



The Honourable Pascale St-Onge
Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for
the Regions of Quebec
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July 13, 2022

Dear Minister of St-Onge,

We are writing today in response to the recent reports of Hockey Canada's poor handling of a sexual assault investigation.

As a national organization that works closely with provincial/territorial and regional networks of community-based sexual assault centres from across the country, the Ending Violence Association of Canada (EVA Canada) is well-equipped to provide guidance on matters related to sexual violence and addressing its root causes. Since 2015, EVA Canada has worked with the Canadian Football League (CFL) to address male violence against women and other forms of gender-based violence. This included developing a Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence Policy for the CFL, as well as the development and implementation of bystander intervention training for all players, coaches, and managers within the CFL.

We applaud your department's recognition of abuse and violence within sport as an issue requiring a systemic response, as evidenced in the establishment of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. In the specific case of Hockey Canada, we would also like to encourage you to consider the following in determining next steps aimed at addressing culture change within Hockey Canada and beyond:

1. Ensure that Hockey Canada and all federally-funded sports organizations become Program Signatories of the new Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and adhere to the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport (UCCMS).
2. Integrate gender-based violence more explicitly in the policies of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, including the UCCMS, and favour a trauma *and violence* informed, survivor-centered approach to investigations and resulting recommended sanctions.
3. Resist the sense of urgency and pressure to find a "quick fix" and instead ensure that any action taken reflects an ongoing and long-term commitment to address what is a much deeper systemic problem. Beyond providing training, culture change requires a recognition of the systemic attitudes, practices, and structures that result in cultures of misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, racism, and other forms of oppression that create an environment conducive to gender-based violence.
4. Ensure additional funding is provided to frontline community-based sexual assault centres who are providing vital services to sexual assault survivors. These services are vastly underfunded across the country, wait times average upwards of 12 months, and most rely on inconsistent, project-based funding from the federal government.

The use of violence within the game, which is tied to the [enduring myth](#) in Canada that violence is somehow foundational to hockey, cannot be separated from violence outside of the game. There is much to unpack when it comes to what young hockey players (and fans) are learning in terms of gender norms, masculinity, and aggression. Hypermasculine norms and attitudes that support and justify the use of aggression towards others, as well as a lack of sanctions for perpetrators are [leading risk factors](#) for sexual violence. Moreover, there is a connection between traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and violence, as it [increases the chances of both perpetration and victimization](#), and is a [risk factor](#) for intimate partner violence.

While we applaud the government's decisive action in halting funding to Hockey Canada, we would encourage you to further push government to undertake similarly decisive action on the many recommendations that have been put forth to address gender-based violence in Canada. As the government continues to delay its work to implement a National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, many of the recommendations outlined in the [Report to Guide the Implementation of a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence](#) if properly resourced and acted upon would already be working toward addressing many of the systemic problems that have contributed to the current situation in Hockey Canada.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how we might work collaboratively to ensure meaningful action is taken to begin a process of systemic culture change towards ending sexual and other forms of gender-based violence.

Sincerely,



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CC:

The Honourable Marci Ien, Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Youth
Gina Wilson, Deputy Minister, Women and Gender Equality and Youth