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Chair

The Honourable Rob Moore

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC)): Welcome to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage as we continue our study on the status of amateur coaching in Canada.

We are very pleased to have witnesses with us today from the Institut national du sport du Québec, Marc Gélinas, chief executive officer. From the Coaching Association of Canada, we have John Bales, chief executive officer. From the Oakville Gymnastics Club, we have Wayne Hussey, chief executive officer.

Welcome to you, gentlemen. These witnesses will be with us until 4:25. At 4:25 we're going to be hearing from another panel of witnesses.

As the clerk has explained to you, there will be time for opening remarks and then we'll have an opportunity for our committee members to ask some questions of the witnesses.

We will begin with Mr. Bales from the Coaching Association of Canada. He has a PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Bales, the floor is yours.

Mr. John Bales (Chief Executive Officer, Coaching Association of Canada): Thank you very much. I greatly appreciate this opportunity to address you today.

I'll go through these PowerPoint slides, the first ones, fairly quickly to get to some of the recommendations towards the end. What I've tried to address here are the main areas that you had referred to in the brief around training and certification, participation, and how the federal government might further promote coaching in Canada.

A little bit of background on the Coaching Association of Canada. The organization was established in 1970. It's a not-for-profit national organization that has received the mandate from both levels of government. The federal-provincial-territorial ministers responsible for sport have given the mandate to CAC for the development of coaching across all sports and at all levels.

It is very much a partnership organization, relying on all of the different national sport organizations and provincial-territorial coaching groups that are involved in coaching.

In terms of the importance of coaching development, there was an analysis done by the Conference Board of Canada in October of 2011 in preparation for the new Canadian sport policy. These were three of the areas that were addressed in this very wide-ranging

study. It looked at the number one priority for Canada's sport development system and concluded that it was coaches and instructors; the number one priority for the high-performance delivery system was coaches and technical leadership; and the number one program change related to long-term athlete development was the training of coaches and volunteers.

Again, I reinforce the fact that you're doing this study and addressing coaching, and it's very much supported by that analysis done by the Conference Board of Canada, leading up to the new Canadian sport policy that came out just over a year ago.

In terms of the training and certification of coaches, that is the primary role and function of the Coaching Association of Canada and its partners. The slogan we use is "Every athlete deserves a certified coach". We train coaches right from the volunteer community level to the Olympic and Paralympic level.

I have a little video clip that's not going to work. It doesn't matter. It was just to demonstrate some of the work being done at the base level with regard to teaching young children fundamental movement skills—balance, coordination, running, jumping, throwing—as the starting point, and a really essential part of the sport delivery pathway, right from that level up to the National Coaching Institute, which has an advanced diploma for high-level coaches that are preparing to be Olympic and Paralympic coaches.

In addition, we have specific programs for women in coaching, who are very underrepresented in coaching in Canada. At the national team level, approximately 15% of the coaches are women, and even through the delivery system women tend to be quite underrepresented. In addition, the aboriginal coaching program and programs for coaching athletes with a disability are part of the program we offer.

I just want to bring your attention to a study that was done by the University of Toronto evaluating one of the modules called "Make ethical decisions", within the national coaching certification program. This was done by two professors at the University of Toronto in 2011 and is a very important part of the program we offer: the whole ethical framework for coaching as an important foundation. It found that 73% reported that they had changed their thinking about ethical decision-making as a result of their course participation. Over 50% were looking for further education on things like fair play, athlete maltreatment, health and safety, equity, doping, honouring sport, and social ethics.

Again, this is a real foundation part of the program, and the feedback on it has been very positive.

When we get to the area of regulation of coaches, which was another point that was referred to in the brief, I think it's important to state the opinion, backed up by some publications, that coaching is quite different from other professions—law, or medicine, or accounting—in that it is termed here as a blended professional area. It is very much a mix of volunteer coaching and professional or paid coaching, whereas those other real professions don't allow anyone outside of their professional sphere. In the case of coaching, it is very much a blend between volunteer coaching and professional coaching, and it's important that we respect and value both aspects. We need more paid professional coaches to lead sport development, but the system is also very dependent on the volunteer coaches who really enable such a breadth of sport opportunities across the country.

However, both have to address the whole risk management and adherence to the code of ethics that really applies to any coach, whether volunteer or paid. That is a critical component of the work we are doing, and it's an area that we see needs further attention. The codes of ethics exist, but we need to address, in a more fulsome way, the adherence and the disciplinary process to ensure that if there are people who are breaking the code, they can be removed from the system.

In terms of participation from a coaching aspect, over 90,000 participants take part in NCCP courses each year, making it one of the biggest adult education programs in the country. Over a million coaches have taken a course since the program began in the 1970s.

Referring back to the Conference Board of Canada report:

“It is the coaches that define a quality experience. ... Having quality coaches, leads to quality sport.”

Again, I think there's a very strong consensus on the importance of the role that coaches play.

In terms of looking forward to areas the federal government might further promote, to highlight some of the barriers and challenges we're facing, we are in the process of conducting a number of different focus groups to get input from the field, from coaches and the people teaching the coaching courses. Some of the issues that are quite prevalent are the cost and time to get certified. In many cases here, we're dealing with volunteer coaches who are already volunteering their time. On top of that, to be expected to take an education program is another ask of them, as well as the cost to be involved in that. Those are big issues within coaching across the country and across different sports.

Accessibility to and awareness of NCCP training.... Again, in many of the bigger cities the program is quite accessible, but as you go into rural areas...and when you go across 67 sports, some of the sports are quite small, so they don't offer the program that frequently. So accessibility is a big issue. Part of that is the capacity of the sport organizations to actually offer the program, both in terms of human resources and financial resources.

• (1540)

I'd also like to bring attention to two studies, the “Report on the Status of Coaches in Canada”, which was done in 2009, and the “Improving High-Performance Coaching” study done by Own the Podium and the Coaching Association. They have really highlighted

the need for more full-time coaching positions to support Canadian athletes.

I've identified four areas here that I would like your committee to consider. One area is around e-learning, to try to help address that cost and accessibility to training to support the sport organizations. To deliver elements of the NCCP online would open up some of the accessibility and reduce some of the costs. I believe there are some federal government programs that really deal with technology, so that could be an area that would have a very big impact on the training of coaches across different sports.

Another idea that comes up quite frequently is the potential to have tax deductibility of the course registration fees for coaches who take an NCCP course. There is the children's fitness tax credit, but the volunteer coaches who are taking NCCP are having to pay for that, and the incentive of a tax credit is something that comes up quite frequently.

Another area is linkage with universities, especially when we get to the high-performance and the paid coaching end, to look at coaching degree programs and research in coaching. Again, the federal government puts a lot of money into research through the different council grants, but very little of that money goes into sport. That's a comment we get repeatedly from the university professors who play a major role in the design, development, and delivery of the coaching program, but they're being pulled off to other areas where there are grants in health and other areas. So there really is a need for additional research in sport and in coaching. That's really the lifeblood of universities, and we really value that contribution that university departments of physical education and kinesiology make to our programs.

Finally, with regard to federal-provincial cost-sharing programs for coach salaries, although there has been a lot of progress made in the recent past in terms of more coaching positions available at the national level, when you go below that national team level, there is still a big gap in really defining a career as a coach. That's an area where we've had a lot of discussions with provinces, and there seems to be quite an open attitude to things like cost-sharing programs.

Let me stop there; it must have been about 10 minutes. Those are some of the key ideas I'd like to put forward. Thank you.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bales.

Next we'll go to Mr. Gélinas, from the Institut national du sport du Québec. The floor is yours, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Gélinas (Chief Executive Officer, Institut national du sport du Québec): Good afternoon.

The Institut national du sport du Québec administers a number of programs and services for athletes preparing for high-level competitions, such as the Olympic or Paralympic Games. We offer a wide range of programs and services, specifically training and professional development for those who want to become high-level coaches or for those who are already national team coaches and need professional development.

I was very interested in Mr. Bales' presentation. A number of his recommendations partly overlap with our observations. We do not train coaches in sports initiation, but we train those preparing for high-performance sport and who are already working in the field. In my view, a number of training elements also apply to high-level coaches.

