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Chair

Mr. Gordon Brown

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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• (0945)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC)):
Good morning, everyone.

I call to order meeting number four of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

This is all to do with our study of Canada's preparations for the 2014 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia.

We have a number of witnesses. First of all, we have Dale Henwood, president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Sport Institute. By video conference from Calgary, Alberta, from WinSport, we have Barry Heck, president and chief executive officer, and Stephen Norris, vice-president of sport.

We will start with Mr. Henwood for 10 minutes.

Mr. Dale Henwood (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Sport Institute Calgary): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

It's my absolute pleasure to speak with you about Canada's preparations for the 2014 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Sochi. I do so from the perspective of the Canadian Sport Institute in Calgary. I thank you for this opportunity, and I thank you for your interest and support of Canadian athletes and their coaches.

The Canadian Sport Institute was established in 1994 and is now part of a network of seven across Canada. We're a partner in the sport performance system. We work very closely every day with the athletes and the coaches, with Sport Canada, with Own the Podium, with a variety of national sport organizations, and with numerous partners and facility operators in the Calgary, Alberta area.

In Alberta we operate primarily out of four performance hubs: one at the University of Calgary, one at the Canmore Nordic Centre, one at the Talisman Centre, and at WinSport Canada's Canada Olympic Park.

Thanks to our great partnership with WinSport Canada, we've recently begun operations in what we believe will be the absolutely best training facility and training environment for Canadian winter athletes in the world. We thank you very much for your support of that facility and the work we do in that facility.

Our institute works every day with about 525 athletes, 300 of whom I would say are more of a national team calibre, so that's summer and winter, and that's Olympic and Paralympic. We also work with not only the elite but also some developing athletes. We

lead the preparation of some of the best medal potential sports, such as speed skating, bobsleigh, skeleton, luge, women's hockey, para-alpine and para-Nordic.

Over our almost 19 years, we've established, I believe, some proven principles which have led to an outstanding record of success. In our short time, we've contributed to more than 400 Olympic, Paralympic, and world championship medals for Canada.

At the Canadian Sport Institute, our primary mandate is athlete preparation. We do that through the delivery of expert services, of science in medicine services, in the daily training environment with the athletes. We're providing these Canadian athletes with what we would call the margin of victory needed to win Olympic and Paralympic medals.

You might ask what that margin of victory is. If you recall, in 2010 Christine Nesbitt, one of our gold medalists in speed skating, won by just two one-hundredths of a second.

Our experts are working with the bobsleigh teams to address a victory margin of 0.39, so thirty-nine one-hundredths of a second, because that was the difference in Vancouver between getting a medal and not being on the podium.

If you all remember Jon Montgomery's win in skeleton, he won by just 0.07 of a second. Had he been a little bit slower, I don't think the great memory that is ingrained in all of our minds would be with us today.

It's not by chance that Montgomery and others have won by the slimmest of margins. In large part it's due to the very strategic, calculated planning, preparation, and monitoring that we do on a day-to-day basis with Canadian athletes through the expert services and expert personnel we have at the Canadian Sport Institute.

How do we do that? We specialize, really, in the delivery of services in the areas of exercise physiology, biomechanics, sport medicine, nutrition, strength and conditioning, and mental performance. That's how we make a difference. We surround the athletes and the coaches with absolutely the best expertise this country has to provide.

We make a difference in the area of sport science, as an example, by providing leading-edge individualized evaluation, interpretation, and monitoring of athlete performance, again, in their daily training environment.

We make a difference in the area of sport medicine by offering access and rapid response for diagnosis and treatment of injuries or illnesses, as well as proactive performance-based medical monitoring.

We make a difference in the area of education and research, as we create innovative, evidence-based practices to ensure that tomorrow's sport science and medicine leaders remain involved in the Canadian high-performance system.

We make a difference in coaching services, as we educate and develop coaches so they can train and develop athletes at all levels across the continuum.

We make a difference by creating not only world-class athletes, but also world-class citizens, caring, responsible, contributing community leaders. We support the athletes with education, career, and transition services.

● (0950)

I think the differences we make, as I just mentioned, provide the Canadian athletes with that critical margin of victory and the tools they need to be the best not only in sport but in life.

I think you would agree that execution really is a driver of business success, so we are involved in the implementation and the delivery of programs and services. We work alongside the athletes and their coaches—we would call it in the trenches—each and every day as they prepare to represent Canada at the highest international level. We make a difference with those athletes and coaches from across Canada who come to our area because of the facilities and the expertise that is there.

We have expertise and great data for decision-making. Our investments are very targeted and strategic. They're aligned with national objectives. It is our role to ensure that athletes are prepared for Sochi. Even though we won't be on home turf and there will be greater challenges, we have planned and prepared. The athletes and coaches are well aware of the expectations and potential distractions, and we will be ready.

It's important to note that many countries are making very significant and targeted investments in sports where we have traditionally performed very well, so we need to remain smart and adaptive and continue to be pioneers in finding what is needed to continually improve performance. We need to stay ahead.

