



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

CHPC • NUMBER 030 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, October 18, 2016

—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Tuesday, October 18, 2016

• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): I will call this meeting to order. As everyone knows, we are studying Canadian women and girls in sport, for five meetings.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming today.

From the Canadian Sport Institute, we have Wendy Pattenden, chief executive officer; from the Coaching Association of Canada, we have Lorraine Lafrenière; from Fast and Female, we have Marie-Hélène Thibeault; from the Ottawa Triathlon Club, we have Geordie McConnell; and of course, from ParticipACTION, we have Elio Antunes. Thank you very much.

In terms of the routine, you each represent a different group, and you have 10 minutes to present. If you can do it in under 10 minutes, great. I will give you a two-minute warning, so that you know you have only two minutes left. Sometimes, if you don't finish, people will ask questions, and you can throw in your bit that you didn't get in. Then we have an interactive period of questions and answers after that.

A voice: It's five minutes.

The Chair: Sorry, because there are five of you, we're changing it to five minutes per person. You thought I'd just given you a bonus there with 10, didn't you?

We will begin now with the Canadian Sport Institute, and Wendy Pattenden.

Ms. Wendy Pattenden (Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Sport Institute): Good morning, everyone. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the committee on the important topic of women in sport. My name is Wendy, and I'm very fortunate to have been involved in sport my entire life. Both my parents were professional athletes. My father played professional hockey for 20 years, and my mother was a professional figure skater for numerous years and a high-performance coach. It's interesting to note that she's 77 years old, and she actually retired from coaching at the high-performance level at the age of 75. So she is certainly an exceptional role model for me.

I personally have been involved in numerous roles in sport. I've had the advantage of seeing the system through the lens of being a high-performance athlete, a national team and Olympic coach, a parent, and now the CEO of a major multi-sport organization as well as a volunteer chair of the board for the Canadian Sport for Life Society.

As I was preparing for my remarks today, I took time to reflect on what it has been like to be a woman in sport in Canada. Gender equity in sport has been a topic as long as I can remember over my 35 years in sport. My sense is that we are a leader in the world in terms of policy and recommendations, yet somehow we seem to fall short on the actual execution or implementation of these recommendations and strategies. Although we have made some progress, there is still room for us to grow in this area.

To prepare for today, I reviewed a recent report by CAAWS called "Women in Sport: Fuelling a Lifetime of Participation". I'm not sure if the committee has this report. I can certainly email it to Jean-François after. In this report, I was certainly struck by a few key statistics that stood out to me.

First was the statistic around national sport organization board member representation, currently at 26.3%. As well, NSO, national sports organizations, board chairs are at 17.5% female. For MSO, multi-sport service organization, and NSO senior staff—at that level we seem to be doing a little better—the number is 33%. In terms of coaching, which is near and dear to my heart, only 17% of Canada's Olympic coaches at the 2012 games in London were females. I don't have a breakdown on the statistics from the recently completed Rio games, but I'm sure the Canadian Olympic Committee could provide those statistics for you. When I look at those four key areas, we're certainly not operating at the level that we should be in this area.

I can speak from my own personal experience as a national team coach about how difficult it has been as I've tried to balance my career with my family. I coached at the highest level, coaching professional tennis players ranked in the top 10 in the world. This required travel on the pro tour on average 35 weeks per year. I did this for 13 years, and I can tell you it was a real challenge to do so while balancing the needs of my young family. Fortunately, I have a very supportive husband who I've been married to for 35 years and counting. Coaching at this level with one child, then two, and then three was nearly impossible. At some point, something had to give. When my husband and I realized we had four weekends together as a family in an entire year, we knew we had to make a change.

I was very lucky that my national sport organization, Tennis Canada, and the pro athletes whom I coached were extremely supportive during this time when I had a young family. They allowed me to reduce my travel schedule to spending a much more manageable 10 to 15 weeks of the year on the road at just the major events, so I would go to Fed Cup, to the world championships, and to Wimbledon—the grand slams. I would send my assistant coaches for the other 20 weeks of travel. I ended up switching my focus to the daily training environment in Toronto, where I would train the athletes who were at the national centre. That also gave me the opportunity to work with the next generation and the young juniors, which I absolutely loved.

What's really important about this is that I did not have to reduce my salary to do this. Again, my NSO was very supportive. I think it is very important that we create opportunities for women with more flexible choices at different points in their career, and it's even more important that these flexible arrangements not impact salary levels. We need to find better solutions to support women in sport at all levels. Young girls deserve to have strong female coaching role models.

●(1105)

In 2013, I visited Rene Simpson during her last few days in palliative care, which left a lasting impression on me. Rene was one of the professional players I had coached for over a decade. At one point she asked me if I realized the impact I had on the players I had coached. I asked what she meant, and she went on to comment that every one of the top professional players that I had coached were now involved in coaching as a career themselves. She commented how interesting it was that each of them pursued a career in coaching and, in her opinion, none of them would have done so had I not been their coach. This is something I will forever be proud of.

Where to from here? How do we hold the sport system accountable to achieve the goals of gender equity in sport? Let's start by moving the dial on three key areas that I feel are important in high-performance sport.

The first one I spoke about from the statistics is gender equity right at the top, which starts at the board level. Is the current 26% good enough?

Second, let's examine the NSO budget allocation by gender for programming. Are the budgets equal? I can assure you that when I took over as director of high performance for Tennis Canada they were not, and that was the first thing I changed, and rectified the budget for men's and women's programs.

The third point is to recruit and hire more coaches at the national team, provincial team, and CIS level. We need to put in place a creative and flexible program with incentives to hire female coaches. This program could be funded through AAP, the athlete assistance program, to recruit recently retired athletes. I know that Lorraine will probably speak to that, but certainly this is an area that we've discussed together in the past .

In closing, as Prime Minister Trudeau so aptly said, "Because it's 2015" when questioned about his new half-female cabinet, well, it's now 2016 and it's time for us to lead the way with gender equity in sport in Canada.

Thank you.

●(1110)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to the Coaching Association of Canada, and Ms. Lafrenière.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière (Chief Executive Officer, Coaching Association of Canada): Thank you.

Hello, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

[*English*]

The Coaching Association of Canada unites more than 400 stakeholders and partners throughout the country representing 66 sports in its commitment to raising the skills and stature of coaches throughout the country, from community to high performance. It is through our flagship program, the national coaching certification program, that we do so.

Through our programs, the partnership empowers coaches with knowledge and skills, promotes ethics, fosters positive attitude, and builds competence while increasing the credibility and recognition for the profession that Wendy so rightly talks about. The CAC was established in 1970 as a result of the recommendations of the task force on sport for Canadians. In 1974 the national coaching certification program commenced. Since its inception, we have become recognized as a world leader, selling our program internationally in coach education and certification. Since 1974 more than 1.5 million coaches have taken a national coaching certification workshop, at an average rate of 60,000 a year.

