

July 25, 2022

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the [Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's \(CCES\) Board of Directors](#) to urge you to take swift and meaningful action to address a crisis in Canadian sport. Specifically, the Board of Directors of the CCES are calling on you, and the Cabinet you lead, to establish a Commission of Inquiry into the Toxic Culture of Sport in Canada.

Sport is a valuable public asset. When the sport experience is a positive one it can contribute to character development in our youth, strengthen our communities, and increase opportunities for sporting excellence on the world stage. But when it is not positive – when it does not value the safety and well-being of the athlete above all other considerations, including winning – then sport can cause immeasurable harm.

Athletes from sport after sport have been coming forward in recent months and years with stories of maltreatment. Maltreatment, as defined in the Universal Code of Conduct to Address and Prevent Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS), includes sexual abuse, harassment, discrimination and racism. As examples, we have heard recently of stories of maltreatment in the sports of gymnastics, hockey, skiing, rugby, rowing, bobsleigh, boxing, soccer, and swimming.

The emerging abuse scandals in hockey and gymnastics have shone a very bright light on the toxic culture of sport in Canada. Canadians are shocked and disgusted by what has been revealed around these cases. Sadly, they are likely only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to maltreatment in sport.

If we do not change the structure and culture within sport, the abuse in sport will continue.

The responses by sport organizations to the overwhelming evidence of abuse and maltreatment have been inadequate. A series of individual sport investigations will not get at the systemic causes of the toxic culture in sport. And, investigations that are not independent of sport will neither have nor deserve the trust of Canadian athletes, others harmed by abuse and harassment in sport, and Canadians at large. The normalized behaviours and governance practices in sport which are at the root of the problem cannot be investigated and assessed by those who are part of the system nor by third parties commissioned and paid for by the sports organizations themselves.

Sport Canada has undertaken some initiatives in this space, for example, the development and implementation of the UCCMS. The Minister of Sport and Minister Responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec has also taken significant steps, for example, freezing funding for Hockey Canada and Gymnastics Canada and mandating that national sport organizations adopt the UCCMS and become program signatories retaining the services of the Sport

Dispute Resolution Centre for Canada to independently administer the UCCMS. However, these measures are not enough. There are clearly limits to the authority of the Minister and Sport Canada. We believe that only an independent examination of the culture of sport, with a comprehensive mandate and investigatory powers, can and will identify the policies, programs, and practices that enable the maltreatment to occur and most importantly be able to recommend the changes needed to create a positive sport culture anchored on the safety and well-being of athletes. For this, action by Cabinet is required.

At the Seoul Olympics in 1988, Canadians' elation over a gold in the men's 100 m sprint turned to dismay when the medal was rescinded for doping. The Prime Minister at that time recognized this was not an isolated occurrence in Canadian sport but perhaps a normalized part of high performance sport culture in Canada. He also recognized the threat doping represented to the health of our athletes, the integrity of sport and the public health of Canadian youth. He moved quickly with his Cabinet to appoint Chief Justice Charles Dubin to head up a Commission of Inquiry into the Use of Performance Enhancing Drugs in Canadian Sport. The impact of the Dubin Inquiry not only led to the creation of an independent anti-doping agency in Canada and our ability to positively change the culture of Canadian sport, it also impacted how international sport, sport medicine and governments around the world viewed and responded to the problem of doping in sport.

Sport has the potential to be a force for good in Canada (and of course there are countless examples where sport is realizing this positive potential), however, in light of the alarming evidence surfacing almost daily that sport is in fact causing significant harm and undermining its potential for good, we are calling on you and your Cabinet to establish a Commission of Inquiry into the Toxic Culture of Sport in our country.

The CCES is committed to sport that is fair, safe, inclusive, and accessible and is prepared to assist in any way we can.

Sincerely,



Dr. Don C. McKenzie OC, MSM, MD, PhD, LLD(Hon)

cc The Honourable Pascale St-Onge, Minister of Sport
Vicki Walker, Director General, Sport Canada | Department of Heritage
Jocelyn Downie, Vice-Chair CCES Board of Directors
Mary Chaput, CCES Board of Directors
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