



PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

Summary of Report to:

British Columbia Soccer Association

Per: Kjeld Brodsgaard
President
Board of Directors

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RE: Safe Sport Program Assessment and Policy Analysis

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1. Introduction and Mandate

On April 23, 2019, Rubin Thomlinson LLP was retained by the British Columbia Soccer Association (“BC Soccer”) to conduct a program assessment and policy analysis as a neutral third party. The focus of the program assessment was on BC Soccer’s safe sport program as expressed through its constitution, by-laws, policies, guidelines and good practice guides with specific regard to BC Soccer’s Premier League program (the “BCSPL”). Our mandate was to collect information through confidential surveys and one-on-one telephone interviews with the British Columbia soccer community, broadly, and current and former participants in the BCSPL to identify areas of priority and concern in relation to safety in the sport of soccer and to identify where BC Soccer, as the governing body for the sport of soccer in BC, was or was not addressing these priorities and/or areas of concern. This is a summary of our assessment report submitted December 13, 2019.

2. Conduct of the BC Soccer Program Assessment

The BC Soccer safe sport program assessment consisted of four phases:

- The Phase I online survey open to all members of the soccer community from May 15 to June 3, 2019 (1179 Responses)
- Phase II by-invitation, online survey open to participants in the BC Soccer Premier League (BCSPL) and Provincial program from June 21 to July 21, 2019 (709 Responses)
- Phase III one-on-one, confidential telephone interviews from August 8 to October 4, 2019 (55 interviews)
- Phase IV policy and best practices review.

3. Information Gathered

The key themes identified by participants were

- Defining Safety in the Sport of Soccer;
- Prevalence of Rough Play;
- The Role and Expectations of Coaches
- Parents' Experiences with Soccer;
- Experiences with Association, League and Club Leadership;
- Reactions to Past Issues that Impact the Present;
- Gaps in Reporting Unsafe Incidents or Practices;
- Perceptions of BC Soccer; and
- Strength within the Community.

a) Defining Safety in the Sport of Soccer

Overall, we heard from respondents that they believe that soccer is a safe sport to play in BC. More than 77% of respondents to the Phase I survey said they agreed (absolutely or somewhat) that soccer is a safe sport to play in BC. Approximately 88% of respondents to the Phase II survey agreed (absolutely or somewhat) that soccer is a safe sport to play in BC.

We also heard from respondents that there could be improvements to safety in soccer in BC. Approximately 82% of respondents to the Phase I survey, and 78% of the respondents to the Phase II survey, agreed (absolutely or somewhat) that safety in soccer in BC could be improved.

Phase II survey respondents were asked to describe who was most responsible for making soccer in BC safe and why. We received a range of responses that revealed that responsibility rested at multiple points along

the continuum of stakeholders in soccer in BC, book-ended by the governing body, BC Soccer, and individual players. Respondents were divided as to whether safety starts at the top or the grassroots.

b) Prevalence of Rough Play

The top concern identified by survey and telephone interview respondents about the state of safety in soccer in BC is the prevalence of rough play. On this issue, we heard primarily from players and parents who described “rough play” as physical player-on-player conduct. Some people whom we interviewed compared the rough play in soccer to hockey, saying that they observed a “hockey on grass mentality” and that the “players were goons.” We also heard that soccer “is about the beauty of the game, not about body-checking... your feet are your tools.”

i. Violent Language

Participants also identified “rough play” in the form of verbal insults and taunts, not only between players but also between coaches, players and referees.

ii. Need for Effective Refereeing

Both interview and survey participants felt that referees play a key role in keeping rough play in check and that ineffective refereeing creates unsafe conditions during matches. Survey participants provided examples where they observed that the officiating did not prevent rough play and injuries resulted.

iii. Safeguards through Policy and Protocols

In the Phase II survey, approximately 25% of respondents said that the current BC Soccer concussion protocol was a factor that could be improved

to make soccer safer. The concussion protocols were the most frequently mentioned policy concern for respondents.