While the program supports coaches from community to high performance, participation in this program is primarily at the community level, at approximately 95%. Community coaches on average have a life cycle of about five years—you guessed it; it's related to their children—during which time they play a significant role in shaping Canada's youth. Over the last five years, the NCCP, or national coaching certification program, was accessed 67% by men across the country and 33% by women. It has, unfortunately, remained consistent over the past five years. I can share a ray of good hope that the same data in 2007 actually had women accessing the program at 25%. However, we're in a holding pattern.

Sport is the number one voluntary sector in Canada. Its impact is vast in building happy and healthy Canadians at all stages of development. The leadership of women in volunteer roles is critical. It is often the first time beyond the classroom that young boys and girls experience leadership. We need more children experiencing female leadership.

I would like to thank you for making this study a priority. Despite progress and considerable engagement from the Canadian sport community over the last two decades, the findings of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage from 1998 still hold true.

Women represent an untapped resource throughout the sports community. While female athletes contribute as much as 50%, sometimes more, of the members of national teams, the percentage of women who coach at that level is dramatically lower. There is, therefore, a reverse trend in participation versus coaching. Women have different life and leadership experiences, values, and attitudes that equip them with a valuable sport expertise and perspective. Wendy shared her experience. That is true of all coaching. It is a demanding job that sometimes leads to very explicit choices in the profession.

A predictor of our current state may have been evident in 2007, when only 21% of coaches, that is, 177 coaches, who were women accessed our highest level of education preparing them for national team and international competition. Time has changed little. In fact, I would argue that the participation has slid. The International Olympic Committee's emphasis on gender equity and athlete participation has not translated into coaching. Wendy referred to others in terms of statistics. I can remember back in 1996 when Canada's Olympic team had 50% female participants on the team. Not so in coaching: it hovers around 20%, as Wendy mentioned.

The data is no different in Canadian universities. Despite the requirement for equity in the number of sports offered for men and women, again there's a downward trend. A 2011 study by the Centre for Sport Policy Studies at the University of Toronto documented that while there were almost as many teams in the CIS for women, only 19% of coaching positions were held by women. Of the athletic director positions in Canada, 17% were held by women. In 2016, 17% of CIS head coaching positions were held by women, and 24% of assistant coaching positions were held by women.

I might add that according to a recent *Globe and Mail* article, fewer than one-fifth of the university presidents, only 20% of full professors, and 45% of assistant professors are female. There seems to be a trend to opening at the junior ranks.

Wendy mentioned the study on boards. I am pleased to report that seven of our 15 board members are female.

• (1115)

The Chair: Could you wind up, please?

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: Yes.

I will turn to "what now". I would like to talk very briefly to what can be done to promote the present application of the volumes of research that exist.

Research has shown that women tend to diminish their potential by assuming that they are not qualified for the potential employment, versus their male counterparts who assume they have that capacity, which includes learning on the job. Women tend to think they need to know how to do the job before they are employed, which is a direct contradiction. It's an unhealthy vicious circle.

A trend from mentorship to sponsorship is not enough to give women mentorship opportunities. They need the men and the

women behind them to sponsor them into opportunities of leadership and experience. It's time to incent and mobilize the silent majority of men to action. We need to dedicate our resources to accountability metrics for sustainable change in government funding.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Thibeault.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Thibeault (Former Executive Director, Fast and Female): Hello.

Many thanks to the committee for inviting me and for recognizing the importance of women and girls in sport.

My name is Marie-Hélène Thibeault and I am from Bromont. I have spent the last 12 years in Alberta, where I have been very fortunate to work with the organization Fast and Female. This organization was founded by Olympic champion and gold medalist Chandra Crawford, who won a medal in cross-country skiing at the Turin Olympics.

Chandra's vision is to keep girls involved in sport. This organization is dedicated to keeping girls aged 8 to 18 in sport. It works with female Olympic champions and sport ambassadors at the provincial level. It tries to hold events right across Canada to reach out to these young girls through activities and events that are very inspiring.

Created 10 years ago, this non-profit organization regards itself as a social enterprise. It initially launched an event that reached 50 young girls in its first year. It now holds more than 150 activities and reaches more than 3,000 young girls across Canada. The organization also reaches the parents who play a role in the development of young girls in sport.

The organization gives seminars to male and female coaches to raise their awareness of the realities that young girls face in sport and helps them understand the difference between coaching boys and coaching girls.

For my part, I am a former member of Canada's downhill ski team. I competed as part of the team for one season. When I was an athlete, I had to move to the United States to attend a downhill ski academy. Fortunately, this happens less and less because there are many more school programs that give our youth the opportunity to enjoy their passion for sport while pursuing their education.

After that, I joined the national team. To give you an idea of the problem, I must point out that, during the year that I belonged to the team, there were cases of sexual abuse, unfortunately. One of those cases was reported in the media last year and involved one of the team's male coaches. Some of my team members experienced that. The lack of female coaches and the lack of opportunity for my team members to open up and talk about their experience contributed to this case of abuse not being reported in the media until 15 years after the fact.

All that to say that Fast and Female is a movement that is dedicated to resolving the first problem: that girls are six times more likely than boys to drop out of sports at the age of 13. In other words, young girls start out in a sport at the age of five or six, but at the age of 13, they are six times more likely to quit the sport than are young boys. The goal of Fast and Female is to change this by capitalizing on our Olympic athletes, who are very inspiring.

Canada is a jewel in terms of performance, as we saw in the last Olympic Games. We have a critical mass of tremendously inspiring women athletes. Fast and Female wants to capitalize on this strength by raising the profile of these athletes and bringing them closer to communities and young girls aspiring to a career in sports.

I would like to talk about one young girl, Sydney, who recently took part in a Fast and Female activity. I am here for her and for the next generations of girls. My career is over and I am now a mother of a boy and a girl. I am a volunteer soccer and cross-country skiing coach. I want to expose my children to as many sports as possible.

I would like to read you a quote from this young girl's mother:

• (1120)

[English]

“Sydney said something very profound after the Champ Chats. She thanked me for taking her, and when asked what the best part of the Champ Chats was, her response was 'to know I'm not alone'. I never thought she felt alone”, said her mom, “but I guess being the only girl on her team, and one of three girls that play a boy-dominated sport at the level they do, I can understand why she would feel alone.”

[Translation]

At Fast and Female, we bring girls together who are involved in different sports, summer and winter sports and different age groups, to create a community, a sense of belonging. Canada is a huge country and young girls do not all live in downtown Toronto. Some of them live in isolated regions where they are the only girls on their hockey team or the only girls who want to play tennis. At Fast and Female, we really want to create that sense of belonging and community to make sure that no girls are alone.

As to our recommendations to the committee, I will divide them into three categories.

