of Canada, several national Multisport Service Organizations and certain provinces and territories, in developing universal safe sport policies and centralizing the administration of complaints. However, both our engagement process and our independent review of the existing mechanisms lead us to the conclusion that in order to improve safe sport in Canada:

- There must be greater uniformity and alignment between safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms throughout the country.
- The "centralized" complaint mechanism(s) must have a greater reach to capture maltreatment arising at the grassroots and local level sport.

As for prevention efforts, there is an urgent need for stronger mechanisms to respond effectively to incidents of maltreatment in sport. The issue extends far beyond ensuring safety in high-performance environments. It is fundamentally about safeguarding the well-being of individuals, including children, and protecting society more broadly. As we heard repeatedly throughout our work, and as it appears from various government and expert reports published before ours, instances of maltreatment in sport permeate all levels of sport and are particularly prevalent at the grassroots and local level sport.

In view of the division of powers between the federal and provincial and territorial jurisdictions (discussed in Chapter 3), we believe improving safe sport in Canada can only be achieved through meaningful collaboration between both levels of government.

What a collaborative framework could look like

In the Commission's view, the Government of Canada and most provinces and territories demonstrated an intention to join efforts to "ensure that all athletes and participants have a safe place to turn to when reporting incidents of maltreatment.[965] This is evident from intergovernmental collaboration between the federal, provincial and territorial governments (discussed in Chapter 3), and more particularly the *Red Deer Declaration for the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport* [966] adopted in 2019. Three years later, at the 2022 Conference of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation, it was also agreed that:

- Ministers would work towards establishing an independent third-party mechanism in their jurisdiction, including processes for the reporting and resolution of maltreatment allegations for sport organizations funded by a federal, provincial or territorial government in 2023.
- Jurisdictions could choose to use the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner as their independent third party, or another entity.[967]

The Commission's engagement process with provinces and territories so far also shows a political will for further collaboration with the Government of Canada on the topic of safe sport. There is a desire for better alignment and integration of existing processes for the reporting and resolution of safe sport issues throughout provinces and territories and across all levels of sport. In fact, several provinces and territories indicated that they would welcome a unified and centralized safe sport "complaint mechanism" or tribunal, to administer safe sport across the country, provided it is entirely funded by the Government of Canada.

Consequently, one of the focuses of the Commission's work as it pertains to improving safe sport in Canada has been to reflect on different collaborative frameworks. These frameworks would enable the federal, provincial and territorial governments to work together not only to establish an independent third-party mechanism in their respective jurisdiction, but also to (i) achieve uniformity and alignment between complaint mechanisms and (ii) ensure their reach through grassroots and local level sports.

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965 Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat, News Release, "2023 Conference of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation" (February 18, 2023), online: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/news-release-2023-conference-of-federal-provincial-and-territorial-ministers-responsible-for-sport-physical-activity-recreation/>.

966 "Conference of Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation, *Red Deer Declaration – For the Prevention of Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport* (Red Deer: Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat, February 14-15, 2019), online: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/red-deer-declaration-for-the-prevention-of-harassment-abuse-and-discrimination-in-sport/.>"

967 Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat, Press Release, 831-421, "2022 Conference of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation" (August 6, 2022), online: <https://scics.ca/en/product-produit/2022-conference-of-federal-provincial-and-territorial-ministers-responsible-for-sport-physical-activity-recreation/>.

In light of the foregoing, the Commission has set out below three options for an intergovernmental collaborative framework. We believe all three options would allow for an integrated approach to responding to safe sport issues across all levels of the Canadian sport system. For each proposed option, we have outlined what we believe should be the role of the federal government, along with the advantages and disadvantages we perceive. The purpose of this exercise is to provide participants an opportunity to deliberate on the proposed options – whether at the National Summit or through other forms of engagement – before the Commission delivers its final recommendations to the Government of Canada.

We also wish to emphasize that each of the options proposed below values and incorporates the developments already made by governments and organizations. We believe that the existing structures and mechanisms are generally well thought out, and our proposed options aim at building on what already exists to allow all Canadian athletes and sport participants to benefit from them. Notably, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and its Canadian Safe Sport Program could serve as the foundational starting point for all the proposed options outlined below.

Finally, we wish to highlight that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, in its 2023 Report entitled "Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for all Athletes in Canada," included the following recommendation: that "the Government of Canada collaborate with provincial and territorial governments as well as with Indigenous Peoples to ensure sports participants have access to independent complaint mechanisms through the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner or other independent mechanisms to ensure transparency for sexual misconduct, resources for survivors, and equal service across and within jurisdictions."[968]

Safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms: preliminary recommendations

Option 1: A national safe sport authority or tribunal

The Commission recommends that:

62. The Government of Canada collaborate with the provincial and territorial governments to create a national safe sport authority or tribunal to administer federal and provincial/territorial safe sport legislation.

A first possibility would be for the Government of Canada to reach an agreement with the provincial and territorial governments for a collaborative framework. Under this framework, both levels of government would enact safe sport legislation and empower a national safe sport authority or administrative tribunal to administer federal and provincial and territorial legislation. Such a cooperative framework could namely include:

968 House of Commons, *Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada* (June 2023) (Chair: Karen Vecchio) at Recommendation 4, online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Reports/RP12528102/feworp07/feworp07-e.pdf>.

- Uniform provincial and territorial safe sport legislation applicable to participants and athletes involved in provincial and local level of sport.
- Complementary federal safe sport legislation applicable to athletes involved in national and international level sport.
- A single national safe sport authority or administrative tribunal empowered by both orders of government to administer and enforce the federal and provincial safe sport legislation.
- A Council of ministers comprising the Ministers responsible for sport in each provincial and territorial participating jurisdiction and the federal Secretary of State responsible for sport that oversees the national authority or tribunal.
- Provincial and territorial registry offices in every participating jurisdiction providing the same range of services to sport participants and athletes.

This recommendation is informed by similar collaborative frameworks developed by federal, provincial and territorial governments in two other areas of shared jurisdiction, namely securities regulation[969] and environmental assessments.[970]

Although the national safe sport authority or administrative tribunal would likely be a government body established through federal legislation, it could leverage the expertise, personnel, processes, and procedures of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.

Advantages of Option 1:

- All participants involved in sport (and not only those participants of sport organizations that receive government funding) would be subject to the same legislated safe sport standards.It would allow for the creation of a unified national safe sport tribunal with jurisdiction to hear and adjudicate safe sport complaints from all levels of sport, from national to grassroot.
- It would provide uniformity and clarity by providing a single point of access for complainants.
- It would streamline processes and eliminate duplication of legislation, policies and complaint mechanisms.
- It would improve the overall experience for those navigating the safe sport system.
- A national safe sport tribunal or quasi-judicial tribunal would guarantee procedural fairness.
- The decisions of the national safe sport tribunal would be subject to judicial review before the courts.

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969 *Reference re Securities Act*, 2011 SCC 66; *Reference re Pan-Canadian Securities Regulation*, 2018 SCC 48.

970 *Canada Environmental Assessment Act, 2012*, online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-15.21/>; *MiningWatch Canada v Canada (Fisheries and Oceans)*, 2010 SCC 2. This Act was replaced by the *Impact Assessment Act*, SC 2019, c 28, s 1, online: <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-2.75/index.html>.

Disadvantages of Option 1:

- Some provinces and territories may refuse to "opt-in" the collaborative framework.
- Such a collaborative framework presents a certain degree of novelty.
- The procedural rules of a national administrative tribunal may not offer enough flexibility to efficiently handle safe sport complaint.
- A national safe sport tribunal may not be suited to address all complaints from national to local level of sport throughout the country.
- Different jurisdictions and levels of sport may require different approaches.
- It would likely entail significant cost for the Government of Canada, particularly if it were to fully fund the national safe sport tribunal.
- The volume of work of the national safe sport tribunal may quickly become excessive.

Option 2: An Independent not-for-profit corporation as safe sport regulator

The Commission recommends that:

63. The Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments agree to delegate the administration of a universal safe sport policy to an independent not-for-profit corporation.

A second possibility would be for the Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments to agree to delegate the administration of a universal safe sport policy to a single independent not-for-profit corporation.

As noted earlier in this chapter, this "contract-based" approach is currently used by Sport Canada, which has entrusted the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport with the mandate of independently administering the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport through the application of the new *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules*. This applies, however, only to participants of federally funded National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.

We also note that the former Abuse-Free Sport Program, unlike the new Canadian Safe Sport Program, did offer provinces and territories the option to "opt-in." This allowed complaints emanating from provincially and territorially funded sport organizations to be administered by the former Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. We were also told that one of the reasons why provinces and territories chose not to opt-in was that the cost of the Abuse-Free Sport Program was prohibitive. As a reminder, the cost of the Abuse-Free Sport Program, unlike that of the new Canadian Safe Sport Program, was then to be shared by its users, including National Sport Organizations.

Consequently, the Commission believes that the Government of Canada should contemplate a collaborative framework in which:

a. 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.
b. The Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments would assign the responsibility to administer the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport through the application of the Canadian Safe Sport Program.
c. The Government of Canada would mandate that all sport organizations receiving federal funding adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program.
d. 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.
e. The provincial and territorial governments would mandate that all sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program.
f. The provincial and territorial governments would mandate that all Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations receiving provincial/territorial funding modify their membership rules to require of their member Community Sport Organizations that they adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

We note that this approach has previously been advanced and is supported by scholars in the field of sport.[971]

The Commission emphasizes that the success of such an approach to alignment and outreach in addressing maltreatment in Canadian sport relies not only on government collaboration, but also – crucially – on meaningful cooperation between sport governing bodies and their member sport organizations across all levels of sport.

The Commission once again encourages the Government of Canada to incentivize provinces and territories participation by funding the activities of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport for national, provincial, territorial and local sport organizations that adhere to the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

Under Option 2, the custody and responsibility to review and oversee the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport should be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity (discussed in Chapter 6). Until this entity is established by the Government of Canada, this responsibility should reside with Sport Canada.

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971 Marcus Mazzucco & Hilary Findlay, *A Code for ALL Levels of Sport: Implementing the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) Across Canada* (Ottawa: SIRC, October 21, 2024), online: <https://sirc.ca/articles/a-code-for-all-levels-of-sport-implementing-the-universal-code-of-conduct-to-prevent-and-address-maltreatment-in-sport-uccms-across-canada/>; Marcus Mazzucco, *Implementing the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS) at all Levels of Canadian Sport: Policy Brief* (Toronto: University of Toronto, Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education, 2024); Marcus Mazzucco & Hilary Findlay, *Finding a Way Forward: Addressing Organizational Factors Contributing to Systemic Maltreatment in Canadian Sport* (2024) 47:8 P Manitoba LJ, online (pdf): <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4916097>.

Advantages of Option 2:

- All participants of sport organizations receiving funding from a participating government and all participants of sport organizations which are members of sport organizations receiving funding from a participating government, would be subject to the same universal safe sport policy.
- This "contract-based" approach would allow for a single and unified complaint mechanism to administer complaints emanating from (i) participants of sport organizations that receive funding from the federal government and participating provincial and territorial governments and (ii) participants of sport organizations that are members of those funded organizations.
- An independent not-for-profit organization such as the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport would offer more flexibility in its procedures and processes in comparison to a quasi-judicial body.

Disadvantages of Option 2:

- Some provinces and territories may refuse to "opt-in" the collaborative framework.
- An independent not-for-profit organization such as the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport may not offer as much procedural fairness as a quasi-judicial body.
- Sport governing bodies (National Sport Organizations and Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations) may not always have sufficient leverage to require their members to adopt the Canadian Safe Sport Program.
- The decisions of the independent not-for-profit organization would not be subject to judicial review before the courts[972] (but we note that the decisions of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada are currently subject to set-aside annulment proceedings before the Ontario Superior Court of Justice[973]).
- A not-for-profit organization is governed by a board of directors and is therefore not sheltered from governance issues.