Respondents also expressed concerns about education and implementation of other policies and protocols, such as ethics, conduct and diversity policies, screening protocols for coaches and volunteers, and the practice of the Rule of Two.

c) The Role and Expectations of Coaches

We heard consistently that coaches play the key role in creating a safe environment for soccer in BC. As one respondent said so succinctly: “Coaches - they are where the rubber hits the road.” Respondents’ perspectives on the role of coaches was divided between identifying their expectations of coaches and their observations of the behaviour of coaches that concerned them. We also heard from some coaches about their experience and changes they would like to see.

i. The Weight of Expectations on Coaches

As the survey results reflected, participants in soccer in BC expect that coaches are responsible for safety (51% in the Phase I survey and 54% in the Phase II survey). Respondents identified that coaches need to fulfil the roles of leader and teacher, not only to support the players as they learn the technical aspects of soccer but also as they learn the culture of fair play and to accomplish this while being mindful of the individual player’s developmental stage and safety-first considerations.

ii. The Pressure of Winning at All Costs

Along with the expectations on coaches to be leaders and teachers, we heard that success at the elite competitive soccer level of the BCSPL is winning matches and that this focus creates pressure on all participants.

Respondents provided many examples of what they observed as a winning-at-all-costs attitude by coaches and the impact that it has on players.

iii. Concerns about Safety at Practices

We heard that the intensity experienced in BCSPL games can carry over to practices. Parents and players said that, as the pressure to perform increases as players age up through the ranks of the BCSPL, they see overtraining as a real threat to safety. They also said that the decisions of coaches can contribute to players' overtraining, which can lead to injury.

iv. Striking a Balance in Coaching

Some parents shared that their children appreciated the tough coaches who pushed them during practices.

v. When Coaches Cross Boundaries

Some respondents shared examples of current or recent behaviours by coaches that they described as crossing boundaries and creating potential safety risks. This conduct involves male coaches and primarily female players. We did not receive any specific reports of current abuse or misconduct by coaches.

vi. Observations about Coaching Girls

In response to the survey question which asked people to identify what could be improved to enhance safety in soccer in BC, we received many recommendations specifically about coaching female youth athletes. People noted that female youth athletes have different needs than male athletes of

the same age when it comes to training and coaching and that recognition of these differences by coaches would benefit the athletes.

vii. Coaches' Perspectives

In both surveys, we heard from volunteer and paid coaches. They spoke about the challenges they faced in their roles, including the time commitment, particularly for volunteers, and managing relationships with parents and the club. Overall, they spoke about their love of the game and their desire, through coaching, to pass this along.

d) Parents' Experiences with Soccer

Two-thirds of respondents to the Phase I survey, more than 50% of respondents to the Phase II survey, and 80% of telephone interviewees identified their primary role in soccer as a parent of a current player. Many are soccer parents to more than one child. Through the Phase II survey and the telephone interviews, respondents shared with us their observations about the role of parents in soccer in BC.

i. Parents as Safeguards for Safety

More than 25% of respondents to the Phase I survey and 35% of Phase II survey respondents said that the involvement of a parent on the team or club and/or at practice or games is a factor that makes soccer in BC safe. We heard that parents saw their role as a safeguard or intermediary not only for their own children but for others. As one parent described it, "Our parenting makes it safe for our children and we also watch out for other kids." A player respondent said, "Communication from my parents" makes soccer safe.

ii. When Parents Cross Boundaries

We also heard from respondents about their observations of when parents' actions can negatively impact the safety of soccer, particularly during games. Respondents cited particular examples of parents crossing boundaries to critique coaches and refs from the sidelines.

iii. Other Safety Concerns

We heard from several parents about the challenges they faced in managing the time and travel commitment for practices and games in the BCSPL, where the schedule includes two or three practices and a game per week. Several parents outside the Metro Vancouver area spoke about the distances that they had to drive and the toll that it takes on them and their children.