One of the things we're trying to do is transition across this country to what we call facility-based institutes. That will take some time and some significant financial investment. I know the continued support of the federal government is essential to Canada's success. We need to ensure we have all of the programs and services for the athletes and a really strengthened, coordinated, and harmonized system that will solidify our place as a world-leading sport nation.

With respect to allocation of resources, I want to assure you that from a preparation standpoint, the resources we receive have allowed us to do many very interesting things. As an example, we are able to offer the athletes and coaches we deal with on a regular basis expedited diagnostic imaging interventions and referrals to appropriate specialists to speed the recovery of athletes who may be injured. We've conducted baseline concussion assessments so we

can better understand the recovery path from a serious injury. We offer individualized and team mental performance assessments and evaluations so that the athletes are psychologically prepared and have a good, solid psychological platform to allow them to manage the pressures that we know will be there in an Olympic and Paralympic environment.

We provide individualized dietary assessments and recovery nutrition protocols and third party supplement testing to ensure the athletes have the required fuel they need to perform on demand on race day. We provide video and accelerometry data and analysis to give Canada's athletes that one-hundredth of a second edge they need over their competition.

It's an absolutely great time to be involved in sport in Canada. At the Canadian Sport Institute we firmly believe that the history of Canadian winter sport will be written where we live. In 80 days or less, our country will once again come together to cheer on our best athletes. We know that new records will be broken, new stories will be told, and history will be made. Our Canadian athletes are and will be prepared. I don't think you can ever underestimate the power of sport and how our country's Olympic and Paralympic successes will ultimately inspire people of all ages, but especially our youth, to be active, to be healthy, and to make Canada better.

I thank the federal government sincerely for their ongoing and significant support for Canadian athletes and coaches. I look forward to continuing this conversation with the committee. I thank you very much again for this opportunity.

I would entertain any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Henwood.

We'll move to Mr. Heck and Mr. Norris, for a total of 10 minutes, and then we'll move to our rounds of questioning.

Mr. Heck or Mr. Norris, you have 10 minutes.

● (0955)

Mr. Barry Heck (President and Chief Executive Officer, WinSport): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

I'm Barry Heck, president and CEO. I'm here with my colleague, Dr. Stephen Norris, vice-president of sport and leader of our winter sports institute.

WinSport is the operating or brand name of the Calgary Olympic Development Association, or CODA. Our origin is from the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics. We were transferred the legacy assets at Canada Olympic Park in Calgary. Those assets were transferred to us by the Canadian government following the 1988 Winter Olympics. These assets have been owned and operated by us since the 1988 Olympics.

We've recently undergone a very significant renewal and expansion of our facilities, including the completion of a new \$200 million-plus world-class, world-leading, multi-use facility. This facility comprises four hockey arenas, a professional building, conference facilities, and the crown jewel: a new high-performance training centre that is now the home to many of Canada's Olympic athletes.

The federal government contributed \$40 million to the capital of that project. As I said, the total capital was in excess of \$200 million. The Province of Alberta also contributed to the extent of \$69 million, and the City of Calgary \$20 million. The balance of about \$76 million was funded by WinSport itself.

WinSport is Canada's leading winter sports institute. We are on our way to becoming the world's leading winter sports institute, which is precisely what our vision is.

Our mission is to provide excellence in winter sports facilities and training for Canadian athletes to discover, develop, and excel through a sustainable business model. That's very important. We receive no government funding for our ongoing operations.

I'll now turn it over to my colleague, Dr. Norris, to speak further about what WinSport does and the important role we play in helping and supporting Canada's Winter Olympics athletes.

Dr. Stephen Norris (Vice-President, Sport, WinSport): Good morning. Thank you for this opportunity.

I must admit I was pleasantly surprised to hear of this level of inquiry and oversight. I think it's a much-needed process in examining performance of any endeavour, particularly high-performance sport.

As you can tell by my accent, I'm not originally from Canada, but I came to Canada in 1990 to do my Ph.D. My specialty is in altitude and altitude training. Then I was recruited to work for Mr. Henwood and his multi-disciplinary service provider team at what was then called the Canadian Sports Centre. They recently changed their name to the Canadian Sport Institute. This really is the brain trust of the service providers who help and guide Canada's coaches, high-performance directors, and obviously the athletes themselves.

I went through three Olympic cycles as the director of sport physiology and strategic planning, basically for the winter sports that were based out of the Calgary-Bow Valley corridor.

We were asked to talk about the preparation for this particular Olympic period coming up. One thing I would say is that, unfortunately, despite the fantastic success at Vancouver, there was somewhat of a hiatus in the months immediately after the Vancouver games, when there really wasn't necessarily, in my opinion, a strong direction for sport. Individuals such as Mr. Henwood had to work very hard to keep the system on an even keel going forward, with the lack, if you like, of leadership from the highest levels of the sport agencies. This is despite recognizing that both the COC and Own the Podium provided a level of guidance, but there was a period of time when we were almost rudderless.