972 *Adams v Canada*, 2011 ONSC 325 (Confirmed in *Adams v Attorney General of Canada*, 2011 ONSC 7592); *Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport v Russell*, 2007 CanLII 20978 (ON SC), 2007 CarswellOnt 3591.

973 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Canadian Sport Dispute Resolution Code* (Brossard: SDRCC, April 1, 2025) at arts 5.1, 5.16, online (pdf): <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/EN%20-%20Code_SDRCC_2025%20Final%202025-04-01.pdf>; *Arbitration Act*, S.O. 1991, c. 17, art 46(1), online: <www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/91a17>; *Cricket Canada v Bilal Syed*, 2017 ONSC 3301; *Bilal Syed v Cricket Canada,* 2018 ONSC 5637; *Alberta Cricket Association v Alberta Cricket Council,* 2021 ONSC 8451; *Spinney v Fowlie*, 2025 ONSC 2632.

Option 3: Conditional grants to provinces and territories to encourage the implementation of a universal safe sport policy and centralized complaint mechanism within their respective jurisdiction

The Commission recommends that:

64. The Government of Canada:
    a. 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 application of the Canadian Safe Sport Program and for participants of federally funded sport organizations; and
    b. provide conditional grants to provinces and territories to enable them to implement a provincial or territorial centralized complaint mechanism tasked with administering a universal safe sport policy for participants of provincially and territorially funded sport organizations within their territory. The universal safe sport policy and independent complaint mechanism would have to meet certain standards set by the Government of Canada.

Through this third approach, the federal government would rely on its spending power to achieve greater uniformity and clarity between the federal and provincial and territorial universal safe sport policies and centralized complaint mechanisms.

This recommendation is namely informed by similar conditional grants which were found to be constitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada in the area of health.[974] Under the *Canada Health Act*,[975] which sets out the primary objective of Canadian health care policy, the federal government is required to contribute to the funding of provincial health insurance programs when certain conditions are met.

Under Option 3, responsibility for the allocation of conditional grants to the provinces and territories should be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity discussed in Chapter 6. Until this independent entity is established by the Government of Canada, this responsibility should reside with Sport Canada.

Advantages of Option 3:

- Conditional federal grants to the provinces and territories may encourage those who currently do not have a provincial or territorial safe sport policy and centralized complaint mechanism to implement one.
- Conditional federal grants to the provinces and territories would provide uniformity between the federal and provincial and territorial safe sport policies and centralized complaint mechanisms.
- This approach would likely allow provinces and territories like Quebec to maintain and improve their centralized complaint mechanism.

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974 *Eldridge v British Columbia (Attorney General)*, [1997] 3 SCR 624 at para 25, online: <https://canlii.ca/t/1fqx5#par25>.

975 *Canada Health Act*, RSC 1985, c C-6, online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-6/page-1.html>.

Disadvantages of Option 3:

- The provinces and territories may refuse the federal grant and adopt their own safe sport policy and complaint mechanism(s).
- This approach would likely entail a significant cost for the federal government which would be funding both the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and its provincial and territorial counterparts.
- The federal government would require resources to monitor whether the provincial and territorial safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms meet the funding conditions.

Option 4: A federal safe sport legislation and tribunal

The Commission recommends that:

65. The Government of Canada enact federal safe sport legislation and create a federal safe sport tribunal.

A fourth possible option, which would not require the buy-in of provinces and territories, would be for the federal government to include the content of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in federal legislation and establish a federal safe sport tribunal. In the Commission's view, such federal legislation and the jurisdiction of a federal administrative tribunal would have to be limited in scope to individuals who compete, participate or are otherwise involved in national or international levels of sport in Canada.

While this approach would carry certain benefits, it would not, in our view, address the need for greater uniformity and alignment between safe sport policies and mechanisms. It also would not ensure a greater reach through all levels of sport.

Advantages of Option 4:

- Incorporating the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport in legislation would ensure the same standards apply to all individuals involved in national or international level sport in Canada, regardless of whether the national sport organization receives federal funding.
- A federal administrative tribunal established by federal statute would have the benefit of guaranteeing procedural fairness.
- The decisions of such tribunal would be subject to judicial review.

Disadvantages of Option 4:

- Federal legislation would likely be limited in scope to individuals who compete, participate or are otherwise involved in national or international level sport.
- A federal administrative tribunal would likely only have jurisdiction over safe sport complaints arising at the national and international level of sport.

Once again, we reiterate that the purpose of this exercise is to provide participants an opportunity to deliberate on the proposed options, whether at the National Summit or through other forms of engagement. The Commission will certainly benefit from all perspectives before delivering its final recommendations to the Government of Canada.

SUPPORT FOR THOSE AFFECTED: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Complaint management processes and procedures: preliminary findings

The Commission concluded that the safe sport system is fragmented. It consists of multiple centralized complaint mechanisms alongside independent third-party mechanisms that handle complaints falling outside the centralized bodies' jurisdiction. We also observed a lack of consistency and uniformity across these mechanisms in the selection processes, qualifications, and independence requirements for adjudicators.

In our view, the same conclusion ought to be drawn regarding the processes and procedures for handling complaints, which appear inconsistent across the various complaint mechanisms. It is important to note that the Commission's mandate did not include assessing the processes and procedures of every complaint mechanism across all levels of the Canadian sport system.

The following preliminary findings focus on the processes and procedures of the Abuse-Free Sport Program, administered by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner until August 1, 2025. Our preliminary findings also focus on independent third-party mechanisms mandated by national and provincial sport organizations to adjudicate safe sport complaints.

Seeing as the Canadian Safe Sport Program only began operating on April 1, 2025, we are not in a position at the moment to make findings about its process and procedures.

The following recommendations reflect the Commission's initial views on the key features that processes and procedures of complaint mechanisms should include. They are not meant to be an exhaustive list, but rather a summary of the main themes and insights gathered so far. We intend to further explore and refine these preliminary recommendations through further engagement with participants before we submit our final recommendations to the Government of Canada.

Although there is not a uniform approach to how complaints are received, assessed, investigated, or resolved—whether between the Abuse-Free Sport Program and independent third-party mechanisms, or even among independent third-party mechanisms themselves —the Commission did identify several recurring shortcomings in their processes and procedures. These deficiencies were consistently raised by various involved parties and were also identified by the Commission in its own independent review. They can be summarized as follows:

- **Complaint procedures are often unclear and unnecessarily complex**. Participants find it difficult to understand how the process works, what steps are involved, and what their rights and responsibilities are at each stage. This confusion discourages participation and undermines trust in complaint mechanisms.
- **Complaint processes are not timely and take too long to reach a resolution**, with cases dragging on for months or even years. These delays cause prolonged stress for all parties involved and undermine the effectiveness and credibility of complaint mechanisms.
- **Complaint processes are not transparent enough**. This, coupled with a lack of consistent communication and information sharing between the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, case managers, investigators, decision-makers and the parties involved, diminishes confidence in the fairness of the entire process.
- **Complaint processes often lack adequate support for the individuals involved**. Participants highlighted the absence of accessible legal aid resources, limited access to mental health support, and a general lack of assistance in navigating the steps of the process.
- **Complaint processes and procedures are not adequately trauma-informed**, failing to take into account the needs and sensitivities of individuals who have experienced harm. The Commission repeatedly heard that the complaint process itself caused complainants to be retraumatized. This was primarily due to the aforementioned shortcomings: complex, unclear, and non-transparent procedures, a lack of support to navigate the system, and the absence of access to legal representation or advice. Complainants also described insensitive interactions with untrained personnel and overly legalistic approaches, which only made their distress worse.
- **Complaint processes and procedures lack due process**. The Commission entertains serious concerns about the fairness of the process, particularly for respondents. Our concerns pertain, among other things, to inconsistent application of procedural rules, inadequate disclosures or opportunities to be heard, and insufficient access to legal representation.
- **Enforcement and oversight are lacking**. Sanctions imposed by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner (specifically, the Director of Sanctions and Outcome) and Independent third parties are not consistently enforced by sport organizations. There is also a lack of oversight to ensure compliance with these imposed sanctions.

With respect to independent third-party mechanisms, several participants also raised concerns specifically about the ability of independent third parties to ensure confidentiality throughout the complaint process.

In the Commission's view, supporting healing requires that complaint processes and procedures be clear, straightforward, timely, and transparent. It is equally important to provide appropriate and accessible support, including guidance in navigating the process and legal aid resources.

Finally, complaint processes and procedures must prioritize trauma-informed practices while also embedding due process for both complainants and respondents. Trauma-informed approaches should not be seen as incompatible with due process; rather, they can be integral to ensuring fairness and sensitivity throughout the complaint process.

Complaint management processes and procedures: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

66. All complaint processes and procedures dealing with safe sport across Canada:
    a. be clear, straightforward, and easily accessible to all. 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. be timely and efficient. Clear timelines and accountability measures must be established and enforced to ensure prompt resolution.
    c. be trauma-informed and adapted to individuals who have experienced harm. This does not mean compromising due process but rather ensuring that all stages of the complaint management process are conducted with sensitivity, respect, and support to prevent re-traumatization.
    d. embed due process for all parties involved. This includes ensuring fairness, impartiality, the right to be heard, adequate disclosure, and procedural safeguards for both complainants and respondents throughout all stages of the process.
    e. include monitoring and accountability measures to ensure that sport organizations properly enforce sanctions.

67. All complaint mechanisms dealing with safe sport across Canada:
    a. be transparent and provide consistent communication with all parties involved.
    b. provide appropriate assistance to help individuals navigate the process, and provide case managers to act as an intermediary between the parties and the investigator or decision-maker, and who can answer procedural questions or concerns.
    c. 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.

In this regard, the Commission echoes the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage's recommendation, in its Safe Sport in Canada Report, that "the Government of Canada establish a formal process to investigate sexual and physical abuse and maltreatment in Canada's sport system, through a trauma-informed, survivor-focused lens."[976]

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976 House of Commons, *Safe Sport in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage* (June 2024) (Chair: the Honourable Hedy Fry) at Recommendation 15, online: <www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/CHPC/report-12>.

CHAPTER 17:
Public registries of sanctioned individuals

In Chapter 16, we reviewed the centralized and decentralized complaint mechanisms operating at the national, provincial, territorial, and local levels of sport across the country. Our preliminary findings reveal inconsistencies, misalignment and limited reach, and highlight the need for a coordinated approach to responding to maltreatment in sport.

In this chapter, 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 maintained by National Sport Organizations. We then discuss the registries that exist at the provincial and territorial level, including centralized registries and those implemented by provincial and territorial sport organizations, and share the 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. We conclude the chapter by sharing our preliminary findings and recommendations on public registries of sanctioned individuals.

ABUSE-FREE SPORT REGISTRY

The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport requires the creation of a searchable database or registry of individuals whose eligibility to participate in sport has been restricted.[977]

Until August 1, 2025, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, which was tasked with administering the Universal Code of Conduct, was responsible for maintaining and updating the Abuse-Free Sport Registry. This responsibility was part of the Abuse-Free Sport Program and done in accordance with the Universal Code of Conduct.[978] The registry is now maintained by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.[979]

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977 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 8, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>.

978 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, Version 7.0* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), s 8, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-UCCMS-Final-E.pdf>; Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Privacy Impact Assessment Summary* (Montreal: SDRCC, last visited May 2025), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/Privacy_Impact_Assessment_Summary.pdf>.

979 Donna Spencer, "Responsibility for safe sport flips to Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport", *Lakeland Today* (March 11, 2025), online: <www.lakelandtoday.ca/politics/responsibility-for-safe-sport-flips-to-canadian-centre-for-ethics-in-sport-10359306>; Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "FAQ: Safe Sport" (last visited March 19, 2025),online: <https://cces.ca/faq-safe-sport>.

