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Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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•(1105)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): I will call the meeting to order, please.

While we are filling people's names in we will say good morning, Madam Minister, and welcome.

As you know, we are doing a five-meeting study on women in sport. We are now welcoming the department and Minister Qualtrough here to talk to us about women and sport, some of the challenges that they face, and what we can do to ensure that women are seen, are heard, and become coaches in other parts of the sports system.

You know that we will be having a 10-minute presentation from the minister. Then we will have an interactive session, in which the department will be able to answer questions, if the minister so wishes.

Thank you very much.

Minister Qualtrough, will you begin, please?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for allowing me the opportunity to be here today.

[*Translation*]

Madam Chair, I am pleased to appear before this committee today.

I would like to begin by commending the members of this committee on having embarked on a study on women and girls in sport. As a Paralympian, an experienced administrator in Canada's sport system and the mother of two girls, I believe this is an issue that is more than worthy of study and of our government's full attention.

As someone who was working for former MP Dennis Mills when he was preparing his report almost 20 years ago, I can tell you how far we have come. I have seen a great deal of progress over the last two decades. I have lived it.

I'd like to share my views of the progress we have achieved, as well as my observations on the gender inequities that remain and that keep our women and girls from succeeding.

Canadian women and girls are excelling in high-performance sport like never before. Successful athletes, such as Penny Oleksiak, Brooke Henderson and Aurélie Rivard, inspire pride in all Canadians.

More than this, their example shows us what women can do. Because of women athletes like them, young women and girls across the country can see themselves excelling in sport. For many, this may be just the encouragement they need to take a chance and get involved in sport.

At the Rio Olympic Games, this summer, an impressive 16 of the 22 medals awarded to Canada were won by women. And, at the Rio Paralympic Games, 11 of the 29 medals for Canada were earned by women athletes.

[*English*]

These achievements were watched by the world and will have untold ripple effects throughout the world of sport and beyond. When women succeed in any sector where they are under-represented, their success helps break down the barriers that keep others out.

This is also reflected in the leadership ranks of the Canadian sport system, where more and more women are taking on decision-making roles. They include Canadian Olympic Committee president Tricia Smith; and the CEOs of the Canadian Paralympic Committee, the Coaching Association of Canada, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, Canada Basketball, and Tennis Canada. I believe you've already met some of these women in the course of this study.

The achievements of our female athletes and sport leaders are indicative of how far we've come. Decades ago, the challenges were about access—simply getting in the door. Now it's a question of reaching our full potential for the benefit of sport and of society. As part of this evolution, our policy on women and girls in sport was updated to foster sport environments at all levels that encourage and support the participation of women and girls as athletes, coaches, technical leaders and officials, and governance leaders, because an inclusive sport system is the reflection of an inclusive society. A society that fosters the full participation of all women and girls fosters the participation of people with disabilities, members of visible-minority groups, and indigenous people.

Yet, despite the considerable progress that has been made in recent years, gender inequality persists, and traditionally under-represented groups remain on the sidelines. Canadian women and girls across all demographics participate in sport at lower rates than men and boys, and while many teenagers drop out of sport, the rate is particularly concerning for girls. We know that messages conveyed by the media about women, femininity, and sport present a major challenge to keeping girls involved in sport. We need to think about how we can change this.

It's not just girls who miss out when they drop out of sport; it's all of society. We need to stop thinking about this as just a girls' problem or a sport problem. In fact, it's a manifestation of the larger inequalities that persist in society. That's why we as a society need to tackle this issue together.

Here is what we know.

While there is a relatively strong focus on our female medallists at the Olympic and Paralympic games, there is little coverage of women and girls in sport the rest of the time.

[*Translation*]

For example, in 2014, only 4% of sports programming on Canada's national sports networks featured women's events.

In addition, during the coverage of Rio 2016 events, we saw examples of sports media reporting on female athletes in a way that reinforced stereotypes and outdated gender roles instead of prioritizing athletic achievement. This is just one example of the gender bias and inequity that still exist in organized sport.

And it is a reflection of persistent attitudes in society—a society in which a gender wage gap of close to 20% continues to exist and women continue to shoulder the bulk of unpaid domestic tasks. All of this makes it more difficult for women to take on volunteer and high-profile leadership roles.

We see this clearly in international sport federations. Women account for fewer than 6% of international federation presidents, 12% of vice presidents and 13% of executive committee members.

In short, women and girls continue to face barriers to full participation and representation in the Canadian sport system at all levels and in all capacities. We need to change this.

[*English*]

Through Sport Canada, the Government of Canada, in cooperation with provincial and territorial governments, is taking steps to address these issues. Only national organizations that demonstrate that their programs benefit both men and women are eligible for federal funding. About half of our recipients in the athlete assistance program are women. A main objective of our bilateral agreements with provinces and territories regarding sport participation is to provide opportunities for persons from under-represented groups and our marginalized populations to actively participate in sport as athletes, coaches, officials, and volunteer leaders.

We know, however, that we still have a lot to do and we must take action. All of us together—women, men, sport organizations, and governments—promoting gender equality and inclusion in sport will benefit countless women and girls of all backgrounds and abilities

and, in turn, society as a whole. Sport helps to create social cohesion and to build more inclusive communities.

• (1110)

To capitalize on this, we need to encourage participation in sport and also in coaching and sport administration by traditionally under-represented groups. These include women and girls, as well as people with disabilities and indigenous people.

As Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, I am committed to ensuring that all Canadians benefit from sport, and I am determined to close the gender gap in sport participation and leadership for women of all backgrounds and abilities. I anxiously await the recommendations of your study to do even more to encourage the full participation of women and girls in sport and in the Canadian sport system.

I'd now be happy to answer any questions you might have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Minister.

Now we begin with our questions. The first round, as you know, is seven minutes long, and that includes the questions and the answers.

We will begin with Julie Dabrusin and Dan Vandal for the Liberals, who are sharing their time.

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

I wanted to start by acknowledging that we have Senator Nancy Ruth here at the table today. She has been a very strong proponent for women in sports and has done a lot of work on that issue.

Thank you for being here, Senator.

I was happy to hear that you worked on the recommendations for the 1998 heritage committee report, Minister, because that's what got us talking. I was wondering if you'd had a chance to look at those recommendations and how they have been actioned, or if they're even relevant anymore.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: I think the recommendations are absolutely relevant. This report was actually the start of my journey in politics, so I always credit Dennis Mills for bringing me into this and never letting me get out. I'm just going to pull them up here, because it's very important to me that I get this right. These recommendations form the basis of a lot of the work that has happened since, and I believe that they're absolutely relevant because they talk about all the things that I've just alluded to and the things you're talking about here today: increased participation rates, increased opportunities in coaching, increased data, and increased strategies.

What has come out of the Mills report, or these recommendations specifically, has been a focus by governments, federal governments and provincial-territorial governments, on women and girls in sport. What came out of the Mills report led to the development of our specific policy on women and girls in sport at Sport Canada. I sat on the advisory committee for that policy as well. What's come out of that is the Canadian sport policy, which sets the foundation for all government, I would say. It steers the ship in terms of sport for government and non-government actors. That's permitted the provincial-territorial governments, in collaboration with us, to focus their efforts on women in sport.

That's a long answer. I apologize. Absolutely, those recommendations remain relevant. Have we come far? Sure. Is there a way to go? Absolutely.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: That's great. Thanks.

I'll be sharing my time, but I have one more quick question, which is about infrastructure funding. We hear a lot about difficulties for girls' hockey teams, for example, in getting access to arenas and that type of thing. To the extent that the federal government is investing in providing infrastructure funding toward different sports facilities, should we be creating any ties to requiring equal access time?

• (1115)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: It's a very interesting question. It's something that we're looking at across the board in terms of how far you go as a government to tie programming requirements to infrastructure investments. I'm not sure, to be honest, that we've landed on a decision around that.

One of the things that we did do in our budget this year was to create a dedicated \$150-million fund for sport and recreation infrastructure, reinvestment, and refurbishment. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities identified that the most dilapidated bundle or type of infrastructure in this country is sport and recreation infrastructure, and it identified an incredibly large dollar amount, a \$9-billion deficit. There's a reason why our recreation centres and rinks have the word "centennial" in their name: because that's when a lot of them were built. They haven't been upgraded since.

We wanted to make sure that rec and sport facilities got the attention they deserved. That, to me, was a bit of a "TSN turning point", to use a sport analogy, in terms of how we're looking at sport and recreation infrastructure.

With respect to tying programming requirements to infrastructure investment, we haven't landed on that yet, to be fair. I'd be really

interested to hear if that is a recommendation that will come out of your report, because that will inform some of the decisions we make.

