



## **AWG INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES POSTPONEMENT OF THE 2022 ARCTIC WINTER GAMES IN PROACTIVE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**March 3, 2021**

***The Arctic Winter Games International Committee announces the postponement of the Wood Buffalo 2022 Arctic Winter Games.***

March 3, 2021 (Whitehorse, YT) – The Arctic Winter Games International Committee (AWGIC), following discussions with Wood Buffalo 2022 Arctic Winter Games Host Society, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) and the Government of Alberta, has made the decision to postpone the Wood Buffalo 2022 Arctic Winter Games in a planned and proactive response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The Games, originally scheduled to take place in Wood Buffalo from March 6-12, 2022, will be rescheduled to a later date to be announced.

Held every two-years, the Arctic Winter Games is the premier circumpolar sport and cultural event for youth hosting up to 2,000 participants and an equal number of volunteers.

The decision to plan the postponement of the Games was made to ensure the health and safety of all the participants, coaches, volunteers, staff, spectators, and the host community. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic would likely prevent the Arctic Winter Games International Committee from delivering on their mission to host a meaningful Arctic Winter Games experience.

*The health and safety of our circumpolar participants, coaches and volunteers is of paramount concern, and although it is a great disappointment that we must postpone the 2022 Arctic Winter Games, we are steadfast in our decision. The International Committee engaged in an extensive consultative process with both the Wood Buffalo 2022 Host Society and our valued Chefs de Mission from Participating Units. We considered their critical feedback, we analysed the relevant risks and considered our tolerance for those risks, and we learned from best practices employed by other Major Games leaders to come to this difficult decision.*

**John Flynn, President, Arctic Winter Games International Committee**

*The Wood Buffalo Arctic Winter Games Host Society supports the decision of the AWGIC and understands the significant considerations involved in the planned postponement of the Games. We would like to thank the community and our volunteers for their continued support as we prepare to welcome the Circumpolar North at a later date. As a Host Society, we will continue to collaborate with the AWGIC and our stakeholders to ensure a successful and safe event for visitors and the community.*

**Melissa Blake, Co-Chair, Wood Buffalo 2022 Arctic Winter Games**



*I share in the collective disappointment that will be felt by our athletes, coaches, officials, games organizers and fans by this announcement. The Arctic Winter Games International Committee and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Host Society had the unenviable task that so many event organizers are making in light of the continuing threat posed by COVID-19. We support their decision to keep the health and safety of the athletes and their communities as their primary focus. We also remain committed to working with the host society to ensure a safe and enjoyable games in Wood Buffalo once new dates are established.*

**Leela Sharon Aheer, Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women**

No decision has been made at this time on the new dates for the Arctic Winter Games in Wood Buffalo. The Arctic Winter Games International Committee and the Wood Buffalo Host Society are diligently working together to determine an appropriate date for the Games to be rescheduled and intend to announce that date in the near future. Both organizations will continue to prioritize the health and safety of all Games participants while monitoring the global pandemic and providing updates to all stakeholders on the Wood Buffalo Arctic Winter Games, as they become available.

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#### **About the Arctic Winter Games International Committee**

The Arctic Winter Games International Committee is the rightsholder, and responsible for the long-term stewardship and management, of the Arctic Winter Games, a biennial premier circumpolar sport and cultural event for youth.

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#### **About the Wood Buffalo 2022 Arctic Winter Games Host Society**

The Arctic Winter Games is an international biennial celebration of circumpolar sports and culture taking place in the Wood Buffalo region. The Games will highlight the region and its culture through the spirit of sport to an international audience and visitors from around the world. The week-long event will see athletes from our own backyard along with international Circumpolar north regions during their time to shine.

#### **Media Contact:**

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## **Wood Buffalo 2022 Arctic Winter Games Postponement - FAQs**

The Arctic Winter Games International Committee (AWGIC) has made the difficult decision to postpone the 2022 Arctic Winter Games due to continued public health concerns relating to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Arctic Winter Games International Committee and the Wood Buffalo Arctic Winter Host Society are diligently working together to determine an appropriate date for the Games to be rescheduled.

### **1. When were the Wood Buffalo Arctic Winter Games originally scheduled to occur?**

The Wood Buffalo Arctic Winter Games were scheduled to occur between March 6 and 12, 2022.

### **2. Why were the Games postponed at this time?**

The decision was made at this time with careful consideration to protect the health of participants and communities of the Circumpolar North and to provide all stakeholders time to adjust their preparations. Given the uncertainty created by the ongoing pandemic, the Games were postponed to ensure the health and safety of all the participants, coaches, staff, volunteers, spectators and the host community. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic would likely prevent us from delivering on our mission and vision to host a meaningful Arctic Winter Games experience that is a premier sport and cultural event for Circumpolar youth.

### **3. What factors have been considered in making this decision?**

In January 2021, the AWGIC contracted the Sport Law & Strategy Group (SLSG) to develop a comprehensive risk analysis of the potential impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic may have on the 2022 Arctic Winter Games, and to report on the risk analysis as well as the critical feedback from key stakeholders. In review of this Report, the AWGIC determined that several of the key risks presented by the ongoing pandemic were too high to tolerate if the Games were to proceed in March 2022.

Aligning with the AWGIC values was paramount in this decision-making process as well as the prudent consideration into several of the risk factors as presented within the SLSG report. As a participant focused organization, the AWGIC champions the emotional and physical needs and safety of all participants while operating with transparency and high ethical standards. The risk to the health and safety of participants, a diminished participant experience as well as financial loss and planning uncertainty were key risk factors to postpone the Games.

### **4. Who has been involved in the decision to postpone?**

The decision to postpone was made by the AWGIC, after extensive consultation, via the Sport Law & Strategy Group, with the Wood Buffalo Arctic Winter Games Host Society,

and Chefs de Mission of Participating Units. Major Games leaders were also engaged and helped to inform the decision.

**5. What are the new dates for the Games?**

The AWGIC recognizes that the decision to postpone and any uncertainty around the potential new date may cause concerns about the future. As such, the AWGIC is working diligently with the Wood Buffalo Arctic Winter Host Society, in consultation with the Chefs de Mission from Participating Units, to determine a responsible and appropriate date for the Games as swiftly and as efficiently as possible. The AWGIC wishes to thank everyone for their patience while they conduct this process.

**6. Will this affect future Arctic Winter Games?**

The dates and locations of future Arctic Winter Games have yet to be confirmed, and thus there is ample time to revise any impacts associated with the postponement of the Wood Buffalo 2022 Arctic Winter Games.

**7. With the Games now postponed, is it likely to be the same athletes participating in the Games?**

The AWGIC is working with its sport partners on important issues around athlete eligibility and team selections. As of right now, no decisions have been made on adjustments to athlete eligibility rules, including age categories. The AWGIC, in consultation with Chefs de Mission of Participating Units, will be reviewing the eligibility requirements of the athletes to determine whether or not adjustments are necessary.

**8. What is the Game Plan once a new date is established?**

Once a new date for has been determined, the AWGIC will continue to collaborate with the Host Society and its Participating Units to identify the key impacts associated with this postponement and to build a Roadmap for the future. This Roadmap will re-establish the key milestones, decisions, and deadlines for the Games, as well as any relevant COVID-19 protocols that may still need to be considered.

**9. What if we have other questions?**

If you have other questions, please contact:

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