



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THE 2026 SPECIAL OLYMPICS ONTARIO SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIPS  
HOST ANNOUNCEMENT**

June 17, 2024 – LONDON, ON — Chief Thai Truong of the London Police Service and Cody Jansma, CEO of Special Olympics Ontario, are proud to announce that the City of London will host the 2026 Special Olympics Ontario School Championships.

This will mark the first time London has hosted the School Championships—Special Olympics Ontario’s largest school-based sporting event. In May 2026, more than 1,000 student athletes from across Ontario and Canada will travel to London to compete, connect, and celebrate inclusion.

“The School Championships represent the very best of community, inclusion, and youth leadership,” said Chief Thai Truong. “It’s an honour for the London Police Service to play a role in bringing this inspiring event to our city. We can’t wait to welcome the athletes and show them the heart of London.”

The Games will feature five sports: basketball, bocce, floorball, soccer, and track and field. Each sport will include both traditional divisions, where all athletes have an intellectual disability, and unified divisions, where students with and without intellectual disabilities compete together as teammates. Events are structured to ensure athletes compete against others of similar ability, making the experience both meaningful and competitive.

The School Championships are the flagship celebration of the Special Olympics Ontario Unified Champion Schools program—a movement that empowers students to build more inclusive school communities through sport, leadership, and whole-school engagement. Unified Champion Schools are redefining what it means to belong—on the playing field, in the classroom, and beyond.

We are proud to share that Western University—a cornerstone of the London community and a long-standing champion of inclusion—will serve as the official host venue for the 2026 Special Olympics Ontario School Championships. Western’s deep-rooted connection to Special Olympics includes its active motionball chapter, which engages students in raising awareness and funds to support athletes with intellectual disabilities; its leadership in launching a Unified Intramural Sports Program, where students with and without disabilities play together on inclusive teams; and its ties to Dr. Frank Hayden, the Canadian pioneer of the global Special Olympics movement, whose groundbreaking research on the athletic potential of individuals with intellectual disabilities laid the foundation for the organization itself. Western’s continued commitment to inclusion and innovation makes it a natural and inspiring home for this celebration of youth, sport, and belonging.

**Special Olympics Ontario**

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Registered Charity Number - 11906 8435 RR0001  
Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation. Authorized and accredited by  
Special Olympics, Inc for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities.



As the Games Flag and Final Leg Torch are returned to London, the flame of the movement passes from Ottawa to a new host city—carrying with it the spirit of inclusion, pride, and unity that defines Special Olympics.

### **FACTS ABOUT SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIPS:**

- The 2026 Special Olympics Ontario School Championships will welcome over 1,000 secondary student athletes and educators from across Ontario and Canada to London.
- More than 10,000 high school athletes will compete across the province during the 2025/2026 academic year for a chance to qualify for the Championships.
- Special Olympics Ontario provides year-round sport programming to over 20,000 individuals with intellectual disabilities in 100+ communities and 200+ schools across the province
- Through sport, athletes discover new strengths, build confidence, and inspire inclusive attitudes across their communities.
- The 2026 Games will feature five sports: Basketball, Bocce, Floorball, Soccer, Track and Field
- Each sport will offer two competition streams: Traditional divisions – for athletes with intellectual disabilities and Unified divisions – where athletes with and without intellectual disabilities compete together on the same team.
- Unified Sports promote:
  - Skill development and athletic excellence
  - Friendship and mutual respect
  - Youth leadership and inclusive school communities

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SCHEDULE INTERVIEWS, CONTACT:**

**Website:** <https://schoolchamps.ca/london/>

#### ***Special Olympics Ontario***

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