So this quadrennial, in my view as a sport scientist with a reasonable track record—and we haven't actually had a full quadrennial, leading into these particular games.... While that may

not come back to haunt us, we need to understand that sport is an ongoing concern, with almost core aspects of middle class values. In other words, it really is about short-term loss for long-term gain. What I mean by that is that there is a massive process behind high-performance sport to ensure not by chance but by design, high performance outcomes at the end.

The way we at WinSport have tended historically to be involved is around the provision of facilities, facilities in which the likes of Mr. Henwood's team of experts can actually operate. We're moving much closer to that period now with the opening of our new facilities at Canada Olympic Park.

WinSport itself is not isolated simply to the legacy facilities directly within Calgary. In partnership with Alberta Parks we also run a high-performance training centre out in Canmore that is focused on the Nordic sports, in conjunction with that particular facility. Up on Haig glacier in Kananaskis country, we have an altitude summer snow training facility for cross-country and biathlon sports, which is definitely a Canadian advantage.

We have another relationship, obviously, with the University of Calgary surrounding the speed skating oval, the Olympic oval itself, which is one of the lasting testaments to the Calgary games of 1988.

We really are living proof of the foresight of organizations, individuals, and the federal government in hosting major games whereby facilities are brought together that are not just there for the two weeks of the games, but have some long-lasting impacts on not only the local community but the entire country.

One thing I would bring to your attention is that prior to the 1988 games, for example, our speed skating team used to have to spend inordinate amounts of time in the Netherlands to train, but over the last quarter of a century we've been able to have a home training base here in Canada. It's actually a place where the world comes to train and to compete against Canadians, and we can showcase Canada because of it.

We have done some other things in this particular quadrennial to gain an innovative leg up on our competition. In particular, we have Frozen Thunder out in Canmore, where quite literally at the end of the winter season, we bury snow in the ground in big pits, cover it with sawdust, and then, come October, bring it out of the ground and lay it out. We actually have the earliest on-snow training virtually anywhere in the world. This is the type of innovative process we undertake. We even do a lot of our national team selections on this sort of quasi-artificial surface.

•(1000)

There are other aspects that have been innovative for us. A number of years ago, CODA/WinSport built an indoor start facility for bobsleigh, skeleton, and luge called the Ice House. This weekend we will host an inaugural world push championship. Many of the countries that compete in bobsleigh will be on live television on Saturday evening going through the process of showing what they can do in pushing a bobsleigh at the start, which is obviously a critical component.

Without that type of innovation and foresight, we would definitely not be as great a leader in the area of winter sports participation and excellence as we have become.

I would like to dwell on some other agencies that we interact with. Partnerships and the interaction of various jurisdictions are extremely important. As I said, WinSport, largely from a facility side, along with our partnership and increasing bond with the Canadian Sport Institute in Calgary, brings together the brain trust with the actual facilities.

I need to stress that the facilities are extremely important, particularly the innovative ones, and they are a place Canadian athletes can call home, but at the end of the day, it is the quality and the quantity of the people who are in these facilities that really make the ultimate difference. Fortunately at WinSport, and with the CSI, we are able to bring together those two critical elements. The future therefore looks bright.

The challenge for us, about which Mr. Heck spoke, is to ensure that we have a sustainable business model. I am somewhat alarmed at what is happening in Canada—despite my accent—by way of the over-indulgence in Anglo-Australian sports systems. While they may have produced some level of success, they are very expensive, and because of that, somewhat unsustainable.

I would urge us as a country, particularly the leading agencies, Own the Podium and the Canadian Olympic Committee, to understand the need to be a lean, mean, high-performance machine, whereby we are extremely effective and efficient at the top level and really invest in our coaches, in our high-performance advisers, and obviously in the support personnel: our sport medicine physicians, our sport scientists, our psychologists, and our performance analysts. We must ensure that the Canadian Sport Institute network and ancillary organizations....

For example, the B2ten organization has moved in to help supplant and aid the Canadian Sport Institute.

It is important that we really focus on our current generation of experts and ensure that we have very sound succession planning so that we don't get on the merry-go-round you see in other countries where they invest for a time in sports and then, after a period of time, realize that it's not a sustainable model and lose their expertise. The expertise goes abroad to other countries; we see that constantly with almost every quadrennial, whether it's on the summer side or on the winter side.

•(1005)

The Chair: Mr. Norris, I'm going to have to cut you off at this point.

Dr. Stephen Norris: That's fair enough. I've said everything I need to say.

The Chair: We will give you an opportunity to expand on this in the questioning.

We will now move to seven-minute rounds. We will start with Mr. Hillyer.

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): WinSport, you mentioned that despite the government funding you had to help improve your infrastructure, you don't have government funding for your ongoing operations. Where do you get the money to run your show?

Mr. Barry Heck: We obtain it through a number of sources, primarily through our own operations. We have our assets. We run various businesses at our facilities that generate income, a ski hill, for example. We have a substantial food and beverage operation. We run summer camps for developing athletes and children.