I don't know if Marie-Geneviève or anybody.... I apologize. I didn't introduce my team: Marie-Geneviève Mounier, Alan Zimmerman, and Sean O'Donnell, from Heritage and Sport Canada. They're my officials.

Mr. Alan Zimmerman (Director, Policy and Planning, Sport Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage): With regard to the infrastructure fund, in terms of Sport Canada's involvement in infrastructure, as you probably know, we're not the experts in that. Any infrastructure funding that has gone to sport and recreation facilities has been through the appropriate departments, such as Infrastructure Canada, or through the RDAs, the regional development agencies.

We have been in discussion with them to see how we can improve the infrastructure that's there, how we can reduce the infrastructure deficit that was reported in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' infrastructure report card last January.

Going forward, I think we're also looking at ways that accessibility, in broad strokes, as well as women and girls, become part and parcel of infrastructure investments going forward.

However, I would say that these are early discussions at the official stages right now, and we'll have to continue to work on that.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): First of all, thank you for your personal and your political leadership on this issue.

I'm interested in your policies on indigenous people and sport, and I'm referencing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There are five related calls to action in the TRC report. It calls upon the government to amend the Physical Activity and Sport Act, to support reconciliation, to reduce barriers to sports participation, and to increase the pursuit of excellence in sport relative to indigenous people.

We don't have a lot of time. I'm wondering if you could comment.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: We've taken a whole-of-government approach to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports, and we at Sport Canada have had to tell Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada how we are going to make sure that those five that pertained to sport are going to be acted upon.

Do you want to talk about those?

Mr. Alan Zimmerman: In terms of our view, what do officials do? We create a working group on aboriginal sport, and we've been working to try to address the recommendations, particularly the five that pertain to sport and recreation.

I think we're in the process of developing a framework that looks at leadership. So, looking at the Aboriginal Sport Circle, for example —

Mr. Dan Vandal: I only have time for one quick one. The North American Indigenous Games was very successful in Winnipeg in 2002, I believe. They're coming up in Toronto, is it?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: They'll be in Toronto next year.

Mr. Alan Zimmerman: They'll be in Toronto in 2017. That's part of the framework, yes.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Is the federal government involved in that?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Absolutely. I went there to announce our involvement in it. We take a strong leadership role around the FPT table around the North American Indigenous Games and, in fact, we may actually be hosting the World Indigenous Games in Toronto. Is that still happening? That was a bit up in the air.

Ms. Marie-Geneviève Mounier (Assistant Deputy Minister, Sport, Major Events and Commemorations, Department of Canadian Heritage): It's still up in the air.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I think Winnipeg would be interested in that.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Right? Understood.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Vandal.

Thank you, Minister.

The Chair would like to apologize for not noticing Senator Nancy Ruth. I would like to acknowledge your presence here.

Senator, you're so shy and retiring always that I really didn't see you sitting there.

• (1120)

Hon. Nancy Ruth (Senator, Senate): That's a compliment, Hedy.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Kitchen, for the Conservatives.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for coming.

I'm going to try to get in a couple of questions.

On the issue of coverage of women in sport outside of the Olympics, I think you said roughly 24% was the number.

Interestingly, yesterday, I went to a “lunch and learn a cause” with Ms. Dabrusin. We sat there and listened to part of the conversation. They were referring to taking things off of main-channel TV and putting them onto the Internet, because that's where the younger generations are looking at things. Following through with that, we all know and we agree that the reality is that we need more female role models to inspire young women to get involved.

Have you looked into that? Have you challenged your committee to take a look at that aspect?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Absolutely.

In Rio, I had the opportunity to spend some time with both Mr. Lacroix and Greg Stremmlaw from CBC Sports. One of the educations I got was on just that, the alternative platforms that were available to showcase sport, women in sport, paralympic sport, any kind of sport that may not be on television per se. I was very intrigued by the idea that television isn't the be-all and end-all that it used to be and, in fact, most young people are engaging in watching sport in very diverse ways, such as on their computers, or on their phones, or through other social media, and Internet platforms.

The thing that fascinated me was the opportunity that this provides, because, in some ways, these platforms are only limited by the content, as opposed to the hour or the minutes on a television, and the notion was that as long as there was content available, we could have a really robust representation of these groups available for people.

As I left Rio, I committed to convening some kind of round table or meeting of people involved in media, such as CBC and others, to talk about how we can get traditionally under-represented groups onto these other external platforms, because I think they present a huge opportunity for awareness.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you.

Obviously, getting young girls to participate is the main goal here. We are doing a great job with our high-performance athletes, and we are seeing great results in that. Kudos to them and the coaching staff who get them there. I'll touch on coaching a little later, if I get a chance.

The Canadian sport policy is basically calling for getting more Canadians, and particularly women, participating in sport. In your meeting with the provinces and territories in June, I know there was expression of strengthening that participation, that aspect of it.

How do you measure those results? How are you going to measure whether someone is actually participating more and whether we are increasing that level?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: I will defer to my officials on the actual technical data piece, but, yes, to reaffirm—at our FPT meeting, we very clearly sent a message that the participation of women and girls in sport was a huge priority for all levels of government.

Can you elaborate on the data piece?

Mr. Alan Zimmerman: The issue of increasing participation of women and girls—girls particularly—in sport is very complicated, as you know. In terms of the straight numbers, we have information on the number of participants at the national sport level, for example. Of the 5.3 million members of national sport organizations, about 1.9 million are girls. We have that kind of basic information, but that is information on the group of young girls or women who like to be in sport. What the challenge is, going forward, is to figure out how we can entice—if that is the right word—greater participation from those who may not look at sport or physical activity as something they want to do themselves.

In that, we are looking to other jurisdictions. The U.K., in particular, has done some really interesting work in that regard, with their This Girl Can initiative. In fact, we have a representative from the U.K., over at the research conference we are running right now, to give us insight into that.

I'd say there is still a lot of work to do in that area. To give a full answer, we are not there yet.

•(1125)

Mr. Robert Kitchen: I realize there is a lot of work to do. Are you focusing on just putting it out and advertising it, or are you actually focusing on doing something concrete? For example, we've talked a number of times, and we've heard from witnesses, about getting that into the school system, getting younger kids where we have gym class now, not health.

As a health practitioner, I agree we need health, but we need gym. We need these young girls and boys, everyone, participating in that aspect of it. We talk about ParticipACTION, walking a block a day. How about one class or an hour of gym in the schools?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Again, one of the challenges for us, jurisdictionally, is that education is provincial. That does not mean we can't provide leadership at the federal level or make that a priority of our bilateral agreements with the provinces to give them some financial support to move in that direction.

As a group of ministers, in June, we identified that while we think we've made some inroads with our Health colleagues, there is still a disconnect with the education sector at the ministerial level. That doesn't mean we are not trying. It means that, when you go to an education minister... Quebec is the only province that has sport and education in one ministry, which makes it super-easy to have those conversations around school sport. Even though I had a chance, in Calgary, to meet with the head of the Canadian school sport association, there is this disconnect that we are still trying to work through, and that can be very frustrating.

In my very first interview as sport minister, they said, "If you could change anything, what would it be?", and I said that I would get daily physical activity back in schools. Of all the things I would change in the system, that would be the number one thing for me.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you very much.

I want to touch quickly on coaching and getting participation of women. Obviously, we all talk... When I was younger, I coached my daughter. Oftentimes it was very difficult for women to get involved. That's where the young girls need that role model. They need their mothers to be there, to step up, so they can follow through.

It's very difficult for them to do that. How do they keep a job, raise a family, and deal with all the other things they are dealing with in the house, and then try to coach, do their certification, and progress on that front?

Are you looking at that? Are you proposing any ideas in that area?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: We have talked a lot with the Coaching Association of Canada about these very issues. I've heard from women coaches about the systemic barriers you're talking about. The time we need our volunteer coaches is the worst time of the day for women to be able to offer their time. It's the four to eight o'clock at night time period, when there's a whole bunch of other competing responsibilities that women still have in our society. Then what happens is female coaches don't see other female coaches, so there's no behaviour to model. It's a cycle. Talking with the Coaching Association about creating those role models, that will then trickle down...and then maybe looking at sport differently. Can we job-share our coaches' role so that you don't have to do it every week?

Two women do the job, and so you can work around your schedules. Like any kind of flex-time job, there are ways we can do this.

We've also had national sports organizations that have brought in a female coach as a mentor. Maybe their normal coaching complement is two head coaches, but they will bring a third person, who will be a female coach, who could then get that mentoring opportunity, and then ultimately be the head coach herself.