First is media and culture. We work with young girls aged 8 to 18. They of course are very sensitive to the images and role models they see in the media. There is not enough female professional sport on TV. Showing Olympic sports every two or four years is not enough. We must change perceptions of female athletes. They are constantly sexualized and the image conveyed is not an ideal role model, not for

me or for my five-year-old daughter. That is not what I would like her to aspire to. I want her to be strong and confident, but not in a sexual way.

By the way, I think Ms. Pattenden and Ms. Lafrenière gave a very good overview of the sport system. We need female coaches out there. Our female athletes, since they do not necessarily have their sights set on high-performance sport, must be able to redirect their energy and passion by serving as coaches and officials. So the sports experience has to be seen in a much broader way.

In conclusion, I would say that we also need ambitious objectives. I reread the 1998 report. Investing money in that initiative is a great idea, but we need clear objectives, like those for reducing carbon emissions. As Ms. Pattenden said, we need to determine how many women are on boards of directors, to put ourselves on the line, to have ambitious goals and to make sure we meet them.

Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Thibeault.

Now we'll go to Geordie McConnell from the Ottawa Triathlon Club.

Mr. Geordie McConnell (Founder, Ottawa Triathlon Club): Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to talk to you today about a subject very close to my heart.

My professional life has been spent coaching swimmers, bikers, runners, and triathletes, but my passion is getting people on their feet, not getting feet on podiums. In each sport, the key to my success has been creating programs that consistently had three characteristics: welcoming, fun, and effective.

I'm here today to share my view of the actual experience of women and girls in amateur sports and how we can improve it. I'm not a scientist nor do I have many answers, but I do know there is a problem at the grassroots.

The million-dollar question is, why are females not staying in sport? From my experience, one of the main reasons is they are not given the recreational opportunities they need. It's not a priority for the Canadian sports system. This is because our sports system is built to support elite excellence. When participation is highlighted, it's often only to increase the pool of talent at the young ages to feed the excellence.

Here's an example. Last year a local middle school with girls at that critical age of 12 and 13 had 50 girls show up to play touch football. Unfortunately, there was space for only 28 of them, due to limited resources. Those other 22 girls walked away from that sport and may never return. They didn't show the proficiency to win the right to play, and that's wrong. While this example is school sport, it is indicative, from my experience, of the sport community as a whole.

Recreational sport is the focus of one of the five objectives of the Canadian sport policy, but it is not being sufficiently addressed. This responsibility seems to fall—recreational sport, that is—to the national sport organizations, but their mission is dominated by a focus on elite success, and their programs are aligned to that goal. I believe in elite sport, but the resources it receives leaves little for recreational sport, and it is recreational sport that serves the majority of Canadians.

One of the main reasons for this imbalance is the organizational focus on the long-term athlete development model. This is a ladder of stages that shows the development of an athlete from introduction to sport through elite levels, and there's great detail at each of these stages. Running up the side of these charts, usually, is a column or option called "sport for life". This is for those who leave the ladder, but there are rarely details with this sport-for-life option. That makes sense, because there are rarely any programming options either. Athletes who step off the competitive sports ladder seem to be told to go off in the corner and play alone. There's just not the support for them.

Let's maintain the ladder—it's important—but let's also pave a road in recreational sport for the majority of Canadians, one they can enjoy. We need to promote Olympic dreams, but we also need to share another ideal, the ideal of a lifelong journey fuelled by the joy of sport.

I coached my daughter's volleyball team when she was 10 years old. When they were eliminated at the school tournament, my daughter cried. I comforted her and gave her some time and space, and then I later asked her why she cried. She explained to me that it wasn't at all that they lost; she didn't care about that. It was that the season was over and she would no longer be able to play with her friends. But Hannah will play again, and she'll keep playing throughout her life—if there is a team, and if the team will take her.

I then hope for two things: first, that recreational sport is promoted and supported in equal measure with elite sport in Canada; and second, that we place as much value on the simple joy of a life in sport as we do on the glory of sporting achievement.

Finally, I want to share a personal note about my own experience. The athletes I coach are going nowhere in sport. They just want to keep going onward. They're not going up.

• (1125)

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to Mr. Antunes, please, from ParticipACTION.

Mr. Elio Antunes (President and Chief Executive Officer, ParticipACTION): Thank you.

ParticipACTION is a national charitable organization whose mission is to help Canadians sit less and move more, and to make physical activity a vital part of everyday life. It's from that perspective that I'll be presenting to you today.

Although physical inactivity is an issue for both males and females, there does exist disparities between genders. Girls and women are consistently less active than their male counterparts.

Women are less healthy than they were a generation ago. Specifically, women age 20 to 59 are in worse shape than women of the same age were in 1981. They are heavier, less fit, have less flexibility, and have lower grip strength. In other words, the health and fitness of a typical 45-year-old woman has moved her from low-risk category to the increased risk of health problems category, in large part due to physical inactivity. Only 21% of women age 18 to 39 get the 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intense physical activity they need each week. This is slightly less than the 24% of men who get the same.

Unfortunately, we are seeing the same in girls. Compared to other studies around the world, the average Canadian girl will have an increased risk of health problems by the time she turns 36, in large part due to physical inactivity. Only 6% of those age 5 to 17 get the 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity they need each day. This is only half of the 13% of boys who get the same.

Another way to look at this is how girls stack up to boys regarding the skills, motivation, and confidence to be physically active. Just like kids need to learn their ABCs in order to learn how to read, which is literacy, they need to learn how to jump, run, throw, and swim so they can be active for life. It's called physical literacy. Physical literacy testing shows girls are well behind boys. In physical competence with jumping, throwing, and running, boys have a 32% success rate and girls are at 25%. In motivation and confidence, 41% of boys have confidence versus 32% of girls.

What's contributing to this? What are the influences on women's and girls' physical activity levels?

Canadian women are more likely to be active if they think they are good at being active, and researchers call this self-efficacy. If they believe they are healthy, then researchers call this self-rated health. If they plan to be active, with good intentions, and if they perceive that they are able to be active and that they have the time and the means to be active, then this is referred to as perceived behavioural control. Interestingly, research also shows that women are less likely to be active if they have children in the home, especially young children.

Many of these attributes are similar to those in girls. The one that stands out is that if we get girls enrolled in sport, then research shows that enrolment in sport is a strong predictor of physical activity levels. The challenge is that not all girls want or feel comfortable with a sporting environment. There are a number of factors that contribute to this, including the idea that certain activities are considered to be gender appropriate—for instance, boys play hockey and girls dance—bullying or teasing related to gender stereotypes, derogatory terms like being called a “butch” for playing rugby, being made fun of for having a lack of skill or success in a sporting environment, and dress codes or female-specific uniforms. Girls feel uncomfortable wearing bathing suits in front of others. It's also more acceptable for boys to wear running shoes every day than it is for girls.

There are some things that we think we need to consider to address these gender discrepancies, and there are seven from my perspective.

The first is policy. There is federal, provincial and territorial effort under way to develop a new pan-Canadian physical activity framework for Canada. We must ensure that there are strategies specific to gender inclusion within that physical activity framework.

