



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### **Whistler Sliding Centre Safety Audit recognizes extensive safety measures in place**

*Whistler, BC* – Whistler Sport Legacies (WSL) today released an independent Safety Audit on the Whistler Sliding Centre (WSC) that recognizes the significant work done to date to address safety and also makes recommendations for further safety enhancements. The Safety Audit was commissioned to assist WSL in identifying whether further track modifications are needed to achieve the highest possible safety standards for all.

*The Whistler Sliding Centre Sled Trajectory and Track Construction Study* confirms the facility's design followed the guidelines set by the sliding sport International Federations (IF's), and that all additional safety measures recommended as a result of the BC Coroner's Report from September 2010 have been met. The Report includes 40 recommendations to further enhance safety measures and minimize risk within the context of a speed sport. Twenty-nine recommendations are directed to WSL and 11 pertain to the IF's.

The [350-page report](#), provides a technical analysis developed over the course of 18 months. The audit is the first of its kind in the world of sliding sports. It includes a three-dimensional scan of the track, trajectory modeling, a design audit, safety audit, and retrospective study of in-track incidents.

The independent report was commissioned by WSL with legacy funding from the 2010 Winter Games, and conducted by an independent and previously unaffiliated entity, Calgary's SAIT Polytechnic. The study was in response to a recommendation in the BC Coroner's Report following the accidental death of Georgian athlete Nodar Kumaritashvili during the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. WSL selected SAIT Polytechnic following a Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

Dr. Alex Zahavich is Director of Applied Research at SAIT Polytechnic and author of the comprehensive audit. "Given that the determination of safety is based on minimizing risk, the findings from this comprehensive study show that measures are in place to minimize risk at the track to athletes, spectators and track workers," said Zahavich, who is also a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Industrial Research Chair for Colleges in Sports and Wellness Engineering Technology. "Based on the findings, this report also puts forward recommendations for additional safety enhancements at the track and in the sliding sports regulations to further reduce risk."

#### **Whistler Sport Legacies**

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“Safety is our top priority and we will continue to take all possible steps to ensure the safety of athletes, the public, spectators and track workers. Whistler Sport Legacies is implementing all 29 recommendations for the Whistler Sliding Centre to ensure the best and safest possible experience for all who use and visit the track,” said Keith Bennett, President & Chief Executive Officer of Whistler Sport Legacies. “We have also offered our full support to the International Federations with the implementation of the remaining 11 recommendations.”

The International Federations recognize the Safety Audit is the first of its kind, and confirmed their continued commitment to working with the Whistler Sliding Centre. “We welcome the report and take it seriously as athletes’ safety is of utmost importance for us. The recommendations contained in the Safety Audit reflect the direction that our organization is already heading in. In fact, we have already implemented some of the advice and follow-up on the other recommendations is work in progress,” said Svein Romstad, Secretary General for the International Luge Federation (FIL).

Athletes who call the Whistler Sliding Centre home confirm its importance in their development. “The Whistler Sliding Centre is game-changer for the Canadian team. The track has contributed to invaluable training and competition, and raised the profile of sliding sports. The Whistler Sliding Centre will continue to produce top caliber Canadian athletes who achieve international podium success,” said Walter Corey, High Performance Director for Luge Canada.

Terry Wright, former Executive Vice President for VANOC, who remains on contract for final wrap up activities stated: “The goal of the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games was to create lasting legacies through the sport venues, including the Whistler Sliding Centre. We’re pleased to have helped facilitate the Safety Audit recommended by the BC Coroner as well as other track enhancements already in place. These measures help ensure the Whistler Sliding Centre remains an outstanding venue for recreational and elite athletes. Our hope is that the Safety Audit, which arose out of a tragic accident, results in an enhanced legacy of safety for all athletes participating in these sports.”

### ***About Whistler Sport Legacies***

In March of 2007, the Whistler 2010 Sport Legacies Society was incorporated under the BC Society Act. The Society was established by the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC) to promote amateur sport and athletics in Canada by operating world-class facilities post- Games for the training, competition, and accommodation of Canadian high-performance athletes. Those facilities include Whistler Olympic Park, the Whistler Sliding Centre, and the Whistler Athletes’ Centre.

The Society is governed by a Board of Directors. There are seven nominating entities (Canadian Olympic Committee, Canadian Paralympic Committee, Province of British Columbia, Resort Municipality of Whistler, VANOC, Lil’wat Nation, Squamish Nation) that each appoint a volunteer member of the Society. The members of the Society form the Board of Directors.



The facilities were transferred from VANOC to WSL in June of 2010. WSL supports operations and capital investments through three primary sources: revenue generated from venue programs, funding from the Legacy Endowment Fund, and BC Provincial Government funding.

***About SAIT Polytechnic***

SAIT Polytechnic is one of Canada's most exciting destinations for post-secondary education, offering more than 100 career programs and over 1,000 part-time courses (including online and distance) that position people for success in technology, trades and business. A leader in innovation, SAIT also collaborates with industry on applied research and delivers corporate training worldwide. For more information, visit [www.sait.ca](http://www.sait.ca).

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## BACKGROUNDER

### *Whistler Sliding Centre Sled Trajectory and Track Construction Study Key Findings*

- Safety practices at the Whistler Sliding Centre track follow generally accepted standards with some opportunities for improvement in documentation.
- The as-constructed geometry of the Whistler Sliding Centre track meets the design expectations.
- The starting stations, buildings, shelters, bridges, tunnels, rail locations, and external barriers all meet design expectations.
- The group responsible for designing the track was competent.
- The track operator has already completed a number of track modifications to improve safety, including the recommendation from the BC Coroner's Report to commission a Safety Audit.
- More than 43,000 runs have taken place on the track since it opened in 2008 – less than 2 per cent of those runs resulted in an incident.
- A review of all the runs showed a less than 0.5 per cent risk of an incident leading to an injury and 0.2 per cent of incidents required medical attention.
- The risk of receiving a moderate injury at the Whistler Sliding Centre Track was found to be less than 0.1 per cent.
- The Safety Audit recommends International Federations governing the sliding sports provide more detailed guidance on track design, a maximum safe velocity, rollover barrier design standards, safety measures, incident analysis, equipment safety and driver/slider competence and equipment.

The full [350-page Report](#) can be found on the Whistler Sport Legacies website

**For more information, please contact:**

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