



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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CANADA

# **STATUS OF AMATEUR COACHING IN CANADA**

## **Report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage**

**Hon. Rob Moore  
Chair**

**MARCH 2013**

**41st PARLIAMENT, FIRST SESSION**

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# **THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON CANADIAN HERITAGE**

has the honour to present its

## **EIGHT REPORT**

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2) the Committee has studied the status of amateur coaching in Canada and has agreed to report the following:





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# THE STATUS OF AMATEUR COACHING IN CANADA

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Committee Mandate

On October 18, 2012, the Committee agreed to the following motion:

That the Committee undertake a study and invite relevant witnesses to testify on the status of amateur coaching in Canada; with emphasis on the regulation and certification of amateur coaches, participation rates in amateur sports and how the government might further promote amateur coaching in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

Beginning on February 25, 2013, the Committee held three meetings on the study of the status of amateur coaching in Canada, during which it heard from 14 witnesses and received five briefs.

### 1.2 The Committee's Report

Chapter 2 of this report looks at the status of amateur coaching and provides an overview of participation rates in amateur coaching; the Canadian sport system and federal government support for sport and coaches; athlete development; the certification of coaches; and vulnerable sector checks.

Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 summarize witness testimony. Chapter 3 looks at the certification of amateur coaches. Chapter 4 looks the barriers to the recruitment and retention of coaches and suggestions for addressing them. Chapter 5 looks at the role coaches may have in encouraging greater participation and in promoting long-term athlete development. Chapter 6 looks at suggestions on how the federal government might further promote amateur coaching.

Chapter 7 presents the Committee's concluding observations, recommendations and conclusions.

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1 Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, [Minutes of Proceedings](#), Meeting No. 41, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, October 18, 2012.



# CHAPTER 2: THE STATUS OF AMATEUR COACHING

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## 2.1 Definition of sport and participation rates in amateur coaching

This report relies on the following definition of sport, which is found in the Statistics Canada report entitled *Sport Participation in Canada, 2005*:

[A] sport is an activity that involves two or more participants engaging for the purpose of competition. Sport involves formal rules and procedures, requires tactics and strategies, specialized neuromuscular skills and a high degree of difficulty and effort. The competitive nature of sport implies the development of trained coaching personnel.<sup>2</sup>

This definition excludes leisure activities such as aqua-fitness, bicycling for recreation, and hiking.<sup>3</sup>

Of the nearly 100 sports that are played in Canada, participation is concentrated in about 20 of them, including golf, ice hockey, swimming, soccer, basketball, baseball, volleyball, skiing and cycling.<sup>4</sup> The figures also show that between 1992 and 2005, the percentage of Canadians involved in amateur coaching increased from 4% to 7% — from 840,000 to 1.8 million people. The report noted, however: “This may be a short-term trend driven by younger baby-boomers who are involved in their children’s sport activities. Therefore, the upward trend may diminish or even reverse direction as they become empty nesters.”<sup>5</sup>

The Statistics Canada report also noted that many more women were involved in amateur coaching in 2005 than in 1992. Their number had quadrupled from 200,000 to 882,000. At the same time, “the number of male coaches dropped 9% to 874,000.”<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2 The Canadian sport system and federal government support for sport and coaches

The Canadian sport system involves many organizations at the federal, provincial/territorial and municipal levels. National sport organizations (NSOs) are responsible for individual sports (such as swimming or skating) and multisport service

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2 Statistics Canada, [Sport Participation in Canada, 2005](#), Minister of Industry, Ottawa, 2008, p. 15.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 10.

5 Ibid., pp. 43–44.

6 Ibid.

organizations (MSOs) serve sports that have common needs. An example of the latter is the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC).<sup>7</sup>

The federal government works with provincial and territorial governments to promote participation in sport. Together, they developed the Canadian Sport Policy, the latest version of which was approved in 2012.<sup>8</sup> Within the federal government, responsibility for amateur sport falls to Sport Canada, which is part of the Department of Canadian Heritage.<sup>9</sup> Sport Canada provides support for amateur coaching through the Sport Support Program. This support is delivered by third-parties organizations.<sup>10</sup>

### **2.3 Long-term athlete development**

Within the Canadian sport system, a framework for athlete development is promoted by Canadian Sport for Life, an organization that works to improve the quality of sport and physical activity. Known as Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD), the framework is a “seven-stage training, competition and recovery pathway guiding an individual’s experience in sport and physical activity from infancy through all phases of adulthood.”<sup>11</sup> LTAD is based on the best interests of athletes, rather than on winning at all costs.<sup>12</sup> All the NSOs have “developed sport-specific LTAD guidelines for their athletes.”<sup>13</sup>

The first three stages of the LTAD focus on developing physical literacy in those aged 12 and under, while Stages 4, 5 and 6 aim to provide elite training for those who want to specialize in one sport. Stage 7 addresses lifelong participation in sport or physical activity.<sup>14</sup>

### **2.4 Certification of coaches**

The system for certifying coaches is known as the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP). First launched in 1974, it is a collaborative program of the CAC, the Government of Canada, the provincial/territorial governments, and national and provincial sport federations.