The conditions of playing fields and the surfaces of the fields were commented on in the surveys as well as the telephone interviews as a safety factor that presented a concern to parents. They spoke about the potential for injuries to players when fields are not maintained, particularly during the winter season.

e) Experiences with Association, League and Club Leadership

More than 52% of Phase I survey respondents and 24% of Phase II survey respondents said that BC Soccer leagues and association are responsible for safety in soccer in BC. Almost 46% of Phase I survey respondents and 39% of Phase II survey respondents said that clubs and teams are responsible for safety in soccer in BC. When we asked Phase II survey respondent who they thought is most responsible for safety, their views were very divided as to whether responsibility rested primarily with coaches or with BC Soccer

because of its role at the “top of the decision-making.” What was consistent was that the teams/clubs, and, to a lesser degree, leagues/associations, were viewed as the primary connection point between the two ends of the continuum.

i. Views of the Role of Teams/Clubs in Supporting Safety

Most respondents to the survey saw a clear role for teams and clubs in making soccer safe. Two primary themes emerged regarding respondents’ rationale why teams and clubs play a key role: (a) they hire the coaches who have direct contact with players in the daily training environment (DTE) or (b) they are accountable as members of the leagues and associations, who are themselves the members of BC Soccer, to apply the policies of BC Soccer directly to coaches, players, parents and other individuals who are associated with soccer through the organization.

ii. Perceptions of Club Management

Many Phase II survey and telephone interview respondents shared their perceptions about the culture of management specifically at the club level. Some people perceived that governance at the club level is a factor that impacts the club’s role in supporting safety in soccer. We heard that people observed a “lack of accountability due to poor governance structure of some clubs” and another person perceived “sexism at the club management level.” Several interview respondents described the burden of work that they take on to support their clubs as volunteers, including as directors, team managers and program coordinators. They commented that there is a stark divide within clubs between the volunteers and the roles of the Technical Director and coaches, who hold paid positions, and that this prevents effective communication.

iii. The Role of the Technical Director

The role of the Technical Director (TD) in the BCSPL clubs was a topic about which many respondents shared their opinions and observations. A common perception was that the TD has significant autonomy and authority within the club, particularly in relation to their hiring of program coaches and decisions regarding player transfers. Some referred to TDs at the “gods of the clubs.” We also heard from Technical Directors whose comments about the weight of expectations on them by players, parents and coaches provided further context.

f) Reactions to Past Issues that Impact the Present

We heard from many respondents who expressed their concerns regarding social media and mainstream media news stories in 2019 about the past conduct of a soccer coach (the “Coach”) who has worked in BC and current incidents of concern. Individuals expressed concerns about the lack of information that they received relating to a choice by a club within BC Soccer to employ the Coach. We also heard from former elite-level players regarding their experiences as young athletes and their current perspectives as adults, still grappling with lingering questions about those experiences.

g) Gaps in Reporting Unsafe Incidents or Practices

67% of Phase I survey participants and 54% of Phase II survey participants said that they had witnessed or experienced an incident of conduct related to soccer in BC that they would describe as unsafe. Over half of those individuals said that they were somewhat or absolutely dissatisfied with the resolution of the unsafe incident.

We asked those who indicated that they did not report the incident for their reason or reasons for not doing so. Their responses fell into four broad themes: they were afraid to speak out; the incident was seen by others; someone else took steps to address the situation; or they felt there was no point.