I will leave it at that. I can participate in the ensuing discussion.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Next we will go to Mr. Hussey, from the Oakville Gymnastics Club.

Mr. Hussey.

Mr. Wayne Hussey (Chief Operating Officer, Oakville Gymnastics Club): Thank you.

I don't have a presentation and I don't have notes, but I have 46 years of experience as a coach. I know, how can a guy who looks so young have that much experience? I think I started coaching in the womb.

I just want to share some of my thoughts with you. I have lots of answers to some of the problems, but we don't have time for them here, so if you want to invite me back, I'd be happy to come back. I'd like to address some of the concerns I've had over the 46 years. I'll just walk you through a little bit.

I started as a very young coach in a different sport from the one I'm in now, in basketball. I coached at every level. I was a volunteer coach as a university student. I became a college coach, a local coach, a university coach, a junior national coach, and finally, a national coach, which I did for nine years. So I've seen pretty much the full gamut of coaching, and I still feel I'm coaching now because....

There are 65 people working in our organization. We're probably the largest gymnastics organization in North America—or one of the largest. There might be a couple we don't know of yet. We have 1,600 young kids, aged 18 months to 18 years, and we have a lot of new, up and coming young coaches.

We struggle with getting good coaches, and getting coaches in general, because the reality is that coaching is not really a great job. The hours are bad, the pay is bad, and the longevity of a life in coaching is bad. And depending on what types of groups they're coaching, it becomes even more problematic. In our situation, for example—I know it's not like this in every sport—when parents get involved...obviously, parents know better than coaches because they're a trained parent and not a trained coach, and they're now paying the way. The challenges in every sport are different—I get that—so I can only share with you some of mine.

When I was a professional coach, people stopped me on the street, friends of mine, and they'd ask me what I did. I'd say, "I'm a coach", and they'd say, "No, what do you do?" Sport in Canada is seen as an activity, not something that we necessarily pay as much attention to as perhaps we should.

I learned a long time ago, too, that sometimes the people who are really involved are the ones very close to the sport, close to their

kids, or close to someone coaching that sport. As we have Olympics and Paralympics and things of that nature, we have a tendency, as everybody has heard, to wave the flag and try to do a little bit more, and try to do a little bit more with coaching.

But it starts so much further back than that. If you come to our club, every day you'll see little 18-month-old kids just getting comfortable in a gym, and there has to be someone in there with them. As John said, certification is very important; however, if you have young coaches working with these young kids...to be certified to coach gymnastics it takes three or four weekends and it costs them a couple of hundred dollars. We pay half and they pay half, and then they earn it back. As I said, they have to deal with a lot of problems, and it's just a tough thing for them.

I was glad to hear John mention the online part. I just mentioned it to him today, so I don't know how he got it on his screen so quickly.

Mr. John Bales: It was pretty quick, right?

Mr. Wayne Hussey: Yes, that's very good. That's a good reaction time, so I'm happy for that.

The only thing he didn't put in there...I'd like to see it be free. That's one of the things we can do. We spend a lot of money on things like this, where you bring people in, but perhaps we could have introductory coaching courses online so that people can go online and take those courses at no cost to them and at their own convenience. Those are the ones who will probably become involved with their sons and daughters in different sports. If they want to go further, as I did, and become a professional coach, there are the higher levels of coaching certification, it's more time-consuming, and you need to know more.

But at that grassroots level, if we think back—some of you who are of my vintage anyway—it was our moms and our dads who coached, and I sure the heck know they didn't have any coaching certification. They just had a love for the sport, a love for their kids, time, interest, and a sincere desire to be there and get it done.

A lot of time in sport now we hear—and I know that from hockey studies, football studies, baseball studies, and basketball studies—that we play too many games and we don't practise enough. Well, that's a result of not necessarily having great coaches, because a lot of times for those coaches it's the luck of the draw: who is in your area?

I would say that now we try to recruit coaches on a quarterly, once-a-year basis, and we struggle to get coaches from Canada. We now have to go overseas. We're getting them from Romania, Russia, England, and Ireland. It's a very difficult profession, so we have to find ways to make it more attractive, especially if we want to take it seriously and especially if we want kids who are really working hard to embrace activities...because we tell them to; we tell them to get away from the computer and be more active. But we don't have people there ready for them.

•(1550)

We built a dedicated facility in Oakville seven years ago. Like a lot of sports, we were located in a commercial building. We went from 800 to 1,600 kids a session—you can multiply that by three—and 1,000 people at summer camps.

Facilities play a big part in it, too. If you build a great facility and you get coaches running good programs, the kids will come.

We have 240 competitive kids. We went from some 30 coaches to employing about 65 or 70 now. We have about 500 kids on the waiting list.

We built the new building with the help of federal and provincial government money in a project in Oakville. It cost us personally \$1.7 million—the whole facility was \$3 million—and we paid it off in 10 years instead of 20 years.

Based on our agreement, we're going to have rent-free access for 30 years, but because we're so full and we think we have the right formula, we're now asking the town to build another facility with us. We don't like to see those kids on a waiting list; we want to get them active.

I think there are a lot of things that can happen in sport in Canada. I hope your committee can identify a lot of them and make some inroads with them. I think some are a lot easier than others, and I know some are very daunting challenges.

Again, I've been doing this for 46 years. We used to have quadrennial planning when I was a national coach, and we'd bring people in from all across the country. We'd have all these great plans, only to learn that we didn't have enough money to follow through with the plans. Then we'd have to plan again, based on the money we had.

All I'm suggesting is this. I know resources are limited. I'm not a big person asking for money; I'm a big person asking for support. I like to generate money through corporations, and I like to generate money by running sport like a business. I think it can be done that way, but I think there are probably some things the government can do provincially and federally to help most sports. You just have to be creative, think outside the box, and challenge sports people to come up with the ideas.

Thank you.

•(1555)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hussey.

Now we will move to our question and answer time. This is a seven-minute round, and we'll start with Mr. Young.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today. We appreciate it.

Mr. Hussey, we almost missed you totally, but you managed to get here today. I guess it was snow that held you up last week.

Mr. Wayne Hussey: The flight was cancelled, yes.

Mr. Terence Young: Congratulations on your successes at the Oakville Gymnastics Club, and on your growth. I'm overdue for a visit to come and see how things are going.

I wanted to ask you this. From the big picture, with all your years of experience, could you share with the committee why sport is important for young people?

Mr. Wayne Hussey: For me, it's a cornerstone for a lot of things. For example, I'm not a big gymnastics person. I was a basketball person, and I could never get gymnastics when I started in that sport. Then I realized that these little kids who were eight, nine, ten years old were flipping and doing things on beams that we would be very nervous to do. I like my feet firmly on the ground; they don't. So all of a sudden I realized why it was so important to them to stay in it.

The thing we found, too, is that the concentration level in sport is so high that it transfers to other things. It transfers to school. We've had results from schools that have shown us that students—whether they were good, bad, or indifferent—became better once they took up the sport and stayed in the sport longer, because of the concentration level.

I've found that even in my post-university career. I wasn't sure a lot of the guys would make it in business—they were sports guys and they had a dubious university career, I would say, or study habits—but because they played sports and they formed a few variables that weren't taught at university, they became pretty good business guys. They knew how to work with people, they knew how to work through things, they had common goals.

I come from a team sport. I always believe you're as smart as the people you hang around with. You're as good as the people around you who are working with you, so I like to build teams. I know nothing about gymnastics, yet we have one of the strongest gymnastics clubs in North America. But I know business and I know coaching, so I go out and hire good gymnastics people, and because I can run a business, I can afford to pay them. So there are ways around it.

Sports is a cornerstone. There are four key sports, gymnastics being one, and track and field being another. There's a sport like swimming. It's a lifetime skill.

You can always take something from sport and bring it into your everyday life, and I think that's why Canada and other countries are so enamoured with sport. It's not necessarily because of the unbelievable skills that people possess. I think it's the other things we know about that sport can do for people.

