



**Board of Directors  
Recruitment Package**

**Special  
Olympics  
Alberta**



## Mission

Special Olympics Alberta is committed to enriching the lives of Albertans with an intellectual disability through sport.

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## Vision

Our vision is that sport will open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities and create inclusive communities all over the world. Special Olympics will strive for this vision by providing better quality sports opportunities, supported through health initiatives. At the same time, we will step up efforts to use our work to “tell the world” about the talents and abilities of people with intellectual disabilities.

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## Special Olympics is more than an event!

Special Olympics delivers world-class sport programs to people with intellectual disabilities of all ages and a wide range of abilities daily in communities across Alberta.

Special Olympics believes that people with intellectual disabilities can, and will, succeed when given the opportunity - we are leveling the playing field.

## Special Olympics is a catalyst for social change. Our programs help:

- instill confidence, self-esteem and other life skills in our athletes
  - contribute to healthier athletes with life-long physical fitness habits
  - change attitudes and create a more inclusive society
  - strengthen communities
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## ***Our Mission***

*Special Olympics Alberta is dedicated to enriching the lives of Albertans with an intellectual disability through sport*

**Special  
Olympics  
Alberta**



Dear Prospective Board Member,

Thank you for expressing interest in becoming a member of the Special Olympics Alberta Board of Directors. Our board prides itself on a commitment to quality and representing Special Olympics with the upmost degree of integrity and respect.

We continually strive to challenge ourselves in an attempt to make our organization better. Bringing on new blood and ideas is critical to our board and organization's future prosperity. You will find enclosed in this package an overview of who our board and organization is; as well as the process that we go through to review new and potential members.

I would like to thank you once again for your interest in furthering our mission and helping enrich the lives of individuals with an intellectual disability through sport. Should you have any questions about the content of this package please feel free to contact either myself or Brent Allison the chair of our Nominating Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah MacPherson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Deborah MacPherson

Chair

## **Special Olympics Alberta**

Jerry Forbes Centre, #3-12122 68th Street, Edmonton, AB, T5B 1R1 **Tel 1.800.444.2883**

**www.specialolympics.ab.ca** **Email** info@specialolympics.ab.ca **Twitter** @SpecialOAlberta

***Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities***





## Board Member Testimonials

“In my professional career, I’ve had the great opportunity to work on a number of private, public and not for profit boards. No other situation has given me more personal and professional satisfaction than my time on the Special Olympics Alberta board. I learned more from the people, the athletes and the community that supports individuals with intellectual disability than from any other organization that I have lent my time, money and talents to. What I saw, changed my life. What I felt, changed my life. What I learned, changed my life. I am forever thankful that I said “yes” to SOA. I’m completely confident that you will be too!”

***John Pinsent, Past Chair***

“Being on the board of Special Olympics has offered me a wealth of experience, and reminded me of the transcendent power of sport. I have had the honour of making decisions with other business and community leaders, and have proudly raised funds for this important cause. At the end of the day, serving on a SO board is about ensuring training programs and competitive opportunities continue for our constituents - the tens of thousands of athletes, coaches and volunteers who make this movement happen in communities across this country every day.”

***Mark Tewksbury, Canadian Olympic Champion and SOC Board member, 2009 - present***

“I have been a member of the Special Olympics Alberta board for six years. My decision to become involved with the board was very personal. As a parent of a child with an intellectual disability I saw first-hand the difference Special Olympics can make in a person’s life. Watching my daughter being accepted, achieving success and blossoming as an individual made me want to be a part of this organization. The work of our board in overseeing the Special Olympics program in Alberta is very rewarding. Knowing that each and every day in Alberta there are individuals whose lives are being changed through the power of sport makes me very proud.”

***Karen Saunders, Past Chair and Athlete Parent***

“As a SOA board member for three years my experience has been very gratifying and inspiring! It has been really enjoyable working with a smart, enthusiastic, and diverse group of board members. I find that our roles are productive and we have the opportunity to give back. Being around SO athletes brings a powerful perspective to life it is so fulfilling!!

***Jamie Sale, Canadian Olympic Champion, past SOA Board member, SOC Board Member 2015 - 2020***

“It has been a privilege to serve on the National Board of Directors. Being on the Board has given me the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the Special Olympics Canada community, witnessing first-hand the transformative impact that sport has made on these incredible athletes’ lives. I would encourage anybody who may be interested to get involved on a SO Board and can personally attest that you will get just as much fulfilment from the experience as the athletes do – or perhaps even more.”

