



## Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada More than a Decade of Passion for Law and Sport

Julie Duranceau, SDRCC mediator

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I was 24 when I decided to combine the practical with the enjoyable. The practical was my law degree and my fledgling career as a lawyer. The enjoyable was my passion for sports, for physical activity, for training. The year was 2000. It was the year that Denis Coderre, then Secretary of State for Amateur Sport, under Canadian Heritage, put together a work group of stakeholders from the Canadian sport community to make recommendations on the best way to handle disputes outside of courts for amateur sport in the country. This initiative led to the establishment of the interim ADRsportRED program in 2002 and the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC) two years later in 2004.

My wish to build on both my career and my passion found its niche: I had the good fortune to join the team that took the first steps towards building what today has become a hugely positive asset to amateur sports in Canada. Indeed, the SDRCC is an increasingly well-known - and renowned-forum bringing together top Canadian and international legal experts in amateur sport. It offers mediation, resolution facilitation, arbitration and med-arb services in order to rapidly resolve disputes by applying the rules that govern amateur sport in Canada. It is a place where the parties involved in a dispute can table their issues with complete confidence, knowing that the experts assigned to their cases regularly participate in a professional training program regarding amateur sport and work within a well-structured and recognized system. This assurance provides peace of mind for all parties.

The SDRCC is also home to a resource centre that focuses on the prevention of disputes and the dissemination of relevant information within the Canadian sport community, including doctrinal and jurisprudence databases. These online databases provide access to a wide range of publications and references on law and sport, as well as to all the rulings issued by the SDRCC arbitral tribunal. Parties dealing with a dispute can consult the rulings in the applicable domain, consider their own situation in light of the generally recognized principles that apply, and prepare their case accordingly. Once again, the SDRCC strives to offer a decision-making framework that is reassuring for all parties and that gives everyone access to the same information.

In addition to the databases, the resource centre enables members of Canada's sport community to consult model contracts and policies, to access a list of legal representatives with specific knowledge of amateur sport (some of whom work *pro bono*), and above all, call on the personalized services supplied by SDRCC employees when needed. Upon request, the SDRCC also offers conferences, workshops and direct assistance to members of the sport community to advise them and help them improve their conflict prevention and management approach and processes.



Of course, the SDRCC has evolved since its foundation 10 years ago. During its early days, the main goal was to raise awareness about the organization among members of Canada's sport community so that they use the service to its full potential. In 2015, this goal is still relevant, as new athletes, coaches, officials, managers and administrators continually join the ranks of top-level amateur sport, but the fundamental goal remain. The SDRCC's energy and resources can now also directed to other projects, one of which is the ongoing professional development of its arbitrators and mediators. In fact, since 2008, all of the arbitrators and mediators seeking to offer their services through the SDRCC must take part in the conferences held by the organization. These meetings are held approximately every 15 months and allow the experts to acquire new skills and knowledge, learn about the latest rulings and applicable regulations, and discuss issues that may arise in arbitration and mediation cases.

I could write at length about the progress achieved by the SDRCC since its creation and about the constructive and vital role played by such an organization in Canada. This is particularly true given that on a personal level, I was afforded an insider's view of the SDRCC, having worked internally as both the person responsible for the resource centre and as an in-house resolution facilitator. For a number of years, I was therefore a witness to the SDRCC's ambitions, reflections and advancements. As an accredited mediator who is now external to the organization, I am excited by what I see today. The SDRCC has taken off; it has established a solid foundation and is now focusing on the improvement of services, simplification of intervention methods, and the presence of stakeholders on the field. The organization is in constant motion, and this is a must in this sector. Members of the sport community are passionate about their sport, their successes and their achievements. Every person to his or her trade: those in the athletic world must be at the top of their game physically, and we in our field must excel mentally. For me, the SDRCC is a way to actively participate in an environment that captivates me, that would not otherwise be accessible. For more than 10 years, the SDRCC has enabled me to help equally passionate people follow their dreams with a minimum of legal obstacles. This is a wonderful opportunity for all involved. ■