

Ottawa Sport Council Submission to The Future of Sport in Canada Commission

Ottawa Sport Council is inviting our community sport organizations, leaders, members, partners, stakeholders and volunteers to have their voice heard on **Thursday, February 13th at 11:30-1:00 pm** at the Future of Sport in Canada Commission Meeting.

Virtual (Zoom Link) or In-person meeting:

[L'Esplanade Laurier at 140 O'Connor Street](#)

On behalf of the Ottawa Sport Council (OSC) we extend our appreciation and gratitude to the Future of Sport in Canada Commission's invitation for community sports organizations to participate and engage in the conversation to better the future of sport. The OSC's belief is ***that there should only be positive experiences in sport*** and we share your commitment to bring strength to the sport systems across Canada.



A Call for a Champion.

Spaces to Play. For community sport to continue championing their communities to start, invest and lead in the development of safe spaces to play; we need to ensure that where sport begins is not forgotten. The community sport sector is often minimized, isolated and underrated in their importance in the development of the future of sport.

While the focus on national and provincial levels of sport is important, it abandons the community level, in which many of these athletes begin their journey. Funding, people, places and time are often nonexistent yet there are many challenges to overcome. Community sport participants - the youth, new Canadians, our working families, isolated seniors, need a champion.

Required for positive sport experience we need equitable access to spaces for play. These spaces are vital hubs for connection where families build friendships through shared activities, youth find safety and belonging and seniors can experience social interactions and joy.

A Call for Action.

More integration around community use of schools and gymnasiums, college and university facilities, creation of multi-sport places and commitment to lifecycle of failing infrastructure will expand participation for years to come. We need a system where governments, municipalities, agencies, national and provincial bodies work in parallel to plan for the current and future development of where we play. Without spaces we have nothing.





Inclusive Invested Funding.

Community sport needs more options for funding to provide inclusive programs for everyone. It is a constant struggle to operate with little funding and, if any, paid leaders, administrators or coaches. Predictable and reliable sources of funding and support is required to ensure sport remains accessible. Sports with high participation rates, such as basketball, can increase their reach, providing greater access by sourcing private places to play but at 10X the costs compared to local school gyms. Tough decisions are made when the options to increase participation fall into increased fees or long waitlists, both directly impacting the players and the future of the sport.

A Call for Action.

We need a better system that addresses these hurdles for community sport so participation can grow, fairly, in all levels. Funding that is strong, planned and prioritized will make a significant impact in creating inclusivity and barrier free participation in our local communities. With predictable funding, organizations can start to plan for what the future looks like and create better sport for all.

A Call to Educate.

More Tools in More Hands. With 73% of grassroots community sport supported by volunteers, we need to invest in our sport leaders by providing the critical tools to create a safe space for all. Maltreatment in sport is an unfortunate reality. The initiatives and tools that become available are typically focused on our national and provincial levels, leaving our ever committed yet unaware volunteers in the dark.

Volunteers are the backbone of future sport and are what fuels the free Learn-To programs and sport clubs. Volunteers are the first impressions of beginner sport participants and that relationship can determine how, and if, they continue in sports for life. For community sport to continue to strive for inclusive, safe, available and accessible sport we need to ensure the right tools are in the right hands. Those tools need to be accessible, easy to learn and actionable. Investing in training initiatives geared towards the volunteer lead organization means focusing on what matters the most, valuing the time available and having those tools at no cost.

A Call for Action.

Safe sport, inclusive sport, accessible sport needs to be supported and transmitted through our other educational centres. Tools need to be provided to the teachers, principals, parents and educational leaders. With integration in the education system the applied knowledge can shape the development of our future leaders. Safe, inclusive and strong community sport where we all belong no matter who we are is the goal. This is slow work, but it can be powerful work. If we can engage everyone where they are, on their timeline and act as their champion we can foster ongoing development and growth of sport.





A Call to Connect.

Seat at the Table. Bringing people together through sport is an achievement to be proud of. Uniquely, sport has the power to remove barriers that we can and can't see. Sport can foster a relationship regardless of status, race, age, religion or gender. Sport teaches us empathy and compassion in parallel with determination and perseverance to fail, learn and grow. Excitement sport generates has a rippling effect whether we are actively playing, cheering from the stands or watching from across the globe. Sport has such a huge role in the connectedness of the world.

A Call for Action. The community sport sector needs to be sitting at the table with the national and provincial agencies. Working together as a collective, we can better understand and support where sport begins and provide a clear path for our players. Consistent governance standards, structured policies and clear reporting are needed across all sports. Good governance and decision making practices require all levels to participate to ensure we are developing strong programs focused on access and inclusivity. Not only can we make it easier for community sports to operate but we can create more joy and connection by having our volunteers in the game and not on the bench.



Summary of Submission to The Future of Sport in Canada Commission

In summary, the Ottawa Sport Council continues to advocate for the following:

Champion: To act in the best interest of sport, provide safe and accessible spaces, more funding and shared resources so community sport can continue to make good sport better.

Educate: Safe sport starts in the community. Developed tools and education on safe sport needs to be inclusive, accessible and provided to the right people. 73% of our sport leaders are volunteers, supporting them will lead to better sport for everyone.

Connect: Working together as a collective, we can better understand and support where sport begins. Good governance and sound decision making practices require all levels of sport to participate. With collaboration, together, we can strengthen sport for life.



[The Ottawa Sport Council](#) is committed to continuing to serve our role as a leader for amateur and community sport. Our position as a **Champion, Educator and Connector** is recognized by the City of Ottawa, and it is one that we are proud to hold. The OSC acts in the best interests of community sport, provides a range of relevant and educational resources and fosters connection, bringing our local sport organizations together to learn and share opportunities. The [Ottawa Sport Council Foundation](#) was created to support sport participation, reduce barriers and increase accessibility for equity deserving groups.

Highlights are below of several OSC vital tools for community use to continue to aim to make all sport experiences in Ottawa positive. For more tools and resources visit website sportottawa.ca

[Ottawa Safe Sport Toolkit](#) developed to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all.

[The Belonging Playbook](#) is a resource hub centered around equity, diversity and inclusion.

[Ottawa Sport Council Volunteer portal](#) in collaboration with Volunteer Ottawa and the [Volunteer Toolbox](#) for use, for free, to support our community volunteers and sport organizations.