Mr. Terence Young: We're not even going to start talking about video games and kids sitting home playing video games by the hour.

Wayne, what's your biggest challenge at the Oakville Gymnastics Club?

Mr. Wayne Hussey: Our biggest challenge is space and a facility. I know you're not involved with facilities at this point in time, but facilities are a big one. But coaches.... As I said, we just don't have enough coaches.

One of my board members said that we have enough money now to put in a new facility, and my comment was that we don't have enough coaches yet. That's why I wanted to come and speak here today. We have to make coaching opportunities more accessible. We're losing out on a lot of things because of that.

• (1600)

Mr. Terence Young: You have a budget to pay coaches, but you can't find them.

Mr. Wayne Hussey: That's part of it.

Mr. Terence Young: How many have you brought from other countries?

Mr. Wayne Hussey: We have about five or six, and there are two en route.

Mr. Terence Young: Is that a very lengthy process, or are they able to immigrate to Canada fairly easily?

Mr. Wayne Hussey: No, it's fairly lengthy, depending on the country they're coming from.

The problem, too, is that it's hard to necessarily check out all their qualifications. We do, because we have insights from other coaches in that area. But it becomes difficult.

Mr. Terence Young: Can you tell us about the successes of Christine Peng-Peng Lee, Oakville Olympian, and any other potential Olympians you have? That makes it pretty exciting.

Mr. Wayne Hussey: Yes. Gymnastics is a tough Olympic sport. John and I were just talking about gymnastics earlier. It's a tough sport, because only so many athletes, male and female, go to represent Canada.

We don't look at it in terms of Olympic athletes; we try to develop a strong base. In most sports, that's what you try to do. If you have a really good base, as it moves up you'll have your successes—Christine Peng-Peng Lee and gals like her. We had three out of the top 10 girls in the national program and we had a couple of boys. So it's just developing a strong base in a program. And again, it was because of two very good coaches we brought in.

Mr. Terence Young: Coaches are key. They're critical.

Mr. Wayne Hussey: Yes.

Mr. Terence Young: Do you have more girls in the programs or more boys?

Mr. Wayne Hussey: We have more girls now. It was pretty much all girls. It used to be called the Antoinettes Gymnastics Club. Because boys started coming around and it became more of a manly activity, we had to change it to the Oakville Gymnastics Club so that they wouldn't feel we were ignoring them.

I would say it's about 30% boys and 70% girls.

Mr. Terence Young: How has the federal government done in supporting gymnastics and coaching with Own the Podium and the Olympic and Paralympic committees? How have they contributed to the overall development or improvement of amateur coaches and high-performance coaches?

Mr. Wayne Hussey: John could probably speak more on that one.

We've taken advantage of some grants for some of our higher-level coaches within the Olympic program. At the amateur level, we

once also had a coach who was supported by some government funding about seven years ago. But I think you told me that program is no longer around.

Maybe I'll let John answer.

Mr. Terence Young: That would be helpful. Thank you.

John?

Mr. John Bales: The program Wayne is referring to was a Services Canada internship, and for a number of years we received funding to offer to different clubs, including Wayne's, to hire a young person. There was an age limit; you had to be below 30 years of age. It was very much a cost-sharing. There was a grant that stimulated the clubs to put in place a position for a young coach.

We received that funding for three or four years, but that program has been discontinued, which I think is quite unfortunate. It really was a stepping stone for coaches to move into careers as coaches.

Mr. Terence Young: Do you have any bursaries for promising gymnastics students, or for any students at all whose parents might be temporarily out of work or something? Can you help them along financially for a short term? Is there anything like that at the club?

Mr. Wayne Hussey: Yes. Again, because we're fairly successful we donate about \$12,000 back to athletes in the club to help offset some transportation costs. It's done on a need basis. Also, I'm even more proud of our recreational program: if people do not have money to take a recreational course, we always find a way to get them in.

Mr. Terence Young: That's fantastic.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Young.

Next, for seven minutes, is Mr. Dubé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Gélinas, I would like to ask you a question that deals with your situation in Quebec, but also with that of Ontario and the eastern provinces, I believe.

We often hear about young elite athletes who have to move to the other end of the country, depending on where they come from. Other witnesses told us about this situation. Athletes, who shall remain nameless out of respect, also talk about experiencing this.

Do you think this is the current situation? Do you feel that the federal government could do something about it? For instance, I am thinking of Mathieu Giroux's situation before the holidays.

Mr. Marc Gélinas: I think the situation in Quebec has drastically changed over the past few years. A number of programs and incentives have been set up in Quebec. As a result, instead of seeing Quebec athletes leave their province to go live somewhere else in Canada, we are seeing that Quebec appeals to athletes from other provinces who want to come to work and train in Quebec.

However, it would be wrong to say that Quebec athletes do not leave their province sometimes to participate in the national programs offered elsewhere. Mathieu Giroux's case is one example like that. I am not fully familiar with the details of the case to be able to really get into it. But I know that it was difficult for him to train in Montreal as a speed skating long track athlete and to reconcile his studies and his sport.

For now, the initiatives implemented by the Government of Quebec, specifically the refundable tax credits and the grants for athletes who train and stay in Quebec, are incentives for Quebec athletes to stay in Quebec and for athletes from other areas to come to Quebec. There are also—

• (1605)

[English]

coaching bursaries in Quebec, as part of the *Équipe Québec* program, that go to coaches of carded athletes. This is a strong program that helps the coaching situation.

[Translation]

Those measures are more effective in retaining athletes and coaches in Quebec than they used to be.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Young talked about coaches who came from elsewhere.

In Canada, do coaches from British Columbia, for instance, sometimes come to Quebec, and vice versa?

Mr. Marc Gélinas: Yes, I think that is possible, depending on the positions available. I think coaches from Quebec have moved to other parts of Canada to fill openings in those places. On occasion, we also lose Quebec coaches who go to train athletes abroad. That is actually a concern that affects the Canadian sports system in general.

[English]

Some of our best coaches are being attracted elsewhere in the world.

[Translation]

That happens both in Quebec and in other parts of the country.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: My next question is for all of you.

Mr. Hussey, you talked about programs that make it possible to retain athletes. I think Mr. Bales also brought it up. Other witnesses talked about it as well.

For instance, we heard that Olympic success can encourage young people to play a sport, but it may well be that the recreation program in their community does not have sufficient resources to retain those young people in the program.

Do you think that is a problem? If so, how can we solve it? We are hearing more and more about this situation.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Hussey: There are a couple of things with that. Not every club can offer programs to those types of athletes. The ones that have set out to do that, to see them potentially through to the Olympics, are set up that way from their budget process. As I said to my board about seven years ago, when they decided to go that route.... We were just a strong provincial club. When we got into the

new building I said, "I can get you to that level, but you might not like it." What happens is a lot of things come with that. You have coaches and athletes come and go, and you have additional costs that you might not have.... But at the same time, clubs will commit to that or not.

Right now, we've taken a bit of a step back. We've had a run and now we have to rebuild. We know we can lose some athletes and some coaches while that's happening, but our board wants to get back up there.

It can be regional. You were saying that some of your coaches might want to leave because the sport in your province might not be as strong as in other provinces. We face that as well. But you have a lot of great programs in your province, so there's no need to leave.

I'm from Quebec. I left to coach the national team. That's the only place you could go to coach a national team; you had to leave.

Mr. John Bales: It is expensive to participate at the Olympics and the high-performance level. There is a lot more specialization now, identifying through the sport institutes or in some cases through elite clubs that really focus on high performance and providing the kinds of services that are needed.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Does that mean a loss for local communities? If we focus too much on the elite or on specialization, are we not actually unintentionally penalizing those who are sort of at the base of the pyramid?

• (1610)

[English]

Mr. John Bales: There's always the trade-off between the participation level and the elite level, with a lot of the resources being absorbed at the elite level.

I guess, Wayne, you would experience that. It is the big majority of your young athletes who are helping to pay the bills for the elite.

