

Edmonton Combative Sports Commission

Annual Report – 2023 Accomplishments

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Section 1: Message from the Chair

Though there were no combative sports events hosted in Edmonton in 2023 the year provided fewer challenges than 2022 and optimism for the return of events to Edmonton in the near future. In each of the preceding three years the Commission implemented pauses on the acceptance of applications for Event Permits as a result of spikes in Covid-19 infection rates corresponding with the various “waves” of the pandemic. With the pandemic seemingly petering out there was no need to place any such health related restrictions on events in 2023.

Furthermore, the pause placed on events by City Administration on August 5, 2022 was lifted in early May, 2023 following the conclusion of the City’s review of its bylaws and processes, as well as the Commission’s policies, regulations and procedures. Following the lifting of the pause the Commission has been open to accepting applications for Promoter Licenses and Event Permits.

The Commission has continued its work on the multi-year Policy Review Project which was commenced in 2018. To date the Commission has reviewed 4 of its 13 policies and replaced them with new regulations which aim to provide greater clarity than the old policies, and streamline associated processes.

The Commission held a retreat in November, 2023 to develop its annual workplan, this time with a specific view to completing the Policy Review Project by Q1 or Q2 of 2025. The Commission hopes to review the remaining 9 policies, three at a time, in a time span of 4-6 months for each group of three policies. The Commission will prioritize the order in which the policies will be reviewed based upon the subject matter of the Policies, with an emphasis on athlete safety being paramount.

The Commission welcomed three new members in 2023 and will not need to recruit any new members in 2024. The knowledge and skills represented on the Commission have positioned it well to achieve its mandate.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of all Commission members who volunteer their time and expertise to support the Commission’s mandate of regulating professional combative sports. I would also like to thank the City of Edmonton staff who support the Commission and the wider combative sports community.

Trevor Kelly
Chair, Edmonton Combative Sports Commission

Section 2: Mandate and Role of the Commission

The Edmonton Combative Sports Commission (the “ECSC” or the “Commission”) has been responsible for the regulation of professional combative sports in the City of Edmonton since 1920. The Commission is a council committee created by City of Edmonton Bylaw 15638 (the Edmonton Combative Sports Commission Bylaw). The Commission is one of three parties working together to regulate combative sports in Edmonton. The other two are City Council and City administration (through the Designated Officer position of Executive Director).

Pursuant to section 83(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada, engaging in, promoting or even attending a ‘prize-fight’ is a criminal offence. However, section 83(2) exempts “a boxing contest or mixed martial arts contest held in a province with the permission or under the authority of an athletic board, commission or similar body established by or under the authority of the province’s legislature.” Pursuant to section 5 of Bylaw 15638, the mandate of the Commission is twofold: to control and regulate Combative Sports and Events in the City by approving regulations governing matters including licensing, conduct, credentials, events, discipline, and by hearing appeals from the Executive Director’s licensing and permitting decisions.

The role of the Commission in controlling and regulating Combative Sports in Edmonton is limited to matters of governance and the Commission’s mandate does not include operational decisions or operational responsibilities. The Designated Officer position of Executive Director is responsible for all operational matters (section 28 of Bylaw 15638 sets out the extensive powers, duties and functions of the Executive Director).

Section 3: Commission Members

The Commission includes up to seven volunteer citizen members. A member may serve a maximum of three consecutive two-year terms. The Commission will not be recruiting any new members in 2024 as only one member is reaching the end of their first two-year term and is seeking reappointment for a second term to 2026.

Trevor Kelly	Chair	Appointed 05 2019
Andrew Soto	Vice Chair	Appointed 05 2023
Tye Babb	Past Chair	Appointed 05 2019
Kevin Malahy	Member	Appointed 05 2021
Nateram Seecharan	Member	Appointed 05 2022
Rashi Khullar	Member	Appointed 05 2023
Brandy Badry	Member	Appointed 05 2023

Section 4: 2023 Key Priorities and Activities

Onboarding of New Commission Members

The Commission lost three members and recruited three new ones in 2023. This was the largest amount of turnover that the Commission has had since 2019.

Review of Policy 5 and Approval of New Regulation 5

ECSC Policy 5: Contestants and Officials Involved in Unsanctioned Events was previously stayed in years past pending completion of the Policy Review Project. As part of the pause placed on applications by City Administration the stay on Policy 5 was noted. As such, the Commission undertook a review of Policy 5 which it then used to develop a new Regulation 5: Contestants Involved in Unsanctioned Events which is now in effect.

Annual Workplan Planning Retreat

The Commission held a retreat for its members in November, 2023. The purpose of the retreat was for the members to formulate a long term workplan for the Commission for the remainder of 2023 and into 2024 and 2025 which workplan focuses on completing the Policy Review Project. The Commission also used the retreat as an opportunity to formulate a budget for 2024 which was subsequently approved at the next regular Commission meeting.