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## RESEARCH NOTE

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### Ottawa Rapid FC

A new professional women's soccer team in Ottawa

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#### Introduction

The 2025 season is the first for the Ottawa Rapid FC / *CF Rapide Ottawa*. The Ottawa team will play in the new professional soccer women, the Northern Super League (NSL) (Ottawa Rapid FC, 2025a).

The new franchise in a new league will play at the TD Place Stadium, an outdoor stadium located at Lansdowne Park in Ottawa. The training grounds will be located at the RA Centre in Ottawa and the office will be in the RA Centre's House of Sports (Wikipedia, 2025a).



Our research questions are: What is the information regarding the new Ottawa Rapid FC? What are the other players in the professional sports landscape in Ottawa-Gatineau? This research note presents some facts and reflections regarding the arrival of the new professional sport team in the Ottawa-Gatineau region. The archival methodology used is an examination of documents publicly available, websites, and newspapers' articles.

Important notice:

Data for this research note was collected between March 2 – April 8, 2025.



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## Soccer in Canada at the top level

The governing body of soccer in Canada is The Canadian Soccer Association Incorporated (CSA) / *L'Association canadienne de soccer incorporée* (Canada Soccer, 2025a). Canada Soccer is a Registered Canadian Amateur Athletic Association (RCAA) per Canadian *Income Tax Act* rules (see Brouard (2023) for more information on Canada Soccer)



For men, the Canadian Premier League (CPL) / *Première Ligue Canadienne* is the top division of soccer in Canada. It is the only fully professional and national league in the country. Eight teams are part of the CPL, namely Pacific FC (Langford, BC), Vancouver FC (Langley, BC), Cavalry FC (Calgary, AB), Valour FC (Winnipeg, MB), Forge FC (Hamilton, ON), York United FC (Toronto, ON), HFX Wanderers FC (Halifax, NS), and Atlético Ottawa (Ottawa, ON) (Canadian Premier League, 2025). Three Canadian teams play in Major League Soccer (MLS), namely CF Montréal, Toronto FC, Vancouver Whitecaps FC. The division 1 league is sanctioned by the United States Soccer Federation.

On the women side, in the beginning of 2025, the country now has the Northern Super League (NSL) / *Super Ligue du Nord (SLN)*. It is the Canadian women's soccer league; the first professional women's soccer league, and the highest level in Canada for women professional athlete soccer players.



Until 2021, Canada Soccer formerly had an affiliation with the U.S.-based National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), where several of Canada's women national soccer team members would be assigned to an NWSL club (Armstrong, 2022). Canadian women players continue to play in the American league, however, they now have a new national option.

### Northern Super League (NSL)

In 2022, Diana Matheson, a former national team player, and Christine Sinclair, then-current national team captain, announced the creation of a league provisionally named Project 8 with a goal to launch in the beginning of 2025 (Dichter, 2022). Number 8 is symbolic, as it was Matheson's number on the national team. Public announcements confirmed that Vancouver and Calgary would be two of the league's inaugural teams in 2022 (Dichter, 2022), followed by AFC Toronto as a third team in 2023 (Dichter, 2023) and then Halifax, Montreal and Ottawa in 2024 (Northern Super League, 2024a; CBC Sports, 2024).

## *NSL as a professional women soccer league*

Based in Canada, the Northern Super League (NSL) is the professional soccer league for women in North America (Wikipedia, 2025b). Diana Matheson and Project 8 Sports Inc. are leading the development, while Christine Sinclair holds an advisory role. NSL's president is Christina Litz and Diana Matheson is the Chief Growth Officer. Litz previously "held senior roles at leading sports organizations, including the Canadian Football League (CFL), Woodbine Entertainment and most recently, True North Sports and Entertainment [...]" (Northern Super League, 2024c).

The NSL league consists of six teams: Vancouver Rise FC, Calgary Wild FC, AFC Toronto, Montreal Roses FC, Halifax Tides FC, and Ottawa Rapid FC. Each team is scheduled to play 25 games beginning in April and ending with the November playoffs. Table 1 presents the teams in the NSL and Figure 1 locates on a map the various National Super League (NSL) teams.

Table 1 – Northern Soccer League (NSL) teams

Canadian teams	City (Province)	Stadium	Capacity
Vancouver Rise	Burnaby (BC)	Swangard Stadium	4,500
Calgary Wild FC	Calgary (AB)	McMahon Stadium	35,400
AFC Toronto	Toronto (ON)	York Lions Stadium	4,000
<b>Ottawa Rapid FC</b>	<b>Ottawa (ON)</b>	<b>TD Place Stadium</b>	<b>24,000</b>
Montréal Roses FC	Laval (QC)	Centre sportif Bois-de-Boulogne	5,581
Halifax Tides FC	Halifax (NS)	Wanders Ground	6,500

Source: Northern Soccer League (2025a); Wikipedia (2025c)

Figure 1 – Location of Northern Super League (NSL) teams



## *Diana Matheson*

Diana Beverley Matheson (born April 6, 1984) played for the national team as a midfielder between 2003 and 2021 (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2025a; Wikipedia, 2025j, 2025k). She played at the university level for Princeton University (2004–2007), the Tigers, a NCAA division 1 team in the Ivy league conference. She also played for multiple professional women's teams over the course of her career, namely Team Strømmen in Norway (2008–2010); Washington Spirit (2013–2016); Utah Royals (2018–2020). She was also part of the Toronto Inferno (2003), Ottawa Fury (2004-2006), Seattle Reign (2017), Kansas City Current (2021), but did not play any games with them.



Matheson had a successful international career, playing many games and is a top scorer for Canada. She played in the Algarve Cup (2003), FIFA World Cup (2003, 2007, 2011, 2015), Pan American Games (2007, 2011), CONCACAF Olympic Qualifier (2004, 2008, 2016) and Olympic Games (2008, 2012, 2016) (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2025a; Wikipedia, 2025j). A memorable moment in Diana Matheson's career is when she scored the winning goal at the 92nd minute to defeat France 1–0, to secure Canada's first ever medal in the bronze medal women's soccer match, at the 2012 London Olympic Summer Games (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2025a; CBC News, 2022a, 2022b).

