



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fourteen new Canadians help launch WinSport Newcomer Program

CALGARY, Alta. – Canada welcomed 14 new citizens on Saturday at the WinSport Arena and they didn't take long to immerse in Canadian culture by donning the blades and learning to skate.

Four families and one individual took the Oath of Citizenship – their final step to becoming Canadian citizens – in a ceremony conducted by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. The skating lesson officially launched the WinSport Newcomers Program, which will welcome 60 newcomers to free skate, ski and snowboard lessons at WinSport this winter to help them integrate into the Calgary community and embrace Canadian winter.

“Calgary has been a city that has attracted newcomers from across the country and around the world. As Calgary welcomes people from regions around the globe, it is important for organizations like ours to play a part in ensuring that these families and individuals become part of the fabric that makes up this great city,” says John Francis, WinSport's Director of Marketing, Communications and Sponsorship. “We are doing this through something that we do well, which is helping people discover snow and ice sports. There is a ton of research that shows that sport can be a great opportunity to drive integration through a set of shared experiences and language.

“The uniqueness of our opportunity is that the sports we are introducing allow newcomers to cope with our climate. Winter weather certainly defines and unites us as Canadians and Calgarians.”

The idea was born after the success of a pilot program WinSport ran during the past two winter seasons. WinSport worked with local organizations, including the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) to identify a family interested in participating in a ski lesson. Since 2015, two families took ski lessons and our partners at Rossignol provided them with equipment. WinSport is excited to include the Centre for Newcomers to help identify potential families for this year's program.

Instructing sport is nothing new to WinSport, however, introducing sport to newcomers is a relatively new endeavour. To ensure best practices are exercised when introducing newcomers to these sports, WinSport will be working with Simon Barrick, PhD Candidate at the University of Calgary, to adopt best practices in sport integration. His doctoral research involves exploring lived experience of newcomers to Canada in introductory winter sport programs.

WinSport's partnering with Barrick garnered even more support. Calgarian Bruce Shultz heard about WinSport's newcomer program, so he and his family decided to support it though a significant financial donation.

“I was very impressed with Simon Barrick's research involving the question of identity, inclusion and belongingness of newcomers,” says Shultz. “Sport has played such an important role in my life and I wanted to support the newcomer program. The idea of introducing people new to our country through sport is a great way for them to integrate into our community, meet their new neighbours and begin a shared sense of belonging.”

Earlier this spring, the Calgary Christian School raised nearly \$10,000 at a fundraising floor hockey tournament and the students pushed to have the money support the Newcomers Program.

“Our school welcomes students from all over the world. Because they are new to Calgary, we want them to feel welcomed, and included, and part of what's happening so that they'll grow to be confident and active participants in their communities,” said Leona Schaap, communications coordinator for the Calgary Christian School. “The WinSport Newcomer Program helps our new families integrate into Canadian culture and make Calgary feel like home. We are grateful for the opportunity to support this unique program.”

Calgarians can play a special role in helping with the newcomers' transition, thanks to a winter clothing drive that WinSport is launching in conjunction with the Newcomers Program. Winter clothing, including mitts hats, scarves, gloves, snow pants and jackets, can be dropped off at seven locations across the city from Oct. 3 to Nov. 13, including:

- Northwest Acura – 125 Crowfoot Way NW
- Silverhill Acura – 5728 MacLeod Trail S
- Ski Cellar Snowboard – 5809 Macleod Trail South, 11 Bowridge Drive N.W. or 1442 17 Avenue SW
- WinSport – 88 Canada Olympic Road SW
- MLA Deborah Drever's Constituency Office – 6307 Bowness Rd NW

WinSport will continue to seek additional partners to expand the Newcomers Program for years to come.

“According to city data, Calgary is the fourth most common destination for newcomers to Canada, so we are excited to have this program snowball in the future,” says Francis.

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About WinSport

WinSport provides world-class sport facilities where Canadian athletes can discover, develop and excel. WinSport owns and operates Canada Olympic Park in Calgary, Alta., the Bill Warren Training Centre located at the Canmore Nordic Centre and the Beckie Scott High Performance Training Centre on Haig Glacier, Alta. A not-for-profit organization, WinSport supports national sport organizations, encourages educational opportunities and subsidizes the operation of unique training and recreational facilities used by the nation's top athletes and the public. For more information on WinSport please visit www.winsport.ca.

For more information, please contact:

Dale Oviatt
Senior Manager, Communications
WinSport
T : 403-247-5601
C: 403-461-9074
E-mail: dale.oviatt@winsport.ca