



# Independent Safe Sport Review Report

Senior High Performance Program

Canada Artistic Swimming

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## 1. Executive Summary

Following recent allegations by some athletes and external coaches of violations of the Code of Conduct, Canada Artistic Swimming contracted ITP Sport to review the senior high performance program and identify recommendations to improve safe sport practices. It is important to note that it was not the mandate of this review to investigate complaints. The complaint process must be done through CAS's Independent Third Party Officer. This review was strictly to assess the senior high performance program from a safe sport perspective and provide recommendations for improvement. This review focuses on the high performance program from 2019 until present.

ITP Sport conducted confidential information gathering interviews in both official languages with all 18 athletes in the program, 10 coaching and Integrated Support Team (IST) staff, and several external coaches, observers, and other stakeholders of the program, for a total of 35 interviews. A review and analysis of all information collected was completed in order to produce this final report for the CEO and Board of Directors for CAS. The recommendations contained within are based on current best practices in safe sport.

It became clear through the interview process that there is an overall lack of understanding of the CAS Conduct Policy (referred here as a Code of Conduct) and safe sport initiatives, including the process for filing complaints to the Independent Third Party Officer. While this review found no indication that there is any type of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or hazing practices present within the senior high performance program, there is found to be experiences of psychological abuse, bullying, neglect, sexual harassment, discrimination, and an overall culture of fear. Sexual harassment in the form of misogynistic comments and behaviour, comments that were sexual in nature, and offensive comments was found to be the most prevalent of the above items, along with discrimination which took the form of racial comments, comments based on religious beliefs, and comments based on gender identity.

Education on the above issues should be provided to athletes, coaches, IST, and staff by subject matter experts that are external to the organization. This education should be reinforced on an annual basis. It must be clearly established that any sort of reprisal will not be tolerated and that any violations of the Code of Conduct must be reported to the Independent Third Party Officer. The complaint process and the outcome must be transparent to the parties involved. It is also important that everyone involved with CAS conducts themselves under Canadian cultural norms and any violations of the Code of Conduct cannot be dismissed due to cultural differences.

One of the main concerns that arose from the interviews is a clear disconnect between the coaching and IST staff, and athletes on the assessment of the safe sport environment within CAS. There is a breakdown in communication and evident mistrust between the stakeholders in the program.

Building commitment within the program around a safe sport vision and values to rebuild the trust within the team is very important. This should be done at the reintegration of the team to the training center and on a continuous basis. It is recommended to engage the services of a professional mediator when conducting the reintegration process.

While CAS has implemented good policies and procedures, it now needs to focus on education and communication of those important measures and all initiatives designed to ensure a safe sport environment within CAS. It is the opinion of the reviewer that the current environment can be significantly improved if the recommendations in this report are thoughtfully considered and implemented.