



## 2023 AthletesCAN President's Report

Dear Canadian National Team athletes,

As I conclude my second year as President of AthletesCAN, I reflect on 2022 as a year of hope and progress. This year we witnessed the remarkable rise of the **Athlete Voice**, which included more athletes sharing their stories publicly, more athletes stepping into leadership positions at their National Sport Organizations, and more athletes demanding powerful calls for action to address the systemic issues that we face in sport in Canada.

Safe Sport continued to rise to the forefront this year as an area that required immediate attention, to which the Canadian Minister of Sport, the Honourable Pascale St-Onge, characterized as a "crisis." In response, the Minister ensured that the athlete voice became the centre of the conversation. AthletesCAN, alongside the Canadian Olympic Committee's Athlete Commission and the Canadian Paralympic Committee's Athletes' Council, joined forces to represent the voice of the athletes within the Canadian Sport System, collectively, addressing the need for stronger and more transparent **governance**, increased monitoring and **accountability**, mandated **athlete representation** within sport organizations, and reducing the win-at-all-cost mentality that currently guides high-performance sport. These priorities were identified by athletes as vehicles for ensuring a safer Canadian Sport System and were communicated frequently in meetings with Sport Canada, the Coaching Association of Canada, the Canadian Centre for Ethics and Sport (CCES), the Sport Dispute and Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC), and Abuse-Free Sport.

Throughout the year, I have seen incredible advocacy for the experiences of Canadian national team athletes and the amplification of issues that impact Canadian athletes day-to-day. While good progress has been made, we know that there is more action to be taken. AthletesCAN remains committed to ensuring that we achieve an athlete-centred sport system, in which athletes feel safe, welcome, and included, listened to, and are valuable actors in the decision-making processes in every Canadian sport organization.

In this report, you will find a more detailed summary of AthletesCAN's progress through the 2022-23 fiscal year as we continue to be guided by our 2021-25 strategic plan. On behalf of the entire AthletesCAN Board of Directors, we are excited for the road ahead and are committed to ensuring that all Canadian National Team athletes feel represented by our organization.

It has been an honour and a privilege to represent Canadian National Team athletes as President of AthletesCAN over the past year. I believe we have set a strong foundation to continue to elevate the athlete voice and to design a sport system that we as athletes want to promote, compete in, and continue to be involved in long after our competitive careers come to a close. Thank you for your trust and commitment to me, and to AthletesCAN; I am grateful for the opportunity to represent such incredible and talented people.

All the best,

Erin Willson  
President





## Our Year in Review

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023

This year was guided by [our strategic plan](#), which includes three key pillars: awareness, insight, and activation. This plan narrows our focus to what matters most to our athletes and aims to unite and amplify the voices of all Canadian national team athletes.

In the 2022-2023 fiscal year, we focused heavily on awareness and activation, to ensure athletes know that we are here to support you, and that your voices are heard in the Canadian Sport System as we address the key issues athletes are facing. This work was led by our incredible staff - including our new staff member Alicia Renaud-Paquin, Manager of Athlete Projects and Operations; Alan Hudes, Manager of Communications and Sport Partnerships, and our talented and dedicated Board of Directors.

It is a pleasure to present an overview of the progress we have made in the past year. I am extremely proud of our team and the massive accomplishments that have been made over the last 12 months.

### Awareness

By 2025, AthletesCAN is well-known by all Canadian national team athletes and fosters deep relationships with key system stakeholders.

### How we delivered it:

- Celebrated the 30th anniversary of AthletesCAN with a special video and newly-launched brand guidelines, as well as creating Our Story / History section on website
- Signed agreements to produce content with Creative Champions
- Launched Athlete Representation Training (ART) e-Learning modules for athlete directors, representatives, and councils ([click the link to view it online](#)) developed by Learning 4 Excellence
- Held the Virtual 2022 AthletesCAN Forum, *Reimagining Culture through a Safe Sport Lens* Topics included inclusion, accessibility, racial equity, trans and non-binary inclusion, and an overview of the newly launched Abuse-Free Sport. [Check out the recordings!](#)
- Hosted the 2022 Canadian Sport Awards to celebrate Canadian athletes as well as the relaunch of the Randy Starkman Award for Leadership in Sports Journalism
- Collaborated with partners at FireWork to hold webinars on personal branding and monetization best practices for athletes
- Created a digital QR code/info card to hand out at events and meetings
- In the wake of safe sport disclosures and reports from athletes, we increased media representation ensuring the athlete perspective was represented on the topic
- Increased AthletesCAN representation at national sporting events to meet and introduce AthletesCAN to our National Team Athletes
- Launched the Athlete Assistance Program Education Series across social media platforms

### Insight

AthletesCAN captures the collective voice of Canadian athletes through robust data collection processes and formalized procedures.

### How we delivered it:





- AthletesCAN, together with the University of Toronto & E-Alliance Research Hub for Gender+ Equity in Sport launched a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion survey to assess the demographics of our members and the nature and quality of their sport experiences, particularly as it relates to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
- In January 2023, we hosted a virtual town hall to gather information from experiences relevant to safe sport
- Participated in the Canadian Sport Policy Renewal Consultation process'

### **Activation**

AthletesCAN develops and sustains impactful change initiatives in the sport system based on data driven insights from Canadian national team athletes.

### **How we delivered it:**

- Had a meeting with the Canadian Minister of Sport, the Honourable Pascale St-Onge, along with the Canadian Olympic Committee's Athlete Commission and Canadian Paralympic Committee's Athletes Council to discuss safe sport and athlete-centred sport
  - Key asks from AthletesCAN were increased accountability, increased governance regulation, mandated athlete representation, reducing the win-at-all-cost culture.
- Attended regular meetings with the Minister and multiple meetings with Canadian Sport Partners, including Sport Canada, Canadian Olympic & Paralympic Committees, CCES, SDRCC, and the Coaching Association of Canada.
- Collaborated with Sport Canada to create Terms of Reference for Sport Canada Athletes Advisory Committee
- Contributed to *Safe Sport: Critical Issues and Practices*, which was an open-access edited digital book providing timely and relevant content on the past, present and future of the safe sport movement in Canada, and critical insight for researchers, sport leaders and policy-makers
- The Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC) hosted an Athlete Information Session to outline Phase 1 of the implementation of the Independent safe sport mechanism, which was supported by AthletesCAN, the COCAC and CPCAC
- Worked with the Athlete Assistance Program team to add wording for the UCCMS into the athlete agreement
- Ran an education series on the Athlete Assistance Program
- AthletesCAN officially signed on with Abuse-Free Sport

