



Special Olympics
Ontario

THANK YOU

The Government of Ontario has provided longtime, ongoing support through the Ontario Amateur Sports Funding and a one-time grant in 2024. This funding has been instrumental in significantly enhancing our capacity to grow the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program and **has helped us build a better and more inclusive Ontario for over 23,000 Ontarians with intellectual disabilities.**



WHO WE ARE

- Special Olympics Ontario **offers year-round sports programs and competitions** in a variety of sports for Ontarians with intellectual disabilities from the ages of 2 to 90.
- **Our programs not only impact our athletes but also strengthen local communities.** The more Ontarians with intellectual disabilities we reach, the healthier and more inclusive our nation will be.
- Our initiatives address sports, inclusion, physical health, mental health, diversity, and employment.
- **Our programs are low to no cost for families**, which is crucial for most of our athletes who have limited socio-economic resources.
- With over 500,000 individuals with intellectual disabilities in Ontario, **Special Olympics is the only organization providing both grassroots and competitive sports opportunities** to this underserved population.
- **Special Olympics Ontario hosts the largest Multi-Sport Provincial Games for individuals with intellectual disabilities in Canada**, both for Schools (SOO School Championships) and Community (SOO Spring, Summer, and Winter Games).
- A Bain study reveals that **for every \$1 invested** in Special Olympics Canada community sport programs, **more than \$7 of social benefit is generated** through improved athlete health and employment.



\$1
Invested



\$7
Social Benefit

OUR MISSION

Special Olympics Ontario is dedicated to **enriching** the lives of Ontarians with an intellectual disability through sport.

OUR IMPACT

Special Olympics is a global sports movement that **serves over 3.5 million athletes with intellectual disabilities** and thrives **in over 180 countries**. Special Olympics Ontario is proud to be one of the world's most progressive and respected programs. Our foundation is sports, but we offer much more. We have a diverse range of programs that cater to the needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities, extending our reach to hundreds of schools and communities across Ontario. With the support of **over 10,000 volunteers** and the majority of funding coming from donations and corporate sponsorships, we provide essential sports, health, social, and lifestyle support. Our diverse range of programs ensures that we can meet the unique needs of each individual we serve.

We have proudly participated in the Special Olympics School Tournaments for over a decade. These inclusive events allow our students to experience the joy of team sports in a welcoming, ability-matched environment. Around 70% of our students eagerly join tournaments like soccer and basketball, with 40 out of 65 attending the recent Soccer Tournament at West Humber HS. Special Olympics not only gives our students the chance to wear a school uniform and represent our school but also celebrates each participant's uniqueness, prioritizing involvement over competition.

Sam Atwal
Educator



Frank Oke Secondary School
Toronto District School Board



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HEALTH OUTCOMES

The Special Olympics Global movement was built on research that happened in Ontario. From Dr. Frank Hayden's work in the early sixties to the continued findings that occur internationally, research has played a significant role in the advancement and development of individuals with an intellectual disability and the Special Olympics movement.

Thanks to the groundbreaking research of Dr. Meghann Lloyd from Ontario Tech University, we now have very strong, population-level evidence for the significant physical and mental health benefits of participating in Special Olympics for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Dr. Lloyd's research has shown:

49%*

Special Olympics Ontario participants are 49% less likely to develop depression compared to nonparticipants

15%**

Special Olympics Ontario participants are 15% less likely to develop diabetes compared to nonparticipants

*Special Olympics Canada. *Research on Depression and Special Olympics Participants*. 2024.

**Special Olympics Canada. *The Impact of Special Olympics Participation on Diabetes Prevention*. 2024.

Many of our students struggle academically, financially, and socially, but when it comes to playing and participating in organized sports, they are very successful. Special Olympics Sports makes their character stronger, they become resilient, they learn to be together, play as a team, and travel in the group. And we are having fun together! This is a blast!

Agnes Orgodniczak
Educator



Heydon Park Secondary School
Toronto District School Board

Since starting Unified Sports, our athletes have become known and respected across the school. They are high-fived in the halls, asked how they are doing, and have made friends beyond the classroom. Unified Sports has had an immeasurable impact, and our students lead by example, paving the way for future teammates.

Angela Nixon
Educator



Glebe Collegiate Institute
Ottawa Carleton District School Board

I first got involved as a Unified Partner through my gym teacher. Competing with Special Olympics athletes made me feel like I was making a difference in their lives, and I loved seeing them compete at such a high and intense level of competition. The experience changed my perspective and gave me a lifelong friend.

Sebastien Beauchesne
Unified Partner



École secondaire catholique de Casselman
CSDC de l'Est ontarien

Government of Ontario funding has helped us build a better and more inclusive Ontario. Since March 2024, this support has resulted in:

111%

Increase in new elementary schools

28%

Increase in new secondary schools

1264

Total active community sport clubs

30%

Representation on Team Canada by Ontario athlete

For a more in-depth look at our impact, view our annual report at: soontar.io/impact-report

OUR REQUEST

We are asking for \$3 million over four years. This will allow us to continue the work we have started in schools and help strengthen our grassroots to ensure a seamless transition to community programs that will provide lifelong impact through involvement in Special Olympics.