Can we change our systems and programs to incorporate more flexibility for women to be able to participate? Absolutely.

The Chair: Thank you.

I go to Madame Laverdière, for the NDP, for seven minutes.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Thank you very much.

Thank you for the presentation.

I'm just thinking maybe we should give some training to some spouses, like cooking lessons.

[Translation]

However, there's also the issue of women's participation in the decision-making bodies in various sports. If I'm not mistaken, I think women are underrepresented there too. Do you think there is a way to solve the problem or improve the situation?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Of course.

The boards of national sports organizations include women. Is their number equal to that of men? It is almost equal on national but not international boards. All national organizations have equity policies. It is one of the conditions to obtain financial assistance from the Government of Canada. However, at the community, provincial and territorial levels, women play a more limited role.

•(1130)

[English]

Women aren't at the board tables, aren't at the decision-making bodies as much at the community or provincial level. The women are doing the more administrative roles and making sure there are schedules and uniforms for the teams and managing the teams, but then the selection of the team and the hockey organization is run by men at the community level. I think that's a big gap in our leadership model that we need to address. I think the leadership can come from us through the national sport organizations and their provincial members. I think if we had as a condition of our funding that their members have more equity on their boards, that would be a big start.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much.

I don't really know what leeway we have to take action on that, but another issue is the sponsorships for athletes, which I understand are lower for women than for men. I was wondering whether you could confirm this and whether there are ways to offset this imbalance. What would you recommend?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: I can absolutely confirm that women receive fewer sponsorships than men in sports.

In terms of how to improve the situation, it is very difficult because the companies make the decisions. We are not the ones making them. I still think that there is tension between sponsorships for national organizations and individual sponsorships for athletes. In addition, there are sponsorships for licence holders.

That's how the Olympic Committee has a bank and the swimming organization cannot have a different bank. It's the same thing for the athlete. More innovative companies are now prevented from giving money to athletes because of the contracts in place. I believe that we can study and improve the rules for

[*English*]

maybe relax them a bit so that our athletes can get sponsors. There are companies that want to sponsor athletes, but the more innovative ones are smaller and more nimble and younger and can't compete with the big ones that are already funding the Olympic and Paralympic committees, but are stopping these other ones from funding our organizations and our athletes. I think there's a lot of work to be done on sponsorship.

The Chair: You have three minutes.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Usually, I talk longer. I'm sorry.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: I usually talk longer.

Generally, what do you think should be our priorities for recommendations in the—

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: On women and girls, in particular?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Yes.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: I would say participation rates particularly at the teenage level. I think there's that gap. Girls get involved in sport, they drop out of sport, and it's a real shame, because the reasons they drop out of sport are sometimes the benefits they would achieve through sport. They drop out of sport because of body image, because of lack of self-confidence, because of competing, all of the challenges you have as a young 13- or 14-year-old girl, when all of those same challenges would be heightened by keeping involved in sport, which improves your self-confidence and helps with your body image. All of the benefits from sport are some of the same reasons why we're losing our girls in sport.

I also think we have to look at the opportunities we're providing our girls and think of what a 14-year-old to 16-year-old girl today would want to do in sport, which may not be the traditional opportunity we've always offered girls for sport.

I think there's a lot of things we could do, but for me that would be the most important piece.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: I don't know whether you agree that many issues go beyond sports. These are social issues, be they self-

image and self-perception among young women, spouses who do not assume their share of responsibility or other situations like that.

• (1135)

[*English*]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Absolutely, but also one of my biggest beliefs is that we can use sport to achieve broader social policy objectives. If we can find a way through sport to help address some of these broader social challenges we face, I think we'll all be better off.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. O'Regan for the Liberals for 10 minutes.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to share my time with my colleague Sonia Sidhu, if that's okay.

The Chair: I don't know if you're allowed. I will check it out.

Yes. Okay.

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

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for coming here.

I recently met Nandini Sharma, who plays sledge hockey. She is a Canadian national women's team member. In fact, she is playing right now. She lives in my riding of Brampton South. She became a paraplegic from an accident in 2010.

Can you elaborate on whether there any recommendations for any exciting provincial programs we can expand and promote, where girls who are very energetic can get some funding and move forward?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: I think there are definitely examples of really good work that's being done at the provincial level. With the other side of my hat, with persons with disabilities, as we consult on our accessibility legislation and we do thematic round tables on areas of transportation, employment, what have you, one of the things I'm doing is sport and recreation. What we're doing is convening a group of thinkers around how we can use best practices in sport and recreation to attract more people with disabilities into sport. They deal with issues of what's being done at the provincial levels, and how do we get more girls and women into sport, especially girls with an acquired disability, that is, you've had an accident, you weren't born with your disability. I would say there's a big gap on the acquired disability piece.

Ontario is doing some great work, B.C. is doing some great work, but it's a huge challenge because, like most systems, the sport system was not designed originally with—I would probably say women—but at least girls with disabilities in mind. They were not at the forefront of thinking when we designed our current system, so we're retrofitting our system to be inclusive of everyone.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

I would pass the rest of my time to my colleague.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Thank you for coming here, Minister.

I want to ask you specifically about some organized sporting events, such as the gay games and seniors games, that don't seem to fall under the framework for federal funding at the moment because they're neither professional sports nor are they the association-driven sports. I was wondering if there was an opening for them or a possibility in the future so that, even on a case-by-case basis, events like that might be able to receive some funding.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: I think I'll ask these guys to elaborate in a second, but what I would say to that is yes. That's one of the things we're looking at.

Historically, the focus of Sport Canada investment has been on Olympic and Paralympic sport. Then, on a case-by-case basis, we may extraordinarily fund the police and firefighter games or.... These are mass participation events that achieve a lot of other objectives, but they don't get our high-performance athletes to the Olympics or Paralympic Games. With that having been the lens, that's where the money has gone.

Right now, we are reviewing our sport funding and accountability framework and the criteria in that. In addition, we're developing an international sport strategy, which has hosting as a component. One of the components of that hosting piece will be mass participation events that are the type of event you're talking about. They would bring in a ton of sport tourism revenue, get a ton of people participating in sport, and highlight diversity in our country. Those are all really important government objectives, so we're definitely looking at how we can tweak our current practices and policies to be more inclusive of these really important initiatives.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: We've been privileged enough to hear from athletes here at this committee, and much as when we spoke last year at this committee with you, we celebrate how well our female athletes did at Rio, but more than that, I think the way they were treated by the media and the way young girls and their families embraced their performance and were so proud of their performance was a bit of a watershed.

One thing we have definitely learned on this committee is that in no way at all can we rest on our laurels in this, and that the spotlight really shines now on how we increase that momentum. We heard some fairly gripping testimony from athletes who in the past have experienced sexual harassment within the environment of athleticism. Something you've brought up is that the element of coaching is an essential element, as is having female coaching and just having an environment that is friendlier and therefore allows our athletes to be their best, which at the end of the day is what we want.

I wonder, because of your unique point of view, if you could give us some of your personal thoughts on that.

● (1140)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Yes, absolutely. I'm happy to.

We need to recognize in sport—but I would say this is broader—that men and women are different. In order to bring out the best in people, you have to recognize the differences and bring out their best through that recognition.

Again, I think that from the start we need to design our programs and policies through an inclusion and diversity lens, so that it isn't designing something generic and then recognizing that it doesn't really work for girls and trying to fix it. It's about being very clear how we intentionally include everyone from the start as we design our policies and programs.

I think what we're talking about—and it's a challenge—is a culture shift. It's a societal change in attitudes, right? I have a 6-year-old daughter and I have a 16-year-old daughter. My 6-year-old daughter goes onto the soccer field and we tell her how great she is and she's equal to the boys and it's all lovely, but by the time your girls hit 14 or 15, some lady will yell out a comment to a boy and say “you run like a girl”, like that's a bad thing. I know some girls who are pretty damn fast, right?

It's just the idea that somehow in that 10 years of a kid's life they go from having such a positive and confident self-image around their participation in sport to the culture shift of it's okay that slugging is to say, “You run like a girl”. To me, this is a really big challenge that we have to face as a society: When does that become a compliment instead of slugging? When we're there, that's when we'll know we have achieved something.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. O'Regan and Madam Minister.

We'll go to a second round. I'm looking at the clock, and I think we could go to a five-minute round, as we've sometimes done with three participants.

We'll start with Mr. Maguire, for the Conservatives.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

I was most interested in your earlier comments about facilities and some of the 49-year-old centennial arenas we have now around the country. I noticed your comments about the \$150 million in the 150 fund for next year for a lot of events, but I'm more interested in the Building Canada ideas, in which I think recreation is now included.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Yes.