The NCCP is designed to meet the needs of all types of coaches, from those coaching community teams to the head coaches of national teams. The current model

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7 Canadian Heritage, “[The Canadian Sport System](#).”

8 Canadian Heritage, “[The Canadian Sport Policy 2012](#).”

9 Canadian Heritage, “[Sport Canada](#).”

10 Ibid.

11 Canadian Sport for Life, “[Welcome to Canadian Sport for Life](#).”

12 Canadian Sport for Life, “[CS4L for Coaches](#).”

13 Canadian Sport for Life, “[Learn About Canadian Sport for Life](#).”

14 Canadian Sport for Life, “[LTAD Stages](#).”

includes three streams (Community Sport, Competition and Instruction) and a total of eight contexts such as introduction, development, and high performance.<sup>15</sup> Each sport is responsible for identifying how many of the contexts are relevant to it.<sup>16</sup> Every year, more than 90,000 coaches take an NCCP workshop and since it began, more than one million coaches have participated in the program.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.5 Vulnerable sector checks

As part of the certification process, many sport organizations require prospective coaches to pass a police background check, also known as a vulnerable sector (VS) check. These checks are designed to protect athletes from dangerous offenders by verifying whether a prospective coach has a criminal record or a pardoned sexual offence conviction.

VS checks are done by local police. In some cases, the person asking for the VS check may be asked to provide fingerprints in order to confirm their identity.<sup>18</sup> When fingerprints are required, the process can take from three business days to 18 weeks, depending on whether or not the prints are submitted electronically.<sup>19</sup>

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15 Coaching Association of Canada, "[National Coaching Certification Program: Program Overview.](#)"

16 Volleyball Canada, "[What is NCCP?](#)"

17 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1535.

18 Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "[Vulnerable Sector Checks.](#)"

19 Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "[Processing times: Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector \(VS\) Checks.](#)"





## CHAPTER 3: THE CERTIFICATION OF AMATEUR COACHES

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### 3.1 Certification of amateur coaches

John Bales, Chief Executive Officer of the CAC, said the training and certification of coaches is the primary role and function of the CAC and its partners. He noted that ethical training is an important part of the certification process. He also said that in terms of regulation, coaching is what is known as a “blended professional area” — a mix of volunteer coaching and professional or paid coaching.<sup>20</sup>

A number of witnesses talked about the certification required by the coaches working for their organization. For instance, Jeffrey Partrick, Director of Coaching and Skating Programs with Skate Canada, testified that Skate Canada requires its coaches to have NCCP certification, have a valid first aid certificate, submit a police clearance check, and complete the CAC’s Make Ethical Decisions course.<sup>21</sup> Jamie Atkin, a gymnastics coach who works with the Airdrie Edge Gymnastics Club, said that 99% of its certification is done through the NCCP.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the NCCP, Dino Lopez, Technical Director with the Oakville Soccer Club, said that while it is a great resource, it can be a challenge putting it into application and organized soccer is working to find the right execution model.<sup>23</sup> Shane Esau, a long-term coach and exercise physiologist, was more critical and said the first level of the NCCP, which is usually a weekend course, does not provide coaches with sufficient training.<sup>24</sup> Matt Showers, a head coach with the Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club, made a similar point when he said: “There’s not much being learned at the NCCP formal coaching certification clinics.”<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, Mr. Bales of the CAC said the NCCP provides the foundation for certifying coaches: “There is a very strong foundation with 67 different sports that have put a considerable effort into training and developing coaches. It really is a case of exploiting that and ensuring that the resources are there to enable them to deliver those programs.”<sup>26</sup>

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20 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1535.

21 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1530.

22 *Ibid.*, 1620.

23 *Ibid.*, 1555.

24 *Ibid.*, 1715.

25 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1715.

26 *Ibid.*, 1620.

### 3.2 Instructional stream coaching

The instructional stream, which corresponds roughly to the first three stages of the LTAD, generally refers to the coaching of children aged 12 and under.

Pierre Lafontaine of Swimming Canada expressed the general consensus when he said: “Every child in this country needs to have a certified coach.”<sup>27</sup> However, witnesses differed on the level of training that should be required for the many volunteer coaches involved in the instructional stream.

