



## Abuse-Free Sport Announces New Collaborators as it Officially Opens Doors

MONTREAL, QC (June 20, 2022) - As it officially launches its first phase of operations today, Canada's new independent safe sport mechanism becomes *Abuse-Free Sport*, unveils new websites and welcomes an exceptional group of collaborators.

Under its new name, *Abuse-Free Sport* acts as the national hub to prevent and address maltreatment in sport.

The renewed [Abuse-Free Sport](#) website provides information to all Canadians about resources and tools available to prevent maltreatment in sport, including more details on its safe sport education accreditation program and its safe sport research grant program. It also introduces the key components of the complaint management process to increase understanding of the services available to concerned individuals. Resources available will expand over the next few months as more prevention, education and awareness initiatives are implemented.

Acting as a central pillar of *Abuse-Free Sport*, the [Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner](#) launches its first phase of operations today.

The Office is set to administer complaints related to violations of the [Universal Code of Conduct to Address and Prevent Maltreatment in Sport](#) (UCCMS) alleged against designated participants of Program Signatories and to initiate sport environment assessments addressing systemic issues related to the UCCMS.

The Office also offers support services, such as legal aid and mental health referrals, which are part of a robust, trauma-informed system where everyone involved will be treated with fairness and compassion.

"Things have moved very fast since I took on this role in early May," said Sarah-Eve Pelletier, Canada's Sport Integrity Commissioner. "We are focused on building a system that will earn the trust of the athletes and the sport community as a whole. The sport system needs a change of course and higher standards, and the OSIC is one of the accelerators," Pelletier explained. "Volleyball Canada and Weightlifting Canada Halt rophilie are the first signatories and we are actively working with several other federally-funded sport organizations who are near the final stage of their transition. Over the next days, weeks and months, we look forward to welcoming new program signatories so that more and more individuals can access our independent services."

Leading the investigations function of the Office and the team of independent investigators will be **Sarah Atkinson**, a lawyer, mediator and neutral investigator with decades of experience into human rights and other workplace harassment issues. She holds her LLM from Osgoode Hall Law School and is a member of the Canadian Chapter of the Association of Workplace Investigators. Atkinson, who speaks French and English, has dealt with multiple matters involving the various protected grounds related to race, sex and age, as well as the intersection of these and other grounds.

Pelletier's Office will also make recommendations on sanctions for violations of the UCCMS to the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes, a function independent of the Office. The newly appointed Director of Sanctions and Outcomes is **Dasha Peregoudova**, a former taekwondo national team member, now an associate at the law firm Aird and Berlis in Toronto. She previously served as the President of AthletesCAN, as a member of the Pan Am Sports Legal Commission, and as a board member of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. She was also the Ombudsperson for Team Canada at the Lima 2019 Pan American Games and the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Peregoudova was hired by the newly formed Maltreatment in Sport Sanctions Council, an independent body that oversees the operations of the Director of Sanctions and Outcomes. The Council is accountable to the Canadian sport community to address discipline and sanctions when maltreatment in sport occurs and to make resourcing recommendations for the *Abuse-Free Sport* program.

The Council is chaired by **Dean Howie**, Dean of Student Services at Champlain College Saint Lambert, with over 30 years of experience in College Student Affairs and Athletics, who served on multiple volunteer Boards and coached at the university, college, national, provincial and club levels. The other members of the Council are: **Emily Cameron-Blake**, a retired Canadian rower and doctoral candidate researching duty of care in elite sport, policy researcher with the University of Oxford, sport policy advisor as Director of Sport and Health at Blake Evans & Co in the UK, and Director at Atlas SportsTech; **Katherine Haber**, also a former national team rower with experience in gender equity and safety issues in sport, safe sport advocate and community volunteer for various causes, and currently Employment Facilitator at Camosun College; **John Martelli**, a labour-employment lawyer who began, in 2020, his own practice as a mediator-arbitrator, now conducting workplace investigations as a neutral third party, and sitting as Vice-Chair on the Ontario Labour Relations Board; and **Katharine White (Cornish)**, a former artistic swimmer, coach and Team Ontario member, federal public servant, with a law degree from the University of Ottawa, former diplomat, having worked on the Government of Canada's response to sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector.

"The official launch of *Abuse-Free Sport* is a significant milestone for safe sport in Canada," said Marie-Claude Asselin, Chief Executive Officer of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, recently mandated by the Government of Canada to design and deliver an independent safe sport program. "It represents thousands of hours of efforts from many individuals, organizations and

experts. I am so grateful for the genuine collaboration noticeable in the sport community in the past few months, and I am proud to see so many extraordinary people joining this venture, all committed to fundamental change in Canada's sport culture."

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### **About Abuse-Free Sport**

Abuse-Free Sport is an independent program that is part of a growing national movement to rid Canadian sport of all forms of harassment, discrimination and abuse. It aims to prevent maltreatment at all levels of sport across Canada through education, training and research. It is also responsible for addressing reported violations of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport at the national level.

### **About SDRCC**

The SDRCC is a not-for-profit corporation created by federal legislation and funded by the Government of Canada. The mission of the SDRCC is to provide the sport community with a national alternative dispute resolution service and strengthen the culture of fairness in Canadian sport by resolving disputes quickly and efficiently and to provide expertise and assistance regarding alternative dispute resolution.

**For media enquiries:**

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A technical briefing will be held for the media, for background only and not for attribution, on **Wednesday, June 22, 2022 at 11 a.m. (EDT)** by videoconference. Interested media representatives can request an invitation by sending an email to [media@abuse-free-sport.ca](mailto:media@abuse-free-sport.ca).