Mr. Larry Maguire: I'm wondering what you're doing to emphasize that with your colleagues and cabinet. The budget will be coming up next spring. How can that be used? How do you see it fitting in?

● (1145)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Those two pieces open the door for important discussion: first of all, making recreation facilities an eligible category of Building Canada infrastructure dollars; and second, having a modest investment through this budget in a dedicated fund for sport and recreation infrastructure.

I am on a crusade for using sport and recreation to achieve broader goals, and one of those, the big one, is health. We know that the health of our country is directly related to the levels of physical activity and sport participation. In 2002, the Romanow report said if you spend \$1 on sport, you save \$5 on health. You don't have to like sport. That's pretty good math.

If you go to Attawapiskat and you ask the youth there what they need and what they want in their community, the first thing they write on the list is a recreation centre. They need a place to gather, a place to play. I spent a lot of time with my cabinet colleagues suggesting how they can achieve their objectives through sport and recreation or a sport-and-recreation angle or lens. I would say that recreation infrastructure is an absolutely huge piece of that, and that's why it's in my mandate letter to work on improving the state of our recreation infrastructure across this country.

Mr. Larry Maguire: I come from a mostly rural area. Half of my constituency is the city of Brandon, but the other half is pretty spread out. It's a lot of smaller communities of anywhere from 400 or 500 people to 2,000. They have taken action themselves in some of these areas. For example, in Hartney, 10 or 12 years ago they built a small arena. They had a very good record of athletes getting involved in amateur sports and professional sports, most of it in hockey and baseball. They ended up with the Westman Wildcats midget hockey team, which won the western Canadian championships the first year they were in existence. They wouldn't have done it, though, without the \$2-million arena they put together. It's a very functional type of arena, but it worked.

I'm wondering how you would look at fitting facilities into some of those smaller towns. A number of professional, and even more of our amateur, athletes have come from these small areas and rural areas and remote areas and they need those types of facilities.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: An immediate response is, of course, the small communities fund. The other piece—and “lobbying” is not quite the right word—is to work with provinces and municipalities to identify these facilities as priorities in their own communities. A lot of the relationships we have in infrastructure are driven by what provinces or municipalities identify as their priorities. If the message gets out that provinces or municipalities identify recreation centres as priorities, we will respond accordingly.

The challenge—and I hear this all the time from recreation centre operators and at the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association—is that it's really hard to compete with waste water. There are some fundamental challenges municipalities face that always take precedence over a recreation centre. That's why we need this dedicated pot for sport and recreation infrastructure. I would say recreation infrastructure, even more than sport and recreation—recreational multipurpose, super-functional—would be a huge win for our country.

Mr. Larry Maguire: It needs to be there for more than just the athletic part of it, I agree. There's also the health part, totally.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Absolutely, it's the heart of so many communities.

The Chair: Please be brief.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Okay, I'd like to go, because you're killing curling rinks in this country.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: How?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: They are being taxed to death by municipalities. I've sat on many curling boards and I've covered many briers. That sport is dying because municipalities are taxing these curling facilities from coast to coast to coast. Their costs for hydro and for running the rinks has skyrocketed and they are shutting down at an alarming rate.

You talk about participation, curling is one sport—

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Curling is a great sport.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: It may be, but I'm going to be honest with you. In 10 years we may not see it.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: That's interesting. I wasn't aware that was happening. I'm happy to look into that, because it's a real shame.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I can give you a name in our city of Saskatoon. We're down right now to four curling clubs. We once had seven.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Waugh.

Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): I'll be sharing my time with Ms. Dabrusin.

I only have one quick question.

[*Translation*]

Good morning, Minister. Thank you and your team for being here with us today.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Good morning and thank you.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I'd like to ask you questions about your personal experience.

Witnesses said that six times more girls than boys stop their sport at the age of 12, 13 or 14.

However, you didn't stop. You kept going. What did you do to continue to play the sport of your choice? Furthermore, does your 16-year-old daughter still play sports? If so, what is the formula for success? Can you share it with us, please?

[*English*]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Those are good questions; thank you.

I'll answer the second one quickly.

No, my 16-year-old daughter is not in sport. She was, and she moved on. To be fair, she's a very artsy child. She's in band, music, drama, theatre, and what have you. She's gone with the arts. She didn't find a place in sport, and that's a huge problem.

In my own experience, at that point in my life, I was lucky enough to find Paralympic sport. If I had stayed in mainstream sport, I probably wouldn't have stayed in sport, but because I happened to be exposed to Paralympic sport, which addressed my unique needs in sport through their system, I stayed involved in sport and flourished.

I can't guarantee you that if I had just stayed in mainstream sport I would have continued either. I would hope so; I'm pretty active, sporty, and competitive, and so probably, but I don't know if it would have been because of the system or despite the system.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you.

We've been talking about women and girls a lot, and we're having a gender discussion, but one of the questions I have for you is about our transgender populations, and how we make sure that people who are transgender also feel included within our sport system and have opportunities. Is our government doing something on that?

● (1150)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Thank you for that question. It is a really important part of this issue.

I'm going to let these guys talk. I keep saying that, and I never let them talk.

We have been working with the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity and with Canadian Interuniversity Sport on creating policies around transgender and participation in sport. Quite a few human rights cases, particularly in interuniversity sport, have highlighted the need for some kind of systemic change in this area.

Right now we're at the working group policy development stage. Is that fair? Have we moved beyond that?

Mr. Alan Zimmerman: In general, we're an advocate for sport that's fair, safe, and open for all, and that's the underpinning. We ask our organizations, as part of their funding agreements, to ensure that they have policies in place that makes sure that sport is fair and equitable for all populations.

The issue of transgender participation in sport has flared up from time to time, and most recently the work and decisions that have been made at the International Olympic Committee level has created that issue again.

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport developed a new policy guideline entitled "Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants in Canadian Sport – Guidance for Sport Organizations". Sport Canada participated in the development of that guidance, and that's what it is. It's a guidance to sport organizations, and it's been provided to all sport organizations. This was developed through extensive consultation and, as I said, it's now been provided to the organizations.

That's about where we're at with this now. It's an issue that's there, and we've tried to address it in this way.

The Chair: You have about a minute.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: That's awesome.

The other part of that I was concerned about was when I saw Olympic coverage this year and there were a lot of questions about gender testing. If a woman had a certain amount of testosterone, there were a lot of questions about her ability to access sports. We don't do the same kind of testing on men. There isn't a whole lot of testing in the Olympics about whether a person qualifies to be a man in that same way.

How are we working with the Olympic Committee on that question about gender testing?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: I think the phrase now is "gender verification", which is a little softer. Many organizations have gender verification policies. The IOC doesn't regularly conduct testing, but athletes do have what's called a biological passport. At some point in their life if they've had this very inappropriate test, they will not be subjected to it again.

The idea that gender verification is alive and well is of concern. The IOC has taken a step back in its aggressive pursuit of this as a systemic policy. I wouldn't say it's rampant, but it still goes on very directly, at least at the visual level, and athletes' protests are filed on these grounds. I know it's of concern for the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport.

I don't know if you guys have anything else to add.

No? That's good.

The Chair: Now we go to Madam Sansoucy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning to you all.

Minister, I'm sorry I missed your presentation. But I'll make a comment before I ask my question.

As the representative of a predominantly rural constituency, I can tell you that you have pleased many people in small municipalities when you talked about community centres. These are really at the heart of the social life of the villages we represent. They are of great importance. Small municipalities are struggling to meet their financial obligations and the needs of the people.

My question is of a different kind. I would like to draw a parallel, but I don't know whether it's relevant. You can decide.

Last year, the committee did a study on dance. We studied the artist's cycle, training, professional life, and found that little emphasis was placed on the reintegration into the so-called civilian life, once the career of the artist was over.

Do you think our female athletes could also face a similar challenge?

● (1155)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Absolutely.

I think there are three stages in an athlete's career: introduction to sport, high-performance sport and transition, after the athlete won the medal, goes to university and wants to have a normal life after intensive competitions. Since athletes feel this is a very important issue for them, we work a lot with AthletesCAN and national organizations.

What comes after winning medals? How do you transition to everyday life? I think there's definitely a parallel to dance.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Earlier, we talked about teenage girls dropping out.

Personally, I have four children. Teenagers who play sports often reach the elite level. They then make a choice, either to continue at that level or to drop out. That's also an age at which they are wondering about their career choices. Since life after sport is difficult, teenagers wonder about what it means to become an athlete or to continue activities in civilian life.