***Stewart Johnston, President, TSN and SOC Board member, 2013***



## Board FAQ's

### How many people sit on the board?

Board shall be comprised of no more than thirteen (13) and no less than nine (9) Directors.

### What are we looking for in a board member?

- Exemplary citizenship and integrity in their endeavors.
- They must be respected business or community leaders and provide a professional or specialized expertise or distinctive knowledge that will assist the Board to fulfill its mandate;
- Experience as a Board Director at the regional/provincial/territorial or national level is preferred or a demonstrated knowledge of the role and responsibilities of a Director; and
- A belief in the importance of social inclusion and a demonstrated understanding of the purpose of our organization and our strategic goals.

### What is the time commitment?

The SOA Board meets six times per year, combination of virtual and in-person.

- October's Annual General Meeting
- November, two-day planning and orientation meeting
- February, May, June & September

### What is expected of Board Members?

- They will strive for 100% attendance, while in certain circumstances exceptions can be made.
- Participation on and contribution to at least one governance Committee of the Board eg: Audit and Risk, Stakeholder Consultation
- Participation and leadership within the Special Olympics community at games or events with provincial or local affiliates on behalf of Special Olympics Alberta;
- Act as ambassadors of Special Olympics Alberta to corporate, community, government or Special Olympics organizations;
- Accept personal responsibility for achieving the goals of Special Olympics Alberta
- Make a financial contribution to the organization

### Where can I go to find out more?

Provincially: [www.specialolympics.ab.ca](http://www.specialolympics.ab.ca)

Nationally: [www.specialolympics.ca](http://www.specialolympics.ca)

Globally: [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org)



# **Our Board's Foundation**

## ***Governance Principles***

### **Athlete Focused and Mission Driven**

We are athlete focused and committed to the Mission of Special Olympics in Alberta; we have a compelling vision for the organization that is consistent with that mission and supports the health and growth of the movement.

### **Values-Based**

We are accountable to defend the core values of Special Olympics and act with integrity in all that we do. We will ensure compliance with these values through appropriate policies, procedures and oversight mechanisms.

### **Respectful**

We are respectful of the time, commitment and perspective of our fellow board members, volunteers, athletes, staff, and stakeholders of Special Olympics Alberta.

### **Transparent & Open**

It is our responsibility to ensure that all stakeholders have access to appropriate and accurate information about our finances, our operations and our results.

### **Engaged**

We maximize our effectiveness through the active engagement of our Board members in achieving the organization's goals and the mindful use of Board meetings and Board members' time.

### **Accountable**

We believe in evaluating our effectiveness as Board members and in revitalizing the Board in the best interests of the organization through thoughtful recruitment and the succession planning of members.

### **Independent**

We believe in putting the interests of the organization first when making decisions and it is our responsibility to apply a rigorous conflict-of-interest policy. We will not be unduly influenced by loyalty, seniority, position or reputation of fellow board members, staff or donors.

### **Supportive**

We will derive our strength from supporting each other and always respecting and celebrating the contributions of all members.

### **Common Vision & Voice**

The Board respects the diversity of our members and our members' perspectives in making decisions. We also recognize that the authority of the Board resides with the Board as a group so when a decision is made the Board speaks with one voice.

### **Strategically Direct & Lead**

We will make decisions and provide leadership through a governance model ensuring that the organization receives strategic direction from a strong long-term plan that aligns with the National and International movements.

### **Fiscally Responsible**

We are committed to the long-term financial stability of Special Olympics Alberta ensuring that we exercise strict financial oversight and control of the organization finances.

### **Results-Oriented**

We are driven to achieve results and will gauge efficiency, effectiveness and impact, while simultaneously assessing the quality of programs and service delivery, integrating benchmarks against peers, and calculating return on investment. We will allocate time to what matters most and continuously engage in strategic thinking to hone the organization's direction.

### **Foster Constructive Partnerships with our Affiliates and Stakeholders**

We value every partnership and stakeholder that helps us achieve the mission of Special Olympics in Alberta.