Her individual records are equally impressive, she took part in 206 international games (3<sup>rd</sup> among Canadian players) and is in the list for most assists (2<sup>nd</sup> among Canadian players with 23 assists) (Wikipedia, 2025k).

Matheson (2025) also received a Bachelor of Arts, BA Economics in 2008 from Princeton University, an Executive MBA in 2022 from Queen's University and a UEFA Master for International Players (MIP) in 2023 from University of Limoges.

### *Project 8 Sports Inc.*

Project 8 Sports Inc. was co-founded by Diana Matheson and Thomas Gilbert (Goodmans, nd).

Per Ottawa Rapid FC (2025a) bio, as chief executive officer (CEO), Thomas Gilbert could be described as follows:

“Tom is a strategy and operations leader with over a decade of experience building and launching innovative solutions in the direct to consumer, hospitality and consumer packaged goods industries. While pursuing his Executive MBA at the Smith School of Business in 2021, he met fellow student and former Canadian

national team member, Diana Matheson. In 2022 they joined forces with the goal of bringing women's professional soccer to Canada and co-founded Project 8 Sports Inc.."

"Prior to co-founding Project 8 Sports Inc., Tom led operations and sales in a start-up frozen pizza business out of Toronto. His deep experience in consumer products has instilled a strong fan-first mentality as he works on building the Ottawa Rapid FC franchise."

"Tom is a Canadian through-and-through, having lived and worked on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and in six provinces over his career. That said, Ottawa has always been the focal point for him and his family, and he's excited to be back in the Nation's Capital - building something meaningful for the Ottawa community."

Thomas Gilbert (2025) received a Bachelor's degree, Environmental studies, political studies in 2015 from Queen's University, a Certificate, Business fundamentals in Asia in 2022 from National University of Singapore (NUS) Business School and an Executive MBA in 2023 from Queen's University.

The vision of Project 8 for the professional league is "founded on the principles of inclusion, community, and identity" (Wikipedia, 2025j). Table 2 presents corporate information on Projects 8 Sports Inc. and Table 3 presents the two shareholders listed.



Table 2 – Project 8 Sports Inc. – Corporate information

Name	
Corporate Name	Project 8 Sports Inc.
Corporation Number	1429287-1
Business Number (BN)	708476700 RC0001
Status	Active
Governing Legislation	<i>Canada Business Corporations Act</i>
Foundation date	2022 August 16
Registered Office Location	13 Foundry Avenue Suite 242, Toronto ON M6H 0B7

Source: Canada's Business Registries (2025)

Table 3 – Project 8 Sports Inc. - Shareholders

Name	Ownership
Diana Matheson	Owns, controls or directs more than 50% and up to 75% of the shares
Thomas Gilbert	Owns, controls or directs at least 25% and up to 50% of the shares

Source: Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) (2025)



## Ottawa Rapid FC / CF Rapide Ottawa

Ottawa Rapid FC / *CF Rapide Ottawa* is one of six teams in the new NSL league in addition to: Vancouver Rise FC, Calgary Wild FC, AFC Toronto, Montréal Roses FC, and Halifax Tides FC.

“The Club is founded on the principles of community, continuous improvement, collective power, and respect. The new ownership model embodies these values by embracing diverse voices to build an organization that makes a lasting impact on its city and community.” (Ottawa Rapid FC, 2025a)

“[Ottawa Rapid FC] badge features a Peregrine Falcon in attack mode, symbolizing speed, resilience, and the club's fighting spirit. The blue palette represents the sky and water, while neon orange accents evoke the Centennial flame, a symbol of Ottawa's endurance.” (Northern Super League, 2024b)



### Games

Starting in April and ending in November 2025, the regular season is 25 games, including 13 regular home games for Ottawa (TSN, 2025). The inaugural game of Ottawa will be on April 27, 2025, against AFC Toronto at TD Place and they will play against Montreal Roses FC in their inaugural home match on May 3, 2025, at Centre sportif Bois-de-Boulogne in Laval (TSN, 2025). “At the end of the regular season, the top four clubs will qualify for the NSL Playoffs, and the two semifinal winners will advance to the NSL Championship.” (Raymond, 2025) “This final match promises to be a celebration of women's sports in Canada, drawing fans from all over the country and cementing the league's place on the national stage.” (Northern Super League, 2024b)

“Starting in 2026, the NSL champions will also earn the right to compete in the prestigious CONCACAF Women's Champions Cup, pitting them against the best clubs from North and Central America, as well as the Caribbean. This exposure on the international stage will only elevate the league's profile further.” (Northern Super League, 2024b)

### Owners

Investors include NSL and Ottawa Rapid FC executives, some local business leaders, and community investor group.

Table 4 presents the group of owners.

Table 4 – Ottawa Rapid FC – Owners

Name	Occupation
Thomas Gilbert	CEO – Chief Executive Officer, Ottawa Rapid FC
Diana Matheson	CEO – Chief Executive Officer, Project 8 Sports inc. Chief Growth Officer, Northern Super League
Heidi Bloomfield	CSO - Chief Sport Officer, Ottawa Rapid FC
Seth Boro	Managing partner, Thoma Bravo (California) Ottawa Senators minority owners
Jen Hamilton	CEO – Chief Executive Officer, Oxygen Yoga & Fitness Ottawa Senators minority owners
David Renfroe	Board Chair, Ottawa Rapid FC President, Renfroe Land Management (Ottawa)
Chris Riddoch	President, Turning Point Brands Canada
Kyle Braatz	CEO - Chief Executive Officer, Fullscript (Ottawa) Ottawa Senators minority owners
Peter Di Maso	Vice President, Business Development (Americas), Cambridge GaN Devices
Stephen Thomas	Adjunct faculty member, Smith School of Business, Queen's University Executive Director, Smith's Analytics & AI Ecosystem
Tandy Thomas	Associate Professor & E. Marie Shantz Fellow of Marketing, Smith School of Business, Queen's University
Isabelle Perreault	CEO – Chief Executive Officer, Differly Inc. (Ottawa)
Giovanni Toscano	
Jason Dashnay	CEO – Chief Executive Officer, Aspire Wealth Group Inc. (Ottawa)
Jason Flick	Executive Chairman, Northern Forge Studios (Ottawa)
Angela Goodfellow	
Ben Hart	Senior Wealth Advisor, National Bank Financial (Ottawa)