The second is physical literacy. We need to ensure that programs and the physical education curriculum focus on improving all domains of physical literacy, competence, confidence, and motivation, which are the basics of getting girls active. We also need to provide time for girls-only instruction and practice time to improve their skills.

Third, we need to shift social norms and work to improve self-efficacy. We need girls and women to believe that they can do this through education at a very early age. We need to shift the impressions and expectations about what it means to be a girl in physical activity and sport. It should be desirable to be tough, to be sweaty, to be active, and to be sporty.

Fourth, we need to redefine what physical activity means. There are so many great ways to be active, and sport is one good way, but we have to remember that not all girls want to play sports.

●(1130)

We need to ensure that biking to school, dance class, yoga, or playing in the park are all great ways to be active and you don't need to register for a team or a class.

We need role modelling. We need to provide support for busy parents to make active choices and help mothers understand that role modelling is especially important. This could be through workplace policies that allow flexible hours, so people can walk their kids to school, for instance. If Canadian women are more active, this will improve the physical activity habits of their daughters.

Last, on youth engagement, we have a program called the Teen Challenge that shows that culture-specific programs or gender-specific programs that target certain groups can be very effective, even with very small bits of seed funding. We need to actually listen to youth and support them in what they would like to do, versus what we as adults think they want to do.

Thank you.

●(1135)

The Chair: I want to thank the witnesses. We'll go now to the interactive part, beginning with a seven-minute round, and the seven minutes will include the question and answer.

I'm going to begin with Ms. Dabrusin, who is the person who brought forward the motion that received unanimous approval by the committee to do this study.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Thank you.

[*Translation*]

To begin, I have a question for Marie-Hélène Thibeault from Fast and Female.

I have a 13-year-old girl. She is in competitive sports and she took one of your workshops. I also have an 11-year-old daughter who is not as involved in sports. I am really seeing some changes. I notice that the girls of 13 or 14 change. Their friends are less and less involved in sports.

You talked a bit about solutions to keep girls of that age in sports. If I understood correctly, one solution would be to have more women coaches. Do you have other practical suggestions that the committee could include in our recommendations, especially for girls aged 13 to 18?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Thibeault: Thank you very much for the question.

Young girls do go through many physiological changes around the age of 13. Their level of self-confidence and self-expression starts falling.

Moreover, a five-year-old girl has a lot of confidence and expresses herself a lot. With age and increased social awareness, though, her self-expression decreases. This is reflected in not wanting to compete with her peer group because competition is seen as socially disruptive. It causes friction between friends.

The environment has to change. Various possibilities have been suggested. We must not limit our focus to competition. Young girls want to develop in the social context of sports, but they are not necessarily interested in high-performance sport. We need sports activities where girls can be with their friends. They must not be required to participate in all competitions and in the next provincial championship.

Sports federations must have a structure that supports young girls. Socialization is very strong at school. In Quebec and Ontario, there is a fantastic organization called Fitspirit that promotes jogging for young girls at school.

Young people spend a lot of time at school. So we must continue to use this platform to expose them to sport. The time allotted to gym classes has been greatly reduced, which does not help.

In my opinion, we should focus on these aspects. We must continue to promote exercise by calling on well-known personalities as role models and must make sure that we offer sports outlets for girls at school where they are already with their friends. They need an environment that is not competitive but rather that is suited to the personality and ambitions of every kind of girl.

[English]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I'll open it up to the rest of you as well, if you have any thoughts.

Mr. McConnell, you mentioned some stuff about exactly the same idea, that we stream towards competitive sports.

I see it in my own life. We have a weekly commitment for one of my daughters of a minimum of 12 hours, and it can go easily to 20 hours in a week. That makes it very hard because there are choices that have to be made as a family, and also individually by her, about what you're going to do, what other things you want to do, and how many things you are giving up. However, I also see how a lot of programs, as you mentioned, are very much streamed towards you being competitive or you are not involved.

Do you have any ideas? If we were trying to promote some programs or things or if we were putting forward recommendations, how can we start effecting some more change so that we can create more of that sport-for-life model?

Mr. Geordie McConnell: Swimming is a really good example of this from the perspective of aging. If children are going to swim in a club, they are expected to swim three to six hours a week. Then, hypothetically, they drop out of swimming, and then they show up.... In my swimming program, I coach five hours a week of adult swimming, and I have a program called the Start Smart swim program. It is oversubscribed. I cannot get enough pool time. These are adults who want to swim. Their ages are anywhere from 20 to 65. They want to swim one hour a week. That's what they want, but finding pool time is difficult.

There's a disconnect because, as you say, you know that there are parents who want their 14-year-old girl to swim, but not six hours a week. Why not one hour a week? This comes through all the levels of government and supporting.

There's another issue for me. Dealing with the 12-to-18-year-old female sporting question or female physical activity question is so complex. That touch football team I referenced was from last year. This year, I stepped in and I coached. I took everybody who didn't make the team and coached them, and we had a lot of fun.

There was one girl.... This is an example of a common mentality out there. There was a girl who kept coming to me during tryouts. She was in grade 7. Mostly it's the grade 8s who will make the team. She kept asking if she would make the team. She didn't make the team, but do you know what? She didn't come out for the tier 2 team because that was it for her. She didn't make the team, so that was over for her. What's her motivation? Is it a social value to her to make the team? But she didn't come out and enjoy playing the game. Why? It's a complex picture.

• (1140)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I know that I'm running out of time—

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: One of the recommendations in 1998 did go to our funding of national sport centres. Part of it, if I read it correctly, is about time allocation, not only for boards of directors. You just mentioned pool time. What do you think about the issue of whether we need to be providing more time allocation when we're funding sport centres for women in sports?

This is for anybody, and you have 10 seconds.

Ms. Wendy Pattenden: I actually had one thing I wanted to speak to, but it would take more than 10 seconds.

The Chair: Perhaps somebody could take that up a little later. You've gone over your time, Ms. Dabrusin. I'm sorry.

Mr. Kitchen, for the Conservatives.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Thanks to all of you for coming today.

It's good to hear a lot of the talk about coaching and focusing on coaching, because that is an emphasis that I think we need to stress in getting those role models out there and getting the female role models out there in order for these young ladies to get active. I truly believe that sport starts right when we start school, at five and six years of age where we're starting to get them involved so they'll do it.

I'm going to ask a couple of questions and then I'm going to gear this.... Please excuse me if I concentrate on Ms. Lafrenière on the coaching part of it, but I will try to have some questions for the others.

In your aspect of coaching in the NCC program, it's geared mainly for bigger centres. Can you expand on that and on how you look at the rural centres? How do you get coaches out there in rural areas where we need them and how do you get people involved in coaching so that they can get young ladies out and keep them involved and in the sport?

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: We do have remote delivery of the national coaching certification program. In fact, it's almost mail order, which is an option.