76% of Phase II survey respondents said that, prior to taking the survey, they were unaware of BC Soccer’s Report Abuse webpage¹, and 65% of respondents said that they were now likely to visit the Report Abuse webpage after taking the survey.

h) Perceptions of BC Soccer

As the provincial sport governing body, BC Soccer is responsible for the “governance, promotion, and development of the game of soccer”² in BC. We heard from respondents about their expectations of BC Soccer’s role in supporting safety in the sport of soccer, their knowledge about BC Soccer and their opinions of the organization.

i. Expectations of BC Soccer’s Role in Safety

As noted earlier, most Phase I and II survey respondents identified BC Soccer as being responsible for making soccer in BC safe. In the Phase I survey, 51% of respondents said that BC Soccer was responsible and ranked the organization second, tied with coaches and behind leagues and associations (at 52%). In the Phase II survey, 48% of respondents identified BC Soccer as responsible and ranked the organization second, behind coaches (at 54%).

¹ Available at <https://www.bcsoccer.net/report-abuse>.

² Excerpted from the BC Soccer website: <https://www.bcsoccer.net/profile>.

ii. Knowledge of BC Soccer

We also asked survey respondents to tell us their sources of information about soccer in BC. Phase I survey respondents said that their primary sources³ were, in order of ranking:

- Word of mouth (51%)
- Team/club website (51%)
- League/association website (51%)
- BC Soccer website (48%)
- Social media (35%).

Phase II survey respondents said that their primary source⁴ for information about soccer in BC was, in order of ranking:

- BC Soccer website (28%)
- Word of mouth (21%)
- Team/club website (17%)
- Social media (15%)
- League/association website (8%).

More than 30% of Phase II survey respondents said that they checked their primary source at least once per week, followed by 20% who checked their primary source on a monthly basis.

iii. Opinions of BC Soccer

Survey and telephone interview respondents offered their opinions about how they think BC Soccer is doing as a sport governing body in relation to safety in the sport of soccer. Many respondents' opinions tended to be negative and focused on a perceived lack of transparency in the decision-

³ Respondents were invited to “pick all that apply” for Question 18 of the Phase I survey.

⁴ Respondents were invited to “select one” for Question 32 of the Phase II survey.

making process at BC Soccer, weak oversight and resistance to change. However, in the context of discussing this program assessment, respondents offered positive statements about BC Soccer and identified that this initiative signalled that the organization is seeking to connect with individual participants and seems to be open to feedback.

i) Strength within the Community

Many Phase II survey and telephone interview respondents referred to the connections that they have made within the sport of soccer and the tangible contribution that participating in competitive soccer, as a player, parent, official, coach and/or volunteer has made to them. We heard from many respondents about how participating in soccer has created a community of safety for them that is larger than sport. Respondents' comments were varied but themes emerged, including the importance of actively supporting the community of soccer, mentoring and being involved in more than one facet of soccer.

4. Review of BC Soccer's Bylaws, Rules, Regulations, Policies and Good Practice Guides

In addition to the survey and interviews conducted as part of this process, we were also asked to conduct a comparative review of BC Soccer's governing documents, policies, protocols, and good practice guides related to safe sport. In order to provide feedback on best practices in other sport organizations, we reviewed publicly-available, comparable policies from: the Canada Soccer Association (Canada Soccer), the national governing body for soccer, as well as another provincial sport organization (PSO) for soccer, Soccer Ontario, and another PSO in BC, BC Hockey.

We also reviewed safe sport resources and documents from the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC), viaSport British Columbia, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES), Sport for Life, and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection (CCCP).

To aid us in our review and to provide a guide for identifying best practices in relation to safe sport, which is recognized by Canada Soccer, viaSport and the CCCP, we also referred to the resources available through the Responsible Coaching Movement (RCM).

We note that we did not undertake an audit of BC Soccer using the RCM checklist. We referred to the RCM checklist to identify best practice approaches for sport organizations where this resource was relevant to this review.