Several witnesses pointed out the extent to which the instructional level relies on volunteer coaches. For example, Clive Tolley, Provincial Regional Coach Mentor with the Saskatchewan Hockey Association, said: “The entire hockey program runs on volunteer coaches and parents are paramount to the success of any program.”<sup>28</sup> He continued: “If we had to pay each one of these volunteers, the system would simply fall down.”<sup>29</sup> Mr. Lafontaine made the same point.<sup>30</sup>

Some witnesses, however, pointed to weaknesses in this system. For instance, Mr. Lopez of the Oakville Soccer Club said that because there are not enough parents with soccer experience, those who volunteer to coach often apply lessons from other sports, such as hockey or basketball. He said that as a result, “we try to educate those parents and hopefully find those diamonds in the rough who understand the game and really help the players.”<sup>31</sup>

Mikko Makela, Director of Hockey and Head Coach with the Warner Hockey School, also said there was not enough experienced coaching at the younger ages.<sup>32</sup> For Jason deVos, a former professional soccer player and soccer analyst, these untrained volunteers may not be doing a good job of developing children at key development stages.<sup>33</sup>

Mr. Esau, the exercise physiologist, testified that many volunteer coaches do not have the necessary education in biomechanics or exercise physiology. He said that this lack of training is a reason why Canada does not have enough athletes attaining the international level. He proposed that the coach certification system should be university

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27 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1545.

28 *Ibid.*, 1650.

29 *Ibid.*, 1700.

30 *Ibid.*, 1610.

31 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1610.

32 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1555.

33 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1640.

based and coaches should have a degree in coaching.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, Mr. Esau said that professional coaches would need to be paid more.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, some witnesses felt that knowledge of basic skills is sufficient for instructional coaches. For example, Mr. Tolley of the Saskatchewan Hockey Association, said:

There's a big difference between teaching a four, five, or six-year-old how to skate to teaching a 16-year-old how to do a toe drag. We're trying to give the skills to the local coaches to really teach the fundamentals well. That doesn't require a professional hockey skill level. That's just a sound understanding of the core skills of skating, puck-handling, and the ability to model and follow the modelling and the examples that we've set.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, school teachers and others who coach high school sport teams may or may not have a high level of training as coaches. As a result, according to Mr. deVos, they may not be able to recognize talented athletes.<sup>37</sup> However, Chuck Toth, Commissioner of Athletics with the Regina High Schools Athletic Association responded to a question about using professionals to coach high school teams by asking where these professionals would come from.<sup>38</sup>

### **3.3 Competitive stream coaching**

A minority of amateur athletes are in the competitive stream, but they require a higher level of coaching than instructional level athletes. Mr. Partrick of Skate Canada pointed out there are only 4,000 competitive skaters among the 180,000 Skate Canada members.<sup>39</sup>

Several witnesses talked about the difficulties of finding coaches for the competitive stream. Wayne Hussey, Chief Executive Officer of the Oakville Gymnastics Club, said there are not enough coaches.<sup>40</sup> Mr. Atkin, the gymnastics coach, said that less than one in ten of the instructional-level coaches move to the competitive level.<sup>41</sup> Mr. Lopez of the Oakville Soccer Club noted that because of soccer's rapid growth, "we just don't have the built-up coaching expertise, so we struggle to fill the role of a coach who is up to the level of our players."<sup>42</sup> Mr. Showers of the Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club pointed out that in

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34 Ibid., 1635.

35 Ibid., 1720

36 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1710.

37 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1710.

38 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1720.

39 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1615.

40 Ibid., 1545.

41 Ibid., 1610.

42 Ibid., 1555.

order to be certified at levels three or four, the prospective coach needs to be evaluated by a level four coach and there are only five to ten of them in Canada.<sup>43</sup>

Mr. Bales of the CAC also said there was the need for more full-time coaching positions for competitive athletes.<sup>44</sup> He said there was a shortage of coaches who could coach an athlete for the 10 to 15 years needed to get to the olympic level.<sup>45</sup>

### **3.4 Role of national sport organizations and other sport bodies**

NSOs have an important role in ensuring that coaches are properly trained and certified. Mr. Partrick noted that Skate Canada's centralized structure ensures consistency in program delivery and club operations.<sup>46</sup> The national office is in regular contact with the coaches throughout the country.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, some organizations do not have the capacity or the resources to oversee all the local clubs. Mr. Lafontaine of Swimming Canada said that the organization does not "have the capacity to be everywhere."<sup>48</sup> Mr. Lopez of the Oakville Soccer Club testified that the Canadian Soccer Association "doesn't have a home where we can make sure our referees are getting the best in training, make sure our players are getting the best in training, and make sure that coaches are getting the best in training."<sup>49</sup>

Regarding the identification of talented athletes by instructional level coaches and high school physical education teachers, Mr. Toth of the Regina High Schools Athletic Association said: "There is some connection between the high school athletics and the sport governing bodies. For example in Saskatchewan ... there are ID camps where the sport governing bodies would recognize ... the elite athlete there."<sup>50</sup>

### **3.5 Vulnerable sector checks**

As already noted, many sports organizations require coaches to undergo vulnerable sector checks as part of their certification. While witnesses generally agreed on the necessity of conducting the checks, some pointed to problems obtaining these checks quickly. Mr. Partrick of Skate Canada said that because personal information can no longer be shared with third parties, he can no longer use the services of a company that

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43 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1650.