Ontario has a very good strategy of online blended learning, which brings in our remote counterparts. We are working on blended strategies of learning in a classroom, online, and with mentors to actually reach out to some of those remote communities. Part of the challenge we have with those individuals is that the coaching education is one component, and then there is the facility component, and then there's the support network component. Therefore, it becomes part of a broader problem, which I think municipalities play a leading role in supporting.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Do you see any way that we can make recommendations on how to expand that, on how we can get more participation and get that education level out there so that we continue this for years and years to come?

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: I think it's part of a broader societal thing that is a bit of a challenge. It's probably not an easy answer, but it is absolutely something that fundamentally makes a difference.

We have an apprenticeship program for aboriginal communities as an example, and what we find is we can get in and we can have apprentice coaches in aboriginal communities, but then sustaining them and keeping them beyond Canada Games, for instance, which is where the apprenticeship happens every four years, is difficult. Part of it is that in providing coaching education, you're only providing one component of the environment that makes a community successful. The initiative would be about engaging all levels of community into a sustainable commitment for change to impact the communities, of which coaching education would be one component.

● (1145)

The Chair: I will go to Ms. Pattenden, who is also a coach. I can see her bouncing up and down on the chair there.

Ms. Wendy Pattenden: I wanted to give an example that I think actually hits both points that have been raised.

My youngest child joined a club. So at the community level...and I know my background is high performance, but actually I'm also chair of the Canadian Sport for Life Organization, so I certainly have that passion as well. We joined a club. It's a very small community club called Crescent Beach. What they do—it's very successful and I think it could be emulated across the country—is they have programming for kids so that they can swim, bike, do triathlons, play tennis, go sailing, just using the natural resources around the Lower Mainland where we live. What they do for the programming for the kids, so say if they start at age 4 to 10, is they're coached by teenagers. It's a very interesting model. It is getting youth involved in coaching right from the start. These kids grow up together as a social group. They're dropped off at the community centre early in the morning, and at 7:30 they're in the pool. I never saw my kid until five o'clock. They went from swimming to volleyball to tennis. They had lunch together, but they were with teenagers, who were role models for them. They were very much gender balanced in terms of the role models. There were always young women. My daughter ended up going through this programming as a kid, and then at age 14, she was a teen leader, and it was leadership training.

I really think we should look at an employment program for teen leaders in coaching. She did that, coaching, from 14 to 18 years of age, and absolutely loved being with the youngsters and to this day—she is in her third year at university—she's still coaching water polo because she loves it and she loves being with the youngsters. And kids love being with kids—I call them kids, but they're teenagers—as opposed to having a 25-year-old coach them.

I really think we can look at a model that encourages teens to get into coaching at the grassroots level right from an early age.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: That's so true. That's part of what we see when we talk about young girls in sport. Oftentimes their comments are they get involved because it socializes them and they're with a group of people, and they often don't come back when they see that. Unfortunately, sometimes they get comments made to them by other people—as we heard about joining rugby and you're a butch if you play rugby—but the reality is sometimes that comes from within and

from girls saying that to girls. How do we make that culture change? It's difficult. I don't know how we do that. Oftentimes we judge success and we monitor how we are successful in a program on how we turn out high-performance athletes. Sometimes I think that's the wrong way to look at it because the bottom line is success should be we're getting people to participate, end of story. The medals don't matter, but it does matter that we get people out and participating at a young age and keeping them that way.

In Saskatchewan, I am a Rough Rider fan and before the Rough Riders come out, we start cheering, “bring 'em out, bring 'em out, bring 'em out”. So my question really is how do we bring them back? How do we bring these girls back into...because as Mr. McConnell mentioned, they leave. They're out there on the side. How do we get them back?

Mr. Geordie McConnell: If I may, imagery is the thing I would particularly like to highlight. My triathlon club started 12 years ago and if you pick any 400 people off the street, that is my triathlon club. They're not all iron men, lean, athletic people. Everybody is part of it. The number one factor that has aided in our growth is the imagery that we're putting out there in social media, and that is a picture of a normal person doing a triathlon. In fact, three normal people who've just done a triathlon smiling is the picture we want. I want everyone to see that, to see themselves as a triathlete. If the Government of Canada was able to facilitate the imagery of the 36-year-old woman playing recreational soccer or the 55-year-old woman running a half-marathon—well, there's lots of imagery of runners out there, so let's say to sport.... The imagery is really the key.

● (1150)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Nantel and Ms. Trudel will split their seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Excellent. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

First of all, thank you for being here, Ms. Pattenden.

I would also like to thank Ms. Dabrusin for suggesting the topic. Quite clearly, if music can lift one's spirits, so too can sport. Ms. Kitchen's remarks were also spot on.

My daughter Marilou could definitely attest to what Mr. McConnell said about competitive sports limiting involvement in sport. My daughter runs regularly but since she is not competitive, and neither is her sister, I might not be very aware as regards sports.

I think my colleague, Ms. Trudel, is also very athletic. So I will give her the floor, she knows much more about this even though she has two boys.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Thank you.

I would also like to thank the witnesses for their presentations. This is the second meeting of this committee that I have attended.

In my youth, I was involved in sports, and your testimony really hit home with me.

I am thinking of a marathon runner who is also a former work colleague. I talked about her at the last meeting. Her sport cost her her job. Last week, I learned that she had to make a choice. She chose to continue with her sport and to become an example. She is a young woman in her thirties. From a young age, funding had often been a problem for her. She represented Canada and had to sell tickets to raise money. She did it because she believed in it. What can we do in cases like that? I did not know how to help her. We could not give her money directly.

We have talked a great deal about Olympic teams, but the fun of sport should not be overlooked. I completely agree about the importance of fun in sport because that is what I do with my boys. They are not involved in a specific sport, but we go mountain biking together and it is fun. We also go snowshoeing. What is important to me is that they are active and have fun. I do those activities with them for fun.

At a higher level of performance, as in the case of my former colleague, competition becomes a challenge. The goal is to get to the Olympics. I wish her success in that.

My question is for all of you. With regard to high-level sport, what specifically can we do to help these young women continue in their sport?

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: Thank you for that question.

To begin, I would say that, since we have sports-study programs, we also need sports-employer programs.

This pertains not only to employers but also to university students.

Some universities show compassion and try to manage athletes' lives to help them achieve a balance between their studies, their future profession and their contribution to international Olympic or paralympic teams.

In my opinion, raising employers' awareness should be a priority. They could establish a best practice. In Quebec, we have the sports-study program that is very successful. The same model should be used with employers.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Karine. You have time.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Certain infrastructures are not suited to recreational sports, or to young people in sport-study programs. This is a problem in my community, which includes skating rinks and the swimming pool.

Without excluding a category of athletes, how could we make facilities both pleasant and practical so they are open to everyone and do not discourage certain enthusiasts? You said there are many people who want to do a sport but quit because they are not a member of a club. They cannot do the sport they like.

