



## THE VANCOUVER CHARTER ON SKIING SAFETY

Vancouver, Canada

November, 2009

The “**Vancouver Charter on Skiing Safety**” herewith presented at the *Winter Helmet Forum: Ski & Snowboarding – Put a Lid on It* event held in Vancouver on November 20<sup>th</sup> in the context of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. *The Vancouver Charter on Skiing Safety* is based on skiing and snowboarding safety and the Turin Charter, which was approved in the context of the 2006 Turin Winter Olympic Games.

The Turin Charter was originally prepared by a panel of experts and specialists delegated by European Governments who worked under the coordination of TOROC (Turin Organizing Committee), BE.PRA.S.A. (a project co-financed by the European Commission and the health authority of the Italian region of Veneto) and the Italian National Health Institute.

It is understood that the Charter is not intended to lay down new rights with legal value. Rather, the aim of the Charter is to promote a safe, healthy and active sporting and recreational culture, and to make its principles visible to the public, citizens and institutions.

## ***The Vancouver Charter: Skiing and Snowboarding Safety Rationale***

An international review, including Canada, concluded that head injuries are the most common cause of death among skiers and snowboarders. In Canada, it is estimated that 87.5% of skiing and snowboarding deaths have been caused by a head injury. More specifically, traumatic brain injury, which appears to be increasing, has been reported to account for 50 to 88% of all fatalities at ski resorts and 67% of all skier deaths in children.

According to *The Economic Burden of Injury in Canada* report, all winter activities in Canada accounted for over 70,000 unintentional injuries with nearly 1,400 resulting in partial and permanent disability. These serious injuries resulting from winter activities total \$400 million dollars in direct and indirect costs to the health care system, which combined are contributing to the social and economic burden of unintentional injuries.

Research has demonstrated that ski and snowboard helmets are effective at preventing serious head injuries. It is estimated that nearly 50% of all skiing and snowboarding head injuries could be prevented by simply wearing a helmet.



## **PREAMBLE**

Concerning Sport in general, the participants of the Winter Helmet Forum and endorsers of “The Vancouver Charter on Skiing Safety”;

### **Concerning Sport in General**

- Are aware of the important contribution that sport and physical exercise makes towards health and well being;
- Remain convinced that both the promotion of sportive exercise and the reduction of injury risk can be achieved simultaneously;
- Believe that a high level of safety facilitates the promotion of sport by reducing concerns about the potential health risks of sport;
- Consider injury prevention in all types of sporting activities as a fundamental tool for increasing the health benefits of sport;
- Are aware that injuries in general have been identified as a major health problem at a global level, and that injuries cause a huge financial burden to health care, welfare and economies as well as a considerable social burden to societies;

### **Concerning Skiing activities**

- Are conscious of the significant improvements already achieved in skiing safety over the last decades and that there is significant investment in making skiing a safer sport;
- Believe that it is possible to raise the level of safety for skiers by the implementation of existing effective measures and by the development of new measures;
- Are aware that the identification and diffusion of best practices of skiing-related injury prevention are of paramount importance in achieving the goal of greater safety;
- Believe that not only the personal behaviour of those practicing in sport, but also the safety of the environment within which people ski and snowboard and the safety of products and services involved in downhill winter activities are of utmost importance;
- Accept that effective prevention of skiing injuries requires an integrated and sustainable approach, including collaboration and coordination among all sectors, stakeholders and all the relevant regional, national and international players;
- Are affirming that it is necessary to develop, share and implement a common vision of safety standards of skiing;



hereby agree as follows:

#### *Art. 1 Objectives of the Charter*

The aim of this initiative is to lay the foundations for articulating a common universal vision and implementing safety standards and further developing these standards for all relevant safety aspects for skiing activities, in order to reduce the burden of related injuries and promote sport activities and their benefits on health.

#### *Art.2 Responsibility*

Safety in skiing activities is the shared responsibility of individuals, governments at all levels (in particular health and sport departments), businesses and non-for-profit organizations related to these sporting activities and health and safety promotion organizations including, but not limited to cable car operators, sports retailers and rental providers, skiing resorts, producers and retailers of sporting goods, marketing organizations at all levels, sports associations, media, insurers, and standardization organizations.

#### *Art. 3 Non-discrimination*

No discrimination on the grounds of sex, age, race, colour, language, religion, ability, political or other opinion, of national or social origin, shall be permitted regarding access to skiing and other snow sport activities and related safety measures.

#### *Art.4 Vulnerable groups*

Special attention shall be given to the needs of vulnerable groups and, if necessary, additional prevention measures shall be taken, aimed at enabling vulnerable groups and disadvantaged/disabled individuals/groups, to perform skiing activities with a high level of safety.

#### *Art.5 Children*

Among vulnerable groups, special attention should be devoted to child safety. Children start skiing before they are completely aware of the risks involved, of their ability or of their limits. Particular support needs to be given to children by families, educational institutions and children's groups. Children need to be taught about behaviours and rules during skiing activities. This will contribute to the improvement of children's approach to mountain activities with positive effects on their physical and mental health. While enjoying sport, children can be better protected through the use of helmets in order to ensure protection from head injuries

#### *Art.6 Information dissemination*

Governments, private companies and related NGOs have the responsibility to contribute to having well-informed and safety-oriented citizens, customers, members, guests or readers. The responsibility for information does not lie solely within one sector. The information given must be appropriate to the specific situations.