44 *Ibid.*, 1540.

45 *Ibid.* 1610.

46 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1530.

47 *Ibid.*, 1600.

48 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1615.

49 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1530.

50 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1655.

used to provide a very quick service. In addition, he said that local police departments — which are responsible for conducting the checks — do not use standardized forms.<sup>51</sup>

Mr. Lopez of the Oakville Soccer Club said that despite efforts to ensure that all the coaches had undergone vulnerable sector checks, the club was facing challenges in enforcing the policy.<sup>52</sup>

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51 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1615.

52 *Ibid.*, 1615.



# CHAPTER 4: THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF AMATEUR COACHES

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## 4.1 Barriers to the recruitment and retention of coaches

Witnesses testified about the various barriers to the recruitment and retention of coaches. Jamie Atkin, the gymnastics coach, said that all his Club's coaches are "professional, paid, and educated and trained coaches."<sup>53</sup> He said that the Club has no trouble recruiting people to coach at the instructional level, but that it was more difficult to retain them and develop them to be higher-level coaches. This is partly due to challenges in achieving work-life balance. He pointed out that 85% to 90% of the coaches are young women.<sup>54</sup> Mr. Lafontaine of Swimming Canada<sup>55</sup> and Mr. Showers of the Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club<sup>56</sup> also discussed the challenges female coaches face regarding work-life balance.

Mr. Lafontaine pointed out that while many coaches are passionate about their sport, they may not have the other skills that are required of coaches, such as understanding budgets and long-term planning.<sup>57</sup>

Another barrier to people choosing a coaching career is the public image of full-time coaches. Mr. Atkin said "the professional coach who is involved in amateur sport is a relatively unknown entity in Canada and relatively lightly held." He commented that recognition of amateur coaching as viable and real work would help participation rates.<sup>58</sup> Wayne Hussey, Chief Executive Officer of the Oakville Gymnastics Club, pointed out that coaching is a difficult job: "The hours are bad, the pay is bad, the longevity of a life in coaching is bad...."<sup>59</sup> In a similar vein, Mr. Bales of the CAC said that career options for professional coaches are limited.<sup>60</sup> Tim Comerford of the Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club described the difficulties involved in pursuing a coaching career.<sup>61</sup>

Several witnesses said that the financial cost is one of the main barriers to participation in amateur sport and coaching. Mr. Partrick said that "ultimately that's what

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53 Ibid., 1545.

54 Ibid.

55 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1555.

56 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1645.

57 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1540.

58 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1545.

59 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1545.

60 Ibid., 1620.

61 Ibid., 1635.

forces skaters, or other individuals playing other sports out of the sport earlier.”<sup>62</sup> Mr. Showers of the Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club made a similar observation.<sup>63</sup> Mr. Esau, the sports physiologist, referred to the high cost of ice time or pool time and said that reducing the costs of facilities would increase participation rates.<sup>64</sup> Mr. Comerford said there was a shortage of facilities<sup>65</sup> and his colleague, Mr. Showers, said that financial support is needed to meet the cost of facilities.<sup>66</sup>

Mr. Lafontaine testified that investment in infrastructure is crucial so that children do not need to move away from their home towns in order to participate in competitive sport.<sup>67</sup> Mr. Hussey of the Oakville Gymnastics Club also said that facilities play a big part: “You build a great facility, you get coaches running good programs, then the kids will come.”<sup>68</sup>

Mr. deVos said there are two barriers to people pursuing further education in coaching: cost and availability. He said: “Many parent volunteers believe they’re giving up their time as it is. They can’t afford to give up any more time to train to become qualified.”<sup>69</sup> Mr. Tolley of the Saskatchewan Hockey Association<sup>70</sup> and Mr. Hussey of the Oakville Gymnastics Club<sup>71</sup> made similar observations.

Mr. Bales of the CAC pointed out that there is sometimes a lack of accessibility to and awareness of NCCP training. This is particularly an issue in rural areas or in sports that have a limited following and do not offer programs frequently. He also noted that the capacity of sport organizations to offer certification training depends on their human and financial resources.<sup>72</sup>

Another barrier that was raised regarding the recruitment and retention of coaches for children is the attitude of the parents. While coaches try to focus on skill development, many parents insist that winning games is more important. To quote Mr. Makela of the Warner Hockey School, coaches often do not want to coach instructional level hockey teams because of this reason:

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62 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1605.

63 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, 1st Session, March 4, 2013, 1635.

64 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1635.

65 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1705.

66 *Ibid.*, 1655.

67 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1540.

68 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1545.

69 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1645.

70 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1700.

71 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1545.

72 *Ibid.*, 1535.



They can't do what they need to do in that environment to make the players better ... because of the parents.