Mr. Wayne Hussey: When I coached a national team, we were in Ottawa at the time. I moved the team to Toronto. I went out to the corporate world. Before you knew it, we had Imperial Life Assurance Company giving us \$50,000 cash a year, plus office space, secretarial help, computers—everything. We ended up getting a group of business people. We had a gentleman who was selling condos, and our athletes would stay in condos for free. There are ways to get it done, but you have to think outside the box a little bit. All of a sudden, we were generating close to \$400,000 to \$500,000 more a year for those elite athletes, so we didn't have to take from the grassroots at a lower level.

There are ways to do it. I think the reason we always struggle is that we just get into a rut of what we have always done. But what can we do just a little differently?

Often things don't get done, and then people come to you, the government, and say they need more money. That's the thing I hate the most. I hate coming with my hand out for more money; I really do. I want people to be partners and to participate, but I want to come up with the ideas to make it work.

When I went to all these businesses in the Toronto area for money, I never asked for a cent. I just told them what I wanted to do, why I wanted to do it, and how I wanted to build it, and they wanted to become involved.

So there are ways.

The Chair: Mr. Simms, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Thank you for coming in, gentlemen.

I want to focus on what I see ahead of me, which is your submission. I found it very interesting and quite constructive.

I like what the incentives bring to the table and how integral the coaching is to many of our sports. We talk about programs such as Own the Podium and about programs that inspire success in Canadians, which have all sorts of spinoffs when somebody wins a gold medal. There's a disconnect with Canadians: to make that success happen, coaching matters. I know I'm preaching to the converted, but it needs to be put out amongst the general population that you lack support and that there are incentives, such as the tax credit for athletes to stay in. When parents have to volunteer to coach, that's all wonderful and grand, but the thing about it is that these parents are also volunteering to raise money—they have bake-offs and that sort of thing—so the expertise in coaching heads down the list.

The first part is very interesting. I'm from a totally rural riding. There's a to-do list—deduct taxes and all that sort of thing. It seems to me that you're saying this should be well up the list, and we have never really considered tax deductability, especially for that particular course.

But the last part is what interests me: federal-provincial cost-sharing programs. Can you give me an example? Federal-provincial cost-sharing programs to us.... It's a lot more problematic when you deal with a place like Australia, I'm assuming. In the United Kingdom, they just doesn't exist; theirs is a federal program and so on. You mentioned something in Service Canada that is a federal cost-sharing program.

I'd like you to comment first on the federal-provincial cost-sharing and raising the capacity to provide coaching education.

Mr. John Bales: What we're projecting there is the need to establish more paid coaching positions at the intermediate level, below the national team. In order to have Olympic success, athletes need 10 to 12 to 15 years of preparation to get to that level, and who is coaching them 10 to 15 years before they get to that Olympic level is extremely important. That's where there's a big gap, wherein we need to have better trained and paid coaches to be able to really prepare those athletes.

In order to do so, a number of provinces are starting to pay coaches at the provincial level, and through the Canadian Sport Institutes Network, there's a real opportunity to have cost-sharing programs in which the provinces are contributing to some of those needs and the federal government is contributing to those needs.

•(1615)

Mr. Scott Simms: But that's not under Sport Canada. That's under some regular programs that you can access, and someone in music could access that same program. Is that correct?

Mr. John Bales: No, it's the Service Canada program. That was open to all different fields.

Mr. Scott Simms: But that's the one that's gone.

Mr. John Bales: Yes. But what I'm referring to here are the programs that are being offered through the Canadian sport centres and Canadian sport institutes that are really trying to coordinate the input of both levels of government.

Marc, I don't know if you would like to comment on that.

Mr. Marc Gélinas: We certainly have an example in the province of Quebec, where at least \$5 million a year goes into coaching bursaries. As I mentioned before, coaches of carded athletes get a \$10,000 bursary each year and also a coaching salary contribution through the funding they provide to the provincial sport organizations. There are certainly ways to improve that system. There has been some discussion between Own the Podium and the Province of Quebec on January 22, looking at a variety of things that could be done to improve the situation in Canada.

I was talking to some other colleagues in the sport system about the idea of having some type of a bonus system for a coach who produces a carded athlete who then goes on to a national team. It would be obviously a financial incentive to the coach to produce these athletes and to not hold on to that athlete, which sometimes happens. Or a bonus system...for the athlete's medals in an Olympic Games or Paralympic Games. That hasn't happened nationwide yet.

In Quebec the system is a good idea. It's not perfect, but it's a step in the right direction.

I just want to comment on John Bales' comment. In the Canadian sport system, there is an acknowledgement that we are performing, at this time, at the Olympic level, at the Paralympic level, but there's a huge gap, not just in coaching, but also in developing the talent of the next-generation athletes. That's probably another reason that we should invest in coaches for the next-generation athletes. That's where the big gap is. We don't have a population of 300 million, so we're not as big as the other countries. For those athletes who we find, who we develop, we'd better make sure that we enrich their pathway to the podium.

Mr. Scott Simms: Can I just stop you right there for a second?

In team sports, coaches do not advance through with any particular team. But in individual sports, like gymnastics and swimming, is it better for one coach to stay with that athlete up to the point of the podium in the Olympics? Or do you set stages, where that coach stays at that level where they're able to produce athletes to go up to the next level and the next coach?

Mr. Marc Gélinas: I don't know that there's a general answer to that question. I guess it depends on the sport and the situation.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simms.

For the remainder of our time, which is five minutes, we have Mr. Brown.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today.

I, for one, am delighted that we're undertaking this study. There's a real wealth of expertise at the end of the table here. I know that Mr. Bales and I crossed paths in the canoe-kayak world over 30 years ago. I was just thinking about that.

It really is a stepped process, if we look at the recreational, the competitive, and then the high-performance athletes. Our study is trying to look at all three, and how we ultimately have athletes get to the point where they're part of the Own the Podium program.

Maybe we can hear a little bit about how we can get coaches to become certified at a higher level.

● (1620)

Mr. John Bales: I think we have the foundation of the system in place. What is missing at the higher level is the incentive of the career. It's very difficult to undertake the amount and the complexity of the training to become a professional coach when the career options are limited. It's really a question of having the incentive of coaches knowing that if they undertake this level of training there is a career path for them.

This is a big gap. That's why we keep coming back to the issue of how we can create a more stable number—both quantity and quality—of coaching jobs. Without that, it's very difficult to provide the incentive for people to take the training.

Through the Canadian sport institutes we have the National Coaching Institute diploma program, which is a high-level training program for high-performance coaches that would be comparable with what the Germans, the Dutch, and the French do. The quality of the education we're providing is comparable, but our challenge is to have the motivation and the incentives for people to take those programs and be able to then move into a coaching career.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Hussey, do you have any thoughts on this?

Mr. Wayne Hussey: I agree that it's a tough one. I would just say to John—and this is why I liked the first comment—that I like the idea that we try to get the early entry coaches, so that it's not so painful on them financially and time-wise. I know there are some things they have to learn, but they can learn them, if they're going to continue up the ladder, or learn more as they go up the ladder. I think that's important.

It is a tough career. People have to have a love for the sport. I make more money now as an administrator than I ever did as a coach. That's not necessarily right, because I coached at the highest level. It's a career that has to become more of a priority, and not just at the top levels.

The coaches' association asked me to do a study when I was a national coach. The life of a national coach was three and a half years back then. That doesn't even get you through a quadrennial. There were so many things pulling at them, from family to wages to the amount of time and effort. Like many of you, we never knew what a calendar was: you had to play, you had to coach, and that was it.

There are so many challenges. As John said, it's not just for the high-level coaches; it has to be at every level. We have to address every level as we go up, not just the high level. In many ways, we are addressing the high-level coaches.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Thank you.

Monsieur Gélinas.

Mr. Marc Gélinas: I'd certainly support John Bales' comments about the incentives. I would suggest looking also at alternate ways to address a coach's development and professional development needs. E-learning is one example, but I think we should seriously look at fast-tracking coaches and mentoring coaches along.

There has also been some pilot work on helping athletes transition from sport to coaching. What better group of people to select coaches from and to train than the group who have worked throughout their lives to become adept at their sport?