• (1155)

[English]

The Chair: Who would like to take that?

Mr. Geordie McConnell: I think it's a mentality thing. There are many places here in Ottawa where adults could swim or run, but if they don't feel welcome, if the attitude is too competitive, they will not feel at home. It comes down to this huge overall change in mentality. It's like that girl who didn't make the team and didn't show up to play on the lesser team. We need to promote non-competitive options. It frustrates me. I teach a learn to run program, as well, twice a year. When I look at the group—and it's 90% female—my number one priority is that it's inclusive, that no one is left behind. It frustrates me to no end that in the community this is an exception. Too often it's the least experienced coach who is the one teaching the new adult. It's a mentality change. We have to prioritize participation and decrease the whole goal-oriented, ladder-based mentality, but it's complicated.

Mr. Elio Antunes: May I add to that?

The other thing that we encourage is collaboration between the various sectors. We need to have the education system working with the recreation system, working with the sports system. Although we're all part of the same family, we all have individual priorities and objectives. If we work more collaboratively at the local level, I think there are opportunities to be consistent with the messaging, but also opportunities to leverage other assets, whether it's instruction, facility access, programs, etc.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I would like to say something because I am interested in the non-competitive and more recreational aspects of sport.

On the other hand, with regard to the Olympic committee, for instance—you spoke about this earlier, Ms. Pattenden—, have we not reached the point where athletes' options for after their athletic career should be broadened? We did very well at the Olympics. Instead of dropping these athletes, why not keep them so they can become coaches who will inspire our young women?

[English]

Ms. Wendy Pattenden: Absolutely, and I spoke to that. I would also say that this should not be an either-or. This should not be a battle between recreation and high performance. We need both in this country. The high-performance athletes are unique role models for all of Canada. I'm a little uncomfortable when it starts going toward either-or because we need both. I was recruited to be a coach as soon as I retired from playing professionally. Lorraine, you'll be happy that it was a coaching program, one of the original apprentice programs. I could have taken a PR job working for Nestlé. That was my other option. It was that or coaching. I went into coaching, and I'm really glad I did. Yes, certainly, it's natural. There are a ton of athletes who are coaches, and not necessarily the Olympic athletes. Actually, I find the best coaches are not the best athletes.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Vandal for the Liberals for seven minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Thank you very much.

[English]

Thank you for all of your presentations.

My first question has to do with the lack of participation or representation of girls and women in the whole sports continuum. Where is that lack of participation most acute? Is it at the young girl level, the entry into sport level? Is it at the recreational level? Is it at the coaching level? Is it at the senior administrator level?

I'll go to the Canadian Sport Institute first.

[Translation]

I would like to hear from Ms. Lafrenière next.

[English]

Ms. Wendy Pattenden: Some of the stats I cited show that it's low everywhere. It's around that 25% or less. I think it has to start at the top with the board. There are a lot of statistics out there that boards make better decisions when they have both genders at the table, so I would start at the board level.

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Vandal: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Lafrenière, what are your thoughts?

[English]

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: Mr. Antunes talked about the dramatic drop in sport participation at the onset of physical changes in young girls. I think that is a significant cause for concern because of the isolation they feel at that time. What I would say is that the system understands how to build a sports system for young boys, and it doesn't know how to build a system for young girls. That goes for everything from the equipment to the hours of practice, to the social networks, to the coaching communication style, to the expectations. We all know young teenage girls like harmony, and if they're not in a harmonic situation, they're not as interested. That was my own experience. I didn't come back to sport until my early twenties. I really do think all of the dynamics of the conversation that have happened at this table talk about a sport system that is created for

boys versus one that needs to be adapted and created uniquely for young girls.

• (1200)

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Thibeault, would you like to say something?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Thibeault: Yes, I agree with the two points made.

There is an equal number of girls and boys among five-year-olds who play soccer. A lot of little girls of that age play soccer. I have also noticed the same thing in cross-country and downhill skiing.

In each successive age group, however, there are fewer girls. We really need look at the environment and girls' motivation in sports. What they are interested in is the social aspect, having fun.

[English]

When you asked earlier about what's going to bring them back, it's fun. If it's fun, if it's hip, if it's social, they're going to come.

[Translation]

As they mature, some of their fellow team members quit. The further they go in the system, the greater the demands. They have to qualify and reach quotas to stay on the team. Losing team members saps their motivation. The sport loses its social aspect.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. Dan Vandal: Let's go to Geordie.

I'm intrigued by your presentation on recreational sport and lack of capacity. I live in Winnipeg. We have many community centres. There are over 70 in the city of Winnipeg, with heavy involvement by the municipal government.

Whose responsibility is it? I know it's our collective responsibility, but who should be taking the lead to address this lack of recreational capacity? Maybe "recreational" is not the right word. Who should be taking it? Is it the school system? Is it the municipal government? Is it the federal government?

Mr. Geordie McConnell: Thank you for the question.

As Elio talked about on multiple sectors, yes, the school system is very important. I have a member of my club who is a phys. ed. specialist. I was talking to her just the other day about this topic. She is now teaching grade 5. Last year she taught kindergarten. She said she will stand in a class, teaching, and she will see it already. She will see it in kindergarten. She will see a young girl leaning against the wall who has defined herself as not an athlete. It starts very early.

Personally, I felt there was a gap, so I went into it and created a social enterprise. It has been very successful, because there was a need for it. When my club goes to triathlons, we're really the only club around here that.... We're really the only triathlon club. There are some that are sort of triathlon clubs, but really they're built around the personality of the coach. It's a social organization.

The national sport governing bodies, and by extension the provincial governing bodies, need to promote this type of social organization more. I think that is happening, finally, in triathlon. But what you have to remember is that the national sport organizations are tied into the ladder, and that's not their priority. Their priorities have to change. They're the experts in their different sports. I think that's where change will happen.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you.

Do I have time left?

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mr. Dan Vandal: We have two minutes left.

There's lots of information. Basically, what can we do as policy-makers, as federal representatives?

Let's start with Wendy.

What can we do as MPs, policy-makers for the federal government?

Ms. Wendy Pattenden: I would have Sport Canada ask the questions to the NSOs and collect the stats. We should all be reporting on our board composition and our staffing composition. In fact, because I was appearing before you today, I actually looked at my organization and at those stats, but nobody has ever asked me the question so I've never reported on it. I would say we need to start reporting on that—

• (1205)

Mr. Dan Vandal: Accountability.

Ms. Wendy Pattenden: —and having some sanctions if people are not improving on those measures.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Elio.

Mr. Elio Antunes: I would say the federal government has an opportunity to make this a priority. I think we need to ensure that Canadians value being physically active and participating in sport. It starts there.

We don't value being active, as a society. Until we do, I think interest in programs, and all of the other things, are down the road. Currently our society does not value being physically active as a way of life here in Canada. We need to put a priority and a spotlight on ensuring that Canadians are physically active.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Vandal, you're very efficient with your questions. That's why you have so much time.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I'm right on time and on budget.

