



Celebrating Success but Planning for the Unexpected

by Canada Games Council

June 2009



The Canada Games are an enormous undertaking. Today, over 5,000 athletes, coaches and managers, over 5,000 volunteers and over 120,000 spectators enjoy the scope and scale of Canada's largest and most prestigious multi-sport event every two years. With almost 40 sports represented at a Canada Games in a quadrennial, and participants from every Province and Territory descending on a host region, one can imagine that a good firm handshake was the only way any and all disputes were handled upon the birth of the Canada Games concept.

The idea of holding a Canada-wide Games where provinces and territories competed against each other was first considered in 1924. For more than 40 years it remained a frequent subject of discussion.

Finally, in 1966 in Quebec City, the government of Canada and the Province of Quebec gave their joint approval to a proposal to hold the first Games the following year. In 1967 the Province of Quebec played host to 1,800 young athletes from across the country. Despite monumental problems with planning, financing, logistics, and even abnormally cold temperatures, these first winter Games were an outstanding success. But one can imagine that a dispute resolution mechanism could have come in very handy for these first Games.

The Canada Games Council is the governing body for the Canada Games. As the Games move from one host community to the next, the Council provides the continuity, leadership and support to Host Societies and since 1991, when it was formed, has been witness to the great success and accomplishments of each individual Games. Council President and CEO Sue Hylland speaks passionately about the accomplishments of the Games.

"Since 1967, nearly 80,000 athletes have participated in the Games" says Hylland. "Watching Canada Games alumni achieve great success internationally and at the Olympic level encourages us to work harder in our role within the Canadian Sport System, and to encourage each Host Society to celebrate the past and look to the future for other milestones."

Another great success is the legacies left behind in communities after they have hosted the Games. From the sport facilities and community infrastructure to the good-will and civic pride, these communities are forever changed for the better by the Canada Games. Of course, all this success and history does not come without some minor challenges along the way.

"When any event evokes tremendous passion and inspires so much hard work, expecting and preparing for disputes is simply a part of good planning" says Hylland. "We work hard to plan for the unexpected, however, there are always exceptions that require a professional approach to ensure everyone involved leaves confident that they were handled right."



The Canada Games Council policy around dispute resolution states that the Council is committed to making fair and ethical decisions in a transparent manner, and is committed to be accountable for such decision-making through a dispute resolution process.

Since 2005, the Council has engaged the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC) to assist us with our dispute resolution facilitation. Examples of issues where the Council's policy applies include athlete eligibility, residency of athletes, sport technical packages, the sport selection process, the harassment policy, the privacy policy and the Council's commercialization policy.

While we all like to imagine a Games where everyone agrees, no one appeals and every person is on the same side, this cannot always be the case. At the Canada Games Council we are confident that through our partnership with the SDRCC and by staying true to the policy we have developed through the years, the Games can communicate fairly while managing disputes through a process that is transparent and that can build trust... all while celebrating our successes. ■