Source: Ottawa Rapid FC (2025b, 2025c); Canadian Press (2025b); Northern Super League (2024c)

### *Management team*

The executive team includes Thomas Gilbert as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), a shareholder of Project 8 Sports inc., Stephanie Spruston, Heidi Bloomfield and Kristina Kiss (Ottawa Rapid FC, 2025a). Table 5 presents the management team.

Table 5 – Ottawa Rapid FC - Management team

Name	Position	
Thomas Gilbert	CEO – Chief Executive Officer	Executive
Stephanie Spruston	COO – Chief Operating Officer	
Heidi Bloomfield	CSO – Chief Sport Officer	
Kristina Kiss	Technical director	

Source: Ottawa Rapid FC (2025a); Wikipedia (2025a)

Stephanie Spruston, as Chief Operating Officer (COO), “brings 30 years of experience in a variety of business, legal, and operational roles” and “served as a driving force at the Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group (OSEG) and its associated entities, taking on various senior executive roles since its inception in 2013”. (Ottawa Rapid FC, 2025a)

Heidi Bloomfield is the Chief Sport Officer (CSO). She has “over 25 years of experience in the sports industry [...] a seasoned soccer player, coach, and manager”; Heidi was also involved in the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup in Montreal. “Heidi’s leadership experience extends to McGill and Concordia University, where she managed several varsity teams working closely with coaches and athletes to ensure the success and development of the programs.” (Ottawa Rapid FC, 2025a)

Kristina Kiss is the Technical Director. Kristina played between 2000 and 2009 with Canada’s senior team, and participate in two Pan American Games (2003, 2007) and two Women’s World Cups (2003, 2007). She also played her professional soccer for IF Floya in Norway. “Kristina was the Technical Director for the West Ottawa Soccer Club from 2014 to 2021. In 2021 Kristina accepted a position of Manager of Development-Programming with Canada Soccer where she focused on promoting and supporting the development and representation of women, marginalized and underrepresented groups across Canada. Following her time with Canada Soccer, Kristina took a position with the Ottawa City Soccer Club as the Technical Director for their girls’ program.” (Ottawa Rapid FC, 2025a).

### *Coaching staff*

The coaching staff includes Katrine Pedersen as Head coach, Søren Kiilerich as Assistant Coach and Carli Tingstad as Performance analyst (Ottawa Rapid FC, 2025a). Table 6 presents the coaching staff.

Table 6 – Ottawa Rapid FC - Coaching staff

Name	Position	
Katrine Pedersen	Head coach	Coaching staff
Søren Kiilerich	Assistant coach	
Carli Tingstad	Performance analyst	

Source: Ottawa Rapid FC (2025a); Wikipedia (2025a)

Danish soccer legend Katrine Pedersen is named Rapid FC’s first coach. She is “a member of the Danish Fodboldens Hall of Fame,” and “will join the team from the Danish Football Association, where she served in a talent development role.” [...] “Pedersen is a three-time Danish Women’s Player of the Year recipient (2007, 2011 and 2013).” (Postmedia News, 2024)



Søren Kiilerich will be the Assistant Coach. “With a UEFA A License, Søren brings over 10 years of experience as a dedicated soccer coach. Over the past decade, he has combined expertise in elite player development with teaching at Aarhus Sports Academy, mentoring and coaching youth at the highest levels. Søren has a great passion for fostering talent and building strong team cultures.” (Ottawa Rapid FC, 2024)

Carli Tingstad will be the Performance analyst. Carli was the Brock University women's soccer head coach during two and a half years with the Badgers. She “also serves as Brock's Sport Club and Leadership Coordinator” (Leithwood, 2025)

### *Players*

“Clubs will have between 20 and 25 players on their rosters, with up to eight international players permitted per team.” (Northern Super League, 2024b)

Table 7 presents the 21 players for the 2025 season (Nightingale, 2025). Positions include Goalkeeper (2), Defender (5), Midfielder (10), and Forward (4). They are coming from Canada, Sweden, USA, Norway, South Korea, and Nigeria.

Table 7 – Ottawa Rapid FC – Players

Jersey no	Position	Name	Nation	International
30	Goalkeeper	Melissa Dagenais	Canada	
1	Goalkeeper	Mollie Eriksson	Sweden & Canada	
15	Defender	Nicola Golen	Canada	
2	Defender	Susanne Haaland	Norway	International
33	Defender	Jylissa Harris	USA	
18	Defender	Liv Scott	Canada	
19	Defender	Hyo-joo Choo	South Korea	International
3	Midfielder	Kayla Adamek	Canada	
5	Midfielder	Emily Amano	Canada	
10	Midfielder	Florence Belzile	Canada	
6	Midfielder	Julia Benati	Canada	
98	Midfielder	Stella Downing	Canada	
8	Midfielder	Ellen Gibson	Sweden	
14	Midfielder	Lee Mina	South Korea	International
13	Midfielder	Ngozi Okobi-Okeoghene	Nigeria	International
11	Midfielder	Desiree Scott	Canada	
4	Midfielder	Miranda Smith	Canada	
21	Forward	Melanie Forbes	USA & Canada	
7	Forward	Johanne Fridlund	Norway	
22	Forward	Delaney Baie Pridham	USA & Canada	
9	Forward	Jazmine Wilkinson	Canada	

Source: Nightingale (2025); Northern Super League (2025c); Ottawa Rapid FC (2025d); Wikipedia (2025a)

