

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 8, 2020

2021 Special Olympics BC Summer Games cancelled

*Current focus is on safe, staged Return to Sport Plan and
reopening year-round SOBC programs*

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Special Olympics BC has made the decision to cancel the 2021 SOBC Summer Games that were scheduled to be held in Surrey next July.

Given the current health circumstances and projections, SOBC does not expect to be able to safely hold an event with the anticipated more than 1,000 participants next summer.

Given the importance of competition to SOBC athletes and volunteers, SOBC remains committed to its mandate of creating empowering and eye-opening experiences through competition and sport.

SOBC is currently focusing on our slow, staged [Return to Sport Plan](#), in order to safely reopen year-round in-person Special Olympics programs. The COVID-driven program pause has been extremely challenging for our athletes who rely on Special Olympics for social connections and healthy activity. SOBC is committed to creating all the tools and plans necessary to help community programs safely return to sport. It will take time, resources, and consultation to implement our careful, phased return to safe operation in all 18 sports, as well as youth programs and health programming.

The SOBC Return to Sport Plan includes working our way back to safe competitions, and SOBC is wholeheartedly committed to finding ways to make competition possible, safely, both through virtual and in-person experiences.

The City of Surrey and School District No. 36 have been outstanding partners who are truly committed to creating inclusion and empowerment for individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport. While we will be unable to host the SOBC Summer Games in Surrey in 2021, we consider Surrey a great advocate and partner. We will continue to work with the city on enhancing the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport, both in the life-changing year-round SOBC – Surrey programs and in future opportunities.

Please visit www.specialolympics.bc.ca for more information.

BACKGROUND

What's happening in the rest of the Special Olympics summer competition cycle?

- The 2021 Special Olympics BC Summer Games would have been the qualifier for the 2022 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games. Due to the pandemic and its impact on priorities and resources, the 2022 SOC Summer Games in Medicine Hat have been cancelled, and SOC will be devoting their attention to renewing and enhancing grassroots programs. [Please click here for more information from SOC](#)
- SOC and the 12 Provincial/Territorial Chapters are committed to exploring alternative, cost-effective competition opportunities that comply with health and safety guidelines.
- Maintaining a pathway to the Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023 remains a goal – as long as it is safe to do so and financial resources are available. SOC is committed

to exploring alternative competition formats that will ensure a quality selection process for Special Olympics Team Canada 2023. [Please click here for more information from SOC](#)

What's happening in the Special Olympics winter competition cycle?

- Special Olympics Canada is planning to announce the names of Special Olympics Team Canada in November 2020.
- Much has already been invested in the journey to the 2022 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Kazan. Athletes competed with pride in 2018 Regional Qualifiers, 2019 Provincial/Territorial Games, and the 2020 Special Olympics Canada Winter Games in Thunder Bay. The athletes have trained, competed and earned the opportunity to see the final step of their journey fulfilled.
- We are grateful that SOC's National Team Program and the participation of Special Olympics Team Canada at the World Games are primarily funded by Sport Canada.
- Taking all of this into consideration, SOC, together with the Chapters, has made the decision to proceed with the National Training Program and participation at the Special Olympics World Winter Games Kazan 2022. With COVID-19 restrictions, training will have to be modified, to ensure that athletes are able to properly train and prepare.
- SOC will continue to monitor COVID-19 health and safety protocols related to training, travel and large gatherings. If, for any reason, Special Olympics Canada deems that the safety of our athletes, volunteers and staff is at risk either in the lead-up to or while at the Games, SOC will withdraw Special Olympics Team Canada from the 2022 World Games.
- [Please click here for more information from SOC](#)

How to help

SOBC is hugely grateful to donors who want to make a difference by supporting the year-round Special Olympics programs where athletes gain essential connections, healthy activity, and empowerment. To donate, please visit www.sobcforever.ca or consider supporting the 2020 New Car Dealers Foundation / Special Olympics BC Auction fundraiser coming up on September 18 to 24.

About Special Olympics BC

Special Olympics BC is dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport. In 55 communities around the province, we provide year-round training and competitive opportunities in 18 different sports to more than 5,200 athletes of all ages and a wide range of abilities, thanks to the dedicated efforts of over 4,300 volunteers. For more information, please visit www.specialolympics.bc.ca and find us on Facebook and Instagram @specialolympicsbc and Twitter @sobcsociety. To learn more about SOBC – Surrey, visit www.sobcsurrey.ca.

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