

Ontario Passes Ground-Breaking Legislation to Protect Amateur Athletes

Province Becomes a National Leader in Concussion Management and Prevention

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Ontario passed ground-breaking concussion safety legislation today to protect amateur athletes and make sport safer on the field and at school.

Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), 2017 makes Ontario a national leader in concussion management and prevention by establishing mandatory requirements that call for:

- Annual review of concussion awareness resources that prevents, identifies and manages concussions that coaches and educators would be required to review before registering in a sport
- Removal-from-sport and return-to-sport protocols, to ensure that an athlete is immediately removed from sport if they are suspected of having sustained a concussion, giving them the time needed to heal properly
- A concussion code of conduct that would set out rules of behaviour to minimize concussions while playing sport.

In honour of Rowan Stringer, the 17-year-old rugby player whose death resulted from sustaining multiple concussions, the proposed legislation also establishes the last Wednesday in September as "Rowan's Law Day".

Ontario is the first jurisdiction in Canada to pass concussion safety legislation, setting a precedent for sport legislation across the country. The province worked closely with key medical experts, researchers and sport leaders -- most notably the members of the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee -- in establishing this first-of-its-kind legislation.

Making amateur sport safer is part of Ontario's plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation.

QUOTES

" With this legislation now in place, amateur athletes in Ontario – and the coaches and families that support them – will have the safe sport system that they want and deserve. Through increasing awareness, and changing conversations on the field, at school and in our homes, Ontario is creating a world class amateur sport system where athletes and Ontarians can participate safely."

- Daiene Vernile

Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport

" I want to express my gratitude to the legislature for establishing Rowan's Law. Rowan's Law is the direct result of recommendations of the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee, who contributed their time, expertise and passion to develop thoughtful solutions to a significant health concern that has been unaddressed for far too long. I believe that Rowan's Law will become the "gold standard" for concussion legislation in Canada, because of the incredible work of the members of the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee. I look forward to seeing Rowan's Law implemented in the months to come, as well as the other key recommendations of the Advisory Committee. In the memory of our daughter Rowan, I thank all who were involved in bringing us to this day, and to those who will continue the important work of promoting concussion awareness."

- Gordon Stringer

Rowan's father

" This important legislation will create a safer environment for young athletes to participate in the sports of their choosing. Now, athletes and their coaches and families are going to benefit from increased awareness and knowledge of how to immediately assess and manage any form of head injury during a sports game. This will keep our young athletes healthy and beneficially engaged in sports."

- Helena Jaczek

Minister of Health and Long Term Care

" I applaud the passing of this legislation. The safety of our students is one of our top priorities. This important legislation will provide the necessary supports for our students and the entire school community."

- Indira Naidoo-Harris

Minister of Education

" As Chair of the Rowan's Law Committee, and on behalf of its members, we are so pleased that Ontario not only has demonstrated its commitment to protecting our young people playing sport, but also set a new standard for concussion prevention and management for Canada. I believe that Rowan's Law will change the culture of amateur sport, where everyone can participate safely and speak up if they or a teammate might have a concussion."

- Dr. Dan Cass

Chair, Rowan's Law Advisory Committee, Executive Vice President, Programs and Chief Medical Executive, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

QUICK FACTS

- The legislation is part of the government's response to the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee report for the prevention and management of concussions in amateur sport released in September 2017. Chaired by Dr. Dan Cass, the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee was established to review the coroner's inquest recommendations made following the death of Rowan Stringer.
- In Ontario, 22 per cent of students reported being knocked out or admitted to hospital due to a head injury in their lifetime. In Canada, among children and youth who visit an emergency department for a sports-related head injury, 39 per cent were diagnosed with concussions, while a further 24 per cent were possible concussions.
- Ontario's current work to increase awareness about concussions includes a [web portal](#) with information and resources on concussions, and a [Sport Recognition Policy](#) that requires all recognized provincial and multi-sport organizations to have policies on concussion management and return-to-play.
- In 2014, the Ministry of Education issued a [policy/program memorandum](#) requiring all school boards to develop and maintain a policy on concussions.

LEARN MORE

- [Report of the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee](#)
- [Concussions](#)

Ben Ellis Minister's Office
416-314-4266
Denelle Balfour Communications Branch
416-326-1724

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