Could the fact that there are few female athlete models who succeeded in their professional life after sport—that's actually a challenge for female athletes—also be a factor in the teenage girls' decision to drop out when they think about their career and life choices?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Yes, absolutely.

When a young man realizes that he will not be part of the NHL, he can decide to quit hockey, given that he will not be able to turn it into a career. I think we must give athletes, children and young people the opportunity to play sports recreationally, without imposing the intensity and long hours required for high-performance sport, in order to encourage them to persevere in those activities.

In addition, it must become a way of life. It's not just about competition or career; it's a way of life in society. When someone is active and plays sports, they are taking part in the community. We must change our attitude toward sport. For instance, in Australia, sport is part of the culture. On Saturdays, all people do is take part in recreational activities; they play sports together. But we're not there in Canada.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: I find that interesting. My understanding is that it's about presenting sport as a lifestyle, not just as a competitive activity.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: That's right.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Throughout life, there are changes. Given that the energy level decreases with age, this must be really presented as a lifestyle. Among all the sports that are available to teens, there has to be a competitive component for those interested in it, but there must also be a more participatory component to promote regular physical activity.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: We have the model *Canadian Sport for Life* or *Au Canada, le sport c'est pour la vie* in French. I'm not sure whether anyone has told you about it before. There are various stages in the life of a participant or an athlete. It starts with the child who is active and ends with an active life.

Sport Canada and the Canadian sport system focus on the higher performance stages. It's the recreational sport system that must focus on the stages of active children and active life. I think it's a continuum. We must act at every stage in the lives of Canadians.

● (1200)

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: That answers my questions. Thank you. [*English*]

The Chair: That does it for this session.

I want to thank the minister for coming, and I want to thank my colleagues for being such very strong participants.

I will ask us to recess for a few minutes until we move into the second hour of questioning.

Thank you again.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Thank you very much for having me here today.

● (1200)

(Pause)

● (1205)

The Chair: Let's begin the next session, please.

We have with us some real superstars. We have Madam Lanni Marchant, who I gather is the fastest runner in Canada, if not globally, and we have Mandy Bujold, an athlete with Boxing Canada. She is appearing by video conference from Kitchener, Ontario. They are presenting as individuals on this issue.

Madam Bujold, we will start with you. You have 10 minutes to present what you want to say. Madam Marchant can do 10 minutes as well, and then we will begin the interactive question-and-answer piece.

Ms. Mandy Bujold (Athlete, Boxing Canada, As an Individual): First of all I just want to thank you for having me before this committee. I'm really excited to be here and hopefully to share some of my experiences with all of you.

I have been on the Canadian national boxing team for the past 12 years. I have travelled to provincial, national, and international competitions, as well as four major games. My sport experience might be a little different from that of most other Olympians. I started boxing much later in life. I didn't come from a family that was really sport-oriented, but my parents did see enough sort of desire to still put us in sports.

When I was younger, my parents would me in things like baton twirling and rhythmic gymnastics. I went to those sports and I wasn't really good at them, and they weren't things that I really enjoyed, so I just automatically assumed that I was not an athlete.

It wasn't until later in life, when I followed my brother to a boxing club, that I fell in love with a sport. Even in high school, after grade 10, when gym class was no longer mandatory, I no longer took gym class.

Finding this sport of boxing is what got me interested. Initially it was just for fitness. I think I just had the right mentors and coaches around me who taught me the sport in a way that helped me really develop and become comfortable with the sport. Then when I made the decision to compete, that decision was on me. It was my decision to get in there and take it to another level.

Since then, obviously I have been very involved in sport. I've also become a coach. I've also become a referee and judge, and I have sat on other panels and different boards representing women in sport.

I have a love for sport. If there is some way that I can encourage the younger generation to get involved and to pick up any sport, I take every opportunity to do that. I'm involved in a few other organizations, including True Sport and Fast and Female, which you've probably heard of. I try to take every opportunity to go to schools and do different presentations to try to get our community to be more active.

I think that's a really important thing. Canada has come a long way, even since I initially started competing, but I do believe that there is a lot more that can be done to increase the interest of young girls and women in sport, coaching, and all the above.

If there's anything that I can share, I would be more than happy to do so.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Bujold. I'm sure we're going to have a lot of questions for you.

Ms. Marchant, please begin.

Ms. Lanni Marchant (Athlete, Athletics Canada, As an Individual): My name is Lanni Marchant. I'm a 2016 Olympian in the 10,000-metre and marathon this past summer. I'm the Canadian record holder in the marathon and half-marathon. I'm a graduate of University of Ottawa's faculty of law and Michigan State University's college of law. I'm a practising attorney in Tennessee, and I'm licensed and admitted to both the state and federal bars.

I'm here today to speak about my experience as an athlete in Canada—as a female athlete in Canada, for that matter. As we heard earlier this morning, we're getting close to having more representation, almost equal representation, of our young girls and our women at all levels of sport. When I contacted Athletics Canada, they told me that we have almost equal representation of boys and girls, men and women, registering with different facets through Athletics Canada. We have gender equality in our national cross-country program now, so men and women will compete over the same distances. As we saw this summer, our women's teams across the board were forces to be reckoned with.

I think perhaps to an outsider, it appears we have gender neutrality in Canada. Based on my experiences, however, I have to say that this is not necessarily true. Looks can be deceiving.

I came into this sport late. I made my appearance on the scene in 2012, when I just missed out on making the Olympic team that year. At the time, Athletics Canada didn't see me as a rising star. Though I was well under the Olympic marathon standard, I was not selected to represent Canada at the London Olympics. We had zero representation in the women's marathon and 10,000-metre run that year.

Since 2012 I've set our national record in the marathon and half-marathon, and I've made every international team I've set out to make. The problem is that they keep moving the goalposts. Most recently, our 2016 Olympic and our 2017 World qualifying marks have been substantially lowered in the women's marathon and 10,000 metres. Our male counterparts see little to no reduction in the qualifying marks they're supposed to meet.

This summer Krista DuChene and I were the first women to line up for Canada in the women's marathon since 1996. That's 20 years.

We've spoken about how high-performance athletes are meant to inspire. The funding we receive is meant to improve enrolment and encourage participation throughout high school and post-collegiate levels, the periods when we're most likely to lose young girls in the sporting world. I question how this initiative will be met if it's another 20 years before we see Canadian women running in the Olympic forum.

In preparation for this summer's Olympics, I once again found myself in the crosshairs with the high-performance division of Athletics Canada. I promise I don't like poking bears, but I had qualified for two events, and the ability for me to double came under scrutiny. My being vocal about wanting to double brought along a threat of a sanction against me.

It was during those six weeks of limbo that my perspective switched. What started out as a selfish endeavour—I wanted to go to the Olympics and I wanted to do two events—became something different. It took on a whole new purpose for me. I was battling Athletics Canada for two spots I had rightfully earned on the team, but it wasn't just my right I was fighting for. Canadians spoke up and voiced their desire to see me compete in both events, not because I was a medal contender, not because it would be nice if Athletics Canada let this little girl run, but because they wanted women and girls in their lives to see a strong Canadian female competing for Canada. In my mind, I was no longer asking for permission for myself, I was demanding it for all of us.

There is very little understanding of the development of a female distance runner in Canada and the fact that age does not necessarily dictate results. The funding of athletes like me, over 30 and female, often comes with performance requirements that are not set on younger athletes or equally on our male counterparts. I will likely not be funded in 2017, after being on the 2016 Olympic team.

Our current government has stated a goal of gender parity in Parliament. We haven't seen that yet in sport in Canada. High-performance directors, head coaches, CEOs, and other title positions within sport federations, such as the COC and Sport Canada, are still predominantly male. After what our female athletes achieved in Rio, there is now a greater expectation to see “us” reflected in the governing bodies and agencies of sport in Canada.

The issue here is not just about participation numbers or female representation as athletes or sporting reps, however. We expect our teammates to have our backs, not to comment on our backsides. We do not need men in the sporting world to proclaim that they stand behind us as feminists because it puts them in the perfect position to comment on our behinds. Instead, we want them to stand beside us.

• (1215)

Recently, I was running with an Olympic teammate, a man. We were passed from behind by a cyclist who recognized me and congratulated me on my performances in Rio. My running companion immediately commented that the cyclist clearly recognized me by my behind.

I'm one of the fastest distance runners in Canada, male or female. I have a very distinct running stride. I was probably the only woman in Toronto running at that pace at that time, but my teammate decided to minimize and dismiss the compliment I had received and tie it to my body. I don't pretend to know the intent behind his words but I have come to learn that it's not the intent of our words that always matters, it's their effect. We look at action over intent.

