

July 27, 2026

Subject: Ensuring Ontario's Attendance Policy Supports Youth Sport Participation

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Skate Ontario, I am writing regarding Ontario's recently announced attendance and participation requirements. We support the government's objective of addressing chronic absenteeism and strengthening student engagement.

We were encouraged by the Ministry of Education's clarification that parents will continue to be able to request excused absences for activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, including sport.

As implementation proceeds, we respectfully ask that in your work with Ministry of Education staff, the following two guiding principles be adopted:

1. **Organized sport participation and competition should be explicitly recognized as an acceptable parent-approved absence.**
2. **No fixed numerical limit should be placed on parent-approved sport-related absences where students remain in good academic standing and continue to meet curriculum expectations.**

Research consistently links youth sport participation with improved physical and mental health, educational engagement, leadership development, and future career success. The evidence is particularly strong for girls. Notably, an EY and espnW study found that **94% of women in C-suite positions participated in sport**, highlighting the important role sport can play in developing future leaders.

Timely clarification is particularly important as families are currently making decisions regarding participation in major events during the upcoming school year. As an example, athletes selected to represent Ontario at the Canada Winter Games will likely require a minimum of one week away from school to compete. For these athletes, that absence is only one component of a broader competition schedule that also includes qualifying events, training camps, assessment days, and national championships. If fixed numerical limits are imposed on parent-approved absences, some families may conclude that pursuing these opportunities is no longer feasible. We are also hearing from parents who are questioning whether the traditional school system can continue to accommodate sport participation, underscoring the need for policies that recognize sport and education as mutually reinforcing investments in youth development. Student-athletes should not be disadvantaged for pursuing opportunities that build many of the same skills and attributes that contribute to academic achievement, lifelong health, leadership, and future success.

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Ontario has invested significantly in increasing physical activity, improving mental health, supporting positive youth development, and advancing opportunities for girls and women in sport. Decisions related to attendance requirements should reinforce these objectives and recognize the important role organized sport plays in achieving them.

We therefore urge you to work with your Ministry of Education counterparts to explicitly recognize organized sport participation as an acceptable parent-approved absence and to avoid imposing fixed numerical limits on sport-related absences.

Thank you for your time and for approaching the Ministry of Education on our behalf. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Lisa Alexander
CEO
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cc: Skate Ontario Board of Directors:

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Sources: Ontario attendance policy announcements and ministry clarification regarding sport-related excused absences (CBC News, April and June 2026; CityNews, June 30, 2026). EY/espnW Women, Sport and Leadership research regarding women in C-suite roles and sport participation.