These are new ways. One thing we're finding out is that training coaches in a classical way is something, but those coaches are extremely busy, as my colleagues have mentioned; it's very tough to get them into a classroom. So more and more training has to be very specific to their needs. This is where we have to adapt, I think.

Mr. Gordon Brown: I may be just about out of time, but Mr. Bales, you've made some specific recommendations, and I wish we had more time to delve into them. Is there anything else you'd like to add to the four recommendations you had up on the screen?

Mr. John Bales: I would only add that I think the foundation exists. 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 foundation and ensuring that the resources are in place to enable them to deliver the programs.

● (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brown.

I want to thank our very distinguished and knowledgeable panel for your testimony. It was only an hour, but I think we were able to all take something away from your testimony.

We will now suspend for five minutes while we set up the next panel, appearing by video conference.

Thank you.

● (1625)

(Pause)

● (1630)

The Chair: We'll get started again.

Continuing our study on amateur coaching in Canada, today we have here with us Matt Showers, head coach for 10 years under the Lac St-Louis Swimming Association.

Welcome to you, Mr. Showers.

Appearing by way of video conference from Vancouver, British Columbia, again from the Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club, is Tim Comerford, competitive swim coach.

Welcome to you as well, Mr. Comerford.

Are you each going to be making opening remarks?

Mr. Matt Showers (Head Coach for ten years and under, Lac St-Louis Swimming Association, Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club): We are, as far as I know.

The Chair: Okay. Then we'll start with you here, Mr. Showers. You have 10 minutes for your opening remarks.

You don't have to take 10 minutes, though.

Mr. Matt Showers: I don't?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Matt Showers: Can we start with Tim?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Matt Showers: All right, there we go.

The Chair: All right. We'll hear from British Columbia, then.

Mr. Tim Comerford (Competitive Swim Coach, Lac St-Louis Region Swimming Association, Beaconsfield Bluefins Swim Club): Hi. Thanks for having me via video conference.

My name is Tim Comerford. I've been coaching with the Beaconsfield Bluefins for nine years now. I'm from the West Island of Montreal, and there we have an outdoor swimming association that really starts to develop coaches at a younger age. I started coaching at the age of 15 in the outdoor program, and then a couple of years later I started at the winter competitive level.

At the Bluefins, we are a family-run club, run by volunteer parents. Matt might know better, but I think we have about 100 to 150 swimmers, ranging from age eight and under to the open level of swimming. We compete in the regional league in Lac St-Louis, and many of our coaches have been there for a while, which is pretty rare in our area. Usually, coaches come in and come out, but we have a good community of coaches, families, and kids at the Bluefins. I think that's a really big part of our coach retention.

I by no means need 10 minutes. I don't know whether you have any questions, but that would be my opening remark.

The Chair: That's fine. We usually leave a little time for opening comments; then we go into a round of questions and answers.

Mr. Showers, do you have any opening remarks that you want to make?

Mr. Matt Showers: I wanted to see what Tim was going to say. He covered a lot of it. As he said, it's a family-run organization.

Bluefins is not the only club I've coached at. Some of the clubs in the area are run a little differently. They have a city influence and are city-run clubs.

We have a little more than 160 swimmers at the club.

I followed the same sort of path as Tim. I started coaching around the age of 15, both indoor and outdoor, and then always did it on the side. I wasn't always a career coach, but then a couple of years ago I started career coaching.

That's about it.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you both for your opening remarks.

We will begin now our rounds of questions and answers. These are turns of seven minutes.

We'll begin with Mr. Calandra for seven minutes.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Thank you.

Thanks, guys.

Matt, can you guide me through how you started off and then how you became a coach?

As you're looking back, what opportunities might we have missed to get other people to look at coaching as a profession, and how do we go about training coaches? We've heard from a couple of witnesses that we should perhaps have something in the universities. It strikes me that we did a study on entertainment software—another industry about which we heard that we're not graduating enough people through universities and have to bring people from other parts of the world to do the work. We heard from witnesses earlier that they're bringing in coaches from other countries as well.

So the question is twofold: tell me your experiences—how you made that decision—and where we're lacking in opportunities so that we're failing to get people into this.

Mr. Matt Showers: Okay.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Both of you can answer this, by the way, if we have time.

Mr. Matt Showers: Where we are, it's pretty standard for kids who are already involved in the pool to be coming up. Swimming is pretty big in Quebec. We get a lot of kids who come through the swimming program, either in the summer or the winter. Usually those kids will end up becoming lifeguards, and it's always the lifeguards who have to coach as well in the summer. These are not separate jobs; you're coaching during the morning and you're lifeguarding during the afternoon.

So it's always the lifeguards coming up, but most of the lifeguards are either former swimmers—synchronized swimmers, or water polo players, or whatever it might be. We're really lucky in Quebec that we have the outdoor pool program. It really helps develop not only the athletes but also the coaches.

As to having something at the university level, I don't know whether I agree or disagree with it. I think one thing that's lacking in development of coaches is a program itself. In the NCCP program, at level 1 or level 2, before you hit level 3—people may agree with me or not—you don't really start to learn much; at levels 1 and 2 it's really just paperwork. You're in a classroom setting for maybe a weekend, and then you may have some hands-on for a weekend.

There's really not much being learned at the NCCP formal coaching certification clinics, in my opinion. The most I've ever learned as a coach is when shadowing with more experienced coaches for entire seasons. It's there that I think all the learning really takes place.

It's harder to retain coaches, I think mainly for financial reasons. Retaining coaches is really hard: there's not much pool time available for any club; every club has so many programs, they're all fighting for the same pool time. If you end up coaching 10 or 11 or 12 hours a week, even if your hourly wage is great you're still not going to be making enough to continue with it for a long time.

Speaking for myself, as I said, I am a career coach, but I have to coach four or five workouts a day just to be able to coach for a living.

I think a university program would be great, but I don't know how many people would follow it to completion, knowing that even if they go through a university program, the same world of coaching is waiting for them when they're finished. There's still going to be that financial problem there.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Tim, do you have anything to add?

Mr. Tim Comerford: I wanted to say that I felt, when Matt was talking about the NCCP training program, that as swim coaches we're in a bit of a unique situation because we have to write a practice ahead of time. We're going to be dealing with 12 to 15 kids in the water. A lot of the level 1 NCCP talks about preparing a practice and having an emergency readiness plan, which for a swim coach and lifeguard is already inherent in the job. That's the situation I saw.

But similar to what Matt said, if you're mentoring with someone, if there's active learning going on through being with a career coach or a higher-level coach, that's really where the learning happens.

Concerning retention...I would add that every year the Bluefins go to a swim meet in Toronto, so Matt and I and our co-coaches of the 10-and-under program are there. Quebec has by far the youngest coaches there, because coaching a 10-and-under group in Ontario seems to be an option for a career, whereas in Quebec, as Matt said, we're coaching a group of kids three or four times a week, and there's no money in that to make a career. So whereas Matt is pursuing a career-coaching opportunity through different groups at the same time, that's not my career choice, basically because of what he's saying. I'd love to be able to be a permanent career coach, but it's just not in the cards, unless I want to move, and I don't really want to.

• (1640)

Mr. Paul Calandra: Do you often lose your elite athletes to the United States and to the college program there? It strikes me that even in the greater Toronto area there just aren't a lot of pools available. We're building a couple, with the Pan Am Games coming, but when you really look at it and look at our community centres, we build a lot of hockey rinks, but don't build a lot of pools.

Tell me whether we are losing our elite athletes. And you don't have to agree or disagree, but what are your thoughts on universities providing scholarships to maintain elite athletes?

Mr. Matt Showers: I can say as a coach that this is the sort of career that you push for the kids, knowing that swimming is not a sport in which they're going to make thousands or millions of dollars and be able to continue it as a career. There is one swimmer in the history of swimming who has done it: Michael Phelps. He's one in, I don't know, 10 million. We're not going to see this again for a really long time. He's really the only one. He put swimming back on the

map and made a really great living at it, but he is the only one—maybe one other guy.