Taking what we learned from the surveys and telephone interviews and applying the lenses of internal consistency, potential efficiency improvements, and best practices in safe sport, we considered whether the BC Soccer's by-laws, rules, regulations, policies and/or good practice guides, which we reviewed, enhance or undermine safety in the sport of soccer in BC. Based on this review, we identified themes and made the following observations:

a) General Observations

- i. Absence of a Cohesive BC Soccer Safe Sport Policy Framework

BC Soccer does not have a cohesive or visible safe sport policy framework.

ii. Absence of a Unifying Safe Sport Statement

BC Soccer does not have unifying safe sport statement that identifies its commitment and approach to supporting safe sport.

b) Observations about Specific BC Soccer Bylaws, Rules, Regulations, Policies and Good Practice Guides

i. Undated Policies and Guidelines

Many BC Soccer policies are undated and out-of-date, including:

- Social Media Policy
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Concussion Policy
- Board Communication and Confidentiality Protocol
- Conflict of Interest and Disclosure
- The Educated Parent

ii. Completion of Screening as a Qualification for Directors

The current qualifications for directors to the BC Soccer board within the By-Laws do not state that they are required to complete background screening. This requirement is contained in the Rules and Regulations. Putting the requirements together would clarify what is required for this role. It would also highlight BC Soccer's commitment to safe sport through its support of background checks at all levels of the organization.

iii. Inclusion of the BC Soccer Conduct and Ethics Policy within its Judicial Code

The BC Soccer Conduct and Ethics Policy sets out BC Soccer's Code of Conduct (the "Code"), which identifies, under section 2.5, the organization's commitment to ensuring "all activities are free from harassment." The Code is contained within BC Soccer's Judicial Code and Policies, which also

includes the Judicial Code, and the Discipline, Protest, Appeals and Sanctioning Policies. On its face, it is not obvious that a Judicial Code would also include the organization's Code of Conduct.

iv. Initiating a Complaint under the Code of Conduct

Many respondents (more than 20% of Phase I survey respondents and more than 30% of Phase II survey respondents) said that they did not report or share information when they witnessed or experienced an unsafe incident or behaviour. Many people expressed concerns that they or their child would be blackballed if they reported.

In considering the feedback from the surveys and telephone interviews as well as the potential content of complaints under the BC Soccer Code of Conduct (allegations of harassment, violence and sexual violence), we observe that BC Soccer's approach of revealing the identity of complainants and imposing a fine for non-compliance with process timelines could serve as a deterrent to filing a report or complaint under the Code, particularly for vulnerable complainants.

v. Lack of Enforcement for the Parent Code of Conduct

Survey and telephone interview respondents described incidents of player parents displaying disrespectful conduct toward refs, players, other parents during matches. As an indicator of best practice in safe sport, Sport For Life's A Sport Parent's Guide recommends a "Parent's Code of Conduct" and provides a template.⁵

⁵ Canadian Sport for Life – A Sport Parent's Guide (2007, Canada Sport Centres). Available at <http://sportforlife.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/A-Sport-Parents-Guide.pdf>.

While the Parent Code of Conduct identifies the expectations of conduct, it does not identify consequences for parents who fail to comply with the behavioural requirements.

vi. Parent Education

As a safe sport resource, BC Soccer’s guide, “The Educated Parent,” sets out information for parents whose children are involved in “Grassroots programming” and is available in English and Punjabi. We note that this guide appears to be focused specifically on parents of children up to the age of 12, who play small-sided games.

We heard concerns from many parents regarding heading and the physical aspect of the game. A resource such as this guide for parents of children new to soccer could provide an opportunity to set out BC Soccer’s rules of play regarding heading and other safety issues.

vii. Clarifying BC Soccer’s Position on the Rule of Two

BC Soccer Rule 20(g), as written, does not require that there be more than one team official per team, provided that the gender of the team official matches the gender of the team players. Rule 20(h), as written, does not require that “the other individual” have knowledge of their role. As such, it is possible that, for games, there could be only one team official present to support a youth team at a match, which does not satisfy the recognized best practice of the Rule of Two.

viii. Duplicate Communications and Social Media Policies

We heard concerns about bullying and cyber-bullying from survey and telephone interview respondents. Section 2.5 of the Code of Conduct identifies “offensive or intimidating phone calls or emails” as behaviour that could be considered harassment. We note that, given the prevalence of

social media, electronic communication has progressed significantly beyond “emails.”