### **Support our CEO**

We work with the CEO of the organization in a constructive fashion. It is our responsibility to support the CEO, hold the CEO accountable as required, and also ensure the CEO performs satisfactorily.



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## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### *What is Special Olympics?*

Special Olympics is a global organization that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sport, everyday around the world.

Through programming in sports, health, education and community building, Special Olympics is changing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities solving the global injustice, isolation, intolerance and inactivity they face.

Today, Special Olympics is more than an event: it is one of the world's most powerful and effective social movements.

### *Who Participates in Special Olympics?*

Special Olympics welcomes people with intellectual disabilities from every part of the province. Our participants range in age from two years old to more than 80 years old.

The minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics competition is eight years of age.

For younger individuals, we have Active Start and FUNdamentals, two innovative sports play programs for children with intellectual disabilities between the ages of two to 12, which introduces them to the world of sports. These programs engage young athletes through a variety of developmentally appropriate play activities that are designed to foster physical, cognitive and social development.

### *What is an intellectual disability?*

According to the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), an individual is considered to have an intellectual disability based on the following three criteria:

1. Intellectual functional level (IQ) is below 70-75
2. Significant limitations exist in two or more adaptive skill areas
3. The condition manifests itself before the age of 18

Adaptive skills are assessed in the person's typical environment across all aspects of an individual's life. A person with limits in intellectual functioning who does not have limits in adaptive skill areas may not be diagnosed as having an intellectual disability.

A person is eligible to participate in Special Olympics if they have been identified by an agency or professional as having intellectual disabilities as determined by their localities.

Some examples of intellectual disabilities include Down Syndrome, William Syndrome and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## What are the benefits of participation in Special Olympics?

According to a Special Olympics impact study with the University of Massachusetts Boston and University of Utah in 2005, approximately 90 per cent of family members report improvement in both social skills and friendships.



In the same study, a report of approximately half of all Special Olympics athletes (48 per cent) in North America engage in physical activity or exercise for more than three hours per week in addition to their involvement with Special Olympics which is considerably higher than the average 25 per cent of the general population.

More than half (52 per cent) of adult Special Olympics athletes in North America are employed with half of those in competitive employment.

## What is the history of Special Olympics in Alberta?

The first Special Olympics programs in Alberta were grassroots efforts in communities like Edmonton and Lethbridge. Taking their inspiration from the first Canadian Special Olympics National Games in 1969, these communities organized programs throughout the 1970s.

Special Olympics Alberta was incorporated in 1980 as an accredited chapter of Special Olympics Canada and provides support to affiliates in more than 100 communities throughout the province.

Special Olympics Alberta provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

## What is our reach in Alberta?

More than 3,000 athletes with an intellectual disability participate in sports programs across the province. This is achieved because of the efforts of more than 1,200 dedicated coaches and volunteers.

Individuals who compete in Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness and motor skills and greater self-confidence. They exhibit courage and enthusiasm and build lasting friendships. These life skills enhance their ability to live productive lives. More than ever, Special Olympics athletes hold jobs, own homes, go to school and successfully confront life challenges on a daily basis.



## Alberta provides 18 Olympic-type sports.

### Summer

- 5-Pin Bowling
- 10-Pin Bowling
- Athletics
- Basketball
- Bocce
- Golf
- Powerlifting
- Rhythmic Gymnastics
- Soccer
- Softball
- Swimming

### Winter

- Alpine Skiing
- Cross-Country Skiing
- Curling
- Figure Skating
- Floor Hockey
- Snowshoeing
- Speed Skating





## Board member recruitment timelines

**October – May:** Special Olympics Alberta (SOA) receives expressions of interest from potential candidates through board members and staff. Perspective members will receive a board recruitment package for review. If interested in pursuing a place on the SOA Board a prospective member will complete the application form and submit it to the SOA Board Nominations Committee for consideration.

**June:** The Nominations Committee will review the list of potential candidates in order to determine what skill and experience sets are best suited to the board. Follow up interviews may take place at this time with potential members.

**June:** A final shortlist of candidates will be selected for nomination. These individuals will be approached by the Nominations Committee chair to confirm their interest.

**October:** A slate of nominees are put forward for election at the SOA Annual General Meeting (closed nomination process) and their term officially begins.

*Note: If a vacancy or need arises within the board potential candidates may be contacted at anytime throughout this process.*