How do we change that other than to educate the parents on this whole journey we're on? Educate them that maybe little Johnny is not an NHL calibre player right now. Just let the coach do the job, and maybe in two or three years it may be a possibility.<sup>73</sup>

Mr. Makela also mentioned that the restriction on parents coaching their own children is another barrier to recruiting qualified coaches.<sup>74</sup>

Another barrier to the recruitment of coaches, according to Mr. Tolley of the Saskatchewan Hockey Association, is the requirement that all coaches undergo a vulnerable sector check.<sup>75</sup>

## 4.2 Addressing the barriers to the recruitment and retention of coaches

Several witnesses said that improving the quality of coaching would require greater investment in coaching. Mr. Lafontaine of Swimming Canada said that coaching programs in high schools and universities are needed to educate enough coaches to meet the demand.<sup>76</sup>

Mr. deVos said the cost of becoming a higher-level coach would need to be addressed and suggested making the education of coaches free of charge.<sup>77</sup> Mr. Toth of the Regina High Schools Athletic Association agreed that scholarships could play a role in helping coaching education,<sup>78</sup> as did Mr. Showers of the Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club.<sup>79</sup>

Mr. Tolley of the Saskatchewan Hockey Association said there were a number of things that could be done to encourage people to pursue coaching:

I think we can do things like provide more exciting skill development opportunities for them and bring in people that are experienced from other parts of the world. They're from the professional leagues that do clinics. We can send some people internationally on trips to get training. We can work with manufacturers of equipment to get sponsorship for the kinds of things the coaches must wear like helmets, skates, sticks, gloves, and training suits.<sup>80</sup>

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73 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1620.

74 *Ibid.*, 1555.

75 *Ibid.*, 1700.

76 *Ibid.*, 1605.

77 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1720.

78 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1715.

79 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1640.

80 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1700.

To respond to the challenges regarding work-life balance, Mr. Lafontaine suggested there be a daycare system for coaches' children.<sup>81</sup> Mr. Bales of the CAC pointed out that women are underrepresented in coaching and that there are specific programs for women in coaching.<sup>82</sup>

Mr. Bales also suggested providing e-learning to address cost and accessibility issues around training. He also suggested making registration fees for NCCP courses tax deductible.<sup>83</sup> Mr. Hussey of the Oakville Gymnastics Club agreed with the idea of e-learning and added that it should be free.<sup>84</sup>

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81 Ibid., 1550.

82 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1535.

83 Ibid., 1540.

84 Ibid., 1545.

# CHAPTER 5: PARTICIPATION IN AMATEUR SPORTS AND LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

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## 5.1 The role of coaches in encouraging participation in amateur sport

Several witnesses described the levels of participation in their sport. Mr. Partrick from Skate Canada said that his organization has 180,000 members in 1,150 clubs and over 5,100 coaches. He testified that over the last 10 years, the number of skaters has remained constant while the number of coaches has increased.<sup>85</sup>

Mr. Lopez of the Oakville Soccer Club said the Club has about 12,000 participants, 11,000 of whom are recreational players and about 200 who are high-performance athletes. The club has over 800 coaches, 750 of whom are volunteers. The Club has four full-time coaches and the rest are part-time professional coaches.<sup>86</sup> The Club subsidizes training courses for all its coaches,<sup>87</sup> with much of that investment going to the competitive stream.<sup>88</sup>

Mr. Lopez said that his Club was experiencing a mild contraction in registration, which he said “is partially due to a lack of quality coaching, lack of resources, as well as competition from other sports and within the sport.”<sup>89</sup> Mr. Makela of the Warner Hockey School also thought that participation rates are declining.<sup>90</sup>

Several witnesses said that properly trained coaches are crucial to encouraging ongoing participation in amateur sport, not only for elite athletes, but for also for life-long recreational athletes. Mr. Bales of the CAC cited a study by the Conference Board of Canada that identified coaches as the top priorities for Canada’s sport development system, the high performance delivery system and long-term athlete development.<sup>91</sup>

Mr. Atkin, the gymnastics coach, said: “the very first experiences of the kids will be affected by the coach’s demeanour, by their positive energy, and by their ability to have the athletes enjoy and also be challenged by what’s in front of them.”<sup>92</sup> He continued:

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85 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1530.

86 *Ibid.*, 1535.

87 *Ibid.*, 1540.

88 *Ibid.*, 1535.

89 *Ibid.*

90 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1555.

91 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1535.

92 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1545.