As coaches, that's what we strive for. If we can get a swimmer to get a scholarship to a U.S. university or go to the Ivy League to get a free education, then it's absolutely worth it. If the Canadian universities were to offer the same thing, it would be a lot more interesting. We would maybe keep a lot more of our swimmers. We have many swimmers who will end up going to McGill, but they're paying Quebec resident fees, which are a lot less than what they would pay if they were coming from out of province. They're lucky in that sense.

Otherwise, it's really hard for kids to leave and go to university somewhere else. The financial burden is a lot. If there were scholarships, as you said, it would be really interesting.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calandra.

Madame Boutin-Sweet.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen.

You said that your club was made up of families and 160 students. Could you tell me what the boys to girls ratio is?

Mr. Matt Showers: Usually, there are a lot more girls than boys. I don't know why. I would say about 80 or 90 girls and 60 or 70 boys.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: How old are they?

Mr. Matt Showers: Between 6 and 18 or 19 years old.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Are there both female and male coaches?

Mr. Matt Showers: Yes.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Is the ratio the same as for young people?

Mr. Matt Showers: No, it's the other way around.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Do you know why there are fewer women coaches, but there are more girls than boys?

Mr. Matt Showers: Honestly, I think it is just our club. In other clubs, even in the same sector, the ratio is more or less equal. I don't know why, but our club practically has men only.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: The kids in your club can be up to 18 years old. They are still at a rather advanced level, correct?

Mr. Matt Showers: Yes.

• (1645)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Other people told us that, at the beginner level, there are more women coaches, but that, at higher levels, there are fewer women because they take care of their families and so on.

What could we do to encourage women to continue to work as coaches? My question is for either of you.

Mr. Matt Showers: It is always a question of money. There is not enough money to retain women. If a woman leaves coaching primarily because she wants to start a family, we will need more money to retain her. Actually, it is likely that, under those circumstances, men are earning much higher wages than women.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: In your example, you seem to be saying that the woman works as a coach during the day. But it is not during the day, because kids are in school then. Are we talking about the summer or what? Why should women call babysitters during the day? Don't they teach in the evenings or on weekends?

Mr. Matt Showers: I am not sure if this is true, but I would say that the schedule is also a factor. Head coaches have a really difficult schedule, especially for older kids. Usually, they have training every morning from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. or from 5:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. and every evening from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. It is very difficult to be a coach for a woman who gets her kids ready for school and looks after them after school, because that is when the training sessions take place.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: So there should be a change in attitude on a number of levels. First, the wages of coaches should be the same as the wages of professionals. Second, the wages of women should be the same as those of men. That's pay equity. Finally, men should perhaps look after their kids a bit more. I am not asking you to answer this question. These are just some comments.

I will share the rest of my time with Mr. Nantel.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Thank you very much.

My thanks to both of you for being here.

Mr. Comerford, could you first tell me if the fact that you are currently in British Columbia has anything to do with the club's activities?

[English]

So the fact that you're there in B.C. is for personal reasons, is it? You're not there for some elite program or something?

Mr. Tim Comerford: I'm sorry, I think I'm getting a translated feed patched in. It's really distracting. Could you guys just cancel it?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Sure. I will speak in English to you and I will speak in French to Matt, who is here.

I wanted to ask you—

[Translation]

Mr. Tim Comerford: You can speak in French.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Great.

What is your connection with elite sport? Based on what you are saying, you are the coaches for a club that is rooted in a very specific community. We are all familiar with Lakeshore and Lachine. People there are heavily involved in the lives of their communities. They are extremely active.

Are you trying to form an elite team or is your team trying to make swimming a leisure activity and something for children to accomplish?

Mr. Tim Comerford: In my view, the goal is always to train elite athletes, but our pool is very small. It has eight 25-metre lanes. Other

clubs in nearby cities such as Pointe-Claire and Dollard-des-Ormeaux, have pools that are better for training.

I train kids who are 10 or younger. We follow the lifelong athlete development plan. We want kids to like swimming and to continue to swim when they are 20 or 25 years old, even if they do not participate in the Olympic Games, but rather in university competitions. That is our philosophy.

However, we still have an elite program, of course. One or two swimmers have reached national standards. That is always the goal, but it is very difficult for us to retain elite athletes.

● (1650)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Some people talked about the importance of making sport more general, to increase the number of physical education hours in schools, to ensure that more people participate and enjoy it.

In an ideal world, do you think more people would take up sports and more people would take courses, the way parents who volunteer do? Ultimately, a group of recruiters will look for people who have a specific talent and will bring them to elite sport directly. I think you are the perfect example of someone who is focused on the community and who, first and foremost, teaches people to enjoy something all their lives.

Mr. Tim Comerford: I think it is worth increasing physical activities in schools, particularly swimming. It is very important for water safety. It is a good skill to have.

The only problem with recruiting very talented athletes at a very young age is that half our elite group started at level B. There are two levels in swimming: A and B. Our swimmers in the B category are not very strong when they start, but we train them. Now, our elite group is made up of 50% level A swimmers and 50% level B swimmers. The kids started at level B.

There is great merit in having a club with a culture and with coaches who have been there for a long time. It is never a problem to get more swimmers.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nantel.

Now we will move to Mr. Simms for seven minutes.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you, Chair. I want to thank both guests for coming out.

I went to university in Atlantic Canada, and I remember the swim teams. There were quite a few from the West Island of Montreal, I'm assuming mostly from your organization. So you certainly have a great deal of success, in addition to Olympians who have been up there.

I have a couple of questions.

I'm interested, Mr. Showers, in what you're pursuing—career coaching, which you are doing. The previous guest talked about a couple of initiatives, and they go back to...the NCCP, I think, is the designation. He talked about e-learning; however, you also talked about the importance of job shadowing as a coach.

Let's face it; you find that the vast majority of successful hockey coaches are, if not former professional hockey players, certainly close to having been professional. That in and of itself is an element of job shadowing, as in the case of someone like Alex Baumann, who made a great career as a coach. Unfortunately, it was in Australia, but it just so happens that he's a good coach.

How would people in smaller communities—someone in Rimouski who is potentially a good coach—find a way to job shadow at a club like yours? You could probably learn more from that.

Mr. Matt Showers: Eventually when they get to a certain level with the NCCP, only certain coaches are actually qualified. You always have to be graded, sort of, by another coach; you're always evaluated. To obtain a level 3 or level 4, you're going to be evaluated by a level 4 coach, let's say. Unfortunately, in Canada there aren't that many level 4 coaches, maybe five or ten. There's quite a good number of level 3 coaches, but the level 4s are few and far between. We have one close by at the Dollard pool. He's been there for maybe 30 years or so now.

Eventually they have no choice but to mentor with a well-recognized and well-experienced coach. To do it earlier, I don't know.... What I've always found pretty interesting is a sort of coach swap, interclub. You swap coaches for a week or two weeks. You go to see what another club is doing and what works really well, or what is different and what you've never seen or tried before. I think it helps a lot.

Whether it's right or wrong, at least it sort of raises an eyebrow to it and opens up the idea that maybe this could work. It's something that we look at, especially in regard to the Ontario clubs, because we're always in a constant battle: Okay, we went down to Ontario and we got our butts kicked pretty well, so what happened? Are they really developing swimmers that are so much better than we are, or do they just have a bigger pool of kids to pick from that—

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes, and before I get to Mr. Comerford—sorry—I'll let you weigh in on this. To me, that's a point. You mentioned earlier that when you went to Toronto your coaches were visibly younger than the other coaches. I don't know if there's any correlation with that, but should we not build capacity to allow coaches to...? It's not just that, because when you go to a swim meet, you're obviously there to compete. You're not there to ask other coaches how they're doing things. I'm sure that's extremely awkward.

What you need to do is go there on a more informal basis, just yourselves, to find out how other... As a result of that, we get better coaches across the country and programs like Own the Podium. Essentially, we get better star athletes out of this.

Mr. Comerford, would you like to comment on that?

Mr. Tim Comerford: Yes. I think what we notice, especially when we go to the Ontario swim meets, is that the culture of coaching seems to be that.... I don't know if it's a good thing that a coach is around for 30 years. I work in the education field. Sometimes we'll have a teacher who has been teaching for 30 years, and it doesn't mean that they're a great teacher; it means that they've been doing the same thing for 30 years.