The Abuse-Free Sport Registry was a searchable database of participants who were subject to the Universal Code of Conduct and the Abuse-Free Sport Program, and whose eligibility to participate in sport had been restricted due to provisional measures or sanctions.[980]

This Registry was created during the Abuse-Free Sport Program's first year of operations, sometime between June 2022 and June 2023.[981] It represented a response to the public disclosure requirements under the Universal Code of Conduct.[982] The Registry was only made available to the public on the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner's website on March 28, 2024.[983]

The Abuse-Free Sport Registry's primary purpose was to "reduce risks to the safety of all members of the sport community."[984] 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.[985] They also hoped it would contribute to deter and denounce maltreatment and help prevent reoccurrence.[986]

As mentioned above, 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.[987] There was, however, an exception to this general rule: sanctions imposed on minors or other vulnerable persons were not automatically disclosed in the Registry.[988] Instead, such disclosure occurred on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the *Policy Regarding Abuse-Free Sport Registry.*[989]

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980 Other types of sanctions and provisional measures such as education and training were not included on the Registry. Sanctions in effect that were included in the Registry where suspensions, eligibility restrictions, permanent ineligibility, probation when it included eligibility restrictions and other discretionary sanctions that restricted the participants eligibility to participate in sport. See Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Policy Regarding Abuse-Free Sport Registry* (Montreal: OSIC, March 28, 2024) at 3, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/POLICY_REGARDING_ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_REGISTRY.pdf>.

981 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Abuse-Free Sport Year One Report* (Montreal: SDRCC, 2023) at 1, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/2023-08-02_Abuse-Free_Sport_Year_One_Report.pdf?_t=169>.

982 Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Privacy Impact Assessment Summary* (Montreal: OSIC, last visited May 2025), at 2, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/Privacy_Impact_Assessment_Summary.pdf>.

983 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Abuse-Free Sport Launches Public Registry" (March 28, 2024) online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/news/13/abuse-free-sport-launches-public-registry>.

984 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Abuse-Free Sport Launches Public Registry" (March 28, 2024), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/news/13/abuse-free-sport-launches-public-registry>.

985 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Abuse-Free Sport Launches Public Registry" (28 March 2024), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/news/13/abuse-free-sport-launches-public-registry>.

986 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, "A Public Registry for Safe Sport" (Summer 2024), at 1, online (pdf): <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/2024-07-26-InTheNeutralZone-Summer2024-MainArticle.pdf>.

987 Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Violations and Sanctions* (Montreal: OSIC, June 19, 2024), s 4(g), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_VIOLATIONS_AND_SANCTIONS.pdf>; Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Policy Regarding Abuse-Free Sport Registry* (Montreal: OSIC, March 25, 2024), s 5a), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/POLICY_REGARDING_ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_REGISTRY.pdf>.

988 Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Policy Regarding Abuse-Free Sport Registry* (Montreal: OSIC, March 25, 2024), s 6, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/POLICY_REGARDING_ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_REGISTRY.pdf>.

989 Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Policy Regarding Abuse-Free Sport Registry* (Montreal: OSIC, March 25, 2024), s 6, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/POLICY_REGARDING_ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_REGISTRY.pdf>.

When sanctions were added to the Registry, the following information about the individuals facing sanctions and 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 issuance
- period in effect[990]

It is important to note that the Abuse-Free Sport Registry only included information about participants whohad signed the Consent Form discussed in Chapter 16, after their sport organization joined the 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.[991] 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.[992]

The *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* set out the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's duty to maintain the Public Registry.[993] They also describe the circumstances in which a sanction or provisional measure must be published on the Registry.[994]

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990 Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Policy Regarding Abuse-Free Sport Registry* (Montreal: OSIC, March 25, 2024), s 5a), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/POLICY_REGARDING_ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_REGISTRY.pdf>.

991 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/canadian-safe-sport-program-public-registry>.

992 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Terms and Conditions of Use" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/terms-conditions>.

993 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 19.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

994 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 19, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

The Rules provide that the Registry must be a searchable public database.[995] It contains information on participants whose eligibility to participate in sport has been restricted in some way, along with summary information on the committed violation and the restrictions imposed.[996]

The Registry includes both provisional measures[997] and sanctions, including sanctions under review or appeal.[998]

Where the sanctions includes a suspension, permanent ineligibility or, at the Centre's discretion, other sanctions that restrict eligibility to participate in sport, they are posted to the Registry for the period they are in effect.[999]

The Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry contains the following information:

- full name
- city, Province/Territory
- adopting sport organization
- prohibited behaviour(s) under the Universal Code to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (such as boundary transgressions and physical maltreatment)
- restriction 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)[1000]

The Registry exclusively contains information on individuals who are subject to the Canadian Safe Sport Program.[1001] However, the Registry currently includes some of the individuals who were banned or sanctioned by the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner under the Abuse-Free Sport Program.[1002]

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995 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 19.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

996 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 19.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>; See Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Terms and Conditions of Use" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/terms-conditions>.

997 In accordance with Rule 19.3.3 of the *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules*, the category and particulars of the alleged prohibited behaviour is not published in the case of provisional sanctions. Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 19.3.3, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

998 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 19.2, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

999 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 19.2, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1000 See CSSP Public Registry. Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Terms and Conditions of Use" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/terms-conditions>.

1001 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "FAQ: Safe Sport" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/faq-safe-sport>.

1002 See CSSP Public Registry. Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Terms and Conditions of Use" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/terms-conditions>.

We also note that the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport maintains the "CCES Database" pursuant to Rule 19.5 of the *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules*.[1003] This is a "database with information on all resolutions and sanctions."[1004] This 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) and sanctions that are no longer posted on the Registry because they are no longer in effect.[1005]

Adopting sport organizations can obtain information from the CCES Database with the consent of the subject participant.[1006]

REGISTRIES MAINTAINED BY NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

There is currently no statutory requirement for National Sport Organizations to maintain or publish registries of individuals who have been sanctioned in relation to maltreatment in sport. It is also not a condition to receive federal government funding.[1007] Nevertheless, it has been observed that a growing number of National Sport Organizations are maintaining public registries detailing sanctions for maltreatment in sport, like Athletics Canada, Skate Canada and Gymnastics Canada.[1008]

We observed that the registries created by National Sport Organizations generally include individuals whose ability to participate in sport has been restricted, and that the registry provides the name of the sanctioned individual, the sanction type and the effective period of the sanction. The level of detail varies per registry.

The scope of the registry is typically limited to the individual members of the organization responsible for the registry, although some extend to members of their affiliated Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.[1009]

1003 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 19.5, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1004 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 19.5.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1005 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 19.5.2, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1006 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 19.5.2, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1007 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport Support Program – National Sport Organization, National Multisport Services Organization, and Canadian Sport Centre" (last modified November 1, 2024), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/application-guidelines.html#a3>.

1008 Rick Westhead, "Heritage Committee calls for public registry of misconduct sanctions in sport", *TSN* (June 21, 2024), online: <www.tsn.ca/other-sports/rick-westhead-heritage-committee-calls-for-public-registry-of-misconduct-sanctions-in-sport-1.2138130>; House of Commons, *Safe Sport in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage* (June 2024) (Chair: the Honourable Hedy Fry) at 115, online: <www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/CHPC/report-12>.

1009 See e.g. Athletics Canada, "Response" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://athletics.ca/safesport/response/>.

For example, Athletics Canada maintains a public registry of suspended individuals on its website.[1010] 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.[1011] However, the current version, the "Code of Ethics and Conduct Policy (AC Code) (2023)," does not mention the registry.[1012]

Notwithstanding, 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 which imposed the sanction.[1013] 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.[1014]

Gymnastics Canada also provides a publicly available list of suspended or expelled members in accordance with its Discipline and Complaints Policy.[1015] The list is publicly available and includes the name of individuals, province, role, start date, status, and scope of the suspension.[1016] The reason for the sanction is not indicated. Further, once the suspension is served, the member is removed from the list.

Skate Canada is another example of a National Sport Organization that maintains and regularly updates a public registry of individuals who are currently suspended or expelled from the organization.[1017]

1010 Athletics Canada, "Response" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://athletics.ca/safesport/response/>.

1011 Athletics Canada, *Code of Conduct (AC Code) to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport* (Ottawa: Athletics Canada, February 2021), s 3.4, online (pdf): <https://athletics.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Athletics-Canada-Code-of-Conduct-2021-March-1.pdf>.

1012 Athletics Canada, *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (Ottawa: Athletics Canada, March 2023), online (pdf): <https://athletics.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Athletics-Canada-Code-of-Ethics-and-Conduct-Policy_2023_FINAL.pdf>; Only the 2023 Code of Conduct is displayed on Athletics Canada's governance webpage. Athletics Canada, "Governance" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://athletics.ca/about-ac/governance/>.

1013 Athletics Canada, "Response" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://athletics.ca/safesport/response/>; See Athletics Canada, *Commissioner's Office - Terms of Reference* (Ottawa: Athletics Canada, March 2023), s 8.0-8.8, online (pdf): <https://athletics.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Athletics-Canada-Commissioner-Office-TOR_2023_FINAL.pdf.>

1014 Athletics Canada, "Response" (last visited April 2025), online: https://athletics.ca/safesport/response/#suspended-individuals:~:text=Provincial/Territory%20Branch%20Complaint%20Mechanisms.

1015 Gymnastics Canada, "Discipline and Complaints Policy" (last visited May 2025), s 39, online: <https://gymcan.org/policy/discipline-and-complaints-policy/>.

1016 Gymnastics Canada, "Suspended & Expelled Members" (last modified May 29, 2025), online: <https://trello.com/c/sw9JiVPl/9-suspended-expelled-members-membres-suspendus-et-expuls%C3%A9s>.

1017 Skate Canada, "Individuals Suspended or Expelled from Skate Canada" (last modified January 13, 2025), online (pdf): <https://lamp.skatecanada.ca/suspended-en.pdf>.

Pursuant to Skate Canada's Code of Ethics,[1018] 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 the effective period of the sanction.[1019]

The list explicitly states that it is not a historical record of all past suspensions but rather a current list of active sanctions.[1020] Additionally, the registry does not include the names of minors serving suspensions and may not be exhaustive.[1021]

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.

Nevertheless, there are some examples of such registries at the provincial and territorial level of sport. In Saskatchewan, as will be discussed below, Sask Sport maintains a centralized registry of sanctions in respect of its member sport organizations. There are also some examples of Provincial Sport Organizations who voluntarily maintain public registries.

Centralized registries

To our knowledge, Sask Sport's Registry of Sanction is the only example of a public centralized registry at the provincial and territorial level of sport. The Registry is a public list of 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 to Prevent Address Maltreatment in Sport, or in some cases, other Provincial Sport Organization policies.[1022]

1018 Skate Canada, *Code of Ethics* (Ottawa: Skate Canada, May 23, 2024), online (pdf): <https://skatecanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Code-of-Ethics.pdf>.

1019 Skate Canada, "Individuals Suspended or Expelled From Skate Canada" (last modified January 13, 2025), online (pdf): <https://lamp.skatecanada.ca/suspended-en.pdf>.

1020 Skate Canada, "Individuals Suspended or Expelled From Skate Canada" (last modified January 13, 2025), online (pdf): <https://lamp.skatecanada.ca/suspended-en.pdf>.

1021 Skate Canada, "Individuals Suspended or Expelled From Skate Canada" (last modified January 13, 2025), online (pdf): <https://lamp.skatecanada.ca/suspended-en.pdf>.

1022 Sask Sport, "Registry of Sanctions" (last visited April 2025), online: <www.sasksport.ca/programs-education/keep-sport-healthy-safe-and-fun/registry-of-sanctions/>.