If we'd like to see actual change in high-performance women's sport in Canada, we need entities like the COC and Sport Canada to step in when a policy or criterion is issued that places a higher burden on women. If you, our government, want to see women continue to develop in sport and see our female population living healthy and active lifestyles, there need to be checks and balances on our federations. Sport Canada and the COC cannot turn a blind eye and say the conflict is solely between the athlete and her federation. If we want to see continued change and growth in women and sport, it needs to happen at all levels. Our teammates need to see us and treat us as equals. Our governing bodies and administrators need to understand our development.

We still have a relatively short history of women in sport, in Canada and worldwide. We need to see ourselves as equals and stop asking for permission. I'm done asking for permission to be seen as an equal on or off the field, and I think we're starting to see that women in sport are demanding it as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We go to our order of questioning, beginning with Mr. Vandal for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you very much.

First of all, I offer my deepest respect to both of you. I did compete when I was a younger man, in boxing actually, and I've jogged and run for most of my life. I know how difficult it is, so I have the utmost respect for the levels that you have reached.

My question is to Mandy Bujold.

You mentioned that when you were younger you competed but weren't really interested. You dropped out. Could you just expand on that a bit?

Ms. Mandy Bujold: Yes. When I was younger, I had never really considered myself an athlete. Like most parents, my parents tried to put me into different sports. I think the sports they chose were typical sports for a girl—baton twirling or rhythmic gymnastics—and I just didn't enjoy those sport experiences. Maybe it was that I wasn't flexible or that I wasn't good at those sports, so in my mind I just wrote off being an athlete.

I just assumed that there are some people who are athletes, and that if you're an athlete you should be good at every sport. I just wasn't good at the sports I tried, so I automatically concluded I was not an athlete and never really gave much thought to any other sport. It wasn't until I had the opportunity to try boxing, and that was because my brother got involved in it and I saw what he was doing, that I knew I had an interest.

Mr. Dan Vandal: What was your approximate age at the time you went into the boxing club?

Ms. Mandy Bujold: Sixteen.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Having been in many clubs, I know that there is a wide array of characters in there. What sort of response did you receive? Did you ever get any disparaging remarks because you were a woman? Just generally, what was the atmosphere like?

Ms. Mandy Bujold: I'm going to be honest; it was very intimidating. When I first went to the boxing club I asked a friend to come with me because I knew that there weren't a lot of girls in the boxing club. I guess I knew this mostly because my brother didn't want me to go to the club with him. I actually had to wait until he quit boxing before I had my opportunity to go.

When he quit, I thought, "Okay, I'm going to do this," and I asked one of my friends to come.

Initially, it was intimidating. You have to keep up with the guys; it's not girls and guys. You're an athlete when you're in the boxing gym, but there were definitely coaches who didn't like females in the gym.

I remember a few times being in the ring sparring and being kicked out of the ring for no reason. Later, they came and told me that it was because they just didn't know how to talk to female athletes or how to handle them in the boxing gym.

I think a lot of that has changed now. I think you see female boxing throughout Canada. But initially, even before we were an Olympic sport, it was difficult. There was a lot of "You shouldn't box," "You're too pretty to box," or "Why would you come into a boxing gym?" It was tough but it was something I really enjoyed and I wanted to do.

● (1220)

Mr. Dan Vandal: I have a couple of questions. At the time, were you sparring with men or with boys, or did you exclusively spar with women?

Ms. Mandy Bujold: No, we sparred with both.

Mr. Dan Vandal: You must have made a connection with a good coach who was inspirational to you at one point?

Ms. Mandy Bujold: Yes. Initially, I had a very good coach who was working with me and who taught me a lot of the basics, but I will be honest that at the very beginning I didn't want to get into the ring. I just wanted to learn the sport of boxing for fitness. It wasn't until after about a year of training that I wanted to get in and spar. The coaches always used to ask me, and I would make excuses, like I had a headache that day, I forgot my mouthpiece, or whatever it was to get out of sparring. When coaches took the time to teach me properly and I learned proper defence and learned the skills behind it, then I created this love for the sport, and then I wanted to be the one getting into the ring.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Were role models inspirational to you to box, either female or male?

Ms. Mandy Bujold: There were a few people, in particular, I do remember seeing in the boxing gym. I remember seeing one girl who was training on a provincial team, I saw her sparring with the guys, and I remember looking at her and thinking, "That is so cool, I want to be that girl". There was a national team athlete who was going into the coaching side of things and who was coaching me on the side, doing some running, and teaching me more about being an athlete. As I said, I didn't know anything about running, weightlifting, or whatever. She gave me her insights into that, so it definitely played a big role for me.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you, Mandy.

I have a final question for Lanni. You mentioned they keep moving the goalposts. Could you explain what exactly you meant by that? There's only about a minute and a half left.

Ms. Lanni Marchant: As I mentioned, before Krista and I competed, we hadn't had women run the marathon since 1996. That's not to say we haven't had women who were competitive by the IOC and IAAF standard, it's just that Canada kept setting the standard faster. In 2012, I missed the team, and so did Krista. In 2013, we both made the world championship team, with a slightly relaxed standard. That gave us the opportunity to compete on the world scene. Since then, I've made other teams.

We saw that with the 2016 Olympic criteria, we were right back to where we started in 2012 to make these teams. Everyone has celebrated what Krista and I have accomplished in women's running, and I've become a role model, whether I set out to or not. I've inspired all these girls, and we have so many marathoners coming up who are in their late twenties and early thirties who could make these teams, but Athletics Canada came back and set the goalpost back to 2:29:55, which is faster than 2012. When we competed in Rio, we performed really well, and then 2017 comes along and our standards come out and they're back to being fast again.

The goal is to inspire. If the new movement here is to inspire girls, to have representation, and to have athletes like me be these role models, then they're going to see us out there competing. Krista and I are the only two women in the country who can run these qualifying times. We're the only two women in the country who have been able to do it since 1996. When I set the record, it was a 28-year-old record at the time. If you want women to participate, and if you want young girls to think they can go and compete at the Olympics, whether it's in running or other events or other sports, then you have to stop setting standards that eliminate us and that take your top women out, and that's what I mean by them moving the goalposts back.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Right. Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kitchen, for the Conservatives.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, both, for coming. Thank you for being great Canadian ambassadors in the Rio Olympics, and for a job well done.

I'm going to ask you both a question. I'm going to ask you to reflect on when you were in your teens, or even before that. Part of what we've been studying here is participation and how we're going to get women and girls involved in sport. How do we encourage them to continue to participate in sport as they grow, as they age, and as they mature. We want to find ways of doing it. I'm just asking if both of you could think back to that and maybe give us a very quick answer as to what was going through your mind at that time as to why you didn't want to participate in sport or why you did.

As you mentioned, Mandy, you said that your parents got you involved with maybe less traditional sporting-type events or activities. Would you mind doing that?

I'll ask Mandy to go first.

●(1225)

Ms. Mandy Bujold: At that age, when a lot of girls are dropping out of sport, sometimes it could actually be from their bodies' changing. Maybe you're good at a sport when you're a lot younger, and as you get a little older, you're not so good at that sport, so then you just drop out of sport.

There are a lot of things that can be done. I didn't find that sport that was interesting for me, but maybe there needs to be an option out there just for training and keeping girls active. I was at an event the other day with a group called IVIVVA, and there was a group that showed up called GIFT, Girls in Fitness Training. They were explaining to me that if a girl is not in a specific sport, there's nowhere for them to go. There's the YMCA, which I think is the only option around for young girls.

This organization was really neat to me, because it introduced girls to different sports just about every week, with different fitness training. If girls are fit they're active and they're more likely to get involved in sport. They're going to be more confident, and they're going to get out there and try different things. That's going to increase our participation in sport.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you, Mandy.

Lanni.

Ms. Lanni Marchant: I started out in sport as a figure skater, so I was very much the pretty little girl in the pretty little box. I skated up until I was about 15 or 16. I transitioned into running because I liked running. When you crossed the finish line, you knew where you stood. You knew if you won; you knew if you didn't. It didn't matter what you looked like crossing the finish line. Obviously, that message spoke to me, and I think it needs to speak to other women and girls in sport, that it's not how we look doing what we're doing.

I spoke right before the Olympics about what I do being fierce and sexy, not how I look doing it. What we've seen in mainstream media, and even from some of our title sponsors, is about the attractiveness of a female athlete, what our bodies look like in an attractive way. By all means, if you want to comment on my behind, comment on it because of the muscular way it's built. If an athlete has broad shoulders and muscular arms, it doesn't make her any less feminine.