If we don't have the committed, educated and experienced people taking on those athletes and bringing them through both their grassroots experiences and their elite competitive experiences, we won't see the growth both in the numbers of participation in amateur sport, which is such a huge factor for overall health and development of our young people, but also the elite participation that brings recognition to Canada as a whole.<sup>93</sup>

Mr. Partrick concurred, saying:

If we have a very strong base of coaches, whether they be volunteer based on whichever sport it is or professional paid coaches, those are the individuals that sculpt and create that experience for that young participant, regardless of what their goals are.<sup>94</sup>

Witnesses said that good coaches can also encourage talented players to find their proper stream and level of competition. On the other hand, poorly trained coaches may discourage otherwise promising athletes. Mr. Lopez said that because there are not enough coaches with expertise that is up to the level of the players, many children drop out of the game.<sup>95</sup> This point was also raised by Mr. deVos, who said that while France has 17,500 nationally-certified coaches and Germany has 35,000, Canada has only 553 nationally certified coaches for 850,000 players.<sup>96</sup>

Several witnesses talked about the inspiration that a good coach can provide to young athletes. To quote Mr. Lafontaine of Swimming Canada: "I think it's the power of the coaches to help create an environment where kids can't wait to get to practice."<sup>97</sup>

## **5.2 The role of coaches in promoting long-term athlete development**

A number of witnesses talked about the importance of long-term athlete development (LTAD) and the need to have the appropriate coaching for different levels of sport. For the instructional level, this means more emphasis on skill development and less on competition. However, this approach sometimes meets with opposition from parents. Mr. Partrick of Skate Canada explained his organization's approach:

To be honest, even at the very initial stage we're starting to remove competition because of the fact that it can be discouraging for athletes when they're at a very young age. The cost of that can somehow be prohibitive as well. The intent is to give them the chance to develop their skills first, develop confidence, and then introduce the competition components.<sup>98</sup>

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93 Ibid., 1550.

94 Ibid., 1625.

95 Ibid., 1555.

96 Ibid., 1640.

97 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1540.

98 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1605.

Mr. Lopez of the Oakville Soccer Club said that his Club's five-year strategic plan is based on the LTAD principles and that coaching "plays a pivotal role to our success and to our meeting all the elements of our strategic plan."<sup>99</sup> He also discussed the opposition from parents to approaches that do away with score keeping and competition for young athletes:

I think the big difficulty with moving away from keeping score and winning is really an adult point of view. We try to put our view of the game onto children, and really children play quite differently than from adults. The biggest challenge is just changing the mindset of the parents and then all the coaches to believe in this because it is a way to go.<sup>100</sup>

Mr. Tolley of the Saskatchewan Hockey Association also talked about this issue:

When a child starts hockey at the age of four, five, or six years, we give the parents a talk. We try to get them to see they are entering hockey for the same reason they would be taking up any other sporting or cultural activity. You put your child into music lessons because you want them to learn music and enjoy it for a lifetime. You put your children into hockey or sport for the same reasons, and at ages four, five and six the parents seem to buy into that and saying that yes, they're putting their little child into this and he will learn skills and have fun. It's going to be non-competitive, and everybody is in it for the right reasons.<sup>101</sup>

Mr. Showers of the Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club pointed out that being a star athlete at age 10, 11 or 12 is no guarantee of future success. He said that these children are likely to plateau in a couple of years and, as a result, many drop out before the age of 16.<sup>102</sup>

Another aspect of the LTAD approach is participation in many sports, rather than specializing in one sport. Mr. Tolley said the NCCP encourages "long-term athlete and player development across all sports." He agreed with this approach, saying: "we're very supportive of initiatives that would see the kids develop as athletes first and sport-specific second."<sup>103</sup> Mr. Esau, the sport physiologist, also favoured this approach and said this is another reason for having trained coaches. He said children should play a different sport every day of the week, and, "If we have a coach that's not a specialist in that sport, they can develop those skills. They're just general kinesiology type skills, physical literacy."<sup>104</sup>

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99 Ibid., 1535.

100 Ibid., 1605.

101 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1650.

102 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1655.

103 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1640.

104 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1655.



## CHAPTER 6: HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MIGHT FURTHER PROMOTE AMATEUR COACHING

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Several witnesses made specific suggestions on how the federal government might further promote amateur coaching.

Mr. Partrick of Skate Canada called on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to allow third-party access to vulnerable sector search information. He said this would “ensure consistency of information, ensure consistent costs for coaches, ensure quick processing time....”<sup>105</sup> He also called for national standardized forms for vulnerable sector checks.<sup>106</sup>

Mr. Partrick also called for the federal government to “support ongoing professional development for coaches,” partly because of the high related costs. This suggestion was also made by Mr. deVos,<sup>107</sup> Mr. Toth of the Regina High Schools Athletic Association<sup>108</sup> and Mr. Showers of the Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club,<sup>109</sup> who agreed that scholarships could play a role in helping coaching education.

To help defray the cost of training, Mr. Lafontaine of Swimming Canada proposed that there be a tax credit for volunteer coaches.<sup>110</sup> Mr. Bales of the CAC suggested that NCCP course registration fees be tax deductible and that there be a federal-provincial cost-sharing program for coaches’ salaries.<sup>111</sup> He also suggested that the federal government assist with e-learning for coach training,<sup>112</sup> and Mr. Hussey of the Oakville Gymnastics Club suggested that e-learning should be free.<sup>113</sup>

Several witnesses talked about the need to invest in sport infrastructure or to take measures to reduce the cost of facilities, including Mr. Esau, the sports physiologist,<sup>114</sup>

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105 Ibid., 1530.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid., 1645.