The Registry of Sanctions is maintained in accordance with section 52 to 54 of the Discipline and Complaints Policy.[1023] Provincial Sport Organizations are obliged to adopt this policy to be a member of Sask Sport, which in turn is required to be eligible to receive funding.[1024]

The information listed in this Registry include:

- 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 duration of the suspension[1025]

Furthermore, members of a Provincial Sport Organization who have received a long-term suspension are ineligible to register with any member Provincial Sport Organization across Saskatchewan.[1026] 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.[1027]

Registries maintained by Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations

Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations can choose to maintain a public registry of sanctions or suspended members. Their registries are generally set out in the organizations' policies, like a discipline and complaints policy. For instance, Ontario Volleyball[1028] and Gymnastics Ontario[1029] are examples of Provincial Sport Organizations who have public registries of suspended members.

1023 Sask Sport will publish the outcome of the case on the Registry of Sanctions as directed in sections 52–54 of the Discipline and Complaints Policy (see Sask Sport, "Sask Sport Safe Sport Manual for PSOs" (last visited May 2025), online: <www.sasksport.ca/member-services/policies-procedures/sask-sport-safe-sport-manual-for-psos/>), as applicable, and shall leave the information up for the longer of one month or the duration of the sanction month or the duration of the sanction. See Sask Sport, "Sask Sport Safe Sport Policy Manual for PSOs Template" (last visited May 2025), online (doc): <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sasksport.ca%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2023%2F12%2FSask-Sport-Safe-Sport-Policy-Manual-for-PSOs-TEMPLATE.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

1024 Sask Sport, "Registry of Sanctions" (last visited April 2025), online: <www.sasksport.ca/programs-education/keep-sport-healthy-safe-and-fun/registry-of-sanctions/>.

1025 Sask Sport, "Registry of Sanctions" (last visited April 2025), online: <www.sasksport.ca/programs-education/keep-sport-healthy-safe-and-fun/registry-of-sanctions/>.

1026 Sask Sport, "Registry of Sanctions" (last visited April 2025), online: <www.sasksport.ca/programs-education/keep-sport-healthy-safe-and-fun/registry-of-sanctions/>.

1027 Sask Sport, "Registry of Sanctions" (last visited April 2025), online: <www.sasksport.ca/programs-education/keep-sport-healthy-safe-and-fun/registry-of-sanctions/>.

1028 Ontario Volleyball, "Code of Conduct" (last visited May 2025) online: <www.ontariovolleyball.org/code-of-conduct>.

1029 Gymnastics Ontario, "Sanctioned Members List" (last modified May 1, 2025), online: <www.gymnasticsontario.ca/suspended-coaches-list/>.

Ontario Volleyball maintains a publicly available Infractions, Suspensions and Conditional Memberships list,[1030] in accordance with its Discipline and Complaints Policy.[1031] This list includes the names of the individuals who have been permanently expelled, suspended or temporarily suspended.

Notably, the list of suspensions includes 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.[1032] This list serves to uphold transparency and accountability in enforcing disciplinary measures imposed under the Universal Code of Conduct. Further, we note that the Discipline and Complaints Policy establishes that disciplinary decisions will be a matter of public record unless the decision-maker expressly determined otherwise.[1033]

Gymnastics Ontario is another example of a Provincial Sport Organization maintaining a public registry of sanctioned members on its website.[1034] This is a list of members who have either been suspended, expelled or are on probation.[1035] The list includes the member's name, jurisdiction, role, details about the sanctions and, if applicable, the disciplinary decision.[1036]

Pursuant 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.[1037]

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.

PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES ON REGISTRIES OF SANCTIONED INDIVIDUALS

A common concern echoed throughout our work was that individuals who are banned from participating in sport can migrate across sport organizations, move to different jurisdictions or different sport settings, and continue their involvement in sport despite being actively suspended. We heard from participants that people and organizations often do not know when coaches and other individuals have been sanctioned because this

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1030 Ontario Volleyball, "Code of Conduct" (last visited May 2025) online: <www.ontariovolleyball.org/code-of-conduct>.

1031 Ontario Volleyball, "OVA Discipline and Complaints Policy" (last visited May 2025), online (pdf): <OVA_Pan_Canadian_Discipline_and_Complaints_policy_-_board_approved_Jan_2025.pdf>.

1032 Ontario Volleyball, "Code of Conduct" (last visited May 2025) online: <www.ontariovolleyball.org/code-of-conduct>.

1033 Ontario Volleyball, "OVA Discipline and Complaints Policy" (last visited May 2025), s 41, online (pdf): <OVA_Pan_Canadian_Discipline_and_Complaints_policy_-_board_approved_Jan_2025.pdf>.

1034 Gymnastics Ontario, "Sanctioned Members List" (last modified May 1, 2025), online: <www.gymnasticsontario.ca/suspended-coaches-list/>.

1035 Gymnastics Ontario, "Sanctioned Members List" (last modified May 1, 2025), online: <www.gymnasticsontario.ca/suspended-coaches-list/>.

1036 Gymnastics Ontario, "Sanctioned Members List" (last modified May 1, 2025), online: <www.gymnasticsontario.ca/suspended-coaches-list/>.

1037 Gymnastics Ontario, *Discipline and Complaints Policy* (Ottawa: Gymnastics Ontario, April 9, 2019), s 42 online (pdf): <www.gymnasticsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Discipline-Complaints-Policy-April-2019.pdf>; Gymnastics Ontario, *Appeal Policy*, (Ottawa: Gymnastics Ontario, April 9, 2019), s 21, online: <www.gymnasticsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Appeal-Policy-April-2019.pdf>.

information is generally not well or consistently communicated throughout the sport community.

Many conversations brought up the idea of creating a national registry of sanctions 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 of registries is insufficient to effectively communicate which individuals have been sanctioned or suspended from participating in sport.

Also, in many cases, sanctions are not posted to any registry because the complaints originate from sport organizations that are not signatories to the Abuse Free Sport Program or the Canadian Safe Sport Program, and because these organizations do not maintain their own registry. Additionally, the few registries maintained by sport organizations are generally difficult to find on the organization's website, and the public remains largely unaware of their existence.

Most of the participants with whom we met 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 only be added on such a registry 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, particularly smaller organizations or those led by volunteers, to more efficiently verify an individual's history in sport. Additionally, by including information from different jurisdictions, it would prevent sanctioned individuals from moving to another jurisdiction to continue coaching or from being involved in sport while being actively suspended.

REGISTRY OF SANCTIONED INDIVIDUALS MAINTAINED BY THE U.S. CENTER FOR SAFESPORT

In the United States, a registry of sanctions is maintained by the U.S. Center for SafeSport.[1038] This registry, called the Centralized Disciplinary Database, lists individuals from across the country who have been banned from sport by the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

For context, the *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017* established the U.S. Center for SafeSport.[1039] This Center is empowered to "serve as the independent national safe sport organization […] for the United States."[1040]

1038 U.S. Center for SafeSport, "Centralized Disciplinary Database" (last modified May 31, 2025), online: <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/response-and-resolution/centralized-disciplinary-database/>.

1039 36 USCS § 220541, online: <www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/534/text>.

1040 36 USCS § 220541(a)(1)(A), online: <www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/534/text>.

The U.S. Center of SafeSport then adopted the SafeSport Code. This code applies to the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, to National Governing Bodies and to Local Affiliated Organizations "and their Participants, as defined in the SafeSport Code."[1041] The code includes provisions on its jurisdictions, applicable procedures, prohibited conduct, reporting, resolution procedures, temporary measures, and sanctions.[1042]

Engaging in conduct prohibited by the SafeSport Code—such as child abuse, sexual misconduct and emotional and physical misconduct—constitutes a violation of the Code.[1043] If there is sufficient evidence to establish that a participant violated the Code, the Center will determine whether and to what extent the participant may participate in sport. The Center may impose sanctions, which could include a suspension or ineligibility.[1044]

In this respect, under the *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017*,[1045] the U.S. 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."[1046]

This disciplinary database includes the name of the individual, their city, state, sport affiliation(s), misconduct, sanction, date of issuance, and adjudicating body.[1047] The database is searchable with key words and can be filtered using criteria such as city, state, sport affiliation, and adjudicating body.[1048] The Commission considered the United States Registry when developing its preliminary recommendations.

1041 See U.S. Center for SafeSport, SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement (Denver, Colorado: U.S. Center for SafeSport, July 31, 2024), at 7, online (pdf): <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2024_SafeSportCode-_073124_v3-A-.pdf>.

1042 U.S. Center for SafeSport, SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement (Denver, Colorado: U.S. Center for SafeSport, July 31, 2024), online (pdf): <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2024_SafeSportCode-_073124_v3-A-.pdf>.

1043 U.S. Center for SafeSport, SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement (Denver, Colorado: U.S. Center for SafeSport, July 31, 2024), at 11, online (pdf): <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2024_SafeSportCode-_073124_v3-A-.pdf>.

1044 U.S. Center for SafeSport, SafeSport Code for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movement (Denver, Colorado: U.S. Center for SafeSport, July 31, 2024), at 47, online (pdf): <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2024_SafeSportCode-_073124_v3-A-.pdf>.

1045 US, Bill S 534, *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017,* 115th Cong, 2018 (enacted), online: <www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/534/text>.

1046 36 USC § 220541(a)(1)(G), online: <www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/534/text>.

1047 See U.S. Center for SafeSport, "Centralized Disciplinary Database" (last modified 31 May 2025), online: <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/response-and-resolution/centralized-disciplinary-database/>.

1048 See U.S. Center for SafeSport, "Centralized Disciplinary Database" (last modified May 31, 2025), online: <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/response-and-resolution/centralized-disciplinary-database/>.

FURTHER PREVENTION OF MALTREATMENT IN SPORT: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Registry of sanctioned individuals: preliminary findings

As discussed above, 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 further to a violation of the Canadian Safe Sport Program.

The Canadian Safe Sport Program set out the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's duty to maintain the registry. It also describes the circumstances in which a sanction or provisional measure is to be published by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.

The stated 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. Importantly, the Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry only captures violations and restrictions that arise under the Program. Consequently, the Registry only applies in certain contexts and to certain participants of federally funded National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes.

Aside from the Canadian Safe Sport Program expressly providing for the implementation of a public registry, 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.

At the provincial and territorial level, Sask Sport maintains a centralized registry of sanctions for its member sport organizations in Saskatchewan. Additionally, a handful of Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations in other jurisdictions voluntarily maintain public registries, despite the absence of statutory or policy requirements.

What precedes leads us to conclude that the implementation of sanction registries remains the exception rather than the rule. 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 engagement meetings was that these individuals can move across organizations and transfer to different jurisdictions. 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 centralized registry of sanctions. They believe this would enable sport organizations to more efficiently verify an individual's history in sport.

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, we emphasize that the successful implementation of a national registry of sanctions ultimately depends on federal and provincial and territorial governments working together to enhance the uniformity and reach of complaint mechanism(s) in the country. This is crucial because the scope of sanctions captured by any proposed registry of sanctions will depend on the jurisdiction and reach of the complaint mechanism(s) feeding into it.

Building on the proposed intergovernmental collaborative frameworks set out in Chapter 16, the Commission examined several ways through which a nationwide public registry of sanctions could be effectively implemented. As a reminder, these collaborative frameworks aim to establish an integrated approach to respond to safe sport issues across the Canadian sport system.

Once again, we believe that the Canadian Safe Sport Program Public Registry could serve as the foundational starting point for the approaches we propose below.

We also wish to emphasize that the Report of the Standing Committee on the status of women 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 (...)".[1049]

Registry of sanctioned individuals: preliminary recommendations

The Commission therefore recommends that:

Option 1

Within the context of the collaborative framework outlined in Recommendation 62, whereby both orders of government would empower a national safe sport tribunal to administer applicable safe sport federal and provincial legislation, the Commission recommends that:

68. The Government of Canada ensure that the legislation enabling the national safe sport tribunal provides for the establishment of a national registry of sanctioned individuals. This registry would publish provisional measures and sanctions for the duration of their effect.

