

New Centre to Prevent and Resolve Sport Disputes

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OTTAWA, April 8, 2004 – Canadian athletes, coaches and national sport organizations can now benefit from a unique, new centre designed to prevent and resolve sport-related disputes.

The Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC), one of only a few such programs worldwide, officially opened its doors to members of the Canadian sport community on April 1.

"The SDRCC is, first and foremost, a Resource Centre, offering resource materials focusing on dispute prevention," stated Mr. Allan Stitt, Chairperson of the Centre's Board of Directors. "Where disputes cannot be prevented, the Centre offers world class mediation and arbitration services that allow people to avoid time-consuming and costly litigation." Mr. Stitt estimated that the Centre will handle about 60 dispute cases per year.

The SDRCC is a not-for-profit corporation created by federal legislation and funded by Sport Canada. The Physical Activity and Sport Act specifies the overall mandate and primary roles for the SDRCC, but also provides the flexibility for the Centre to respond to evolving needs in the sport community.

"I'm so proud that Canada is on the leading edge of finding creative and innovative ways to resolve sport-related disputes. We hope to be a model for other countries to follow," added Mr. Stitt. "One of our first priorities is the 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Summer Games in Athens, and we will be there to help resolve team selection and other issues."

Doping disputes (where athletes challenge suspensions levied as a result of positive drug tests, for example), will be handled by the new SDRCC as of June 1st. Doping disputes are currently handled by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES). "The CCES has been a strong proponent of a national dispute resolution program for amateur sport for many years," said CEO Paul Melia.

Resource materials and dispute resolution services are available in both official languages to members of the sport community in all provinces and territories.