#### *Art.7 Right of safety*

Each individual has the right to be free from harm caused by unsafe services, unsafe structures or materials, incorrect behaviours of other snow sport participants and each individual has the right to access materials, services, structures, training and treatments that meet high safety standards.



#### *Art.8 Right of information and education*

Every individual has the right to be provided with information regarding risks and available preventive measures that has been shown to be relevant in minimizing the risk of injury. This information should be presented in a comprehensive and positive manner that encourages physical activity.

#### *Art.9 Right of Access*

All individuals should be given the possibility to choose among a range of products and services of high quality and safety standards. Participants have the right of access to what is clearly recognizable as best practice with respect to the environmental, physical, social, cultural, legal, economic and technological conditions. All individuals have the duty to follow existing codes of conduct aimed at minimizing the risk of accidents

#### *Art. 10 Responsibilities of industry*

It is the duty of service suppliers to the sport to inform participating individuals of the relevant safety information and regulations. Standardized rules of conduct for safety in skiing sports, for example the International Ski Federation (FIS) rules should be known and followed. To achieve a high level of safety, guidelines or standards are needed in the following areas; education and information, equipment and equipment-related services, and infrastructure and its related services.

#### *Art. 11 Governmental responsibilities*

Since skiing safety is a multi-sector issue, governments have the responsibility to develop, implement, enforce and evaluate policies and programs. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to, policies and programs, supportive and healthy environments, safety standards, safe products and services, continuous information and public education. Such policies and programs need to be led by Ministries responsible for health, health promotion, tourism, sport and/or the industry sector for consumer products and safety.

#### *Art. 12 Knowledge development*

All decisions made regarding injury prevention measures should be based on evidence. Reliable and comprehensive injury surveillance as a matter of routine, according to international standards, is crucial for quantifying the problems, identifying risk factors and monitoring the effectiveness of interventions. Sustainable networks and information systems are needed for sharing experiences and knowledge of good practices. Dedicated health and non-for profit institutions ensure that research, expert advice, knowledge translation and advocacy are all included in sharing awareness and understanding in the field of winter helmet safety.

#### *Art. 13 Collaboration of stakeholders*

There are no successful injury prevention policies without a functioning collaboration of researchers, practitioners and policy makers. It is important to maintain a permanent collaboration and partnership with stakeholders from public and private sectors, as these sectors both share a common and a derived benefit from enhanced safety in skiing activities.



#### Art. 14 *Regional, National and International collaboration*

In order to ensure an effective exchange of experiences and knowledge of good practices, a collaborative international network is needed, including international benchmarking.

#### Art. 15 *Best practices*

Of paramount importance is the adoption of evidence-based theory that, through a continuous process of monitoring, evaluating and experience-sharing, shall become the adoption of shared best-practices. The concept and identification of best practices are tightly linked with social, economical and technological changes. This also means that what is a best practice today will not necessarily be the same tomorrow.

### **GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE CHARTER**

**Safe Kids Canada** is to submit the charter to the major national, provincial and international stakeholders, including participants of the *Winter Helmet Forum; Ski & Snowboarding – Put a Lid on It* event.

The Charter will be submitted for endorsement, adoption, and/or comments by regional, national and international institutions, civil society and anyone who is able to contribute to the protection of these rights. All endorsers and stakeholders are invited to support the implementation of the Charter principles. Safe Kids Canada will report about the progress to the participants at the Canadian Injury Prevention Conference in 2011.



## GLOSSARY

### *Definition: Skiing*

Within the context of this charter the term skiing also includes snowboarding. This charter deals with skiing and snowboarding on prepared slopes or on marked but not prepared routes. The focus is on these sporting activities, which are performed by sports enthusiasts for leisure and when using tourist facilities and services. The Charter does not deal with racing and does not cover activities in the wilderness like ski trekking or helicopter skiing, where risk taking and safety precautions lay primarily within the responsibility of the adventurers. It also does not give specific advice on the assessment of risk of technical systems or natural dangers like avalanches.

### *Definition: prevention of skiing injuries*

Prevention of skiing injuries is the result of a complex process, whereby humans interact with their environment, including the physical, social, cultural, technological, political, economic and organizational environments, in order to set up safer conditions when performing skiing activities and decrease, in this way, the risk of being injured.

### *Definition: safety*

Safety is a state in which hazards and conditions leading to physical, psychological or material harm are controlled in order to preserve the health and well-being of individuals. Safety as meant by this Charter indicates a low level of risk, which can be achieved by a thorough implementation of available, affordable and effective measures.

### *Definition: safe product*

Safe product shall mean any product which, under normal or reasonably foreseeable conditions of use, including duration and, where applicable, putting into service, installation and maintenance requirements, does not present any risk or only the minimum risks compatible with the product's use, considered to be acceptable and consistent with a high level of protection for the safety and health of persons.

The following organizations have endorsed the principles within the Vancouver Charter:

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Dr. Patricia Daly  
Chief Medical Health Officer  
Vancouver Coastal Health



Dr. Perry Kendall,  
Provincial Health Officer  
British Columbia Ministry of  
Health Services



Dr. Jack Taunton  
Chief Medical Officer  
Vancouver Organizing Committee  
for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic  
Winter Games

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