Option 2

Within the context of the collaborative framework outlined in Recommendation 63, whereby both orders of government would0 contractually delegate the administration of a universal safe sport policy to an independent not-for-profit corpor11ation, the Commission recommends that:

1049 House of Commons, *Time to Listen to Survivors: Taking Action Towards Creating a Safe Sport Environment for All Athletes in Canada* (June 2023) (Chair: Karen Vecchio) at Recommendation 15, online (pdf): <www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Reports/RP12528102/feworp07/feworp07-e.pdf>.

69. The Government of Canada ensure that the independent not-for-profit corporation is mandated to implement a national registry of sanctioned individuals. This registry would publish provisional measures and sanctions for the duration of their effect.

Option 3

Within the context of the collaborative framework outlined in Recommendation 64, whereby the Government of Canada would provide conditional grants to provinces and territories to support the adoption of provincial and territorial universal safe sport policies and implementation of provincial and territorial centralized complaint mechanisms, the Commission recommends that:

70. The Government of Canada ensure that grants be made conditional on the provincial and territorial mechanisms feeding into a single national registry of sanctioned individuals, to be maintained by the Centralized Sport Entity discussed in Chapter 6. Until that entity is established, this responsibility should rest with Sport111 Canada.

Option 4

Within the context of recommendation 65, whereby there is no full collaboration between federal, provincial and territorial governments on the implementation of safe sport policies and complaint mechanisms, the Commission recommends that:

71. The Government of Canada reach an agreement with its provincial and territorial counterparts so that existing provincial and territorial centralized complaint mechanisms report into a national registry of sanctioned individuals, which would be maintained by the Centralized Sport Entity described in Chapter 6. In the interim, Sport Canada should assume this responsibility.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1:
National Sport Organizations funded under the Sport Support Program in 2023-2024

The table below illustrates which National Sport Organizations received funding under the Sport Support Program in 2023-2024.[1050]

NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS	
Alpine Canada Alpin	Canoe Kayak Canada
Athletics Canada	Climbing Escalade Canada
Badminton Canada	Cricket Canada
Biathlon Canada	Diving Plongeon Canada
Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton	Equestrian Canada
Bowling Federation of Canada	Federation of Canadian Archers Inc.
Bowls Canada Boulingrin	Field Hockey Canada
Canada Artistic Swimming	Figure Skating / Skate Canada
Canada Basketball	Goalball - Canadian Blind Sports Association
Canada Skateboard	Hockey Canada
Canadian Amateur Boxing Association	Judo Canada
Canadian Amateur Football Association	Lacrosse Canada
Canadian Amateur Rowing Association	National Karate Association
Canadian Amateur Softball Association	Nordiq Canada
Canadian Broomball Federation	Pentathlon Canada
Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sport Association (Boccia)	Ringette Canada
Canadian Curling Association	Royal Canadian Golf Association
Canadian Cycling Association	Sail Canada
Canadian DanceSport	Shooting Federation of Canada Inc.

1050 Government of Canada, "National Sport Organizations: 2023/24 Funding" (last modified May 23, 2025), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-organizations/national/funding.html>.

NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS	
Canadian Federation of Amateur Baseball	Ski Jumping Canada
Canadian Fencing Federation	Ski Mountaineering Competition Canada
Canadian Freestyle Ski Association	Speed Skating Canada
Canadian Gymnastics Federation	Squash Canada
Canadian Luge Association	Swimming Canada
Canadian Racquetball Association	Table Tennis Canada Tennis de Table
Canadian Rugby Union	Taekwondo Canada
Canadian Snowboard Federation	Triathlon Canada
Canadian Soccer Association	Water Ski and Wakeboard Canada
Canadian Surfing Association	Weightlifting Canada Haltérophile
Canadian Tennis Association	Wheelchair Basketball (via Canada Basketball)
Canadian Volleyball Association	Wheelchair Rugby Canada
Canadian Water Polo Association Inc.	Wrestling Canada Lutte

APPENDIX 2:
National Multisport Service Organizations funded under the Sport Support Program in 2022-2023

The table below illustrates the 23 federally funded national Multisport Service Organizations that received funding under the Sport Support Program in 2022-2023.[1051]

ORGANIZATION	
Aboriginal Sport Circle	Go, Le Grand Défi inc.
AthletesCAN	KidSport Canada
Canada Games Council	Motivate Canada
Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports	Own the Podium
Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association	ParticipACTION
Canadian Deaf Sports Association	Physical and Health Education Canada
Canadian Olympic Committee	Special Olympics Canada
Canadian Paralympic Committee	Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada
Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities	Sport for Life Society
Canadian Women and Sport	Sport Information Resource Centre
Coaching Association of Canada	U SPORTS
Commonwealth Games Canada	

1051 Government of Canada, "National Multisport Service Organizations: 2022/2023 Funding" (last modified September 11, 2023), online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/sport-organizations/national-multisport-service/funding.html>.

APPENDIX 3:
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[1052]	2021-2022[1053]	2022-2023[1054]	2023-2024[1055]	2024-2025[1056] (Budgeted amounts)
Sport Support Program	$180,267,706	$212,819,735	$249,163,014	$212,632,415	$177,631,907
Athlete Assistance Program	$31,086,969	$31,938,847	$31,738,883	$31,741,012	$33,000,000
Hosting Program	$11,893,663	$27,726,191	$41,412,093	$20,529,228	$22,365,000
Total Sport Canada Funding	$223,248,338	$272,484,773	$322,358,990	$264,902,655	$232,996,907

1052 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada 2021 Volume II: Details of Expenses and Revenues" (2021), online (pdf): <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2021/P51-1-2021-2-eng.pdf>.

1053 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada 2022 Volume II: Details of Expenses and Revenues" (2022), online (pdf): <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2022/2022-vol2-eng.pdf>.

1054 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada: 2022–2023 - Vol 3, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2023), online (pdf): <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2023/cpc-pac-ds6-pdf-eng.pdf>.

1055 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada 2023 Volume II: Details of Expenses and Revenues" (2023), online (pdf): <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2023/2023-vol2-eng.pdf>.

1056 Government of Canada, "Details on Transfer payment programs — Departmental Plan 2024-25" (last modified April 18, 2024) at Core Responsibility 3, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/corporate/publications/plans-reports/departmental-plan-2024-2025/details-transfer-payment.html#a1c>.

APPENDIX 4:
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.[1057]

PROVINCIAL-TERRITORIAL ABORIGINAL SPORT BODY / ABORIGINAL SPORT CIRCLE	% OF FUNDING	2019-2020 AND ONGOING
Alberta	9.27%	$494,200
British Columbia	9.07%	$483,340
Manitoba	9.42%	$492,300
New Brunswick	5.42%	$288,540
Newfoundland & Labrador	6.65%	$354,430
Nova Scotia	5.87%	$312,565
Northwest Territories	6.9%	$367,705
Nunavut	8.06%	$429,610
Ontario	10.64%	$566,895
Prince Edward Island	4.79%	$355,115
Québec	8.45%	$450,455
Saskatchewan	8.5%	$452,785
Yukon	4.89%	$260,245
Aboriginal Sport Circle	2.25%	$120,000
Total		$5,328,365

1057 Government of Canada, "Application Guidelines – Sport for Social Development In Indigenous Communities (SSDIC) 2024-2026 (Stream One)" (last modified April 26, 2024) at Appendix E, online: <www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/sport-support/stream-one/application-guidelines.html#a22>.

APPENDIX 5:
Sport Support Program funding allocated to Provinces and Territories from 2020-2021 to 2023-2024

SPORT SUPPORT PROGRAM FUNDING ALLOCATED TO PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES					
PROVINCE OR TERRITORY	**2020-2021**[1058]	**2021-2022**[1059]	**2022-2023**[1060]	**2023-2024**[1061]	**2024-2025**
Alberta	$6,313,570	$641,070	$641,070	$641,070	Not available
British Columbia	$6,256,865	$661,465	$661,465	$661,465	Not available
Manitoba	$4,719,973	$500,473	$500,473	$500,473	Not available
New Brunswick	$3,566,640	$400,540	$400,540	$400,540	Not available
Newfoundland and Labrador	$3,135,565	$413,065	$413,065	$413,065	Not available
Northwest Territories	$2,214,870	$393,570	$393,570	$493,570	Not available
Nova Scotia	$4,168,838	$418,338	$418,338	$418,338	Not available
Nunavut	$1,538,315	$1,164,055	$1,166,311	$1,048,673	Not available
Ontario	$9,380,128	$1,108,431	$1,128,228	$1,128,228	Not available
Prince Edward Island	$2,978,145	$356,645	$356,645	$356,645	Not available
Quebec	$7,400,588	$818,388	$818,388	$818,388	Not available
Saskatchewan	$495,003	$476,703	$476,703	$476,703	Not available
Yukon	$2,557,625	$353,025	$353,025	$453,025	Not available

1058 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada: 2020–2021 - Vol 3, Section 6: Transfer Payments", online (pdf): <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/html/2021/recgen/cpc-pac/2021/pdf/2021-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

1059 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada: 2021–2022 - Vol 3, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2022), online (pdf): <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2022/2022-vol3-ds6-eng.pdf>.

1060 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada: 2022–2023 - Vol 3, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (2023), online (pdf): <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/2023/cpc-pac-ds6-pdf-eng.pdf>.

1061 Government of Canada, "Public Accounts of Canada: 2023 – 2024 - Vol 3, Section 6: Transfer Payments" (last modified December 17, 2024), online: <www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2024/vol3/ds6/index-eng.html#wds6en_tbl_r1437>.

APPENDIX 6:
List of 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 FFSOs 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 FFSOs 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 FFSOs.
    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)

66. 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

52. 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

    i. The person can disclose to anyone – a friend, colleague. You can also disclose to the NIM.

    i. 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.

    i. 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

52. Anyone disagreeing with the decision of the NIM, for either procedural or substantive reasons, may apply for adjudication of the matter. (3.3.6)

53. 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 7:
Detailed Summary of the complaint management process under the Abuse-Free Sport Program

Below is a more detailed summary of the complaint management process under the Abuse-Free Sport Program:[1062]

- 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.[1063]
- 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.[1064]
- 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.[1065]
- 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.[1066]
- 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.[1067]

1062 See also Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Complaint Management Process" (last visited May 2025), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/AFSSA-CMP-Flowchart_2024.pdf>.

1063 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Initial Review & Preliminary Assessment of Complaints* (Montreal: OSIC, June 2022), s 4.a-b, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/GUIDELINES-INITIAL-REVIEW-PRELIMINARY-ASSESSMENT-COMPLAINTS-2022-06-20.pdf>.

1064 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Initial Review & Preliminary Assessment of Complaints* (Montreal: OSIC, June 2022), s 4.c., online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/GUIDELINES-INITIAL-REVIEW-PRELIMINARY-ASSESSMENT-COMPLAINTS-2022-06-20.pdf>.

1065 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Initial Review & Preliminary Assessment of Complaints* (Montreal: OSIC, June 2022), s 4.d., online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/GUIDELINES-INITIAL-REVIEW-PRELIMINARY-ASSESSMENT-COMPLAINTS-2022-06-20.pdf>; Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Provisional Measures* (Montreal: OSIC, 2024), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_PROVISIONAL_MEASURES.pdf>.

1066 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Investigations of Complaints* (Montreal: OSIC, 2023), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/GUIDELINES-INVESTIGATION-COMPLAINTS-2023-03-31.pdf>.

1067 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Investigations of Complaints* (Montreal: OSIC, 2023), at 4.i., online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/GUIDELINES-INVESTIGATION-COMPLAINTS-2023-03-31.pdf>.