The Chair: We're going to go to the second round. I think we are going to do a five-minute round each, but I'm going to ask you to be tight on this one.

Mr. Maguire is going to share his time with Mr. Kitchen.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thank you to everyone for your presentations today.

Last week we had a session here as well, and I want to refer to it in a minute.

I have a quick question in regard to the imagery that you brought up, Mr. McConnell. Anyone can get into this. You mentioned through your imagery.... Does that process involve education as well, of why to get into sport and how to get into sport?

I go back to the harmony that you mentioned, Ms. Lafrenière. It didn't hit me until you said it, but my daughter was involved in synchronized skating for years. There was a group of kids there, all girls, coached by a young lady who loved it. It went on into university. They all skated in university. They still make sure that all their kids are involved in sport. All those kids coming up are now six, seven, eight, nine years old.

When we go back to role models, I want to know if role models play any part in that. Whether it's Hayley Wickenheiser in hockey, or Eugenie Bouchard, or Brooke Henderson, there are lots of different role models out there today. We've just come through the Olympic side of it as well with Isabela Onyshko, in Brandon, in gymnastics, in my own area. I wonder if role models play any part in the younger people getting into it.

The education part comes from the fact there are amateurs versus professionals. Getting spotlights in the media in Canada is a little tough when you have baseball on the TV every night right now. The media tends to cover the professionals and not the amateurs, even at the Olympic level. That's my point.

Can you comment on the importance of that?

Mr. Geordie McConnell: Here's a brief example of this. I was watching television the other day, CBC, of course, and there was a commercial for some Olympic sport-related thing. It showed the kids; it showed the Olympic athletes. It showed the kids; it showed the Olympic athletes. Fantastic, very motivational, feeding the ladder....

Why don't they show Simon Whitfield paddle-boarding in his free time as well? Why don't we mix that in? Why don't we find the other retired elite athletes? I know Simon personally. I know he plays a lot of soccer. Why don't we have that imagery as well? Why do we stop at the Olympics?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Thibeault: Perhaps I could add something on this concept of imagery.

I have a photo here of a girl taking part in a Fast and Female event. This is Kelsey Serwa. She's a ski cross Olympic medalist from Kelowna. She's with one of the Fast and Female participants.

What do you think that type of connection has for this young participant? She gets to bond directly. She gets to sweat with Kelsey. Kelsey is going to take her through an agility course. Kelsey is going to talk to her about her experiences growing up and the challenges. Kelsey was actually a ballet dancer and chose the athletic route of becoming a ski cross athlete.

For an eight- or nine-year-old who is questioning what is going to be her pathway in sport, to hear that story first-hand is transformative. We get letter after letter from parents. Julie, I haven't seen letters from you yet, but maybe they're coming. The parents acknowledge that after a Fast and Female event, after their daughter has spent a half a day with an Olympian, she goes to school, puts on her Fast and Female T-shirt and feels fierce. They're going to school with an attitude they've never had before. That just speaks about the power of bringing our Olympians to that grassroots level.

Obviously, we can't do this every day. We need to find that scalable factor. That's where the media kicks in. How do we really make our Olympians and our female role models accessible, human? Humanize them, not sexualize them. Again, that's not a theme we've talked a lot about. That representation of female athletes as strong and confident, and what that speaks to in their leadership capacity, and how they're transferring that to our female youth, that, to me, is really huge.

• (1210)

The Chair: Mr. Kitchen, you have one minute.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: We have multiple sports. I think that leads into where you say the media tends to key in on, hockey, soccer. These are high profile. There are multiple sports. We all know that. There are sports out there that aren't Olympic sports that people participate in, martial arts, etc., those types of activities. You say paddle-boarding, etc. Those are things that people need to do—canoeing—Canadian things. I'm glad to hear you talk about that.

I have a sports injuries background, so I've dealt with a lot of sports injury. There is not a lot of emphasis on sports injury. Sometimes there's that fear that I'm going to get hurt, therefore I will not play.

Is that stressed in your organizations, and if so, how do you do it?

Lorraine.

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: Yes, in fact, it is. Wendy can certainly speak to this as well. It is part of coaching education, with the advent of very formalized sports sciences and the role of the coach at the high-performance level.

There is training for the community coach on fundamental movement skills and management and what to watch for, but I would suggest that it's still the psychology of the person.

Could I offer two comments on your imagery point? We need to do report cards.

The Chair: We have to wrap up. I'm so sorry, but we have to fit into the time we have left.

Mr. O'Regan, for the Liberals.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): I actually wanted to expand on the question Ms. Dabrusin had. She has put an awful lot of time into this study and an awful lot of passion and leadership. I think her question dealt with time allocation in sports facilities. Who would you like me to direct that to?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I think Ms. Lafrenière would be a good place to start.

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: Every time we host, and we have the legacy of the Pan-American Games in Toronto in 2015, the biggest challenge we have is what I would term the total cost of ownership. That means not just keeping the lights on but maintenance, management, safety, protocol, and policy.

What does the total cost of ownership mean? It means that folks are trying to find money to keep the lights on and run all these things. It's chargebacks for facility space. It's increasing costs. It's managing it for the highest bidder, somebody who pays more. If you look at the facilities across the country, that is absolutely a dynamic that drives the facility owners in terms of management and access.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Thank you very much.

I want to ask Marie-Hélène Thibeault about sexual abuse and confronting that environment.

First, I want to ask whether a lack of female coaches or a lack of female staff contributes to that sort of environment. You hit on something, too, that maybe in our short amount of time you could comment on, and that's the sexualization of athletes in the eyes of young girls.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Thibeault: By no means am I an expert in the realm—

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: No, but what are your observations?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Thibeault: When I was on the team, there was one female, and that was the physiotherapist. To some extent, I can see why they would have assigned a female for that role, because you're getting treatment on your leg or on your glutes. There's a level of intimacy with the athletes.

I can't speak to whether it's part of the practice now to have female physiotherapists in the context of treating female athletes, but that was the only female presence on our team at that time. There were three male coaches, one with an extremely strong ego who managed to keep a lid on what was going on. No one spoke up, including the athletes. It created an unfortunate situation that only emerged 15 years later.

I think having females speaking openly to other females creates a level of assurance. Imagine being 16 years old, and you're on the road three-quarters of the year. Your coach becomes kind of your dad, your mentor. It's a very complicated relationship.

You're not going to confide these types of situations to your peers, because that creates a very uncomfortable situation. Having more of a female presence on the coaching staff in a respected, meaningful role.... Lorraine and I were talking about this before we started.

I actually had a seat on the women's cross-country committee. Cross Country Canada has a women's committee, which I actually give a high-five to. I'm not sure that all the federations have a women's committee. We would talk about female coaches being assigned to kind of check off that, yes, we sent a female coach to the junior world championship. Guess what she was doing. She was carrying skis and filming the athletes. She did not have a meaningful leadership role or develop her own abilities as a coach.