Duplicate communication and social media policies could create confusion for individuals seeking to apply this policy and/or make a complaint. We also note that updates to terminology to address the current practices of electronic communication and social media would strengthen the relevant policy.

ix. Clarifying Grounds for Disclosure of Personal Information under the Privacy Policy

Section 11 of the Privacy Policy sets out circumstances under which it may collect, use, or disclose personal information without an individual’s consent and references the *Personal Information Protection Act*⁶ (the PIPA). The BC Soccer Privacy Policy highlights five circumstances. Section 18 of the PIPA identifies sixteen categories of circumstances under which disclosure is permitted without the individual’s consent.

Adding information to its Privacy Policy about the circumstances under which BC Soccer is permitted by PIPA to disclose personal information without consent to a public body or law enforcement will contribute to clarifying BC Soccer’s role in supporting safety in sport.

x. Consideration of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Many respondents spoke about their observations of and experiences with discriminatory comments and attitudes, particularly in relation to race. In reviewing the BC Soccer resources, we note that there is not a stand-alone policy that presents BC Soccer’s position on equity, diversity and inclusion.

⁶ Personal Information Protection Act, [SBC 2003] CHAPTER 63.

5. Recommendations

In preparing these recommendations, we intend to provide BC Soccer with clear direction and practical suggestions to improve the manner in which it, as the governing body for the sport of soccer in BC, supports safety and addresses concerns about safety in the sport of soccer in BC.

In formulating our recommendations, we focused on the specific context of our review: the role of BC Soccer as the governing body for the sport of soccer in BC to foster, support and ensure safety. BC Soccer carries out its role as the governing body through policy, sanctioning of events, licensing of clubs and enforcement through its Judicial Bodies. Our recommendations were developed to speak to actions to be taken by BC Soccer along these paths. BC Soccer may take additional actions beyond our recommendations based on information summarized in this report.

The recommendations are designed to achieve five specific objectives:

1. Clarify the role of BC Soccer, as the sport governing body, in supporting safe sport, generally, and safety in the sport of soccer in BC
2. Enhance BC soccer's ability to be a leader in the safe sport movement as a BC PSO.
3. Identify opportunities for BC Soccer to support the education of the soccer community in BC about safe sport and safety in soccer in BC
4. Increase the soccer community's trust in BC Soccer in relation to its role in supporting safe sport and safety in soccer in BC
5. Create accountability for BC Soccer to demonstrate its commitment to safe sport and safety in soccer in BC.

Recommendation 1 – Share the results of this review

We recommend that a version of this report be shared publicly. Through the course of the review, we received many enquiries about when the results of this project would be available. The soccer community is interested in safety and showed its interest by participating in great numbers. We also recommend that a written plan to respond to the recommendations in the report be prepared by BC Soccer and shared publicly.

BC Soccer should solicit and consider feedback on its plan from interested parties, including, but not limited to, soccer participants, referees, league/association and team/club leadership and the Safe Sport Advisory Group, as discussed below.

As we heard from respondents that communication is very important, we recommend that BC Soccer commit to providing periodic updates to its members and the soccer community on its implementation of the plan.

Recommendation 2 – Develop and adopt a safe sport position statement

To ensure that BC Soccer's message regarding its commitment to safe sport and safety in the sport of soccer in BC is clear, we recommend that BC Soccer develop and adopt a safe sport position statement and include this statement along with its Mission and Vision statements on its website. We also recommend that BC Soccer include this statement in all BC Soccer safe sport resources and communications. Repetition of this statement will underline BC Soccer's commitment to safety in the sport of soccer in BC. As a starting point, BC Soccer may consider building from its current statement in its Criminal Record Check Policy:

As the governing body for soccer in British Columbia, BC Soccer, in conjunction with its members and affiliated organizations, is responsible for providing safe environments for every participant of our game.