- The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner would give the finalized investigation report to the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes.[1068]
- 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.[1069]
- 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.[1070]
- 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.[1071]
- 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.[1072]
- 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.[1073]
- Finally, sanctions reviewed by the Safeguarding Tribunal could be appealed to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada's Appeal Tribunal.[1074]

1068 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Investigations of Complaints* (Montreal: OSIC, 2023), at 4.j., online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/GUIDELINES-INVESTIGATION-COMPLAINTS-2023-03-31.pdf>.

1069 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Violations and Sanctions (Montreal: OSIC, 2024), at 4(b)-4(c), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_VIOLATIONS_AND_SANCTIONS.pdf>.

1070 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Violations and Sanctions (Montreal: OSIC, 2024), at 4(d)-4(e), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_VIOLATIONS_AND_SANCTIONS.pdf>.

1071 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Violations and Sanctions (Montreal: OSIC, 2024), at 4(f), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_VIOLATIONS_AND_SANCTIONS.pdf>.

1072 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Violations and Sanctions (Montreal: OSIC, 2024), at 4(g), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_VIOLATIONS_AND_SANCTIONS.pdf>.

1073 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Violations and Sanctions (Montreal: OSIC, 2024), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_VIOLATIONS_AND_SANCTIONS.pdf>; Canadian Sport Dispute Resolution Code, *Canadian Sport Dispute Resolution Code* (Brossard: SDRCC, October 1, 2023), s 8, online (pdf): <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/Code_SDRCC_2023_-_EN.pdf>.

1074 Canadian Sport Dispute Resolution Code, *Canadian Sport Dispute Resolution Code* (Brossard: SDRCC, October 1, 2023), s 9.5, online (pdf): <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/Code_SDRCC_2023_-_EN.pdf>.

APPENDIX 8:
Comparison table between the Abuse-Free Sport Program and the Canadian Safe Sport Program

Main features of the Programs

PROGRAM	ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM	CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM
Administrator	Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner ("OSIC"), an independent unit of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada ("SDRCC")	Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport ("CCES")
Cost	Cost of services are shared by its users	Cost of services are assumed by the Government of Canada
Jurisdiction	Contract-based approach: sport organizations from all levels of sport, as well as provinces and territories, can adhere to the Program[1075]	Contract-based approach: only federally funded National Sport Organizations, Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes can adhere to the Program[1076]

1075 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Program Signatories" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/signatories>.

1076 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Definition, "Sport Organization", online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

PROGRAM	ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM	CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM
Participants	The list of participants to which the Program applies is to be determined, for each adopting sport organization, in their program signatory agreement.[1077] Participants can include athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, administrators, directors, employees, trainers, parents and guardians.	The list of participants for which the program applies is set out in the Canadian Safe Sport Program ("CSSP") Rules.[1078] 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. The CSSP may apply to other individuals for the duration of their participation at certain national events designated by each adopting sport organization.[1079]

1077 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "FAQ – Informed Consent Form" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/consent-form-faq>.

1078 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 3.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1079 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025), at Rule 3.2, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

PROGRAM	ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM	CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM
Legal Aid Program	The Abuse-Free Sport Legal Aid Program provides eligible individuals with free and confidential access to legal advisors. Both complainants and respondent to a Complaint admissible to the OSIC are eligible. A victim/survivor of Prohibited Behaviour (as defined in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport ("UCCMS")) in a situation that would be admissible to the OSIC, regardless of whether a complaint has been filed, is also eligible.[1080]	The CCES does not have a legal aid program. 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."[1081]
Support Services	The Abuse-Free Sport Helpline is available to all Canadians with questions about discrimination or maltreatment in a sport environment.[1082]	The CSSP Support Team is available to share information about: • what can be reported and what to expect after a report is submitted; • connect individuals with mental health and other support services; • assist with redirecting reports that fall outside of the CSSP jurisdiction; • answer questions about the CSSP.[1083]

1080 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Legal Aid" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/legal-aid>.

1081 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Does the CCES Offer Legal Aid?" (last visited April 21, 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/faq/does-cces-offer-legal-aid>.

1082 Abuse-Free Sport, "Abuse-Free Sport Helpline" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://abuse-free-sport.ca/helpline>; Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, "Abuse-Free Sport Headline is for all Canadians" (October 11, 2023), online: <https://sirc.ca/news/abuse-free-sport-helpline-is-for-all-canadians/>.

1083 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Support Services" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/support-services>.

PROGRAM	ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM	CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM
Mental Health Support Program	The Mental Health Support Program ensures access to competent mental health support to eligible individuals before, during, and after the Complaint Management process or the Sport Environment Assessment process.[1084] Eligible individuals include: • victims/survivors of Prohibited Behaviour regardless of whether a complaint has been filed; • a complainant or a respondent to a Complaint admissible to the OSIC services; and • a Requester or a participant of a Sport Environment Assessment [1085] Individuals must be at least 16 years of age to access the Abuse-Free Sport Mental Health Support program.	The CSSP Mental Health Services Program provides independent mental health services to participants involved in the CSSP reporting process. 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.[1086] Individuals must be at least 16 years of age to access the CSSP Mental Health Services Program

1084 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Abuse-Free Sport: Mental Health Support Program" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/Mental-Health_Support_Program_Description_AFSSA_2024.pdf?_t=1706293003>.

1085 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Abuse-Free Sport: Mental Health Support Program" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/Mental-Health_Support_Program_Description_AFSSA_2024.pdf?_t=1706293003>.

1086 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Mental Health Services Program" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/mental-health-services-program>.

Main features of the complaint management processes

PROGRAM	ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM	CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM
Report intake	Complaints must be filed through the OSIC online platform[1087]	Reports must be filed through the CCES reporting platform (online or by telephone).[1088]
Provisional measures	OSIC may recommend and the DSO may impose provisional measures at any stage of the complaint management process[1089]	The CCES may impose provisional measures at any stage following receipt of a Report [1090]
Resolution procedure(s)	Mediation (with the consent of the parties) or investigation stage[1091]	Letters of concern, remedial resolution, acceptance of violation, mediation facilitated by the SDRCC and a formal resolution[1092]

1087 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Initial Review & Preliminary Assessment of Complaints* (Montreal: OSIC, June 2022), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/GUIDELINES-INITIAL-REVIEW-PRELIMINARY-ASSESSMENT-COMPLAINTS-2022-06-20.pdf>.

1088 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 6.3, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1089 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Provisional Measures* (Montreal: OSIC, 2024), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_PROVISIONAL_MEASURES.pdf>.

1090 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 12.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1091 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Initial Review & Preliminary Assessment of Complaints* (Montreal: OSIC, June 2022), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/GUIDELINES-INITIAL-REVIEW-PRELIMINARY-ASSESSMENT-COMPLAINTS-2022-06-20.pdf>.

1092 Rules Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rules 13.1–13.5, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

PROGRAM	ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM	CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM
Investigation	• Appointment of external investigator by OSIC • Investigator provides Investigation Report to OSIC • OSIC reviews Investigation Report to confirm compliance with OSIC Guidelines Regarding Investigation of Complaints • OSIC provides Investigation Report to DSO[1093]	• Appointment of external investigator by CCES • Investigator provides Investigation Report to CCES[1094]
Decision-making	• DSO provides Investigation Report to parties and give them the opportunity to make written submissions on the Investigation Report findings • DSO makes decision on violation(s) and sanction(s) and provides parties with a "Report on Violations and Sanctions" with detailed reasons[1095]	• CCES provides Investigation Report to parties and give them the opportunity to make written submissions • CCES determines whether a violation has been committed, impose appropriate sanction(s) and provide the parties with a Notice of Decision that includes the reasons for the decision[1096]

1093 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Investigations of Complaints* (Montreal: OSIC, 2023) at 4.i., online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/GUIDELINES-INVESTIGATION-COMPLAINTS-2023-03-31.pdf>.

1094 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 14, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1095 Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Violations and Sanctions* (Montreal: OSIC, June 19, 2024), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_VIOLATIONS_AND_SANCTIONS.pdf>.

1096 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 15, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

PROGRAM	ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM	CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM
Revision/appeals	• Parties may challenge findings on violation of the UCCMS and sanction imposed before the Safeguarding Tribunal of the SDRCC[1097] • Parties may challenge review of sanction(s) before the Appeal Tribunal of the SDRCC[1098] • DSO appears to defend their decision before the Safeguarding Tribunal and the Appeal Tribunal of the SDRCC[1099]	• Parties may challenge findings of violation of the UCCMS/CSSP and sanction imposed before the Safeguarding Tribunal of the SDRCC[1100] • Parties may challenge review of sanctions before the Appeal Tribunal of the SDRCC[1101] • CCES appears to defend their decision before the Safeguarding Tribunal and the Appeal Tribunal of the SDRCC[1102]
Enforcement of sanctions	Program signatories are responsible for ensuring that sanctions or other measures imposed by the DSO, the Safeguarding Tribunal or the Appeal Tribunal are implemented and respected[1103]	Sanctions imposed by the CCES, the Safeguarding Tribunal or the Appeal Tribunal shall be automatically recognized and enforced by and between adopting sport organizations[1104]

1097 Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Violations and Sanctions* (Montreal: OSIC, June 19, 2024), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_VIOLATIONS_AND_SANCTIONS.pdf> ; Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Canadian Sport Dispute Resolution Code* (Brossard: SDRCC, April 1, 2025), art 8, online (pdf): <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/Code_SDRCC_2023_-_EN.pdf>.

1098 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Canadian Sport Dispute Resolution Code* (Brossard: SDRCC, October 1, 2023), art 9.5, online (pdf): <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/Code_SDRCC_2023_-_EN.pdf>.

1099 Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, *Canadian Sport Dispute Resolution Code* (Brossard: SDRCC, October 1, 2023), arts 8.3–8.4 (Safeguarding Tribunal), 9.6 (Appeal Tribunal), online (pdf): <www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/Code_SDRCC_2023_-_EN.pdf>.

1100 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 16.1(a), online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1101 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 17, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1102 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rules 16.7, 17, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1103 Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Violations and Sanctions* (Montreal: OSIC, June 19, 2024), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_VIOLATIONS_AND_SANCTIONS.pdf>.

1104 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 22.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

PROGRAM	ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM	CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM
Procedural fairness	Fairness is a principle that guides the determination, by the DOS, of Prohibited Behaviour and imposition of sanctions[1105]	The CCES is committed to administering the CSSP in a matter that meets the requirement of procedural fairness[1106]
Trauma-Informed approach	The OSIC "administers the UCCMS in a compassionate, efficient and fair manner that uses trauma-informed best practices at all stages of the process". [1107]	The CCES is committed to administering the CSSP in a matter that "is trauma-informed"[1108]

1105 Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Violations and Sanctions* (Montreal: OSIC, June 19, 2024), s 2, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_VIOLATIONS_AND_SANCTIONS.pdf>.

1106 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 2.1.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

1107 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, "Vision, Mandate and Values" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/vision-mandate>; Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Violations and Sanctions* (Montreal: OSIC, June 19, 2024), s 2, online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_VIOLATIONS_AND_SANCTIONS.pdf>.

1108 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 2.1.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>; Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, "Trauma-Informed Practices" (last visited April 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/trauma-informed-practices>.

PROGRAM	ABUSE-FREE SPORT PROGRAM	CANADIAN SAFE SPORT PROGRAM
Timeliness	The Guidelines regarding investigations of complaints provide 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"[1109] The Abuse-Free Sport Policy regarding violations and sanctions provides that the parties shall submit their written submissions to the DSO within 10 days of the receipt of the investigation report. They further provide that request for reviews of the DSO decision before the Safeguarding Tribunal must be filed within 21 days of the receipt of the Report on Violations and Sanctions from the DSO[1110]	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"[1111] The CSSP Rules namely provides timelines for the following steps: confirmation of Report, notice to the respondent, responding to report, referral to resolution process, investigations, delivery of investigation report by CCES, opportunity to make written submissions, request for a review before the Safeguarding Tribunal and request for an appeal before the Appeal Tribunal.

