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May 6, 2022

c/o Vicki Walker, Director General of Sport  
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To Sport Canada:

We, the undersigned members of the academic and sport communities, write to express our deep concerns with Sport Canada's commissioning of Catherine Devine and the content of [her Canadian High Performance Athletes 1 survey](#). This survey perpetuates discriminatory views of transgender athletes, and we call on Sport Canada to swiftly withdraw its support for this study.

The first sentence of the online survey explicitly uses the term *biological males* when referencing transgender women. Academics and advocates alike [recognize that referring to trans women as biological males has become code](#) for a trans-exclusionary position. Beyond deliberately demeaning and devaluing trans women's identities and humanity, the term "biological male" also ignores scientific research demonstrating that the athletic capabilities of transgender women are not comparable to those of cisgender men.

Appearing in the opening sentence of the survey, it serves as a green light for respondents to express trans-exclusionary views, thereby injecting a clear bias into the survey. Later in the survey, other misleading terms that similarly signal a trans-exclusionary position, including *puberty-related male advantage*, are used to prime participants for answering questions. Priming is widely recognized amongst survey researchers as biasing the responses of survey participants and compromising the validity of the resulting findings. In this case, priming via transphobic and scientifically incorrect terminology is likely to increase the expression of negative attitudes towards transgender women in elite sport.

Later in the survey, two articles are cited, which “detail that there is no current scientific protocol which eliminates puberty-related muscular advantage in non-athletic transwomen (biological males). This means they retain most of their puberty-related male strength following hormone therapy and/or surgery even if their plasma testosterone levels drop to within the female range.” To date, several scholars, including the Canadian Centre for the Ethics of Sport, have denounced such studies, finding them inconclusive for making policy decisions about sport.

If Catherine Devine worked in a university setting, an ethical review of her proposed research would have been mandatory. Most commonly, this review would have included evidence of compliance with the [Tri-Council Policy Statement](#), which mandates that researchers respect the dignity of human subjects. No evidence of such an approval is identified to participants. Given

the biases identified above, it is doubtful that her study would have received approval. As it stands, the survey biases do not respect the dignity and humanity of all subjects, in this case, transgender women athletes. Catherine Devine has a clear and public track record of such bias.

We are exceptionally concerned that Sport Canada has commissioned and is currently funding an unethical study, given that study that does not adhere to the Tri-Council Policy Statement's core principles: Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, or Justice.

In a [2020 statement submitted to the UK Parliament](#), Catherine Devine expressed her views on the feedback she received from reviewers of a manuscript she had submitted to an academic journal. In this statement Devine claimed constraints on her academic freedom. The journal's reviewers, all of whom would have expertise in the field and familiarity with the debates, made the following comments about Devine's use of *biological males* and similar terms to refer to trans women: "Putting biologically male and biologically female next to transgender is transphobic"; "The use of 'the biological differences' and 'the sexes' is particularly reductionist"; and in the words of one reviewer, "Steps need to be taken to rewrite much of this article to avoid contributing to the moral panic over trans women competing in women's sport". These statements directly apply to Catherine Devine's current study on the views of Canadian high-performance female athletes regarding the inclusion of transgender women in sport.

The preamble to the Catherine Devine's survey states that the results of the study will comprise "a report for Sport Canada to inform and balance policy insight in this area". Relevant to this claim is [the settlement that Canadian transgender cyclist Kristen Worley reached in 2017](#) with Cycling Canada (CC) and the Ontario Cycling Association (OCA). Among the terms of the settlement, CC and the OCA agreed to review their policies and establish guidelines based on objective science. If Sport Canada is to use Catherine Devine's findings as objective science (despite its clear biases listed above) to inform policy changes for elite women athletes, we can reasonably assume those changes will be trans-exclusionary.

We find the affiliation of this survey with Sport Canada to be profoundly troubling; It suggests that Sport Canada is reversing its longstanding [leadership against gender policing](#) and its [commitment to achieving gender equality](#) in Canadian sport at every level by 2035. The world's first ever openly transgender Olympic champion who represented Canada at the Tokyo Games has also expressed their dismay:

"As a transgender athlete who has proudly represented Canada on the Olympic podium, I am dismayed to see Sport Canada funding research that perpetuates deeply harmful stereotypes about transgender athletes," said Quinn. "Especially given the onslaught of legislation and policies banning transgender youth from sports, we need research that dispels myths and misinformation and that promotes inclusivity, not discrimination."

Sport Canada's support of this survey directly marginalizes the role of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) on policy development regarding ethical issues. The CCES has issued the two reports – [Sport in Transition: Making Sport in Canada More Responsible for Gender Inclusivity](#) and [Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants in Canadian Sport: Guidance for Sport Organizations](#) – providing policy guidance on transgender inclusion in sport through multi-year analysis from experts in the field. Advisory boards for those reports included

both cisgender and transgender athletes, coaches, leaders of National Sports Organizations, researchers, physicians, ethicists, and government officials who consulted across the country.

As people concerned for the transgender community, we endorse the CCES's research and recommendations on these complex and difficult issues. We urge Sport Canada to withdraw its support and funding for Catherine Devine's transphobic and deeply unethical survey.

We value the diversity of all athletes. We learn from each other, are inspired by one another, and support one another. We will not remain silent as discriminatory practices that unfairly target elite transgender women athletes are prioritized in sport under the guise of research.

Signed,

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