Note: International = Designated International player

“Dark, powerful, and unstoppable—Ottawa Rapid FC’s home kit mirrors the force of nature itself. A deep black base, laced with subtle green and blue hues, reflects the rugged landscapes of the region, while bold accents streak across like flashes of lightning. Designed for a team that moves with relentless speed, this jersey embodies the energy of a storm brewing on the horizon.” (Northern Super League, 2025d)



Source: Northern Super League (2025d)

### *Salary cap and player compensation*

“The NSL is determined to set a new standard for player compensation in women’s soccer. Each club will operate with a \$1.6 million salary cap in the inaugural season, allowing teams to assemble competitive rosters while ensuring financial stability. The cap is expected to grow within the league’s first few seasons as the NSL gains traction and revenue streams increase.” (Northern Super League, 2024b) “In addition, the NSL will implement a Designated Player rule, similar to Major League Soccer, allowing teams to sign marquee players at salaries higher than the salary cap limit.” (Northern Super League, 2024b)

“Perhaps most impressively, the league has set a minimum salary of \$50,000 for its players, a figure that is sure to turn heads internationally. For comparison, Spain’s top-flight women’s league has a minimum salary of approximately \$25,000, and in Italy, it’s less than \$40,000. Even in the well-established NWSL, the minimum salary falls below \$50,000 USD.” (Northern Super League, 2024b)

### *Broadcasting and streaming (Canada and US)*

“In 2025, NSL matches will be easily accessible to fans across the country, thanks to a groundbreaking broadcasting deal with TSN and CBC. These two media giants will showcase a combined number of games on linear television, meaning NSL action will be in homes, restaurants, and bars coast-to-coast. Additionally, all matches will be available via streaming platforms on NSL, TSN, and CBC, ensuring that no fan misses a moment. French-speaking audiences will be able to catch all Montréal Roses matches on RDS and select games on Radio-Canada Sports (SRC).” (Northern Super League, 2024b)

Per the Northern Super League (2025b):

“All 75 Northern Super League regular season matches will be available nationally across multiple platforms. TSN will air 20 regular season games, while CBC will broadcast eight.

RDS will provide live French-language coverage of all Montreal Rose FC matches on their linear platforms, while Radio-Canada will broadcast four on ICI TÉLÉ and on ICI TOU.TV streaming platform.

In addition to linear broadcasts, a ‘Game of the Week’ will co-stream simultaneously on CBC Gem and NSL.ca, while 24 additional matches will co-stream simultaneously on TSN+ and NSL.ca.”

“Games will also be broadcast on multiple platforms, with nine Ottawa Rapid FC games on TSN and two on the CBC.” (Raymond, 2025) The inaugural match of the Montreal Roses RC against Ottawa Rapid FC will be broadcast in French on RDS (TSN, 2025).

“The Northern Super League, Canada’s first professional women’s soccer league, is set to make its mark in the United States through a new, multi-year media partnership with ESPN. This agreement will bring Northern Super League matches to American audiences, expanding the league’s reach and showcasing top Canadian and international women’s soccer talent on the leading multiplatform sports entertainment brand. ESPN+, will stream 40+ Northern Super League matches including select playoff games and the Final.” (Northern Super League, 2025e)

“ESPN+ is the No. 1 sports streaming platform, serving fans in the U.S. with exclusive access to more than 32,000 live sports events each year, an unmatched library of on-demand replays and acclaimed original content, and premium written articles by the top reporters and analysts from ESPN.com.” (Northern Super League, 2025e)

## Opponents of the Ottawa Rapid FC

### *Vancouver Rise*

“Vancouver Rise FC, one of the first teams to join Project 8, has swiftly made a name for itself in Canadian soccer. With their branding and logo unveiled in August, the club is poised to become a significant force. Spearheaded by Sporting Director Stephanie Labbé, a Canadian soccer legend and Tokyo 2020 gold medalist, the team is focused on building a competitive roster ahead of their debut season. Labbé, who also leads the Vancouver Whitecaps Girls Elite program, brings a wealth of experience both as a player and mentor, making her the ideal person to shape Rise FC’s identity. She is committed to fostering an environment that supports athletes not only as players but as individuals, echoing her belief that world-class players thrive in world-class environments.



Vancouver Rise FC’s branding is a powerful emblem of empowerment and progress, featuring a crest that symbolizes the province’s natural beauty. The design incorporates the majestic mountains and radiant sun, with three peaks representing Cypress Mountain, Grouse Mountain, and Mount Seymour. The sun’s six rays honor the six founding clubs of the Northern Super League. The club colors—teal, gold, and black—reflect the captivating sunsets and the depth of the Pacific Ocean. With Canadian soccer icon Christine Sinclair as a member of the ownership group alongside majority owner Greg Kerfoot, the club is deeply connected to the community and the legacy of women’s soccer in British Columbia. Sinclair’s commitment to inspiring future generations adds to the club’s vision of creating a world-class environment for athletes, making Vancouver Rise FC a promising new chapter in Canadian soccer.” (Northern Super League, 2024b)

### *Calgary Wild FC*

“Calgary’s soccer community was abuzz when Calgary Foothills SC joined Project 8 in December 2022 to create Wild FC. As one of the first cities to join Project 8, Calgary set the tone by unveiling a brand that reflects the city’s unique character and deep-rooted love for soccer. “Calgary is a massive soccer city with one of the most well-developed pathways in the country,” says Wild FC Marketing Director Kelly McGuire. For a city known for its love of sports, the arrival of a professional women’s soccer team provides inspiration for young girls to see their dreams realized, strengthening Calgary’s place in the Canadian soccer landscape.