I think that whole dynamic around a female presence on coaching teams is significant.

•(1215)

To your second point on the sexualization in the media, well, two days ago I googled female athletes just for fun to check what would emerge, and the first 15 links were the hottest 10 female athletes from the U.S., or the coolest looking girls, or hottest female Olympian athletes. It's always geared toward that sexualization. Then I did the exercise just to compare with male athletes, and the first one that emerged was "who is the strongest male athlete". There are two standards for how we assess female and male athletes. You might have seen that even in the commentary at the Olympics. There were a couple of slips where a female athlete was acknowledged as being the wife of...you know, some football player.

We need to transform culturally how women, female athletes, are positioned and perceived before we can make sure our five- and eight-year-olds want to be pumped up about being that next soccer rock star or being the next soccer coach. There's really fundamental

The Chair: Thank you very much. Thanks Seamus.

We're going to Mr. Samson, for the Liberals.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Oh, sorry.

Yes, we are going to Mr. Samson. I'm going according to what this says.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson: That's fine.

[*English*]

The Chair: We've never had time for an extra Liberal, but we should, so I'm going according to this thing here.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson: I would like to make two important points.

In Nova Scotia, for the past 10 years or more, it has been mandatory to have at least one female coach for girls' soccer. The province adopted this regulation at least 10 years ago. I don't know if that is the case in other provinces, but it is mandatory. This is quite impressive.

I spent 30 years in the education sector and this is the first time I have heard this. It is touching and it makes me a bit uncomfortable. As a school principal and superintendent of French-language schools

in Nova Scotia, I should perhaps have tried to do more about girls who drop out of sports. I had heard that girls are six times more likely than boys to quit sports at the age of 13. That concerns me a great deal.

We need to take action very early with children, but we must focus on girls. We often hear about good role models. It would certainly be better if there were female coaches. That would encourage girls and women to continue their training.

My two girls played soccer at the provincial and national levels. Now they are teachers and soccer coaches, especially for girls' teams. In the past, girls did not play soccer at school, but now they play a great deal.

Can you comment on that? The question is open to everyone.

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: I will answer your question about female coaches.

I recognize the shortcoming in the policies of national sports organizations. The system should make it mandatory for a female coach to travel with female teams.

Downhill skiing went through a very difficult period in 2015. We triggered a process to support philosophical change in national sport organizations, clubs and in the provinces. One part of this change is the rule of two, that is, that there should be at least one man and one woman on a female team at all times. Unfortunately, that is not the case now. We recognize that this change is needed.

As Ms. Thibeault noted, it must be a positive experience for female coaches. It must be an opportunity for them to be part of a respected field.

In Nova Scotia, there is an outstanding female coach who helps prepare young girls for the Canada Games. She provides very targeted coaching for these young athletes, bearing in my what motivates young girls, such as friendship, harmony or a positive activity. She is very successful and that is what we should do with our sports teams.

•(1220)

Mr. Darrell Samson: What is her name?

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: I don't remember her name but I will find it and send it to you.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I will find it.

I have one final question.

In 2012, the government adopted a national policy after consulting the provinces. Does this policy address the needs related to the role of women in sport?

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: What is the 2012 policy?

Mr. Darrell Samson: It is the Canadian sport policy of 2012.

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: Is it in effect?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Does this policy support women in sport?

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: It supports sports and the sports environment in an ethical and respectful way. That is something different.

Mr. Darrell Samson: What could we add to the policy? That is what I would like to know. I invite you to send us your answer in writing for the committee's information.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Pattenden, do you wish to say something? We kind of don't see you because you're not sitting at the table and we tend to overlook you. I'm sorry, but did you have something to comment on that last question by Mr. Samson?

Ms. Wendy Pattenden: I would just say that actions and words are important. We have a lot of words and we need more action and accountability.

Everyone says the right things, but when push comes to shove, are the budgets equal? Are the facilities being used by athletes of both genders at their key times?

I just think we need to have a closer look at accountability.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we go to Mr. Nantel. Will you be splitting with Madame Trudel as well?

Okay, Madame Trudel, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will share my time with my colleague.

I would like to return to what was said earlier about the sexualization of sport. I was talking to my colleague Pierre Nantel about this earlier and the image that came to mind was the women's beach volleyball team. How can we create programs where the equipment is not an instrument of sexualization? Of course I know that the bathing suit has to be tailored to the sport. What would you suggest that the committee could include in its report? I know this a matter...

Ms. Lorraine Lafrenière: Beach volleyball is one of the worst examples. It is disappointing.

I will try to give you a few quick suggestions. There would have to be a report. Seeing what happens at the Olympic Games and all the attention our Olympic athletes get, we could do a thorough analysis of the content of television and radio coverage to highlight the differences between them. That is very clear and simple. In addition, we could create a communication standard with vocabulary to help the media and stakeholders involved in promoting women in sports. In my opinion, a positive step could trigger a long-term change regarding the sexualization of sport in the media.

•(1225)

Ms. Karine Trudel: Ms. Thibeault, is there anything you would like to add?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Thibeault: It pertains to the role of women on boards of directors. That kind of decision, about how a sport will be sold, are commercial marketing decisions that are made by businesspeople sitting around a table. I would like to know if female athletes took part in those decisions or if the decisions were imposed on them. How can we ensure that athletes are at the table to present their point of view? How can we ensure that businesswomen, who also understand marketing and know that it must be done with respect, have a greater presence and that their views are taken into consideration?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I will step in here.

Knowing how much investment Canada Olympic House needs from several orders of government, including Quebec and the federal government, which has invested \$3 million, we cannot stand in the way of ambition. Moreover, you mentioned that these boards of directors choose athletes' uniforms, for instance. When members of the Canadian Olympic Committee appeared before us, we deliberately told them—or at least I remember saying it myself—that we would not talk about Marcel Aubut and his inappropriate behaviour because we did not want to distract anyone. I think they should come before the committee again. If we wait too long, the winter Olympics will be here. We need to talk about this. We often talk about sources of inspiration and I think that is very important. Is Marcel Aubut a model for certain coaches or for a board of directors that chooses a sexy bathing suit for a sport that could be played in a t-shirt?

Ms. Pattenden, I'm not sure if you were able to hear what I said.

[*English*]

Ms. Wendy Pattenden: Yes, I did. I believe uniforms certainly fall with the National Olympic Committee. I think certainly on the pro sports it's also through the international federation, so I think a conversation with the Canadian Olympic Committee would be helpful.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you.

Very good.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank the witnesses for appearing here and giving us the amount of information. There's always a new spin when we hear from other people. There's a new idea or a new factor that raises its head. So thank you very much for coming. We're going to recess for five minutes, and then we'll go in camera.

Thank you.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>