

# **The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada and the Control of the Canadian Olympic Committee, 1908-1921**

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In 1907 a temporary Canadian Olympic Committee was formed to oversee Canada's first official participation in the modern Olympic Games (the 1908 London Olympic Games). Following the Games, the Committee was dissolved. This process was repeated for the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm.

In 1913, at the behest of Pierre de Coubertin, the members of the umbrella group for amateur sport in Canada, the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (AAU of C), created a permanent Canadian Olympic Committee (COC), complete with its own Constitution. While permanent, it remained closely connected with the AAU of C since nearly all of its members belonged to both organizations. The COC remained in this organizational form for the next seven years. Then, in 1920, the AAU of C members completely reorganized the COC

Constitution to make it more closely accountable to the Union. What prompted this decision? This paper argues that the decision was based on a concern that the COC had the potential to become independent of the AAU of C.

Potential COC independence was a concern for several reasons. First, overseeing the activities of the COC would enhance the AAU of C's pre-eminent position in controlling the administration of amateur sport in Canada. Second, COC independence from the AAU of C would undermine the influence and power of the AAU of C over Canadians involved in international sport, especially the Olympics. Furthermore, the AAU of C wished to develop a close link with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) which regulated the premier international amateur sports competition. Close association with the IOC would give the AAU of C a powerful weapon in its self-proclaimed crusade against professionalism in sports.

The thesis of this paper is supported by an examination of the minutes of AAU of C annual meetings, newspaper accounts of those meetings, and various secondary sources such as dissertations and theses. An examination of the constitution of the permanent COC created in 1913 reveals that it was, in fact, worded in such a way as to indicate the possibility of it taking actions independently of, and even in opposition to, the AAU of C. When it was reorganized in 1920, its status was reduced to a standing committee within the AAU of C. This increased the AAU of C's control over Canadian athletes involved in amateur international competitions by strengthening its connection with the IOC, aided in its war against professionalism, and solidified its claim of administering most amateur sport in Canada.