The club's vibrant crest, inspired by the owl—a symbol of stealth, wisdom, and precision—embodies the team's goals on the pitch. Neon violet and red hues mirror Calgary's stunning sunsets and iconic Calgary Tower, while a stylized 'W' pays homage to Alberta's rivers, mountains, and the Famous Five. McMahon Stadium will serve as the home for Wild FC, where Calgary's high-energy, outdoor-loving lifestyle will give the team an edge. As the only NSL team between Toronto and Vancouver, Calgary Wild FC aims to make a significant impact as the league embarks on its inaugural season, breaking new ground for women's soccer in Canada." (Northern Super League, 2024b)

### *AFC Toronto*

AFC Toronto "Toronto has long been a vibrant hub for soccer, and AFC Toronto is poised to build on that rich legacy as one of the founding clubs of the Northern Super League. The club is not just about building a competitive team but also about uniting fans from various backgrounds under one banner. The leadership team is committed to making the club inclusive, accessible, and reflective of Toronto's diversity, inviting supporters to celebrate their heritage while rallying behind the team. By providing role models and opportunities for young girls to play professionally in their hometown, AFC Toronto aims to inspire the next generation of soccer stars. The club's presence will bring professional women's soccer to one of North America's most vital sports markets, cementing Toronto's status as a soccer city and offering a space for fans and players alike to thrive.



Launched in April 2023 by a women-led ownership group, AFC Toronto is deeply rooted in the local soccer scene, emerging from the successful North Toronto Soccer Club. Led by CEO Helena Ruken, COO Brenda Ha, and CMO Jill Burgin, the club's leadership has a passion for the game and a commitment to creating a professional pathway for women players. Their signature colors—"Victory Vermillion" and "Mighty Maroon"—symbolize the club's energy, ambition, and toughness. The crest, featuring an "Anchor T" and mirrored sevens, honors the seven founders and Toronto's original boroughs, blending the city's history with a bold new identity. York Lions Stadium, known for its intimate atmosphere, will serve as the club's home, where AFC Toronto aims to create a fortress for home matches and cultivate a deep connection with the community." (Northern Super League, 2024b)



### *Montréal Roses FC*

“The first professional women’s soccer team in Québec, Montréal Roses FC has built an impressive team both on and off the field. Co-founded by Isabèle Chevalier and Jean-François Crevier, this club embodies Montreal’s distinct identity, blending passion, creativity, and a commitment to the city’s cultural diversity. With an impressive leadership team that includes former France international Marinette Pichon as sporting director and former CFL executive Annie Larouche as club president, the Roses have a wealth of experience driving their ambitions. Their shared vision is clear—Roses FC is not only a soccer team but a symbol of the city’s resilience, rooted in Montreal’s sports history and its vibrant, multicultural fabric.



The club's official branding captures the essence of Montreal. The Roses de Montréal name is inspired by the city’s official rosette, while the blue rose in the emblem reflects the creative spirit and dreams of making the impossible possible. The club’s colors—red, blue, black, gold, and white—symbolize courage, victory, and integrity, deeply connected to Montreal’s heritage and sports legacy. With passionate local support, an ambitious leadership team, and an inclusive, forward-thinking identity, Montreal Roses FC is poised to make history in Quebec and elevate women’s soccer in Canada.” (Northern Super League, 2024b)

### *Halifax Tides FC*

“Halifax Tides FC is poised to become the beating heart of soccer across Atlantic Canada and they’re ready to turn the tide for women’s soccer in the region. Rooted in Halifax’s rich maritime culture and community spirit, the Tides are more than just a club—they’re a movement to elevate the game in a city where soccer thrives. Led by CEO and co-founder Dr. Courtney Sherlock, a trailblazing entrepreneur from Fall River, and supported by a passionate ownership group, Halifax Tides FC has deep ties to both the local community and soccer’s long history in the province. With a fanbase eager to support, and a leadership team committed to creating opportunities for future generations, the Tides are set to make waves in Canadian sports.



The club’s nautical-inspired crest symbolizes Halifax’s connection to the Atlantic Ocean, while the colors and design reflect the province’s maritime heritage. Representing the East Coast with pride, the Tides are ready to make their mark on and off the field, creating a legacy that will inspire the next generation of talent to dream big.” (Northern Super League, 2024b)

## Potential Success Factors with Ottawa Rapid FC

Several factors may be examined to determine the potential success in Ottawa-Gatineau of the Ottawa Rapid FC. A new team in a new league offers many challenges and opportunities.

It may face challenges in enhancing visibility, ensuring quality of players, living wage for players, securing financial viability, and engaging fans and sponsors. As opportunities, some may cite benefiting from the momentum in women's sports, developing soccer market in Ottawa-Gatineau, and involving the community around women's soccer. This happens in the context of other professional sports in the region.

### *Visibility*

The NSL aims to provide visibility for female athletes and inspiring younger generations. Providing visibility for a new team in a new league is of prime importance. Limited visibility can hinder fans' engagement and sponsorship opportunities. Starting with only six teams may limit the league's outreach and fans' engagement initially but may focus on the quality in a similar manner to the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL).

Importantly, even if there is a growing presence of women in sports nationally and a shift in societal attitudes, female athletes face ongoing significant underrepresentation in sports media generally (Wilson, 2025). Indeed, women's leagues often receive less media attention compared to their male counterparts, with female coverage often limited to major events or specific sports (Lever, 2023; Scheadler and Wagstaff, 2018; Wilson, 2025).

The league's visibility will benefit from multi-year media partnerships to broadcast games for Canadian audiences with CBC, TSN, Radio-Canada, RDS, and for American audiences with ESPN (Cummings and Foye, 2025; Northern Super League, 2025e).

### *Quality of players in Ottawa and NSL*

The quality of players is promising, as they combine experience and youth. Experience of players at the international level, on NCAA and U Sports teams, and in professional leagues on various continents (Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, Americas). Just to name a few from Rapid FC, we could mention Desiree Scott, Melanie Forbes, Julia Benati, Emily Amano, Mollie Eriksson, and Miranda Smith.