We obtain it primarily through our own operations. We have several profit centres, the profits of which are all invested back into our facilities and our support of the high-performance athletes.

Partnerships are very important to us. We have a number of partners who assist in various ways. Some are corporate partners. Hockey Canada, for example, is a partner and tenant of ours out there.

Those are the primary ways. It's a self-sustaining business model that we're working towards.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Mr. Henwood, does your organization use government funding for regular ongoing operations?

Mr. Dale Henwood: I guess from a people standpoint, yes. As a service organization we do have back-of-house expenses for which we would get some Sport Canada support, but we do not get any support for some of the ongoing costs that we have in terms of continual increase in salaries or compensation for some of the key experts that we have.

We will have some obligation for rental costs in new facilities. We don't get any help for that, so that has to be self-sustaining.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: How do you generate that?

Mr. Dale Henwood: Some of it is through corporate Canada. We are doing a number of things with WinSport in terms of new revenue generation programs, trying to look at how we can work together to deliver some programs and services to the sporting public in the Calgary area to try to generate revenue, but it does distract us from what we're supposed to be doing on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: When it comes to investing in Canada's high-performance athletes, the ones who compete on the world stage, if our goal is to win lots, and that seems like a neat goal, it's necessary to invest in that. What would you say to an average Canadian? The average Canadian is never going to compete at luge or bobsleigh competitively. He might get some kids involved in hockey and skiing.

Why would you say it's important for Canada to continue to invest in being successful on the world stage?

I'll make it even tougher. Other than it encourages people to be healthy and get involved in sport, what are some other reasons you think it is good for our country to invest in world-class success in sport?

Mr. Dale Henwood: First of all, excellence in any endeavour is a worthy pursuit. It is long term. It is difficult and expensive, but we should try to be excellent in everything we do in this country, just to pursue excellence, regardless at what level. If you're a young kid, if you're a piano player, if you're in business, we should be trying to pursue excellence in everything we do. That's the first thing. That attitude of trying to get better and be better is one thing.

To me, it's maybe more what the medal does. The medal in and of itself I am going to say maybe is not that important, but it's what it does in terms of inspiring people, challenging people. You don't go to the opera and see people with flags painted on their face. That happens in sport venues. It is unbelievable what sport can do for the country in terms of pulling the country together. It's unbelievable what sport does and what excellence does in getting young people, and people of all ages, to set some new goals, to stretch themselves. To me, it's what the medal does and not really the medal in and of itself.

• (1010)

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Mr. Heck or Dr. Norris, do you have any comments on why we should continue to invest in world-class sport?

Dr. Stephen Norris: I would certainly echo many of Mr. Henwood's comments. The intangible aspect, if you like, of inspiration for a country can't necessarily be valued in a classic, quantitative way, but the inspiration of the pursuit of excellence in any endeavour, I think, is a worthy cause.

The aspect of high performance is obviously a challenge particularly for a fair, egalitarian, socially responsible country like Canada, where ultimately you are investing in fewer and fewer people. There are three places on an Olympic podium, not seven billion. That's the reality, but it's no different from any other pursuit of excellence in that how we utilize the knowledge gained in that pursuit, how we really build our heroes in any endeavour doesn't matter. Whether it's Chris Hadfield on the space station or an athlete standing at the top of a world event podium, it's how we utilize that within our society and how we use that to value, if you like, the worth and the weight of a particular society in terms of our role in the world. Sports is just one of a whole myriad of elements that contribute to that.

It is hard to put a dollar value on that type of pursuit, but these are important things that make us humans.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Thanks.

You took over the facilities that were used for the Calgary Olympics. Is there a similar organization that manages facilities left behind by Vancouver's Olympic Games, that you know of?

Dr. Stephen Norris: Actually, yes there is. I think it's called Whistler Sport Legacies. It's a very similar format. It's not quite as large, mainly because of what happened to many of the facilities post the Olympic Games. The real focus for that particular legacy looks after the Richmond Olympic Oval where the speed skating was held, and up to Callaghan Valley where the Nordic sports were, close to Whistler, and the Whistler Sliding Centre track. There is an

endowment and a board of directors that looks after that particular legacy.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move to Mr. Lapointe for seven minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Chair, before we test to see whether the interpretation works, I would like to make sure that it will not be taken off my time.

[English]

Perhaps the witnesses could put their translation devices on. Is it working?

[Translation]

Everything works.

My sincere thanks to the witnesses for joining us today. My guess is that you have been very busy this year in preparation for the upcoming Olympics. Thank you for being here.

The services provided by the Canadian Sport Institute are essential. I am sort of thrilled to talk to someone who was inducted into the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame & Museum. I can't even bike for 45 minutes without being exhausted. It is a pleasure to have you here, Mr. Henwood.