Recommendation 3 – Review internal policies and resources

Based on our review of BC Soccer’s policies, as well as feedback received from the surveys and telephone interviews, we recommend that BC Soccer review its policies, procedures, protocols, and good practice guides for the purpose of creating a cohesive safe sport policy framework. As part of this process, we recommend that BC Soccer enhance its resources and update its policies as noted in this report, including but not limited to:

- Ensure its policies are up to date;
- Create a space for safe sport resources on its website that is easy to locate;
- Ensure its resources and forms are accessible in relation to the various levels of ability, age and literacy of the soccer community as well as access to computers and the internet;
- Amend the By-Laws to reflect that the qualifications of Directors include a background check;
- Establish a stand-alone Code of Conduct or clarify the location of the Code of Conduct and its complaint procedures;
- Update its Communication and Social Media policy
- Update its Privacy Policy
- Update its Parent Code of Conduct.

We also recommend that BC Soccer commit the safe sport best practice approach of the Responsible Coaching Movement and undertake to complete the policy review process identified in the Responsible Coaching Movement Audit Checklist. In enhancing its policies to create a safe sport

policy framework, BC Soccer should also add policies, beginning with those identified in the RCM Audit Checklist:

- Parental Consent Form
- Coach Agreement
- Athlete Agreement
- Travel Policy
- Rule of Two Policy

As noted above, as the core element of the safe sport policy framework, we recommend that BC Soccer establish a stand-alone Code of Conduct or clarify its location within the Judicial Code and Policies. We also recommend that the Code of Conduct should include a complaint initiation process that allows for protection of vulnerable complainants through the acceptance of anonymous complaints and organization-initiated complaint processes with due consideration for procedural fairness for respondents.

Recommendation 4 – Endorse the Canada Soccer Safety Guide

We recommend that BC Soccer endorse the Canada Soccer Safety Guide, use this guide in its development of its safe sport policy framework and link to this guide through its website.

Recommendation 5 – Adopt a position statement and take action on equity, diversity and inclusion

In concert with enhancing the Code of Conduct, we recommend that BC Soccer adopt a position statement in support of equity, diversity and inclusion in the BC soccer community. This statement could form part of the Code of Conduct. We further recommend that, in conjunction with Recommendation 7, Continued Communication, that BC Soccer undertake

a community census to establish a baseline for diversity in the soccer community in BC. BC Soccer should seek external advice on conducting demographic censuses.

Recommendation 6 – Create the role of a Safe Sport Officer

To ensure that individuals who have questions about the safe sport policy framework and procedures can find answers to those questions, we recommend that, in addition to or in conjunction with the BC Soccer Privacy Officer, that BC Soccer create the role of Safe Sport Officer. The individual in this role should be neutral and trained on the policies and procedures of the BC Soccer safe sport policy framework. The Safe Sport Officer should undertake to complete the certifications related to safe sport that are offered by Commit2Kids or the Respect Group at a minimum.

The role of the Safe Sport Officer would be as an information and referral resource for members of the soccer community. The Safe Sport Officer would not conduct investigations into complaints but could advise individuals about where they may report concerns or submit complaints. As many respondents noted in the survey and interviews, they hesitated to file complaints for fear of being blackballed and they also expressed a lack of trust in the processes of BC Soccer to address their concerns. The role of the Safe Sport Officer could address this concern by following up with individuals who ask questions or express their concerns to ensure that their issues have been responded to.

As a further measure to create transparency and accountability for BC Soccer, we recommend that the Safe Sport Officer provide an annual report to the Board of BC Soccer about their interactions with members of the soccer community related to the safe sport policies and identify potential

options for action and improvement of the safe sport policy framework by BC Soccer.

