

February 17, 2023

Honourable Neil Lumsden
Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport
Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport
438 University Avenue, 6th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Minister Lumsden,

We are writing today on behalf of the Ontario Lacrosse Association to bring awareness to the announcement by the Canada Games Council (CGC) to exclude the sport of lacrosse from the 2025 Canada Summer Games. Further, we hope to solicit your support for our position on why the sport of lacrosse deserves permanent inclusion in all Canada Summer Games in the future.

As you know, the Niagara Canada Summer Games last August included lacrosse as a pilot sport; the Host Society's choice sport, or the equivalent of a demonstration sport. Similarly, in a most recent announcement, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador selected Rugby Sevens as their 2025 host choice.

Our understanding is the CGC is the governing body of the event, funded by federal government support through Sport Canada, and co-delivers the Games with the selected host organizing committee. The CGC has a Sport & Games Committee which determines which sports are eligible for inclusion in the Games via a *Core Sport Review* and a *Sport Selection Process*. The Core Sport Review allocates approximately 70 percent of a participation quota (or athlete/coach footprint) for each Games; the Sport Selection Process allocates 30 percent.

From at least the late 1970s, Lacrosse Canada (LC) has participated in these regular reviews and applications to qualify as a Games participant sport. Every review during the past 40+ years has resulted in the same outcome: the exclusion of lacrosse. However, the most recent CGC announcement that the sport is being formally evaluated independent of the standard sport selection process, presents an opportunity for lacrosse to advance its strongest position yet for inclusion as a core sport in the Canada Summer Games.

The mandate of the CGC is to deliver national, multi-sport Games. The Canada Games are most important as a pillar in the Canadian sport development model as a high-performance pathway and as a catalyst to help grow Canadian sport participation. The CGC has an impressive mission statement: through the power of sport, we strengthen the fabric of Canada. For those of us passionate about the transformative benefits of sport to individuals, communities and society, that's a welcome message.

The current disconnect is between the CGC delivering a national, multi-sport Games without including the National Summer Sport of Canada. The justification for lacrosse to qualify as a core sport in the Canada Games was made in 1994. It has absolutely nothing to do with applying to a Core Sport Review or a Sport Selection Process; instead, it has everything to do with the CGC recognizing and respecting the National Sports Act of Canada. It has already conferred that respect toward ice hockey, the National Winter Sport of Canada. Why not lacrosse, the National Summer Sport, with its acknowledged Indigenous, historical and cultural link to the foundation of our country? How can a Canada Games brand be broadly recognized and valued across the country when it continually excludes one of two National Sports established by an Act

of Parliament? Why, when CGC originally convened deliberations on sport selection, would national sports as recognized by the National Sports Act of Canada not be included by default? Respecting the National Summer Sport status that lacrosse has earned is one of the strongest cases lacrosse can make.

With its exclusion from the Canada Games, the second strongest case is the inherent paradox that lacrosse currently finds itself in: having recently been granted International Olympic Committee recognition with the stated goal of participation in the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 2028 and Brisbane Olympic Games in 2032 (both cities which are located in host countries who are interested in advocating for the inclusion of a sport in which they could medal), athletes and coaches from across Canada could earn gold medals in National Championships; World Championships; World Games and Olympic Games, but remain ineligible to even participate in the high performance gateway of the Canada Summer Games.

From a Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) lens, should that day come sooner rather than later, the sport would have rendered Canada Games participation irrelevant to athlete development and international excellence. Men's and Women's Canadian national teams already have an established track record of international success and were both gold medalists at the 2022 World Games in Birmingham, Alabama last summer. The goal today for the CGC should be to embrace lacrosse as a central Summer Games sport to enhance its own role in national athlete development and to embed the Games as a respected and integral component of the lacrosse LTAD model. That strategy extends the Canada Games mission to deliver the most memorable experiences on the athlete journey to higher education, international competition, careers, and life.

With the current CGC review, evaluation and recommendation of the successful lacrosse showcase at the Niagara 2022 Games currently underway, there may never again be a more important moment than now to stake a claim that lacrosse needs to be recognized as a core sport in the Canada Summer Games. This is the respect the sport earned twenty-eight years ago.

We hope you might consider our position, support our belief that lacrosse deserves a permanent place in the Canada Summer Games, and share our mission in advancing this statement to the Canada Games Council on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Should there be more information or assistance that we can provide for your office to support our request, we would welcome the opportunity to do so.

Respectfully,



Sean O'Callaghan
Ontario Lacrosse Association President



Chuck Miller
Ontario Lacrosse Association Executive Director

Sent on behalf of the Ontario Lacrosse Association membership

CC: OLA Board of Directors