

Edmonton Combative Sports Commission - 2024 Annual Report

Message from the Chair

2024 was a significant year of activity for the Edmonton Combative Sports Commission. Hosting no combative sports events since December 2019 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, Edmonton hosted a UFC event at Rogers Place on November 2, 2024. The event was successful, and hopefully will mark a return to combative sporting events being held in Edmonton on a more regular basis.

The Commission has continued its work on the Policy Review Project which commenced in 2018. The work on this project has led to updates to eight of the Commission's 14 policies thus far, and the Commission ideally aims to complete its work on the Policy Review Project by the end of 2025.

The Commission sent three delegates to attend the Association of Boxing Commissions' annual conference in Louisville, Kentucky in July. At the Conference, the Association membership voted on two rule changes to the Unified Rules of Mixed Martial Arts which came into effect November 1, 2024. Coincidentally, the UFC event held in Edmonton the following day was actually the first UFC event to use the two new rules following their implementation.

On November 5, 2024 the Fatality Inquiry Report concerning the death of professional boxer Tim Hauge was publicly released. The Commission is working closely with the Executive Director and the City in its review of the recommendations outlined in the report and will work towards implementing appropriate changes with a view to improving athlete safety. The Commission extends its condolences to the family of Tim Hauge.

Lastly, the Province of Alberta has initiated discussions with the various municipal Combative Sports Commissions in Alberta with respect to exploring the possibility of establishing a Provincial Combative Sport Commission. On December 17th the Chairs and Executive Directors of each municipal Commission were invited to a meeting with the Minister of Sport and Tourism, Joseph Schow, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Ric McIver. The Commission has long advocated for the establishment of Provincial Commission to regulate combative sports in the Province, so the Commission intends to work collaboratively with the City and the Province in the hopes that such an initiative may be undertaken.

Attachment 1

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

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).

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 be recruiting two to three new members in 2025 as two members (Trevor Kelly and Tye Babb) are reaching the end of their third two-year term, while a third member (Kevin Malahy) who is reaching the end of his second term is not seeking a third term.

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However, one of the members reaching their third term, namely, Trevor Kelly, is seeking a one-year extension by City Council of his third term as the Commission wants him to remain on as Chair as no other Commission member is able to assume the role of Chair for 2025. The intention is that one of the new members appointed in 2025 will be able to assume the role of Chair in 2026, but for succession planning purposes the Commission passed a motion on October 9, 2024 endorsing the extension of Trevor Kelly's appointment by one year, to April 30, 2026. The Commission also elected Trevor Kelly on December 9, 2024 to remain Chair of the Commission for the period of January 1 to December 31, 2025.

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

Key Priorities and Activities

Review and Updated Policies 7, 9 and 13

ECSC Policy 7 – Pro Fighter Debut Criteria: The Commission updated this Policy with a view to enhancing the safety of athletes making their professional fighting debuts. As part of this update, the provisions of Policy 7 have been incorporated into Policy 1 and incorporated its provisions into ECSC Regulation 1: Licensing of Contestants and Officials.

ECSC Policy 9 – Suspensions and Rest Periods for Combative Sports Contestants: This policy was updated with a view to harmonizing medical suspension periods. These changes align with the recommendations set out in the MNP report as well as the Fatality Inquiry Report concerning Tim Hague.

ECSC Policy 13 – Drug Testing: This policy was updated to recognize the authority of additional organizations to administer drug testing programs and their ability to impose sanctions on athletes that have committed any violations.