Desiree "Scott is one of the founding members of the Kansas City Current in the National Women's Soccer League and played in the world's first purpose-built stadium for a women's professional sports team (CPKC Stadium) in 2021; [...] She played 10 seasons in the NWSL, until 2024, and, as captain of the Current, she reached an important milestone in 2022, becoming the second Canadian in league history to log 10,000 career minutes; A four-time Olympian, Scott earned a gold medal at Tokyo 2020

and bronze medals at London 2012 and Rio 2016, making her one of only three players to win three consecutive Olympic medals.” (Brennan, 2025b)

Scott had a successful international career, playing many games and being a top scorer for Canada. On the individual records, during her career (2010-2024), she appeared in 187 international games (4<sup>th</sup> among Canadian players) (Wikipedia, 2025k). “Scott first represented Canada at the 2006 CONCACAF U-20 Championship where the team won silver to qualify for the FIFA U-20 Women’s World Cup. After appearing in three games at the global tournament, Scott made her debut with the senior national team in 2010, which included a gold medal at the CONCACAF Championship. In 2011, she competed at her first FIFA Women’s World Cup and helped Canada win gold at the Pan Am Games in Guadalajara.” (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2025b)

Melanie “Forbes earned numerous academic honours at Indiana including Big Ten Distinguished Scholar (2018, 2019, 2020-21) and Academic All-Big Ten (2018, 2019, 2020-21). She arrives in Ottawa with a bachelor's degree in human biology and master's in health-care management. Medical school remains a possibility after soccer. After Indiana, Forbes spent 18 months in Portugal where she helped Lisbon's Sport Futebol Damaiense win promotion to the top tier. It was another learning experience, offering a different style of football than the athletic brand of the NCAA ranks.” (Canadian Press, 2025a) “Melanie earned MVP honours and the golden boot award in her most recent season with Keflavík ÍF.” (Canadian Press, 2025a)

Julia “Benati, as captain of FC London, was named League1 Midfielder of the Year for the fourth time last season (also winning in 2019, '21 and '22). A multiple league all-star, she was honoured as League1 Ontario MVP in 2022. She scored 41 goals in 76 games since joining London in 2016. Benati also had stints with Portugal's Valadares Gaia and Norway's Medkila after a stellar collegiate career at the University of Buffalo. Away from soccer, she earned her chiropractic degree.” (Canadian Press, 2025a)

Emily Amano who played in the USA and in Europe is a local talent from Ottawa South United Force Academy. “Emily was a 5-year starter and senior captain at Colgate University, the winningest team in the NCAA D1 Patriot League. She began her professional career in Sweden playing with Umeå IK, a club with a rich history in the Champions League and Damallsvenskan. Most recently, Emily played at IF Grótta in Iceland before returning home to join Rapid FC.” (Ottawa Sports Pages, 2025)

Goalkeeper Mollie “Eriksson attended the same high school as Ottawa teammate Liv Scott and the two represented Ontario along with fellow Rapid players Melanie Forbes and Emily Amano. Eriksson is also no stranger to Ottawa teammate Julia Benati, having played against the former League1 Ontario MVP with FC London.” (Davidson, 2025a) “After completing a degree in neuroscience at DePaul, she started a master’s degree in psychology and neuroscience at McMaster University in Hamilton. After her first year, she was promoted to the PhD program and is now studying how personality influences mental health in adolescent populations.” (Davidson, 2025a)

“[...] Miranda Smith, a key member of the University of Ottawa’s 2018 championship soccer team” is “a standout on the Ottawa soccer scene from a young age, began her collegiate career in 2014 with the University of Memphis Tigers” (Brennan, 2025a).

Among the other players in other teams, we could mention midfielder Quinn and Samantha Chang, with Vancouver Rise FC, goalkeeper Erin McLeod with Halifax Tides and Emma Regan with AFC Toronto just to name a few (Nightingale, 2025; Canada Soccer, 2025b; Steiner, 2025). Many more will be discovered as the season starts.

### *Living wages for players*

With quality players, the NSL hope to bring more opportunities and to create pathways for Canadian players who previously had to go abroad (Pearson, 2025). “The NSL’s pay structure ensures that Canadian players can earn a fair and competitive wage without having to leave home.” (Northern Super League, 2024b) The NSL offers one of the highest minimum salaries among professional women's leagues worldwide.

“NSL promises a minimum salary of \$50,000 and full trade protection for its players. By comparison, the Canadian Premier League (CPL) — Canada’s domestic men’s professional soccer league — offers a minimum salary of \$30,000. Heading into its 13th year, the NWSL will offer a minimum salary of \$48,500 USD for the upcoming season. In Major League Soccer — North America’s premier men’s soccer league and home to Toronto FC, Vancouver Whitecaps FC, and Montréal Impact FC — primary roster players earn a minimum salary of \$89,716 USD.” (Takeuchi, 2025)

### *Financial viability and sustainability*

Securing sustainable funding is a major challenge. Expenses need to be sufficient for a high standard for the game. “The league will allocate a \$1.6 million salary cap for each team, enforcing a league minimum salary of \$50,000.” (Cummings and Foye, 2025) Many leagues struggle with generating sufficient revenue from ticket sales, sponsorships, and media rights. Attendance is important and a measure of commitment. Attracting and retaining a loyal fan base is critical. Ottawa-Gatineau is the fourth largest Census Metropolitan Area in Canada and represent an incredible market. Revenue could also come from sponsorship and various partnerships.

### *Ottawa Rapid FC and NSL recognition by Canada Soccer as National 1 license*

Canada Soccer (2025b) recognize all six Northern Super League (NSL) clubs, including Ottawa Rapid FC, with the National 1 License issued under the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program. “This is a historic moment for Canada Soccer, issuing professional licenses to women’s clubs for the first time” and it is an “important milestone in the professionalization of women’s soccer in Canada” (Canada Soccer, 2025b) Aligned to the Concacaf Club Licensing Regulations, these standards reinforce the clubs’

commitment to quality across the pillars of infrastructure, technical, administration, and governance.” (Canada Soccer, 2025b)

The recognition by Canada Soccer “ensures that Ottawa Rapid FC meets the highest standards in infrastructure, technical operations, administration and governance. This achievement underscores the club’s commitment to excellence, community growth and creating a professional soccer pathway in Ottawa as it prepares to take the field later this month for the NSL’s inaugural season.” (Ottawa Rapid FC, 2025c)

### *NSL with many partnerships*

In terms of momentum and broader interest, several organizations are partnering with Northern Super League, and some announcements are happening before the beginning of the season (Davidson, 2025b; Toyota Canada, 2025). The league has secured partnerships with major brands like Canadian Tire Corporation, SportChek, DoorDash, Coca-Cola, CIBC, Toyota Canada, Intact Financial Corporation, WestJet, hummel, Simons, Westland Insurance, and Kōena Spa.