1109 Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, *OSIC Guidelines Regarding Investigation of Complaints* (Montreal: OSIC, June 20, 2022), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/GUIDELINES-INVESTIGATION-COMPLAINTS-2023-03-31.pdf>.

1110 Sport Integrity Commissioner, *Abuse-Free Sport Policy Regarding Violations and Sanctions* (Montreal: OSIC, June 19, 2024), s 4(c), online (pdf): <https://sportintegritycommissioner.ca/files/ABUSE-FREE_SPORT_POLICY_REGARDING_VIOLATIONS_AND_SANCTIONS.pdf>.

1111 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, *Canadian Safe Sport Program Rules* (Ottawa: CCES, 2025) at Rule 2.1, online (pdf): <https://cces.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/2025-01/CCES-CSSP-Final-E.pdf>.

APPENDIX 9:
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 April 2025).[1112]

NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS	
Alpine Canada	Curling Canada
Archery Canada	Cycling Canada Cyclisme
Athletics Canada	Diving Canada Plongeon
Badminton Canada	Equestrian Canada
Baseball Canada	Field Hockey Canada
Biathlon Canada	Football Canada
Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton	Freestyle Canada
Boccia Canada (Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports Association)	Golf Canada
Bowls Canada Boulingrin	Gymnastics Canada
Boxing Canada	Hockey Canada
Broomball Canada	Judo Canada
Canada Artistic Swimming	Karate Canada
Canada Basketball	Lacrosse Canada
Canada DanceSport	Luge Canada
Canada Skateboard	Nordiq Canada
Canada Snowboard	Pentathlon Canada
Canada Soccer	Racquetball Canada

1112 Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports, "Adopting Sport Organizations" (last visited May 2025), online: <https://cces.ca/adopting-sport-organizations>.

NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS	
Canadian Blind Sports Association	Ringette Canada
Canadian Fencing Federation	Rowing Canada Aviron
Canadian Tenpin Federation	Rugby Canada
Canoe Kayak Canada	Sail Canada
Climbing Escalade Canada	Shooting Federation of Canada
Cricket Canada	Skate Canada
Ski Jumping Canada	Triathlon Canada
Ski Mountaineering Competition Canada	Volleyball Canada
Softball Canada	Water Polo Canada
Speed Skating Canada	Water Ski and Wakeboard Canada
Squash Canada	Weightlifting Canada Halterophilie
Swimming Canada	Wheelchair Basketball Canada
Table Tennis Canada	Wheelchair Rugby Canada
Taekwondo Canada	Wrestling Canada Lutte
Tennis Canada	

NATIONAL MULTISPORT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS	
AthletesCAN	Go le Grand défi
Canada Games Council	KidSport
Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport	Motivate Canada
Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association	Own the Podium
Canadian Deaf Sports Association	PartipACTION
Canadian Olympic Committee	Physical and Health Education Canada
Canadian Paralympic Committee	Special Olympics Canada

NATIONAL MULTISPORT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS	
Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities	Sport for Life
Canadian Women and Sport	Sport Information Resource Centre
Coaching Association of Canada	U SPORTS
Commonwealth Sport Canada	

CANADIAN SPORT INSTITUTES	
Canadian Sport Centre Manitoba	Canadian Sport Institute Atlantic
Canadian Sport Centre Saskatchewan	Canadian Sport Institute Ontario
Canadian Sport Institute Alberta	Canadian Sport Institute Pacific

APPENDIX 10:
List of provincial and territorial complaint mechanisms, including independent third-party mechanisms

	RESPONSIBLE BODY	INDEPENDENT	MANDATORY	WHO CAN COMPLAIN?	SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS
Quebec[1113]	Recreation and sports integrity ombudsman	Yes	Yes	"A person"	"Matters of integrity"
Quebec (Sport Quebec)[1114]	Independent Third Party (Sport'Aide)	Yes	No	Participants of sport federations	Complaints of abuse, harassment, negligence and violence (of a sexual nature or other)
Manitoba (Sport Manitoba)[1115]	Independent Third Party (Sport Law)	Yes	No	Participants of Provincial Sport Organizations that are members of Sport Manitoba	Complaints under the Provincial Sport Organization's discipline and complaint policy

1113 Bill 45, *An Act to amend the Act respecting safety in sports mainly to better protect the integrity of persons in recreation and sports*, 1st Sess, 43rd Leg, Quebec 2024 (assented to June 7, 2024), online: <www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-45-43-1.html>.

1114 Sports Québec, "Intégrité dans le sport" (last visited April 2025), online : <www.sportsquebec.com/sport-securitaire/integrite-sport/>.

1115 Sport Manitoba, "Submit a Dispute" (last visited April 23, 2025), online: <www.sportmanitoba.ca/disputes/>; Sport Law, "Sport Law announces partnership with Sport Manitoba as they launch "Pathways to Safe Sport: Safe Sport Line, resources, training, and accountability" (May 11, 2022), online: <https://sportlaw.ca/news-item/sport-law-announces-partnership-with-sport-manitoba-as-they-launch-pathways-to-safer-sport-safe-sport-line-resources-training-and-accountability/>.

	RESPONSIBLE BODY	INDEPENDENT	MANDATORY	WHO CAN COMPLAIN?	SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS
New Brunswick (Sport NB)[1116]	Independent Third Party (ITP sport)	Yes	No	Participants of Provincial Sport Organization and Multisport Service Organizations that are members of Sport NB	Complaints of maltreatment as defined in the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport Appeal of final decisions of Provincial Sport Organization/Multisport Service Organization alleging that it failed to follow their constitution/ by-law or policies. Appeals of arbitral decisions made by a Mediator/Arbitrator under the NB Safe Sport Complaint Mechanism
Newfoundland and Labrador (Sport NL)[1117]	Independent Third Party (ITP sport)	Yes	Yes Mandatory for members of Sport NL and membership is required to receive funding.	Participants of Provincial Sport Organizations that are members in good standing with Sport NL	Complaints of maltreatment under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport

1116 Sport New Brunswick, *New Brunswick Safe Sport Complaint Mechanism: Program Guidelines* (Fredericton: Sport New Brunswick, April 2025), online (pdf): <www.sportnb.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/NBSSCM-Guidelines-FINAL-BRANDED-ENG-April-2025.pdf>.

1117 Sport NL, *Sport NL Safe Sport Complaint Mechanism: Guidelines* (Mount Pearl: Sport NL, February 2025), online: <https://sportnl.ca/programs-services/safety-in-sport/>.

	RESPONSIBLE BODY	INDEPENDENT	MANDATORY	WHO CAN COMPLAIN?	SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS
Saskatchewan (Sask Sport)[1118]	Independent Third Party (ITP sport)	Yes	Yes Mandatory for members of Sask Sport and membership is required to receive funding.	Participants of the Provincial Sport Organizations that are members of Sport Sask	Any complaints involving breaches of the Provincial Sport Organization's policies, which includes maltreatment under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport

1118 Sask Sport, "Sask Sport Safe Sport Manual for PSOs" (last visited April 2025), online: <www.sasksport.ca/member-services/policies-procedures/sask-sport-safe-sport-manual-for-psos/>.

APPENDIX 11:
List of Recommendations

HORIZONTAL ALIGNMENT

1. The Government of Canada, through incentives, encourage National Sport Organizations to amalgamate.
2. The Government of Canada, through incentives, encourage National Sport Organizations to establish and implement a horizontal shared services model to centralize common services among these Organizations, such as information technology (IT) support, human resources, legal services, translation services, insurance provision, and a shared foreign exchange strategy.
3. The Government of Canada, through incentives, encourage National Parasport Organizations to establish and implement a shared services model tailored to the needs of the parasport community.
4. The Government of Canada create a strategic transformation fund to support National Sport Organizations, including National Parasport Organizations, through the horizontal amalgamation and/or shared services process.

PARASPORT ALIGNMENT

5. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with the parasport community at the national, provincial and territorial levels, develop a national parasport strategy. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.

VERTICAL ALIGNMENT

6. The Government of Canada encourage National Sport Organizations to seek broad consistency in the application of their policies across all levels of their sport.
7. The Government of Canada, through incentives, encourage National Sport Organizations to amalgamate with their respective provincial and territorial sport organizations to form a single national organization for each sport, with provincial and territorial branches.
8. The Government of Canada, through incentives, 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. This model would centralize common services among these organizations, such as information technology (IT) support, human resources, legal services, translation services, insurance provision, and a shared foreign exchange strategy.
9. The Government of Canada create a strategic transformation fund to support National Sport Organizations, and National Parasport Organizations, as they undertake the development of a vertical amalgamation and/or shared services process.

FUNDING FOR NATIONAL SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

10. The Government of Canada urgently increase the core funding allocated to National Sport Organizations under the Sport Support Program to account for inflation since 2005. The funding needs to be adequate to support core operational requirements and address long-term priorities, including improving safe sport.
11. The Government of Canada allocate additional funding to specifically support National Parasport Organizations.
12. The Government of Canada increase the core funding allocated to National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Centres for Sport and Institutes, and periodically review the core funding allocated to these organizations to determine whether the funding is adequate to support core operational requirements and address long-term priorities.
13. The Government of Canada, following a reasonable grace period, require 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.
14. The Government of Canada study additional sources of government revenue to ensure it has sustainable means to support federally funded sport organizations. These sources of revenue include, but are not limited to, tax revenues from single sport betting.
15. All sport organizations, including National Sport Organizations, national Multisport Service Organizations and Canadian Sport Centres and Institutes, explore and diversify their sources of revenue and examine processes and practices to ensure enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.

CENTRALIZATION OF FEDERAL FUNDING FOR SPORT

16. The Centralized Sport Entity as outlined in Chapter 6, once it is established, be responsible for receiving, allocating, distributing and overseeing all federal sport 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 organizations;
    e. developing and monitoring a compliance and auditing regime to ensure effective use of funds.

FUNDING APPLICATION PROCESS

17. The Government of Canada ensure that the funding applications and procedures to receive federal grants and contributions are clear, efficient, and accessible. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.

MONITORING AND AUDITING OF FUNDED SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

18. The Government of Canada regularly and proactively monitor and audit federally funded sport organizations. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.
19. The Government of Canada 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 6 once it is established.

LONG-TERM FUNDING STRATEGY FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN CANADA

20. The Government of Canada develop a comprehensive multi-year and evidence-based funding strategy focussed 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 6 once it is established.
21. 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 6 once it is established.

FUNDING TO PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES

22. The Government of Canada increase the funding it provides to provinces and territories for the development of sport and physical activity for the purpose of improving the sport system and safe sport in Canada.

CENTRALIZED SPORT ENTITY

23. The Government of Canada integrate the functions of sport and physical activity under the same Department.
24. The Government of Canada create a Centralized Sport Entity to provide strategic leadership, coordination, administration and oversight of sport and physical activity across the Canadian sport system. It would also ensure the effective coordination and collaboration of the range of Canadian sport organizations currently serving Canadians and the sport community.

25. The Centralized Sport Entity develop, deliver and oversee a cohesive national sport and physical activity strategy with clearly defined priorities. This function, currently held by Sport Canada, should be carried out in collaboration with interested parties, including the provinces and territories, Indigenous groups, athletes and sport and physical activity organizations.
26. The Centralized Sport Entity be responsible for:
    a. Developing and implementing a national coaching certification.
    b. Supporting research relevant to the health and well-being of Canadians, and to the success of sport and physical activity and programs under its jurisdiction.

    These responsibilities are currently performed by other national Multisport Service Organizations.
27. The Centralized Sport Entity be responsible for functions and responsibilities related to funding for sport and physical activity by the Government of Canada, the governance of sport organizations, safe sport, as well as a national parasport strategy. The specific elements of these responsibilities are described in other chapters of this report.