It's a tricky question. I do think there's huge merit in going to other clubs, as Matt was saying, for a coach swap or just on a coaching tour, just to see what other clubs are doing. To be honest, without any knowledge of the Ontario system, I do believe that those coaches are there because there's a salary that you can raise a family on, whereas for us, we're all part-time. The ten-and-under coaches are part-time. For the most part, we're students who do coaching because we love it.

In Ontario, I do believe that for the older coaches, their clubs, as Matt said, may be bigger clubs, especially the Toronto Swim Club and the Etobicoke Swim Club. Those are huge, so they're able to keep their coaches around for a longer time, maybe because of that as well. Having a bigger pool of athletes and being able to have the top ten-and-under swimmers in the country also makes you want to keep coaching.

• (1655)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Showers.

Mr. Matt Showers: This might be a touchy subject for some in the room, but if we talk about developing elite athletes, parents also, especially where we are, are a big problem.

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes, and we've already been down this road.

Mr. Matt Showers: They want results right away, so they're going to go to whatever club is producing the fastest kids at 12 years old. Meanwhile, who cares how fast your kid is at 12 years old?

If we look at the top ten swimmers at 25 years old versus those who were the top ten swimmers 15 years ago, they're never the same people. Because you are a star athlete at 10, 11, or 12 years old, it's not to say that you will continue. More than likely, you're going to plateau within a couple of years, and nobody is going to know who you are by the time you're 20 or 25, if you're even still swimming. Most kids are burnt out and they just stop swimming.

That's where a lot of our talent goes. It's a shame to see, but a lot of our talent, by the age of 13, 14, or 15, is no longer producing results. It weighs on you. It's a really hard sport mentally. If you can't go to a competition and perform better than you have in the past couple of years, it's really hard mentally on a kid of that age, and they just call it quits. We have had so many talented kids come through the system who just don't make it. They don't make it past 16 years old.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simms.

Mr. Boughen.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

Let me welcome our guests and add my voice to my colleagues' in thanking you for sharing part of your day with us.

We've heard from a number of witnesses about career coaching and the fact that there are not very many career coaches in Canada.

If we lived in a perfect world, how would you set up the variables to make sure that you could develop career coaches who would stay in Canada to produce professional-type athletes?

Mr. Matt Showers: I think it's going to take a big financial backing from the cities, or even the boroughs that the clubs are in. Something's got to give.

I know for us, not only are we fighting for full time, we're paying a ridiculous amount of money just to rent that pool space that we're lucky enough to get. After the pool time is paid...and we can't charge a ridiculous amount for the kids to swim, either, or else they just won't bother. They'll go do another sport. If that's the case, no revenues will be coming in, and we won't be able to pay any coaches.

I think at some point there will have to be a huge financial backing from either the city or the government. If they are going to retain coaches, I think it's the only way.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Okay.

Tim, what do you say?

Mr. Tim Comerford: I agree. I think finance is a huge, huge part of retention for coaching.

In my case, in our club, as somebody brought up before, our practices for the 10-and-under coaches are in the afternoon. Theoretically, somebody could work a nine-to-five and be a coach for life. It's doable for the very young age, where we only have three or four practices a week.

I think in terms of being a career coach, there has been...maybe like you were saying before, that if coaching becomes part of a university program, having a career coach who's also a university teacher supplements the time during that day. We have the CEGEP program. If you can take a minor in coaching, with a focus in swimming, and then you have a head coach for swimming who's also a professor at McGill, that would be a huge appeal to a coach, I think, to be a career coach.

It fills in the question mark behind "How am I going to make sure that I make money, that I have a salary?"

• (1700)

Mr. Ray Boughen: Okay. Good.

Just switching over to the spectator side of swimming, swimming draws a lot of people, we know, in highly competitive environments like the Olympics. People were selling tickets for a crazy amount of money because that's what they could get for scalping those tickets.

What happens with young people when they get to that 15- or 16-year age? If they're in hockey, they have a career path if they're good. If they're in boxing or wrestling, there's a career path.

What happens with swimmers after they get to the Olympics and that's over with and they're off to college? If they're fortunate enough and good enough to get a college scholarship, what happens when they finish college? Where do they go?

Mr. Matt Showers: We hope they become coaches.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Matt Showers: No, there aren't that many places to go. For most kids, if they're lucky enough to get a scholarship and go away to school on scholarship and get an education, oftentimes they'll put the education to use, we hope, after swimming is done. Swimming,

unfortunately, is just not a career option anywhere in the world. Nobody's going to pay you to swim.

I used to play water polo at the national level. Even as carded athletes in Canada I think we were getting \$800 a month, give or take. I had to work a part-time job and train three times a day just to be able to play. It's unrealistic to think that anybody's going to want to do that for any long period of time.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Why do you think there's no competitive swimming the way there is competitive football or soccer or anything else? I mean, it's an easy sport to watch, and it's an exciting sport to watch, and it has all the elements of other sports. Why can't it generate revenue and run as a professional activity?

Mr. Matt Showers: I just think the fan base isn't there.

Mr. Ray Boughen: How do you develop that?

Mr. Matt Showers: That's a great question. In Canada, to dream that we're ever going to be like the likes of hockey is so unreasonable. Right now that's where all the kids want to be, and what they want to watch.

Most swimmers are actually just athletes. We try our best to just develop an athlete, not necessarily a swimmer, because we know that will carry them a lot later on in life. You'll see that usually pure swimmers are very uncoordinated, very awkward people. They can't throw a ball. They can't kick a ball. They can't catch a ball. We want to develop just athletes.

But in terms of developing a fan base, I mean, we get an influx of kids into a swimming program after the Olympics, that's for sure. Is that a fan base for swimming or is that a fan base for the Olympics? It's for the Olympics. Will they watch just a swimming-specific televised event? I don't think so. Will they watch the Olympics? Sure.

So I don't know. I really don't.

Mr. Ray Boughen: What do you think, Tim?

Mr. Tim Comerford: It's a tricky situation, especially because, as Matt said, the Olympics are a huge draw. People get to know a couple of names, so they'll pick a country. If the Canadians have a relay going in, the relays are really exciting.

Swim meets usually end off with a 50-metre freestyle, a really exciting race, but the reality is that the main races in the sport of swimming are a 200-metre individual medley or a 400-metre IM. You're looking at 1,500-metre freestyle, which really isn't that exciting to watch.

Not to be pessimistic about the sport itself, but to answer your question of where we start, it's in elementary schools. It's implementing swimming and all sports into a physical education curriculum.

If we want to mimic what they have in the United States, at a university swim competition the building is crowded and overflowing with people cheering on the team. We see that a little bit starting in CEGEP. If we can bring that to high school and bring a culture into our high schools, that would help. If every high school or one in the area had a pool, that would be a huge step in the right direction towards developing kids who want to watch swimming.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Thanks, gentlemen.

Thanks, Chair.

The Chair: Now we'll go to Mr. Dubé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Thank you very much.

I would like to discuss something that you have both touched on. On the one hand, we have heard that a number of coaches work part time and study at the same time. On the other hand, they are often lifeguards. That brings me to the following question.

People are more interested in becoming lifeguards, as you mentioned. Is that because it is easier to be a lifeguard in the summer and go to school for the rest of the year? Is there a specific reason for that?

• (1705)

Mr. Matt Showers: Where we're from, being a lifeguard in the summer is really fun. Kids who swim in an indoor or outdoor pool all want to become lifeguards, but it remains a summer job. It's the same for the trainers who teach kids aged 8 or 9. The job gives them a bit of pocket money while they are at school. Aside from them, few people are interested.

It's a difficult situation. We could probably hire other trainers who do not have all the swimming knowledge, but who could stay longer than them. But we would prefer trainers who have a very good knowledge of swimming. It is preferable to see them train and demonstrate their skills to the children than to hire people who know nothing about swimming.