Recommendation 7 – Commit to continued communication with the BC soccer community

We recommend that BC Soccer continue to communicate with the broader soccer community in BC about safe sport and related issues, including but not limited to equity, diversity and inclusion, through regular (annual or semi-annual) online surveys and that it post survey results publicly on its website. The Safe Sport Officer could review the survey results and incorporate feedback into their report to the BC Soccer board of directors with recommendations for action and improvement for the safe sport policy framework.

We also recommend that BC Soccer commit to detailed and transparent public reporting on the types of safe sport complaints that it receives and the manner in which those complaints are addressed. The report should be sufficiently general so as not to identify any personal information, while also being sufficiently specific about BC Soccer's response to provide a snapshot of the effectiveness of BC Soccer's safe sport program.

Recommendation 8 – Take the Responsible Coaching Movement Pledge

We recommend that BC Soccer join the more than forty BC PSOs (24) and BC soccer organizations (20) and publicly commit to RCM by signing on to its Pledge by 2020 and incorporate into its practice the recommendations of Phase I of the RCM:

- Adopt the Rule of Two;
- Conduct background screening for all coaches and volunteers; and

- Support training in ethics and respect for all participants, parents, coaches, volunteers and others involved in sport.

Recommendation 9 – Develop a safe sport communication and education strategy

In conjunction with the development of the safe sport policy framework and accompanying policy changes, such revisions should trigger education and training for BC Soccer members relating to safe sport policy procedures and their compliance requirements and responsibilities under these policies. This training should be made available to individual participants as well.

To address the geographic realities of BC, we recommend that BC Soccer develop online training materials that are accessible and intended for all ages and abilities and utilize its Youtube channel⁷ to promote these resources.

We also recommend that BC Soccer update and expand its current parent resource, The Educated Parent, to include information such as specific safety issues, including field conditions, heading and the concussion protocol, parents' responsibilities in relation to safety including their conduct and BC Soccer's enforcement of conduct standards and the role of coaches and refs in ensuring safety.

Recommendation 10 – Establish a Safe Sport Advisory Committee

As these recommendations arose from the feedback gathered from survey and telephone interview respondents through this review process, we recommend that BC Soccer develop terms of reference for and establish a

⁷ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiMu6XWRNZr_eNymGCovooQ

BC Soccer Safe Sport Advisory Group, which will include diverse representatives from equity-seeking communities and geographic locations and will feature gender parity. The specific constitution of the BC Soccer Safe Sport Advisory Committee will include one or more individuals from the following stakeholder groups:

- Current youth player
- Current adult player
- Former elite or BCSPL player
- Parent
- Coach
- Technical Director
- Referee
- League/Association board member
- Individual(s) with expertise in workplace and organizational investigations into harassment, discrimination, sexual violence, with particular focus on investigations involving youth

Among the objects of the Safe Sport Advisory Group will be to develop options for BC Soccer to consider in addressing the negative impact of historical misconduct within the sport of soccer in BC and institutional responses to reports and concerns. We further recommend that the Safe Sport Advisory Group also consider and develop options, with consideration for its mandate, for BC Soccer to address the issue of field conditions.

The BC Soccer Safe Sport Advisory Group will meet with the BC Soccer Safe Sport Officer to provide feedback and inform the Safe Sport Officer's report to the Board of Directors.

We take this opportunity to thank the many members of the soccer community in BC who took time to fill out the surveys and volunteer for the telephone interviews. We spoke with many people who love the game of soccer. We hope that these individuals may have an opportunity to review a version of this report and to read their words. We acknowledge that, for some respondents, talking about their experiences in soccer was challenging as it stirred up memories. To those individuals we extend a very special thank you.

We hope that BC Soccer will find in this report information that it can use as it considers its next steps in building and supporting a culture of safety in the sport of soccer in BC.

Date: December 19, 2019

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'M Roman'.

Per: Marisha Roman
RUBIN THOMLINSON LLP