



Sport Law Connect Program: Winning on All Counts

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Disputes can arise in any sport organization at any level, yet resources to resolve them may be scarce. The SDRCC is proud to deliver its dispute resolution services to all sport organizations across Canada. While these services are free of charge only at the national level, thanks to funding from the Government of Canada, sport organizations at other levels may access the Centre's dispute resolution services on a fee-for-service basis.

Many of these parties and sport organizations, often with limited resources, cannot afford to hire legal experts or outsource their dispute resolution processes to the Centre, and therefore lack the capacity to handle internal appeals independently. Consequently, sports-related disputes at the provincial/territorial or club level can place a strain on sport administrators and volunteers who possess no legal training.

To mitigate this situation, the Centre has created the [Sport Law Connect Program \(SLCP\)](#), which enlists students with an interest in sport law from Canadian law faculties or alternative dispute resolution (ADR) programs, so that they may serve as dispute resolution resources for the broader Canadian sport community.

Through this program, provincial/territorial sport organizations (PTSOs) are connected with law students and mediators and arbitrators recently trained with the ADR Institute of Canada (ADRIC). In addition to increasing the Canadian sport community's access to affordable sport dispute resolution resources, the program also fosters the development of a new generation of sport mediators and arbitrators in Canada.



How it Works

The SLCP is offered in provinces/territories where a provincial/territorial multisport organization accepts the responsibility of promoting the program to its members and linking those members in need to SLCP participants.

Program participants assist sport organizations and their members in dealing with sports-related disputes on a voluntary basis, either by using their facilitation skills to informally facilitate the resolution of such disputes or by acting as panel members in disciplinary or internal appeal procedures.

These students in law or ADR are recruited and provided training directly by the SDRCC in the form of seminars to complement their academic programming. This training also serves to familiarize participants with the federated sport context so they are equipped to handle a large array of sports-related cases such as disciplinary issues, team selection, resource allocation (e.g. funding, facility sharing), governance, policy application, field-of-play protests, etc. Where a pool of interested students is in place in a given province/territory, a multisport organization is designated to serve as the clearinghouse for all requests from that region.

Monitoring of the SLCP

Minimum qualifications and a strict set of guidelines, policies, standards and agreements govern the administration and evaluation of the program to ensure quality control. These ensure that participants are acting in the best interest of the parties in a fair and unbiased way. To continuously improve the program, the SDRCC and the provincial/territorial multisport organization monitor feedback from parties and participants once cases are closed.

Launch of the SLCP

The SLCP was launched as a pilot project in British Columbia in January 2019 in partnership with viaSport BC, the ADR Institute of British Columbia (ADRBC), as well as



students from the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria. Training sessions were conducted by SDRCC and viaSport BC staff, in Victoria and Vancouver, to interested law students and members of ADRBC. Provincial sport organizations in British Columbia can now [submit requests](#) to viaSport BC to receive dispute resolution assistance from qualified participants. Over 30 participants attended the training sessions and volunteered to act as facilitators, members of an appeal panel and/or sole adjudicators.

A modified version of the SLCP was also launched in Quebec in February 2019 in partnership with SportsQUÉBEC and the Université de Sherbrooke's Mediation Clinic. A training session was delivered by SDRCC staff to mediation students, who can now provide mediation services on a volunteer basis to provincial sport organizations in Quebec.

Program Expansion

Provincial sport organizations in Manitoba will be able to take advantage of the SLCP services as of the fall of 2019. The program is launching in partnership with Sport Manitoba and the ADR Institute of Manitoba (ADRIM), with law students from the University of Manitoba and members of ADRIM invited to participate.

Who Can Benefit?

Law students with an interest in sport law are able to apply their legal knowledge in the context of sport as facilitators or members of a three-person panel. Where an equivalent course covering facilitation or appeals was not yet completed as part of their university curriculum, students are trained directly by the SDRCC.

ADRIC members with the Q.Med or Q.Arb designation have the opportunity to gain practical experience towards obtaining their C.Med and C.Arb certifications. By acting as a facilitator, sole adjudicator or member or chairperson on a three-person panel, Q.Med and Q.Arb members involved in the SLCP have the unique opportunity to hone their professional skills in a sports-related setting.



Potential mentorship opportunities with C.Med and C.Arb are also available to the SLCP participants. The program also allows participants to expand their network with local sport organizations while benefiting from training and continuing education opportunities on sport ADR, as well as relevant experience for résumé-building.

PTSOs will benefit from this affordable service, which gives them access to individuals who are trained in ADR to help resolve some of the disputes that may arise within their organizations. The SLCP will help to relieve some of the pressure their staff and volunteers face when disputes arise, further increasing the Canadian sport community's access to ADR.

Are there any Fees Associated with the SLCP?

The SLCP was created with the goal of providing affordable services to sport organizations with typically limited amounts of resources. SLCP participants are providing their services on a volunteer basis to the Canadian sport community.

The only costs borne by the PTSO are out-of-pocket expenses necessarily incurred by a participant for the purpose of delivering the services under the SLCP. PTSOs are encouraged to conduct proceedings and meetings by teleconference as a means to minimize the costs associated with using the SLCP.

Extending Dispute Resolution Services Nation-Wide

The Centre's goal for the SLCP is to eventually launch it in every province and territory, ensuring affordable access to dispute resolution services for local sport organizations across Canada. Based on the interest generated for the concept, the Centre is working to initiate discussions with potential partners in other provinces and territories. If you are interested in the SLCP, its availability in your region or would simply like more information regarding the program, please contact the SDRCC at education@crdsc-sdrcc.ca.