Coca-Cola products, Powerade and smartwater, will be the official hydration partners of NSL (Northern Super League, 2024d). Intact is also partnering with three of the NSL’s six clubs in Ontario and Québec, including Ottawa Rapid FC, and the Professional Women’s Hockey League (PWHL) three Canadian teams, including the Ottawa Charge (Davidson, 2025b).

Among the partners cited on Ottawa Rapid FC (2025a) website are: Canadian Tire Corporation, Delta Hotels Marriott Ottawa City Centre, Intact Insurance, KineMedics, ISN (Investigative Solutions Network), Sleepwell Realty Group, and Toyota.

The partnerships will provide financial stability and a marketing outreach.

### *Momentum in women’s sport*

The NSL is part of a broader movement in women’s sports, building on the success of leagues like the Professional Women’s Hockey League (PWHL) and the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA). We could see some synergy, such as the announcement of signing the star player Desiree Scott “in front of more 6,500 fans gathered to watch the city’s other professional women’s sports team, the PWHL’s Ottawa Charge” (Cummings and Foye, 2025)

The PWHL franchise is a great success, surpassing one million fans all-time, through its first year and a half (Cummings and Foye, 2025; Professional Women’s Hockey League, 2025).



### *Development of women's soccer market*

Women's sports often face skepticism about their market viability, leading to a dilemma of building the league first or waiting for public buy-in. "The NSL poses as a platform for young girls to see professional soccer as an opportunity in Canada instead of one that only exists outside of its borders." (Cummings and Foye, 2025)

Grassroots initiatives and youth programs will help build a strong talent pipeline. Player development is essential for long-term success. The NSL will provide a platform for Canadian women athletes to showcase their talent at a professional level, which could inspire future generations. It will offer a domestic pathway for Canadian players, reducing reliance on international leagues.

Per David Renfroe, Board Chair for Ottawa Rapid FC, the National 1 License recognition by Canada Soccer "is a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in building this club. It affirms our commitment to providing a professional environment for athletes and underscores our responsibility to the community that comes along with delivering top-tier women's soccer to the entire region." (Ottawa Rapid FC, 2025c)

### *Involvement in the community*

Soccer is part of a group of well-known sports, like hockey, baseball, and football. Several youth associations and adult leagues operate in Ottawa both at competitive and recreational levels. Those associations may contribute to developing the soccer market in the region.

The francophone market should not be forgotten in the Ottawa-Gatineau region as noted though this report with French names equivalent, when available. A real effort is seen in bilingual posting on Instagram and in communications. The NSL offers also bilingual communications.

The league could create jobs and partnerships, benefiting local economies and businesses. "That this new league could create an industry around domestic professional women's soccer, Matheson said, employing coaches, referees, sports medicine doctors, media, business and more." (Cummings and Foye, 2025)

We will also see the philanthropic activities of the new team compared to the Senators Community Foundation and the OSEG Foundation associated with other professional sports teams in Ottawa (Brouard, Litalien and Perreault, 2023).

### *Ottawa Rapid FC in a competitive context*

Competing with established sport leagues for attention can be tough. First, competition could be with established soccer leagues. The NSL will need to carve out its niche in a market dominated by men's leagues and international women's leagues. Competing with other leagues for talent could be challenging.

“Until the league’s debut, the highest level of domestic women’s soccer in Canada was the pro-amateur league, League1 Canada. Historically, top Canadian players have pursued careers in the US or Europe. For example, Canadian legend Christine Sinclair played 12 seasons in America’s National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL) with the Portland Thorns while CWNT [Canadian Women’s National Team] star Ashley Lawrence currently represents Chelsea in England’s Women’s Super League.” (Takeuchi, 2025)

In the future, competition could happen between established sport leagues. However, this may present another difficulty, such as viewership competitions with other leagues. (see Appendix A for other professional sports in Ottawa-Gatineau) Indeed, during the Summer, Ottawa includes several sport teams and leagues’ event series, such as the ones by the Ottawa Redblacks of the Canadian Football League (CFL); the Ottawa Titans of the Frontier League (FL) in baseball, and the Atlético Ottawa of the Canadian Premier League (CPL) in men’s soccer.

### **Conclusion**

The arrival of the Ottawa Rapid FC adds another player in the Ottawa sport landscape. This may be positive or negative, depending on the stakeholders involved. It will certainly have an impact on other professional sports in Ottawa-Gatineau.

With the growing number of professional teams in women’s sports and the growing popularity of soccer, the future of Ottawa Rapid FC is bright. Time will tell us about its impact on the community.

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An owner of the Ottawa Rapid FC is the husband of a colleague in the Sprott School of Business at Carleton University.

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## PARG research notes

Professional Accounting Research Group (PARG)

Sprott School of Business, Carleton University

(available at <https://sprott.carleton.ca/parg/videos-notes-papers-and-briefs>)

## Appendix A

### Other professional sports in Ottawa-Gatineau

As already reported in Brouard and Litalien (2024), the professional sport landscape or with paid attendance in Ottawa-Gatineau has several teams. In addition to the Ottawa Rapid FC of the Northern Super League (NSL), Ottawa is home to seven other professional sports teams: the Ottawa Senators of the National Hockey League (NHL); the Ottawa Redblacks of the Canadian Football League (CFL); the Ottawa Blackjacks of the Canadian Elite Basketball League (CEBL); the Ottawa Titans of the Frontier League (FL); Atlético Ottawa of the Canadian Premier League (CPL); the PWHL Ottawa of the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL) and the Ottawa Black Bears in the National Lacrosse League (NLL).