108 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1715.

109 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1640.

110 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1610.

111 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1540.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid., 1545.

114 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1635.

Messrs. Comerford and Showers of the Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club,<sup>115</sup> Mr. Lafontaine<sup>116</sup> and Mr. Hussey.<sup>117</sup>

Mr. Partrick also suggested that the federal government, “support the Canadian Sport for Life movement, participation in physical activity, and other healthy living initiatives.”<sup>118</sup> This was echoed by Mr. Atkin, the gymnastics coach, and Mr. Lopez of the Oakville Soccer Club.<sup>119</sup>

Mr. Partrick also called on the federal government to “elevate and recognize the role of the coach.”<sup>120</sup> Mr. Lafontaine made a similar suggestion.<sup>121</sup>

Mr. Bales suggested that the federal government examine ways of supporting universities with coaching degree programs and research in coaching.<sup>122</sup>

Several witnesses talked about the need to educating coaches and parents about the long-term athlete development approach. They argued that if the approach were better accepted, the coaches might be more encouraged to put it into practice.

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115 Ibid., 1655.

116 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1540.

117 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1545.

118 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 53, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 25, 2013, 1530.

119 Ibid., 1625.

120 Ibid., 1530.

121 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 54, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, February 27, 2013, 1540.

122 *Evidence*, Meeting No. 55, 1st Session, 41st Parliament, March 4, 2013, 1540.



## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Committee is grateful for the witnesses' testimony and is impressed by their passion for coaching. The Committee recognizes that coaches play a key role in encouraging people to participate in sport throughout their life.

The Committee is aware of the frustrations of many witnesses regarding the level of training for basic-level coaching. At the same time, the Committee is aware of the large role played by volunteer coaches in the Canadian sport system. Without them, the cost of participating in sport would rise and there would be fewer opportunities for children to participate in sport.

The Committee is mindful of the challenges of encouraging coaches to pursue further training. Some of these challenges are financial; some are related to work-life balance; and some with the lack of a stable career path for coaches.

The Committee is also aware of the financial challenges of participating in amateur sport and that in some cases these may discourage people from participating. The Committee heard that in some localities, these challenges may be related to a shortage of sport facilities.

The Committee heard that generally speaking, the foundations of the system for certifying and training coaches through the NCCP are sound. The challenges tend to be in the delivery and execution of some of these foundations. These challenges are also greater in rural areas and for sports with fewer participants.

The Committee heard that the Long-Term Athlete Development model is the basis of the Canadian sport system, but it appears that some parents and coaches do not accept the skills development approach for young athletes and insist on an approach that puts the emphasis on winning games. Witnesses tended to support the skills development model, under which there may be no scoring or competition at early levels.

The Committee heard that while vulnerable sector checks are an essential component of certifying coaches, there could be improvements to the administration of the checks.

### **Conclusion 1**

**The Committee recognizes the dedication and commitment of the many volunteer and professional coaches to encouraging participation at all levels of amateur sport.**

### **Recommendation 1**

**The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to work with the provincial and territorial governments and partner organizations in the sports system to encourage Canadians to participate in amateur coaching.**

### **Recommendation 2**

**The Committee recommends that the federal government explore measures, including e-learning, to assist the Coaching Association of Canada and other sports organizations with the delivery of the National Coaching Certification Program.**

### **Recommendation 3**

**The Committee recommends that the federal government explore measures to encourage qualified Canadians to pursue careers in competitive coaching.**

### **Recommendation 4**

**The Committee recommends that the federal government explore measures to promote the objectives of the Long-Term Athlete Development framework.**

### **Recommendation 5**

**The Committee recommends that the federal government explore measures to improve the efficiency of the process for providing vulnerable sector checks.**

# APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p><b>As an individual</b></p> <p>Jamie Atkin, Club Manager and Head Coach, Airdrie Edge Gymnastics Club</p> <p>Jason deVos</p> <p>Shane Esau, Exercise Physiologist, Canadian Sport Centre - Calgary</p> <p><b>Oakville Soccer Club</b></p> <p>Dino Lopez, Technical Director</p> <p><b>Skate Canada</b></p> <p>Jeffrey Partrick, Director, Coaching and Skating Programs</p>	2013/02/25	53
<p><b>Horizon School Division</b></p> <p>Mikko Makela, Director of Hockey and Head Coach, Warner Hockey School</p> <p><b>Regina School Boards</b></p> <p>Chuck Toth, Commissioner of Athletics, Regina High Schools Athletic Association</p> <p><b>Saskatchewan Hockey Association</b></p> <p>Clive Tolley, Provincial Regional Coach Mentor</p> <p><b>Swimming Canada</b></p> <p>Pierre Lafontaine, Chief Executive Officer</p> <p><b>Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club</b></p> <p>Tim Comerford, Competitive Swim Coach, Lac St-Louis Swimming Association</p> <p>Matt Showers, Head Coach for ten years and under, Lac St-Louis Swimming Association</p> <p><b>Coaching Association of Canada</b></p> <p>John Bales, Chief Executive Officer</p> <p><b>Institut national du sport du Québec</b></p> <p>Marc Gélinas, Chief Executive Officer</p> <p><b>Oakville Gymnastics Club</b></p> <p>Wayne Hussey, Chief Operating Officer</p>	2013/02/27	54
<p><b>Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club</b></p> <p>Tim Comerford, Competitive Swim Coach, Lac St-Louis Swimming Association</p> <p>Matt Showers, Head Coach for ten years and under, Lac St-Louis Swimming Association</p> <p><b>Coaching Association of Canada</b></p> <p>John Bales, Chief Executive Officer</p> <p><b>Institut national du sport du Québec</b></p> <p>Marc Gélinas, Chief Executive Officer</p> <p><b>Oakville Gymnastics Club</b></p> <p>Wayne Hussey, Chief Operating Officer</p>	2013/03/04	55