MANDATORY GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

28. The Government of Canada, mandate that all federally funded sport organizations adopt and comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. This will require revisions to the Canadian Sport Governance Code, which is currently tailored to National Sport Organizations. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.
29. A reasonable transition period be provided to allow federally funded sport organizations to comply with the Canadian Sport Governance Code without affecting their funding. This transition period should 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.
30. The Government of Canada 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 6 once it is established.
31. The Government of Canada be the custodian of the Canadian Sport Governance Code and be responsible 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 6 once it is established.

ENHANCED GOVERNANCE STANDARDS

32. The Government of Canada enhance the Canadian Sport Governance Code by adding the following mandatory practices for all federally funded sport organizations:
    a. Racial diversity must be included as an element in the skills matrix used for selecting board members.
    b. All board members must receive regular training on anti-racism and inclusion.
    c. The board of directors must include an athlete representative to serve as a director with full voting rights.
    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 Recommendation 37, the national safe sport education program, which would fall within the function of the Centralized Sport Entity once established, would address this requirement.
    e. Sport organizations publicly post the following on their website:
        i. minutes of all board meetings;
        ii. an annual disclosure of all public funds received, along with an accounting of their usage;
        iii. 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, by-laws, annual financial statements, minutes of members meetings, board mandate, all committees' terms of reference, and an annual report on diversity.

GOVERNANCE STANDARDS OVERSIGHT AND COMPLIANCE

33. The Government of Canada conduct regular audits of federally funded sport organizations to ensure the implementation of and the compliance with the Canadian Sport Governance Code. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.

GOVERNANCE AT ALL LEVELS OF SPORT

Option 1:

34. The Government of Canada use its spending power to achieve greater uniformity of sport governance standards between the federal and the provincial and territorial levels of sport. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.

Option 2:

35. The Government of Canada collaborate with the provincial and territorial governments to establish and legislate similar federal and provincial/territorial sport governance standards. This role should be transferred to the Centralized Sport Entity outlined in Chapter 6 once it is established.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

36. The Government of Canada partner with stakeholders such as Multisport Service Organizations and launch a national public awareness campaign to inform the public about safe sport, including (i) best practices and good behaviours to foster safe sport environments and (ii) the various forms of maltreatment in sport, including abuse, harassment and discrimination.
37. The Government of Canada (i) take a leadership role, (ii) partner with stakeholders such as Multisport Service Organizations and (iii) provide the necessary resources in order to develop a single comprehensive, interactive and efficient national safe sport education program. This program must include chapters tailored to meet the needs of all stakeholders involved in sport. This will ensure safe sport education is consistent, accessible and specific to each role across the entire sport system. The stakeholders include athletes (children and adults), parents, coaches, volunteers, employees, referees, officials, administrators and members of board of directors.
38. The Government of Canada engage and collaborate with its provincial and territorial counterparts and Indigenous groups, to develop the national safe sport education program.
39. The Government of Canada:
    a. mandate that all individuals involved in sport organizations receiving federal funding, namely athletes (children and adults), parents, coaches, volunteers, employees, referees, officials, administrators and members of board of directors, complete the appropriate chapter of the national safe sport education program; and
    b. provide the resources necessary to deliver the program to federally funded sport organizations.
40. The Government of Canada:
    a. mandate that all National Sport Organizations receiving federal funding modify their membership rules to require of their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations that all individuals involved in their respective sport organization, namely athletes (children and adults), parents, coaches, volunteers, employees, referees, officials, administrators and members of board of directors, complete the appropriate chapter of the national safe sport education program.
    b. provide the resources necessary to deliver the program to the member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations of federally funded National Sport Organizations.

41. The Government of Canada, in determining the level of funding allocated to National Sport Organizations, take into account the extent to which the national safe sport education program is delivered to their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.
42. The Government of Canada:
    a. encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to mandate that all individuals involved in sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding, namely athletes (children and adults), parents, coaches, volunteers, employees, referees, officials, administrators and members of board of directors, complete the chapter of the national safe sport education program relevant to their roles; and
    b. provide the resources necessary to deliver the program to sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding.
43. The Government of Canada:
    a. encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to mandate that Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding modify their membership rules to require of their member Community Sport Organizations that all individuals involved in their respective sport organization, including athletes (children and adults), parents, coaches, volunteers, employees, referees, officials, administrators and members of board of directors, complete the appropriate chapter of the national safe sport education program; and
    b. provide the resources necessary to deliver the program to the member Community Sport Organizations of provincially and territorially funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.
44. The Government of Canada encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to consider, in determining the level of funding allocated to Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, the extent to which the national safe sport education program is delivered to their member Community Sport Organizations.
45. The responsibility for developing, updating and delivering the National Safe Sport Education Program across all levels of sport be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity (outlined in Chapter 6). Until the Government of Canada establishes this entity, these responsibilities should reside with the Multisport Service Organization(s) mandated by Sport Canada, under the supervision of Sport Canada.
46. The Government of Canada ensure the continued delivery of the True Sport Program. With the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport no longer delivering the program, responsibility for True Sport should be transferred to an independent organization capable of advancing its mission and expanding its reach across the Canadian sport system. This responsibility should also be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity external to Sport Canada (referenced in Chapter 6) once it is established. In the meantime, True Sport should be transferred to an independent Multisport Service Organization.

BACKGROUND SCREENINGS

47. The Government of Canada:
    a. mandate that all sport organizations receiving federal funding conduct Vulnerable Sector Checks for all coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees in contact with athletes, and require that these checks be conducted periodically; and
    b. subsidize the cost of the mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks for all sport organizations receiving federal funding.

48. The Government of Canada:
    a. 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 conduct Vulnerable Sector Checks for all coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees in contact with athletes and require that these checks be conducted periodically; and
    b. subsidize the cost of the mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks for member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations of federally funded National Sport Organizations.

49. The Government of Canada, in determining the level of funding allocated to National Sport Organizations, consider the extent to which the mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks are conducted by their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

50. The Government of Canada:
    a. encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to mandate that all sport organizations receiving provincial or territorial funding conduct Vulnerable Sector Checks for all coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees who have direct contact with athletes, and require that these checks be conducted periodically; and
    b. provide conditional grants to provinces and territories to allow them to subsidize the cost of mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks for all sport organizations receiving provincial and territorial funding.

51. The Government of Canada:
    a. encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to 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 conduct Vulnerable Sector Checks for all coaches, officials, referees, volunteers, and employees in contact with athletes, and require that these checks be conducted periodically; and
    b. provide conditional grants to provinces and territories to allow them to subsidize the cost of Mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks for member Community Sport Organizations of provincially and territorially funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

52. The Government of Canada encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to consider, in determining the level of funding allocated to Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, the extent to which the mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks are conducted by their member Community Sport Organizations.
53. Responsibility for (i) subsidizing the cost of mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks for federally funded sport organizations and member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations of federally funded National Sport Organizations and (ii) providing conditional grants to provinces and territories (to allow them to subsidize the cost of mandatory Vulnerable Sector Checks for sport organizations receiving provincial and territorial funding and for member Community Sport Organizations of provincially/territorially funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations) be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity (discussed in Chapter 6). Until this entity is established, these responsibilities should reside with Sport Canada.

Alternatively:

54. The Government of Canada take a leadership role, and collaborate with Multisport Service Organizations, its provincial and territorial counterparts and Indigenous groups to develop a standardized background screening policy.
55. The Government of Canada:
    a. mandate that all sport organizations receiving federal funding adopt and implement the standardized screening policy; and
    b. subsidize the cost of implementing the standardized background screening policy for all sport organizations receiving federal funding.
56. The Government of Canada:
    - 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 and implement the standardized screening policy; and
    - subsidize the cost of implementing the standardized background screening policy for member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations of federally funded National Sport Organizations.
57. The Government of Canada, in determining the level of funding allocated to National Sport Organizations, consider the extent to which the standardized background screening policy is adopted and implemented by their member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

58. The Government of Canada:
    a. encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to 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 and implement the standardized background screening policy; and
    b. provide conditional grants to provinces and territories to allow them to subsidize the costs of implementing the standardized background screening policy for member Community Sport Organizations of provincially and territorially funded Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations.

59. The Government of Canada encourage its provincial and territorial counterparts to consider, in determining the level of funding allocated to Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations, the extent to which the standardized background screening policy is implemented by their member Community Sport Organizations.

60. The development and stewardship of a standardized background screening policy be assigned to the Centralized Sport Entity to be established by the Government of Canada (discussed in Chapter 6). Until that entity is in place, this responsibility should rest with Sport Canada. This includes the subsidization of implementation costs for federally funded sport organizations and member Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations of federally funded National Sport Organizations, as well as the provision of grants to provinces and territories to support their own cost-sharing efforts.

DATA COLLECTION

61. The Government of Canada establish a comprehensive national tool to regularly collect and analyze data on key indicators to measure and assess the health and safety of sport environments in Canada. Sport participation, safe sport complaints and their outcomes must be part of the data collected.

SAFE SPORT POLICIES AND COMPLAINT MECHANISMS

Option 1:

62. The Government of Canada collaborate with the provincial and territorial governments to create a national safe sport authority or tribunal to administer federal and provincial/territorial safe sport legislation.

Option 2:

63. The Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments agree to delegate the administration of a universal safe sport policy to an independent not-for-profit corporation.

Option 3:

64. The Government of Canada:
    a. 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 application of the Canadian Safe Sport Program and for participants of federally funded sport organizations; and
    b. provide conditional grants to provinces and territories to enable them to implement a provincial or territorial centralized complaint mechanism tasked with administering a universal safe sport policy for participants of provincially and territorially funded sport organizations within their territory. The universal safe sport policy and independent complaint mechanism would have to meet certain standards set by the Government of Canada.

Option 4:

65. The Government of Canada enact federal safe sport legislation and create a federal safe sport tribunal.

COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

66. All complaint processes and procedures dealing with safe sport across Canada:
    a. be clear, straightforward, and easily accessible to all. 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. be timely and efficient. Clear timelines and accountability measures must be established and enforced to ensure prompt resolution.
    c. be trauma-informed and adapted to individuals who have experienced harm. This does not mean compromising due process but rather ensuring that all stages of the complaint management process are conducted with sensitivity, respect, and support to prevent re-traumatization.
    d. embed due process for all parties involved. This includes ensuring fairness, impartiality, the right to be heard, adequate disclosure, and procedural safeguards for both complainants and respondents throughout all stages of the process.
    e. include monitoring and accountability measures to ensure that sport organizations properly enforce sanctions.

67. All complaint mechanisms dealing with safe sport across Canada:
    a. be transparent and provide consistent communication with all parties involved.
    b. provide appropriate assistance to help individuals navigate the process, and provide case managers to act as an intermediary between the parties and the investigator or decision-maker, and who can answer procedural questions or concerns.

c. 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.

REGISTRY OF SANCTIONED INDIVIDUALS

Option 1, within the context of Recommendation 62:

68. The Government of Canada ensure that the legislation enabling the national safe sport tribunal provides for the establishment of a national registry of sanctioned individuals. This registry would publish provisional measures and sanctions for the duration of their effect.

Option 2, within the context of Recommendation 63:

69. The Government of Canada ensure that the independent not-for-profit corporation is mandated to implement a national registry of sanctioned individuals. This registry would publish provisional measures and sanctions for the duration of their effect.

Option 3, within the context of Recommendation 64:

70. The Government of Canada ensure that grants be made conditional on the provincial and territorial mechanisms feeding into a single national registry of sanctioned individuals, to be maintained by the Centralized Sport Entity discussed in Chapter 6. Until that entity is established, this responsibility should rest with Sport Canada.

Option 4, within the context of Recommendation 65:

71. The Government of Canada reach an agreement with its provincial and territorial counterparts so that existing provincial and territorial centralized complaint mechanisms report into a national registry of sanctioned individuals, which would be maintained by the Centralized Sport Entity described in Chapter 6. In the interim, Sport Canada should assume this responsibility.