When you're a teenager, and your body is transitioning—and I saw it a lot from a figure skating world to a running world—you don't want your body commented on. You see us all start putting on bigger clothes and hiding our bodies. Until the sporting world learns how to connect and come forward and comment on our being strong people, and not try to put us in pretty little boxes.... I think that's where we're losing girls. Our bodies are ours, and we're really shy and awkward at that age.

I wanted something where you couldn't comment on my body; you could comment on my performance.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you for that.

I'm a rugby player, and I have coached women's rugby. I've found that sometimes, particularly in rugby, young women who are participating in it said, "Ah, you're just a butch". It actually comes from women, to women. Their peers are saying that to them. How do we change that? Granted, I understand your comments about when a man does that, but how do we stop women from saying it? Part of it is that they need to recognize they need to be active as well, but how do we stop that?

Ms. Lanni Marchant: Girls are mean. We're harder on ourselves than any man's ever going to be on us. It's to address it across the board.

If we stop having men comment on our behinds and taking away and being dismissive of what we've accomplished because of how we look, we'll learn to stop picking at each other as well. More women like Mandy and me could speak up and say, "Talk to me about being an athlete". I'm an athlete first when I'm competing; I'm a woman second. I've always said that, and I very much believe it.

It's a matter of getting into the schools and teaching girls that our self-esteem doesn't come from putting each other down. It's how we've been raised, and it's how the men around us have been raised as well. You knock somebody down to build yourself up, whether it's about gender or within gender. We talked about transgender. If it's different, we comment, and if we want to make ourselves feel better, we comment in a negative way.

It's to get at the ground root and build up—gender-wise or not.

• (1230)

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you.

Mandy, you indicated that you're coaching now. What challenges have you had in trying to accomplish coaching as well as your life—your job, your social life—and getting your certification levels?

Ms. Mandy Bujold: I took my certification levels throughout my career. I've continued to do some coaching on the side. A lot of the coaching that I did.... I do some corporate events in Toronto now, where I'm coaching people in the advertising and media industry in boxing. I'm more or less doing that type of coaching, or else I'm going into schools and just introducing people to the sport.

It is very difficult. A lot of people ask if, once I'm fully retired, I'm going to be a coach, and honestly, I think my answer is no. I want to go out and coach young girls and athletes, but there are no initiatives out there for females who are in a sport to transition over to the coaching aspect.

I've gone through a couple of different coaches. One coach in particular was a full-time employee somewhere else. He was a part-time coach, and he had a family. I was always in the gym alone and didn't really have the attention that I needed at that time, and that was really hard on me.

If I'm going to be a coach, I'm going to do it 100%; I'm going to be there for my athlete. And after dedicating my entire life to being an athlete, I'm not sure if I want to dedicate my entire life to being a coach and going through the same struggle of not having funding or whatever it is to be a full-time coach. I think that is very difficult.

I do think that's something that we need to work on, to keep our athletes somehow in the program, whether it be as coaches, board members, or otherwise.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you both for being role models.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madam Sansoucy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Thank you, Madam Chair. My thanks to the two witnesses for their presentations.

You have both shared your objectives in terms of achieving greater participation of women and girls in sports. Could you share your suggestions with our committee on ways to improve federal programs at various levels and according to your areas of interest?

I would like to hear your suggestions on the issue, whether in terms of sport-family balance, the media coverage of female models in sport or the transition to coaching. We could start with Ms. Marchant. I will give Ms. Bujold, who just spoke, a short break.

So what are your suggestions for federal programs?

[*English*]

Ms. Lanni Marchant: The biggest issue we're facing still is funding. We have funding through Sport Canada, and as athletes, we seek out private sponsors. But in terms of programs and initiatives, from the federal standpoint it seems the money is going into a lot of talk. I commented earlier that it's not the intent behind the words, it's the effect. It's not the intent behind what we say we're going to do, it's action.

I'm very fortunate, and I'm very happy to be here speaking on this matter. But if we're just going to sit around and talk about it, then I don't understand what we're going to accomplish.

I went through university. I went through law school. We're told as women that we can have it all—we can be professional women; we can be a mom; we can have hobbies; we can work out. Nobody really told me it was okay to accomplish all those things and then walk away and be a professional athlete.

Young girls and women are not the same as boys. If a guy is halfway decent at hockey, he's going to go all the way and try to make the NHL. I saw with my collegiate teammates that it was perfectly acceptable for them to graduate, not pursue a secondary degree, and live in a house like frat boys while trying to make it on the running scene.

It's not been told to us as girls the same way it has been to boys, that it's okay to pursue a sport, and that in doing that, you are just as successful as a female.

I'm very fortunate; I'm very glad I have my degrees. But nobody told me I didn't have to do it that way.

I think if the federal government wanted to start sending out that message, that success can come through sport.... Because it's through sport that we end up with some great coaches, and we end up with our Minister of Sport. She said herself that she participated in this initiative years ago, and it introduced her to politics. We have a lot of female athletes out there who could turn into future ministers and future professionals, but the pressure doesn't need to be on us to be that first.

• (1235)

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Ms. Bujold, do you have something to add to that?

[English]

Ms. Mandy Bujold: I would agree 100% with Lanni.

I think the government should also be using the current Canadian national athletes we have. We have so many amazing, strong female role models in this country who can impact the community, so maybe we need to get them out there more doing more initiatives with young girls or just spreading the message even more than we are.

I think funding would go a long way in making that happen. I think right now as athletes we struggle on a day-to-day basis to be full-time athletes, so we have to do things like get an education and try to work and make it work so that we can actually compete for Canada. I think if there was a way funding was increased it would help us so we don't have to be out applying for grants and trying to do all those things. We can actually give back to the community and try to encourage the next generation to be out there and get involved in the sport to make a healthier contribution to this country.

I see other programs in our schools in Ontario. We have to do 40 hours of volunteering. That's amazing. It gets people out there and volunteering, but maybe there is some way we can introduce a physical activity component into that. Maybe we do 10 hours of physical activity or whatever it may be to just get more people interested and focusing more on physical activity and sports.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Ms. Marchant, you said that there are few women in leadership roles, whether as coaches or in sports associations or organizations.

In your presentation, you said that we must do something about that, but what can be done?

[English]

Ms. Lanni Marchant: In my experience, I've been privy to conversations where yes, the jobs might be opened up to men and women, equally, but then I've overheard conversations where it's been, if we give the job to her we can pay her less. I think we're still dealing with wage gaps and wage issues to get these roles.

I went to school in the NCAA system. I went to UT Chattanooga and UT Knoxville, which is, as everybody knows, a big university in Tennessee. Their women's basketball coach was making pennies compared to what the men's coach was making and her team was winning NCAA title after NCAA title. I think that's paralleled often in our sporting environments here in Canada, whether it's basic level

coaches or other. If it's on a volunteer basis that they're given a bit of a grant or funding, it might be higher if it's for a male coach.

If you look at the title positions in Athletics Canada, Equestrian Canada, Canoe Kayak Canada, when these jobs come up—I admit I haven't seen the postings—I often wonder if they are posted or if they're posted equally where women are going to see that these jobs are available when the spots come to be filled.

It seems very much like we hire within our own and because it's been so male dominated, we keep hiring men. I think we need to cast a wider net.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Ms. Marchant, you said that your funding will end in 2017. We understand that it's a great deal more difficult for women to obtain sponsorships in sport. Why is that so?

[English]

Ms. Lanni Marchant: Yes, to clarify my Sport Canada funding, my carding, will likely end. The list will be out tomorrow, so I can't comment exactly, but I was given a restriction on my funding that I had this past year and the restrictions were only given to those athletes who were over 30, and the majority of those athletes were women. We had to perform on a certain basis at the Olympics to be eligible for funding going forward.

It doesn't matter that my age puts me perfectly in the window to be a finalist in the 2020 Olympics. It doesn't matter that I'll stay in the sport another four years. As a woman over 30, I had to perform and to be in the top 15 in the 10,000 in Rio to be eligible for funding going forward. I was 25th and then I turned around two days later and I was 24th in the marathon and that doesn't warrant anything.

In terms of private sponsorships it is more difficult for women and I don't have a good answer why. I know I'm a very vocal Canadian runner in Canada. I'm sponsored by ASICS Canada, but I know that my ASICS male teammates make more than me. Again, I don't know if it's because our history in sport has been so short that the companies don't necessarily buy into what we're selling, but I know that when I've hosted community runs 20 people will show up and they'll have a brand new pair of ASICS shoes on their feet.