Mr. Henwood, you said in your testimony that expert services are essential in providing Canadian athletes with that little edge that will ensure victory. That is often measured in milliseconds. In the research materials I was reading, it said that the funding you received in 2012-2013 was just shy of \$5 million. The amount was about the same in 2011-2012. Do you feel that the funding your organization receives enables you to maintain an adequate level of expertise to support athletes?

There is something else I would like to know since I know nothing about it. Are there any comparable models elsewhere? I am talking about former Olympic facilities in other countries that have hosted the winter Olympic games. How do those countries work? Are the support and funding they receive to use those facilities and to support the athletes comparable or superior to what we have here?

•(1015)

[English]

Mr. Dale Henwood: First of all, if I got all of your question, it was whether we have enough dollars to keep the expertise. That's always a challenge. We're trying to generate our own new dollars because certainly the dollars we've been getting from existing sources have not changed since 2008, so it's a challenge for us to continue to keep the best people. We pride ourselves in being able to offer things other than financial rewards. It's likely no different from you people who serve our country so well. You're not doing it necessarily for the financial reward. Our expertise, a lot of the physicians and medical personnel and scientists are there because they are passionate about Canada. That said, yes, we do need support to keep them, but we have tried to work in a number of ways and provide flexibility and other incentives in their environment so that it's not only a financial concern.

There are also many other models. If you look at it as an example, and we like to compare ourselves to the G-8 all the time, we are the lowest of all the G-8 countries in terms of support and direct support for high-performance sport. Therefore, I think we over-perform based on the resources that are provided for Canadian athletes. I think that's a testament to the athletes and the coaches that we have in the system.

There are other models, all the way from the U.S., which is zero government dollars and all corporate, to the other extreme in a number of countries where it's totally government. We are a hybrid, I would say, of corporate and self-generated and government support.

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: Could you also tell me what support francophone athletes receive? For instance, Quebec does not have bobsleigh runs. If a Canadian francophone were to develop an Olympic potential, how would that work? Is it fair to say that francophones receive the same services, including psychological services. You need perfect language skills to be able to provide comparable services. Is that working well?

[English]

Mr. Dale Henwood: First of all, we have a network of institutes across the country. There's a new Institut national du sport du Québec. That would provide a lot of the base-level services also for Canadian athletes. As an example, for a bobsledder, I guess today there are two places you could compete, one at Whistler but primarily in Calgary. If those athletes are of a sufficient calibre in terms of making the national team, the support services are there. We have a very good relationship with a French community in the Calgary area. We have physicians, dentists, physiologists, strength coaches who can provide the services in both official languages.

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: Thank you for that answer.

There was an aspect at the end of your presentation that was also very interesting. You have opened the door to the idea that we pioneered winter Olympic sports, but that we must be careful because many countries are catching up with us by taking a creative approach to how they support their athletes. Could you elaborate a

bit more on the next steps we need to take to remain pioneers in the way we support our athletes?

[English]

Mr. Dale Henwood: First of all, my comment would be if you look at it from a winter side, countries like Korea, Japan, and China are investing heavily in sports such as speed skating and snowboarding, sports where we have traditionally done very well. It's a real challenge for us to continue to get the number of medals that we have in the past, because as I said, they have really targeted their investment.

I guess among the things we have to do is on a regular basis keep good connections with universities in terms of some of the very much applied research. Also, all the people we deal with have a real attitude of striving to get better every day. That's one of the questions they're always trying to look at. What are some of the new things? What are some of the different things? What are some things we could do better to try to make sure that we're getting an advantage or keeping an advantage for Canada? There are a lot of things.

Perhaps Dr. Norris could talk more specifically about some of the physiological things that are going on. Certainly in the area of medicine, we're doing a lot of work in concussion research right now. I would say that we are a Canadian leader, and I might even be so bold as to say an international leader, in some of the concussion research that we're doing, based on some of the equipment that has been bought through organizations such as Own the Podium, which is, as you know, primarily a federal support.

There are things that we do on a daily basis from a physiological and a psychological standpoint, but I can't speak specifically about some of those. We have people who are a lot more expert than I am who can talk about them, but I do know that every day they're looking at new ideas and new areas where we can try to get better.

Could I perhaps ask Dr. Norris if he wanted to expand on that?

•(1020)

The Chair: Very quickly.

Dr. Stephen Norris: I think your point about the links with universities and certain industries is extremely important and actually verges back on that aspect of the worth of sport. To work with, say, Bombardier, you'd think maybe designing an airplane would be enough for some people, but you put an athlete, say an alpine skier, into their wind tunnel, and you see the engineers' faces light up. It's an exciting proposition for them. We get information back from industry to the sports that we wouldn't normally have without this arrangement, this partnership with industry, and they get excitement that helps them in their own endeavours. Perhaps there's an exchange of information and knowledge as well.

The universities are absolutely critical in this process for us, and making sure that we have those avenues is a strong component of why we're successful.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dion, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the three of you for being with us today.

I would ask Mr. Heck or Dr. Norris if they have something to add about what Mr. Lapointe asked on the ability to be sure that francophone Canadians have all the support they need in Calgary or in other areas in Canada where English is the predominant language.