So there is major turnover. Every two or three years, we lose our trainers and have to replace them with younger people going to school. Having said that, we prefer having them than other people who do not have the same knowledge.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: That's right.

I think I am sort of seeing the difference between the two. So, a little more personal commitment is required to become a trainer. That probably doesn't explain the lack of interest, but the fact that more people want to become lifeguards. It's easier to do that kind of quick turnover.

My other question is about the observation that I think Mr. Comerford just made on pools in the schools.

Last week, Pierre Lafontaine, the former director of Swimming Canada, rightly said that the Olympic Games might get people interested in swimming, but it was difficult for young people to swim when there are about 15 swimmers in each swim lane.

Do we really not have enough pools? Wanting a pool in every school is still asking a lot.

Mr. Tim Comerford: In our neighbourhood, about 30 pools are open in the summer in about 12 towns, which is quite a lot. But in the winter, three large pools are used for competitions. They are in Beaconsfield, Dollard-des-Ormeaux and Pointe-Claire.

I think there is a great need for pools. The only problem is that our three pools are competing. At the pool in our neighbourhood, we are trying to develop swimmers; it's our culture. We want to train

athletes for life. However, at the other pools, it may be that you want an athlete to be the fastest that year. Given these different cultures, the family of a given swimmer may choose a pool where it costs less or where the culture meets their needs.

We need more pools if we want to develop swimmers. In our area, we have about 15 swimmers per lane; it's very difficult.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Thank you.

My last question is for both of you. We're talking about basic talent. Often, what is interesting in swimming is seeing that a lot of people register to learn basic skills, to learn to swim, but not necessarily compete.

In fact, I remember that the pool was full during swim class, but in the evening, there were maybe five people there for training. I'm exaggerating a little, but I'm using it to illustrate what I want to say.

Does that present challenges for the trainers? In your sport, more people register to gain life skills. However, a lot of people register for hockey, for example, to be very competitive and get to a higher level. Does that mean that swimming has unique challenges?

• (1710)

Mr. Matt Showers: I think so. There are two different ways of teaching swimming, either through the Red Cross program, or by trying to get to the Olympic Games. I would like it to be tied more to swim clubs. Right now, these two teaching methods are really separate. Towns hire lifeguards to teach swimming. If your child wants to learn to swim competitively, he or she must join a swim club. I would really like it to be the same club. I have nothing against lifeguards and how they teach swimming, but they are only showing children what to do if they get into trouble in the water.

Children are in the water for half an hour or an hour, three or four times a week. Why not do more? There could be more children. If training were given at the same time as a lesson, I see what they are doing. What do we make the children do? They do the same thing for 30 minutes, going back and forth. I would like a group to look at that, everyone together. The swim club does everything: lessons and competitive swimming. I think there might be more children swimming competitively if that were the case.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dubé.

Next we have Mr. Richards for five minutes.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Chair, I'm going to share my time with Mr. Leung. I'll let him lead off with his questions.

The Chair: Mr. Leung.

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Richards.

My question has to do with prioritizing how we handle swimming as a sport. We heard from previous witnesses that financial resources, pool time, and coaches are all at a premium. I just want to hear from you about how you prioritize where we should focus our resources to produce the best results.

I understand that swimming itself is a wonderful life skill. The discipline of an athlete is very important. I myself was a long-distance swimmer. However, given the scarce resources, perhaps you can share with us your thoughts on how we should focus on where we get the best results.

Thank you.

Mr. Matt Showers: To produce the best results, I think the funds should be focused on the coaches. Everywhere in Canada, I think, not only in Quebec, parents will pull their kids and jump from club to club on a yearly basis. We experience it a lot where we live, but I think it happens everywhere. Parents will take their kids to whichever club seems to be producing the best results. That club may not necessarily have the best coaches or the best coaching staff. They may just have had the luck of the draw and pulled some talented kids.

I'd like to see what we have in hockey, where kids play hockey based on where they live: if you live in this district, you play hockey here.

A voice: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Matt Showers: I don't know, but... Whether that's true or not for hockey, I really think that's the way it should be for swimming, at least up to a certain age. When you're 16, 17, or 18 and you want to decide where you want to swim, by all means, go right ahead.

But I think we're missing the point as coaches and clubs. There's too much interclub battling going on for certain kids, coaches, and talent, whereas you could look at it and say that if anybody from Quebec or from our area were to succeed, that's a win for all the coaches. Or if anybody makes it from Canada, that's a win for everybody: everybody is helping each other out.

I think the bottom line is going to be the coaches. Pool time is what it is; there isn't more or less to go around.

•(1715)

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Comerford, could I have your thoughts on this? I'm actually focusing this on where the resources should go and perhaps even whether there are facilities or even age groups that we need to do this with.

Mr. Tim Comerford: Yes, I agree with Matt. I think resources going towards coaching are important, especially resources going towards coaching that will help people understand the sport of swimming. I think we're in a situation where... I coach kids who are eight years old and under. We practise four times a week, and we have a swim meet maybe once every three weeks, if we're lucky, whereas in hockey you have two practices a week and then a game, which is consistent, so there are a lot of direct payoffs.

In the sport of swimming, as Matt was saying, we have competition from other clubs, and they may be training their kids more and getting results now, but in the long term, that's not the case. I think if funding went into coaching and into helping coaches to develop a club.... Maybe the situation is that "this is where you live and this is where you're going to swim". If you're able to develop a club and hold onto this group of kids through their lifetime of swimming, I really think that would benefit the sport. Doing that

through allowing funding to go to the swim club and the coaches is a smart way to start.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Thank you.

Mr. Richards.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you.

I'll start with you, Mr. Showers.

I'm not looking to exclude you, Mr. Comerford. If you have something to add, please do so.

Mr. Showers, earlier you mentioned the coaching certification program and you talked a little about it. You mentioned levels 1 and 2. You felt there wasn't a lot in that first couple of levels that really would give you much in terms of coaching techniques.

What you were referring to I'm not familiar with.... I know about the national coaching certification program. Is swimming a part of that national coaching certification program, or does Swimming Canada have some other parallel coaching certification that you were referring to?

Mr. Matt Showers: No, it does fall under the NCCP. Swimming does have a branch in there. For example, the first part of your level 1 program could be with coaches from any sport.

There's a second part of the course that branches off and touches on swimming, but as I said, it's maybe for a weekend—a Friday night and a Saturday, and then maybe a half-day on Sunday—so there's not much being learned at a lot of these classes. Then what you get is coaches who, for the first few years of their career or their coaching life, just coach based on what they've done. All coaches have to rely on their previous swimming years or whatever to coach.

Mr. Blake Richards: Would you suggest that we should look at something more sport-specific in the national coaching certification program at the earlier levels? I have a follow-up question if you want to respond to that one and then to the second part. I'm most familiar with hockey because I played some hockey and coached a bit myself.

I know that in some sports there are certain programs where they're now looking at.... You've talked a lot about professional coaching and how it's difficult financially for someone to sustain that as a career. What if we looked at a model for a club where there were maybe one or two head coaches and under those individuals there was a volunteer, maybe a parent, or a parent of a past member of the club, or a past member of the club who doesn't intend to pursue coaching as a career but would volunteer some of their time? They would work under the head coach, who would oversee the total thing.

Also, if we did have in that national coaching certification program something a bit more sport-specific earlier on in the training, could something like that work as a model that would enable clubs to stretch their resources further?

The Chair: We have time for a real quick response.

Mr. Matt Showers: I think it's a great idea. We have that in place right now at our club. We have a brand-new head coach, who has a ton of coaching experience, but he's never been a head coach before, so this year we are working with a man by the name of Clifford Barry. He is Victor Davis's old coach, so he knows his stuff. I think we're experiencing our best year as a club because of his guidance. I think it's a great idea to have figures like him. He's not there all the time, maybe once or twice a week for a couple of hours. It's really short, the time that he's there, but that short time makes a huge impact on all the coaches. I think it's a great idea.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Richards.

Mr. Comerford, Mr. Showers, thank you both for agreeing to be here and to contribute to our study.

We will suspend now, committee members, for 30 seconds while we go in camera to deal with some committee business.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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