Ottawa-Gatineau also has two major junior ice hockey teams: the Ottawa 67's and the Olympiques de Gatineau (Brouard, Pilon and Webb, 2023). Other semi-professional teams are also present in the region. Universities in the regions also have varsity teams and clubs affiliated with U Sports, OUA and RSEQ: two in Ottawa with Carleton University Ravens and University of Ottawa Gee-Gees, and one in Gatineau with Université du Québec en Outaouais Les Torrents.

#### *NHL - men's ice hockey - Ottawa Senators / Sénateurs d'Ottawa*



Established in 1992, the Ottawa Senators / Sénateurs d'Ottawa (officially the Ottawa Senators Hockey Club) is a professional hockey team part of the National Hockey League (NHL) - Atlantic division, Eastern Conference. They presently play in the Canadian Tire Centre in Ottawa.



#### *CFL – men's Canadian football - Ottawa Redblacks / Rouge et Noir d'Ottawa*



Starting play in 2014, the Ottawa Redblacks / Rouge et Noir d'Ottawa is a professional Canadian football team of the Canadian Football League (CFL) - East division. They presently play in the TD Place Stadium (formerly the Frank Clair Stadium), an outdoor stadium located at Lansdowne Park in Ottawa.



Previously, the Ottawa Rough Riders were a founder of the CFL in 1958 and played until 1996. Between 2002 and 2005 a new Ottawa franchise of the CFL, the Renegades, played in Ottawa, but the franchise was suspended by the league due to financial difficulties.



### *CEBL – men's basketball - Ottawa Blackjacks*



Founded in 2019, the Ottawa BlackJacks is a professional basketball team part of the Canadian Elite Basketball League (CEBL) - Eastern division. They presently play in the TD Place Arena, an indoor arena located at Lansdowne Park in Ottawa.



### *FL – men's baseball - Ottawa Titans / Titans d'Ottawa*



Established in 2020, their inaugural season was in 2022. The Ottawa Titans is a professional baseball team part of the Frontier League (FL) - East division. They presently play in Ottawa Stadium (previously Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton Park).



“They became the city's seventh professional baseball franchise succeeding the Eastern League's Ottawa Wanderers, the International League's Ottawa Giants, Ottawa Athletics and Ottawa Lynx, the Intercounty Baseball League's Ottawa Fat Cats, as well as the Can-Am League's Ottawa Rapidz and Ottawa Champions. The franchise is one of the expansion teams of the FL, following their merger with the Can-Am League in October 2019.” (Wikipedia, 2024c)

### *CPL – men's soccer – Atlético Ottawa*



Established in 2020, the Atlético Ottawa is a professional soccer club part of the Canadian Premier League (CPL). They presently play in the TD Place, an outdoor stadium located at Lansdowne Park in Ottawa.



“From 2014 to 2019, Ottawa Fury FC competed in American-based soccer leagues, most recently the USL Championship. The Fury dissolved after the 2019 season due to sanctioning issues associated with competing in the United States with the emergence of the domestic Canadian Premier League.” (Wikipedia, 2024f)



*PWHL – women's ice hockey – Ottawa Titans*



Established in 2023, the PWHL Ottawa is a women's ice hockey team and part of the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL) / Ligue professionnelle de hockey féminin. They presently play in the TD Place Arena, an indoor arena located at Lansdowne Park in Ottawa.



*NLL – men's lacrosse – Ottawa Black Bears*



The Ottawa Black Bears is a men's professional box lacrosse team in the National Lacrosse League (NLL) (Brouard & Litalien, 2024). They play in the Canadian Tire Centre in Ottawa.



*OHL – junior men's ice hockey - Ottawa 67's*



Established in 1967, during the Canada's centennial year, the Ottawa 67's is a major junior ice hockey team part of the Ontario Hockey League (OHL) - East division / Eastern Conference. They presently play in the TD Place Arena (formerly the Ottawa Civic Centre), an indoor arena located at Lansdowne Park in Ottawa.



*LHJMQ – junior men's ice hockey - Olympiques de Gatineau*



Established in 1973, the Olympiques de Gatineau is a major junior ice hockey team part of the Ligue de Hockey Junior Maritimes Québec (LHJMQ) - Western Conference. They presently play in the Centre Slush Puppy indoor arena located in Gatineau.



### *Other semi-professional and amateur sport teams*

A number of semi-professional and amateur teams are located in Ottawa, such as the Ottawa Sooners (Canadian football) in the Canadian Junior Football League, the Ottawa Junior Riders (Canadian football) in the Quebec Junior Football League, the Cumberland Panthers (Canadian football) in the Quebec Junior Football League, the Ottawa Swans (Australian football) in the AFL Ontario, and the Ottawa Lady Senators (ice hockey) in the Ontario Women's hockey League (Wikipedia, 2024b).

### *USport / RSEQ – Carleton Ravens, UOttawa Gee-Gees and UQO Torrents*

Carleton University Ravens and University of Ottawa Gee-Gees men's lacrosse varsity clubs are playing in the Canadian University Field Lacrosse Association (CUFLA). Ravens and Gee-Gees are both playing in the East division and compete for the Baggataway Cup.

#### Carleton University



Carleton University Ravens has multiples varsity teams (13) in basketball, fencing, football, hockey, Nordic ski, rugby, soccer, golf, rowing, and water polo and 21 varsity clubs, including in men's lacrosse. They presently play in Ottawa.



#### University of Ottawa



University of Ottawa Gee-Gees has multiples varsity teams (10) in basketball, football, hockey, rugby, soccer, swimming, and volleyball and 25 varsity clubs, including in men's lacrosse. They presently play in Ottawa.



#### Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO)



Université du Québec en Outaouais Les Torrents has only a few varsity teams, namely flag-football, golf, soccer, volleyball, and hockey. They presently play in Gatineau.