Mr. Barry Heck: Do you want to speak to that?

Dr. Stephen Norris: Dale, do you want to answer that first?

Mr. Barry Heck: I think he wanted us to answer.

Dr. Stephen Norris: Okay. From my standpoint, absolutely, we would rely very heavily on the services through the Canadian Sport Institute, where we're able to supply French-speaking individuals. We take inordinate lengths to ensure that we are able to communicate effectively and provide services.

There was an interesting question that came up earlier about bobsleigh. With bobsleigh in Ontario and in Quebec, we utilize Lake Placid, actually, for the eastern athletes. Of course it's a facility-based sport and the facilities are in the west, at least in Canada, so eventually, when athletes make the grade, they do have to move to Calgary, typically, if they're in those sliding sports, so that we can take them to the next level.

I deal with the women's hockey team, for example, and we have fortunately a real cohort of incredible talent that comes from the province of Quebec and is integrated obviously clearly into the national team. They have to come to Calgary for the six months leading into the games, and yes, whilst English would be the predominant language, we go to what I would hope are very clear lengths to ensure that our communication in both directions with the francophone athletes is of the highest order.

I would hope that when the Quebec athletes are asked those questions, whilst Alberta is not home for anyone from another province, they feel like it's home when they're there and they have the level of care and attention that any other athlete has.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you very much.

Again this is for you, Dr. Norris. In your presentation you mentioned a concern you may have, if I understand well, about the danger that after the Olympics the focus will be less on the support for the athletes. You said that it's a pattern you have seen in other countries. You mentioned Australia. Can you explain more to the committee about what you have in mind?

Dr. Stephen Norris: Let me say that there's perhaps the honeymoon period, whereby there's the euphoria particularly around Vancouver, and then after that the memory dissipates. If you look at

the way the media treats the Olympic sports, there's a big focus in the months, weeks, and days leading into the games. There's a lot of focus of attention around that two-week, three-week period. There's a latency period of perhaps a few weeks after the games, and then it almost disappears out of the communal psyche for the next few years. We have to understand that although there's that period of two weeks, there's always other games. We're always preparing.

In fact, it's not limited to just the year before the games that the preparation is occurring. Many of the athletes who will compete in Sochi are possibly at the end of a decade of the pursuit of this particular excellence. Unfortunately, I do feel sorry, at times, for the people working within the system and the athletes themselves, because we go through this very cyclical attention to these athletes, and they're almost forgotten for a period of time. To really have a high performance model, we need to have greater stability, if you like, in terms of everything: the resources that are applied, the attention to the athletes, the understanding of the process they're going through, because it is a long-term process, not a short-term one.

• (1025)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: You would like this committee to take your recommendation to the government. For the three of you, are there other recommendations you would like this committee to consider?

Mr. Dale Henwood: First of all, I don't believe it's always financial resources that are needed. At times it's more will than wallet, but if we want to maintain our position and improve our position internationally, I think we do need some investment in people, and that's primarily, I'm going to suggest, first and foremost, in coaches. Second, I think we do need good support personnel for the athletes and coaches. That's again what we try to do through our institute, and not just in Calgary but those who are across the country.

As we move into facility-based institutes, there is a need for some ongoing operational costs that we're going to have to come up with somewhere. If there is any way we can get some support for those, it would be very much appreciated.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Heck, do you want to add something about the recommendation you would like this committee to consider?

Mr. Barry Heck: I would certainly echo Mr. Henwood's comments. I would add that I think there is a need across the entire system for us to work more collaboratively. There is some duplication in the system that we all have to get better. Whether that's on the governance side right down to how we manage our resources, I do believe there is some work that can be done there. I think the federal government can play a role in that, in just ensuring a more effective way of operating so that at the end of the day, more dollars are getting to the athletes, the coaches, where they're truly needed.

Dr. Stephen Norris: I would agree.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Are you in a situation to specify what you mean by duplications that we should address?

Mr. Barry Heck: Do you want to speak to that?

Dr. Stephen Norris: The governance structure and the role of central government, I think, at times is underestimated. I personally look to the central government to be a leader. It doesn't mean to say necessarily, as Mr. Henwood said, invest money. I think there are a number of things in terms of getting the agencies responsible for sport at all levels across the country to work together more effectively, to reduce the level of national duplication, but understanding the needs for the different geographical aspects of the provinces. There is, let's say, a level of competition among some of the more senior agencies that I think we need to eradicate so that we can be a lot more purposeful in what is actually done.

One area for me is for government to really lead and perhaps coerce, to actually challenge corporate Canada to become a lot more involved. I think the federal government has a role to encourage that type of activity.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move now to Mr. Richards and Mr. Young, who are going to split the seven minutes.

• (1030)

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): I understand our beginnings in sport are somewhat similar. I played junior hockey in Alberta, but I think that's about where it ends. That's probably why I'm sitting here asking the questions and you're sitting there as one of our foremost experts in high-performance sport. We're really pleased to have you here today.

