

Letter to the Honourable Nellie Kennedy, Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage

Date: August 8th, 2025

From: Manitoba Jiu-Jitsu Association

To: The Honourable Nellie Kennedy

Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage

minscht@manitoba.ca

RE: Serious Concerns Regarding Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Regulation Under the Manitoba Combative Sports Act

Dear Minister Kennedy,

I am writing on behalf of the Manitoba Jiu-Jitsu Association (MJA), the largest combat sport under the MCSC's jurisdiction, to express our serious concerns regarding the implementation and ongoing administration of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu regulations under the Manitoba Combative Sports Act. Despite multiple attempts to engage constructively with your department and the Manitoba Combative Sports Commission (MCSC), fundamental issues remain unresolved after more than two years of correspondence.

Background and Current Status

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is now the **largest combat sport** under the MCSC's jurisdiction, with more licensed athletes than all other combat sports combined. The Manitoba Open alone had 338 unique athletes registered in 2025 (520 total registrations when accounting for multiple divisions), yet only 162 athletes obtained the required licenses. Importantly, we fully informed all registered athletes that licensing was required and directed them to the MCSC for compliance. The significant gap between registered athletes and licenses obtained—despite our clear communication of the requirement—is a clear indication of the community's concerns with the current regulatory framework.

Primary Concerns

1. Exclusion from Regulatory Development Process

The Issue: Despite repeated assurances that the BJJ community would be "part of the regulations," we were merely informed about pre-determined policies rather than meaningfully consulted.

Evidence from Timeline:

- **May 16, 2023:** MCSC Executive Director initial contact stating BJJ would be included as part of the regulation development process
- **April 2, 2024:** Single meeting included only a notification of pre-determined policies with limited stakeholders
- **April 12, 2024:** Community submitted detailed opposition to \$40 licensing fee and offered alternative solutions such as event organizer fees instead
- **August 15, 2024:** Draft regulations discovered on EngageMB website without prior notification, despite these drafts being released August 1st to the public
- **August 21, 2024:** Julia Tetrault, Director of Sport and Tourism Policy, stated "Once the consultation period has ended I would be happy to meet with you and John to discuss how the regulation will be implemented." This meeting never occurred despite community feedback that highlighted major concerns
- **December 1, 2024:** Regulations officially came into effect - BJJ community was never notified by any government representative and only learned of this through a reporter

Our Position: True consultation requires input before decisions are made, not notification after policies are finalized. The BJJ community's substantive feedback regarding licensing fees and regulatory approach was acknowledged but never addressed or incorporated.

2. Broken Commitments Regarding Fund Distribution

The Issue: For over two years, government officials and MCSC leadership have consistently promised that licensing fees would be "reinvested back into the sport." These commitments remain unfulfilled with no concrete timeline or mechanism established.

Evidence from Timeline:

- **April 2024 meeting:** Julia Tetrault, Meghan Rafferty, and John McDonald discussed fund allocation, with Julia referencing the need for a policy to be written
- **November 18, 2024:** In-person meeting with MCSC Executive Director confirmed "no MCSC costs, fees to be reinvested in sport"
- **May 20, 2025:** MCSC meeting with all commissioners present reaffirmed this commitment
- **June 9, 2025:** MJA submitted detailed MOU proposal for fee collection partnership
- **July 8, 2025:** MCSC leadership changes postponed all decisions until September 2025

Documented Statements:

- **April 2024:** Julia Tetrault said there was "the need for a policy to be written" by the MCSC for fund allocation
- **Deputy Minister (September 12, 2024 meeting):** Reiterated that the funds could support BJJ community
- **John McDonald, MCSC Executive Director:** Repeatedly stated fees would be "reinvested in sport"

Current Status: Despite collecting thousands of dollars in licensing fees since December 2024, no funds have been allocated to BJJ development, no committee has been established, and no formal process exists for fund distribution.

3. Commission Meeting Commitment Unfulfilled

The Issue: During our May 2025 meeting with the full MCSC board, all commissioners present agreed to the principle of fund reinvestment and community partnership. This unanimous commitment has not been implemented.

Evidence:

- **May 16, 2025:** MCSC requested meeting specifically about "licensing fee utilization"
- **May 20, 2025:** Meeting held with full commission participation
- **Post-meeting:** Detailed MOU proposal submitted outlining partnership framework
- **Current Status:** No formal response to MOU proposal received

4. Exclusion from Commission Governance

The Issue: As the largest combat sport under MCSC jurisdiction, BJJ has been systematically excluded from commission meetings, policy discussions, and governance processes.

Evidence:

- No BJJ representative invited to any Manitoba Combat Sport Commission or Association meetings
- No involvement in Combat Sports Act policy development
- Inquiries from community members about BJJ committee establishment and governance often went unanswered for months
- MCSC communication primarily reactive rather than proactive

Impact: The largest stakeholder group has no voice in the governance structure that regulates their sport and collects their fees.

International Context and Reputation Impact

Our regulatory model has drawn international attention within the global BJJ community, with Manitoba being noted as uniquely imposing licensing fees where none exist elsewhere. This impacts:

- Tournament participation and athlete mobility
- Manitoba's reputation in the international BJJ community
- Potential economic impact on BJJ events and tourism

Requested Actions

We respectfully request your immediate intervention to address these concerns:

1. Immediate Fund Distribution

- Establish formal mechanism for collected BJJ licensing fees to be distributed to sport development
- Create transparent process for fund allocation decisions
- Implement the partnership model outlined in our MOU proposal

2. Governance Representation

- Appoint BJJ representatives to MCSC board or establish BJJ advisory committee
- Include BJJ stakeholders in future policy development affecting the sport
- Ensure proportional representation reflecting BJJ's status as largest combat sport

3. Regulatory Review

- Conduct comprehensive review of BJJ regulations with meaningful community input
- Consider exemption model similar to Quebec and other jurisdictions
- Address out-of-province competitor concerns

4. Communication Protocol

- Establish formal communication channels between MCSC and BJJ community
- Ensure proactive rather than reactive engagement
- Provide regular updates on policy developments

Conclusion

The Manitoba BJJ community has demonstrated good faith throughout this process, participating in consultations, submitting detailed proposals, and working constructively with government and MCSC officials. However, the pattern of unfulfilled commitments and exclusion from decision-making processes has eroded trust and created unnecessary conflict.

We represent hundreds of athletes, dozens of schools, and significant economic activity within Manitoba's sport sector. Our community deserves regulatory processes that are transparent, consultative, and accountable.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you directly to discuss these concerns and work toward constructive solutions that serve both the BJJ community and the broader goals of sport development in Manitoba.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters. We look forward to your prompt response and action on these long-standing issues.

Sincerely,

Randal Boiteau

President, Manitoba Jiu-Jitsu Association
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CC:

- Premier Wab Kinew (premier@manitoba.ca)
- Julia Tetrault, Director, Sport and Tourism Policy (Julia.Tetrault@gov.mb.ca)
- John McDonald, Executive Director, MCSC (info@mbcombativesports.com)
- MJA Board of Directors (board@manitobajiujitsu.com)

Attachments:

- Email timeline documentation (May 2023 - July 2025)