# **APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS**

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## **Organizations and Individuals**

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**Coaching Association of Canada**

**Oakville Soccer Club**

**Regina School Boards**

**Salmon, Darryl**

**Skate Canada**



## REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* (Meetings Nos. 53, 54, 55 and 56) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Rob Moore

Chair





## NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NDP) SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION

The Official Opposition members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage would first like to thank the witnesses, who took the time to present their views on amateur coaching in Canada.

We are pleased to support the report. However, to address the issues raised by the witnesses, important recommendations must be added regarding some of the key challenges facing amateur coaches and the Canadian sports world.

A number of witnesses stated that financial concerns are one of the main challenges for amateur coaching. For example, training costs, combined with the often voluntary nature of amateur coaching, mean that coaches' ongoing professional development is expensive. However, though this training is costly, it remains essential to "ensuring a quality sport experience for physical activity participants."<sup>1</sup> One witness noted that "[c]oach education falls into the area of lack of financial support."<sup>2</sup>

Witnesses also cited the lack of funding for the bottom of the Canadian sports pyramid. A clear distinction must be made between competitive and recreational sports, each of which "needs to be funded accordingly."<sup>3</sup> One witness argued that we must "stop thinking about Olympians all the time" and that "we would not be able to have any sports in Canada if it were not for the volunteers."<sup>4</sup> These volunteers are indispensable to the Canadian sports system.

The underrepresentation of women and members of minority groups in amateur coaching was identified as an additional challenge. However, there is no recommendation on this subject.

Several witnesses also cited Canada's sports infrastructure deficit as one of the main challenges to amateur coaching today. One witness stated that "Canada's sports infrastructure is not up to the task" and that "more facilities need to be built in Canada. In addition, ... they should be within the financial reach of the clubs. That aspect is a challenge because the municipalities are the ones that have to assume those costs."<sup>5</sup> The shortage of sports infrastructure in Canada makes it more expensive to use and less accessible for sports clubs and amateur athletes. It is a significant problem for certain sports and parts of the country that are far from major urban centres. The lack of infrastructure is a major obstacle to high-quality, accessible and affordable amateur coaching. Again, the report contains no recommendation on this matter, even though

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<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 25 February 2013, 1530.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1645.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1540.

<sup>4</sup> House of Commons, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 27 February 2013, 1610.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1605.

several witnesses called the sports infrastructure deficit one of the greatest challenges to amateur coaching in Canada.

A number of witnesses regarded amateur coaches as a solution to the public health problems of low sports participation rates and declining physical activity among Canadian youth. According to the Statistics Canada study on sports participation, “[p]articipation in sport declined from 45% in 1992 to 28% in 2005 in Canada. ... That was down from 9.6 million Canadians in 1992 to 7.3 million in 2005.”<sup>6</sup> Some witnesses argued that the federal government should do more to encourage healthy living in order to reduce health care costs and improve the quality of life of all Canadians. Several witnesses said that trained and certified amateur coaches should be at the heart of such a public health strategy. Said one, “[i]f we don’t have the committed educated and experienced people, ... we won’t see the growth ... in the participation numbers in amateur sport, which is such a huge factor for the overall health and development of our young people.”<sup>7</sup> The role that amateur coaches play in youth involvement in sports is worth emphasizing.

In light of these considerations, the Official Opposition would like to make the following three additional recommendations:

1. That the federal government study solutions to increase the number of women and members of minority groups involved in sports, particularly amateur coaching.
2. That the federal government work with the provinces and relevant jurisdictions to make up the sports infrastructure deficit, which is hampering youth participation in sports and amateur coaching.
3. That the federal government study various solutions to reduce the financial barriers to amateur coaching and, more generally, Canadians’ participation in sports.

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<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada, *Sport Participation in Canada, 2005*, Catalogue no. 81-595-M, Ottawa, 2008, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> House of Commons, Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 25 February 2013, 1550.