Mr. Heck, Dr. Norris, welcome from back in Alberta where, of course, my home is as well. As a native Albertan and someone who represents the area surrounding Calgary and certainly represents Canmore, where you have a well-known training centre that you're responsible for, I've been in most if not all of your facilities, many of them multiple times. There's no question you're doing a wonderful job of what you do there, so we're pleased to have you both here with us, remotely, as well.

I have one question, and any remaining time I have I'd like to turn over to Mr. Young.

You spoke about Frozen Thunder, Dr. Norris. I was there to help open it a few years ago. I've mountain-biked at the Canmore Nordic Centre fairly extensively, and I can remember times when I was mountain-biking and watching the athletes training already on the snow. It makes for some interesting mixes.

In 1988, I was a fairly young teenager, and I remember the excitement about the Olympics and certainly the legacy that they left. I only have to look at communities like Canmore as a great example. The number of Olympic athletes that have come from Canmore since that time is a clear indication of the legacy the Olympics can leave. I'd ask any of the three of you who would like to, to comment on that.

Obviously, we've seen greater success in our Winter Olympics in the last little while. Certainly, Vancouver was an amazing accomplishment of our athletes, although we may have gone through a period of time in the nineties when some of the results weren't as much as we had hoped for. As a government, we've invested a lot in sport. The WinSport facility in Calgary is one of those examples. It's an amazing facility. I wonder how much of that

greater accomplishment we saw in Vancouver and which I'm sure we'll see next year in Sochi is based on some of those legacies that you're responsible for, Mr. Heck, with WinSport, and how much of it is based on some of the greater investment there has been in sport in recent years. Is it a combination or is there some other factor you might want to point to that has led to some of that greater success we've seen?

I'd ask for any comments on that from any of you.

Mr. Dale Henwood: I'll start and say that the facilities absolutely from 1988 have really been a catalyst to a lot of things that are going on. Once you have the facilities, then I think you're able to bring in the people, meaning the science and medicine personnel, and attract the athletes and coaches from across the country to use those facilities.

There's a whole gamut of things that are critically important, and we need to invest in all of them. As a country, we are very successful. We got medals, and that's a pretty good level of excellence, in 10 summer sports and in 10 winter sports. That's excellence in a wide array of summer and winter sports. Certainly in our part of the country, and with Sochi right in front of us, we are focused on the winter side. We also do a tremendous job on the summer side, I think, for the size of the country and population we have and who we compete against.

Yes, I would certainly say the real impetus has been the legacy of the facilities from 1988.

Mr. Blake Richards: Is there any comment that either of the other two gentlemen wanted to make on that?

Mr. Barry Heck: Yes. I would echo Mr. Henwood's comments. I think it clearly is a combination. With the completion of our new facility, the Markin MacPhail Centre, which is absolutely state of the art, we are spending a lot of time understanding how we are going to become world leading.

The bricks and mortar are extremely important. We have the bricks and mortar, but as Dr. Norris referred to earlier, it is really now what we do with them. It's what goes on inside. Our challenge will continue to be how we keep those facilities world class. We're not done building. We have a bobsleigh track that needs to be refurbished and refreshed. It's 25 years old. It's still very good, but it's near its end of life. We need a new indoor aerial training facility that we can use year round. We have lots more projects on the books that we're going to have to find a way to finance and fund. It is a combination of both of those to keep us world leading.

We're in a bit of a holiday now in the sense that we have this new \$200-million facility, so we don't have to repair it yet, but come very soon we know that we're going to have to invest significant dollars in keeping the facility world class. It's going to be a challenge for us, and it's very important.

•(1035)

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you. I appreciate that.

I want to make sure I leave a little bit of time, and I don't think I've left much, Mr. Chairman, for Mr. Young. I appreciate those answers.

Mr. Young, I will turn it over to you and I hope there's a little time left for you.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You have 40 seconds.

Mr. Terence Young: It's better than nothing.

I'm going to ask one quick question of Mr. Heck, if I may. What are your biggest challenges? We did a study last year on coaching, and at the lower levels of competition we have a shortage of coaches in gymnastics, etc. What are your biggest challenges?

Mr. Barry Heck: I'd like to defer to my expert here, Dr. Norris.

Dr. Stephen Norris: Certainly I think the aspect of coaching and quality coaching through to children and youth is absolutely critical. I do strongly urge you to pay attention to governance of sport in the country. We have to out-punch our weight because of our population size and geographical size at the other extreme, and so those are elements for me, quality people, sound instruction, and strong governance to make sure we do not duplicate services and that we're very efficient.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Young.

We'll now move to a five-minute round.

Ms. Mathysen, I believe you are splitting your time with Mr. Donnelly.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Yes, and I'll try to share in an equitable way.

Thank you very much for being here. It's encouraging to hear that there's so much preparation in terms of the well-being of our athletes.

My first question is in regard to the balance of programming between men and women. What efforts are being made to make sure that women aren't overshadowed? Of course, we know that when it comes to hockey, women don't allow men to overshadow them at all.

Mr. Dale Henwood: Maybe I could start by answering that. If you look at our medal performances, the women are outperforming the men, so I'm not sure I need to say any more than that.

In terms of opportunity we try to look at the ability and provide services to those athletes with the ability and potential, but if you look at Canadian performances, summer and winter, our women are outperforming our men.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

My second question, very quickly, and Mr. Young alluded to it, is on the development of young athletes. Perhaps those young athletes don't have the financial ability to go to summer camps. How do you find, support, and nurture them?

Mr. Dale Henwood: First of all, our primary mandate is at the high end. It's absolutely critical that our partners deeper down in the system are working with those young athletes.

The one concern I would have, and I would maybe tag onto a question that was asked earlier, is you can certainly help us by advocating for corporate investment that would help some of those younger kids, who are good kids, who maybe do not have the wherewithal or their parents don't have the wherewithal, to stay involved. There are a lot of organizations, KidSport and so on, that do provide some of that support system, but certainly more is needed to get some of those good young kids to help them stay involved, because it does become expensive as you move up the system.

Second, I would say just continue to encourage our provinces. I think municipalities and provinces have a role to play in some of that stuff. Encourage them to keep investing, because from a succession planning standpoint, we need to go deeper down the development system and start working with those athletes at a younger age and prepare them to be future national team athletes, if that's their desire and if they have the ability. Today we don't have a real strong pool of that next generation of athletes. That would be a concern which I think the provinces and the corporate sector could help us with.

•(1040)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

Mr. Donnelly.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): First of all, thank you to all three of our witnesses for testifying today in front of the committee.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Henwood, on your career as an Olympic hockey coach and the work you have done over the years at the Canadian Sport Institute.

I have two quick questions for you, Mr. Henwood. What are you most proud of in terms of your achievements at the institute? What is the one thing you don't have right now that you wish you did have?

Mr. Dale Henwood: The proudest, I would say, are the people we have been able to invest in, whether that's the athletes or the coaches. I get excited every day when I get to see young committed Canadians who are out there trying to be the best in the world. I'm simply very proud of the impact we have had, we meaning the team of us, the wide variety of people who have contributed over a long period of time. That is what gets me running to work every day. I'm very proud of the young people we have who will represent our country, the young people we have who will be our future leaders. That's the first thing.

In terms of the ongoing challenge today, it's really our capacity. It's our ability to continue to provide the level of support and expertise we need not only for the athletes today but for those athletes who are coming behind. To me that's the bigger challenge going forward.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Do I have 30 seconds?

The Chair: You do.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Thank you.

I have one quick question for WinSport then. Is there a province that stands out in terms of where athletes are coming from, or is the representation right across the country based on, say, the population of the provinces?

Dr. Stephen Norris: For me, Quebec is a leader without doubt. Ontario is to a certain extent, but considering the population size they don't outperform their population size. They need to improve that. B.C. has done a very, very good job with its grassroots programming. I think areas of the country that have very sound physical education programs in their elementary and junior high schools stand out, unfortunately not Alberta.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We do have a few minutes left so we'll go back to Mr. Young.

Mr. Terence Young: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to ask Mr. Henwood a question. I know everything you do helps athletes that are not at the elite level, everything. Watching the Olympics inspires our young people, all kinds of young people. It inspires them to participate in sport. It's good for their health, physical activity.

Can you describe a little bit, though, how the \$4.9 million that Canada is investing in 2013-14 in the Canadian Sport Institute benefits other athletes at other levels, either directly or indirectly?

Mr. Dale Henwood: Our primary focus is to provide that support service for the top-end athletes, but as I mentioned, I think for Sochi we'll only have about 215 athletes from across the country. Not all of them, maybe two-thirds of them, might be from our area of the country in terms of Canadian athletes who have relocated to the Calgary-Canmore area.

We are working deeper down in some sports, not in all the sports. Our ability to go down is dependent on other resources, so we do touch them but we certainly do not touch them to the same extent we would the top athletes.

Mr. Terence Young: Okay. I appreciate that, but you use the money for sport science and sport medicine. That benefits all athletes, does it not?

Mr. Dale Henwood: It does, but the level of support the top athletes get is different from maybe someone who's on a development team or a junior team. They would get a little bit, but certainly not nearly the same quality or quantity.

Mr. Terence Young: Your institute helps athletes who reach an elite level, so you don't have any kind of regional representation or anything. It's simply whoever reaches that elite level in their sport. Is that correct?

Mr. Dale Henwood: Yes. It's actually the national sport federations that would identify the athletes. Again, they do that across the country at any one of our seven institutes. The sport would identify the athletes, and we would provide the services, but we do that on a priority and targeted basis, and it's dependent on the athletes the sports have identified for us.

The Chair: Mr. Young, that will have to be the last word.

I'd like to thank our witnesses for joining us today and for bringing some of their insight into our study. Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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