I know I have that power to reach people and I know that with my background in education, and coming from a large family with a single mother, I have an interesting story, and we have so many women with these amazing, interesting stories, but the companies are still looking for the Wheaties box and typically on the Wheaties box we have men.

• (1240)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Samson.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you very much.

I have to say that I'm very impressed. We have with us two real athletes. I don't know if you knew each other there or if you met there or whatnot, but it's very nice to see both of you, having competed.

There's no question that girls in sport, women in sport, with the successes of the last Olympics, is going to be something special that we're going to build on. I think there's momentum and we need to build on that momentum.

My first question is for Mandy. Are you seeing some, as many, or more young girls now in boxing, in the ring and whatnot?

Ms. Mandy Bujold: Actually, I think worldwide we're seeing more, but in Canada we're seeing fewer. When I first started in boxing we had really strong senior teams, junior teams, and youth teams. Then we thought, when the Olympics happened, that would increase, but I think it increased more on the fitness side of things. There are more people getting involved in knowing about women's boxing, but as far as getting involved is concerned, the rest of the world sort of caught up. We were always in the top three at the world championships for our senior women's team, but the rest of the world just started to catch up, and we didn't do what we need to do to stay there. Now we have trouble filling our junior and our youth teams. I actually don't even have full junior or youth women's teams. All over the world, our international committee has put in place continental championships, world championships, so these girls have the opportunity to get the experience that I never had the opportunity to get. Canada is falling behind because we're not developing these young girls, so when they get to the senior level, they're already so far behind all the other countries over in Europe and Asia that it's just too hard to compete at this international level.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Could both of you quickly comment on this? Do you believe that the coverage is well-balanced between men and women in events such as the Olympics or any national competition that you've participated in?

We'll start with Lanni.

Ms. Lanni Marchant: I would have to say no. I think our women's team did very well in Rio, so we received a lot of attention for that, because they were doing so well. I think in the events where there weren't medal contenders, medal hopefuls, or medal winners the coverage was lacking.

As someone who spends a lot of time in the U.S., I'll say the Canadian coverage is fantastic. We cover way more than what you'll see in other countries.

However, when there was coverage on the women too, we also dealt with the comments on our bodies and our appearances, and what our lives are like outside of sport. So in response to your question, I would have to say no. I would have to say that if we had a less successful women's team, we probably wouldn't be praising the media coverage that we had.

Mr. Darrell Samson: That's a good point.

Mandy.

Ms. Mandy Bujold: I absolutely agree. I think someone did a bit of research recently on what female athletes are asked in interviews

versus male athletes. It was actually kind of funny to watch the questions. When Genie Bouchard wins a match, it's not about "How did you perform in that match?" it's "What are you wearing?" or "What skirt is that?" or "Can you do a twirl for us?"

Sure, we're getting media coverage more and more, but I think it's for the wrong reasons. We have to go out there and show that we can be strong and beautiful, but we are here to compete. I want to be respected for what I'm doing in my sport, number one, for all media.

•(1245)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Lastly, you made the point about funding of athletes over the age of 30. I find that very sad when you think it's about time, it's not about age. We will take note of that, of course, in our report, but also, in my opinion, athletes should be writing to the federation as a group and indicating that it's unacceptable.

Ms. Lanni Marchant: Yes, and in a perfect world, that would work, but as I mentioned, being vocal about my desire to double at this past Olympics, I was sent a threat of a sanction. That's why we're here to speak to you. You need to come in on our behalf. The COC and Sport Canada need to come in on our behalf, because it's the athlete versus the federation, and everybody else looks the other way. It's the athlete who faces retribution and retaliation.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Good. We have that in our report. Thank you.

I don't know if you want to go—

The Chair: You have two minutes if you wish.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I want Julie to have a couple of questions.

The Chair: All right, but I'm going to have to cut Julie off because we're cutting down time if we want a second round.

Julie, you have two minutes.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I want to stay on the part about media coverage, because we're going to be looking at that a bit more carefully as well.

Yesterday I was at the same lunch and learn about women in sports. One comment was that different stations have difficulty putting on women's sports because they don't have a high enough viewership. I'm putting it out there because one thing one commentator said was they need stories about female athletes to help sell the sports.

I was wondering what your thoughts are about that, because that's an issue that keeps coming up, getting more representation of women in sports.

Ms. Lanni Marchant: If you don't put us on TV there's not going to be more viewership. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy; you don't see us. Some men in athletics have some great stories, but you don't have to seek those stories to make those men great athletes. Yes, as I commented, there are so many amazing women with so many strong, amazing backgrounds and stories, but we're athletes. You can't argue there's no viewership if no channels are showing us.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Ms. Bujold, did you have anything to add to that?

Ms. Mandy Bujold: No. I think the more they show women in sport, the more viewership we're going to get. We have to get out there.

Yes, sharing a story can be important, especially around the Olympics, when we're trying to get to know athletes we don't already know. We want to get them out there, but we have to show it as much as we can and then people will start watching and think this is cool. The women's rugby sevens have had a lot of media attention and a lot of praise for how amazing they are as athletes. I think the more that people see them, the more there's going to be an interest in watching them live or on TV.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Do you see a link between the media coverage you have and the sponsorship opportunities you get?

Ms. Lanni Marchant: I see a little.

Ms. Mandy Bujold: Absolutely.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: All right. Do you want to elaborate?

The Chair: I'm afraid I cannot allow them to elaborate, I'm sorry. We have run out of time.

We're going to a second round. It's going to be a tight three-minute round if we're going to get everybody in.

We have Mr. Maguire and Mr. Waugh sharing, with one and a half minutes each.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to congratulate you both as athletes representing our country. I know how much it takes. Once I decided I was going to be an athlete. I ran five miles and almost collapsed. It didn't take long to get me out of that. I got into the workforce as well.

Lanni, are you in Tennessee?

Ms. Lanni Marchant: I practise law in Tennessee, but I travel wherever training takes me.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Where do you train; is it mainly there?

Ms. Lanni Marchant: I train everywhere.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Okay. I'm more interested in the levels you talked about right now. Are Canadian qualifying levels different from what other countries would have for your events?

Ms. Lanni Marchant: In qualifying, yes. Most countries go by what the IAAF or the IOC sets as a qualifying mark. I'm not saying Canada's the only one that moves the mark, but we seem to be the only country without the depth that warrants moving that mark. If we were the U.S., the U.K., and we have six, seven, eight, nine, or ten girls capable of running these times, and you want to make it a more competitive team, fine. When you have one or two or maybe three

women capable of even running under the IOC standard, why move the goalpost even farther?

• (1250)

Mr. Larry Maguire: It doesn't matter to me if you finish 24th or 4th. From what you've just said, if we don't have anybody, it's fine. If you're not on TV you're not going to get more. If you're not running, you're never going to get to TV. My point is that, with athletes of both your levels competing, you've become bigger role models for that many more people. If there were eight of you instead of two or three, the whole country would know more about it. I wasn't aware that's how we did it compared to other countries.

I just talked about your track, and maybe boxing as well. Is there a parallel in all the other sports? If we can manage that, through Canada setting the standards for one sport, we can do it for them all. Is that done?

Ms. Lanni Marchant: My understanding for other sports is they'll have trials and it's the top three across the line. I'm not well versed enough in other sports to know necessarily if there are qualifying times or standards. I imagine in swimming there might. But when you look at our top swimmers, you see we have the depth there that maybe warrants it.

Mandy might be able to speak better on some of the other sporting sides.

Ms. Mandy Bujold: Yes, for us it actually comes down to our international committee that sets our qualification process. For us this time the top two in each continent had the opportunity to qualify. Then there was a world championship where you had to place in the top four. So everything was on an international level and not actually Canadian-specific.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. O'Regan, you have three minutes.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: I wanted to give you about a minute each just to make a closing statement because frankly I'm quite taken with both of your testimonies. They're both extremely considered and thoughtful and personal, and they'll be very important to us in our deliberations. If there's something that you missed or an important point that you want to leave with us to make sure that it's in our report, perhaps you'd like to take a minute each.

Ms. Marchant, maybe you want to begin.

Ms. Lanni Marchant: I believe I covered all the bases that I wanted to touch on. I recognize the role I play as an athlete in Canada and the more important role I play as a female athlete in Canada.

I've spent time since the Olympics speaking at several schools and at different expos and talking about getting out of my own way and the struggles that I faced as an athlete—body image, otherwise—but then also talking about the people and the federations that stood in my way as well. I meant it very much when I said that the athlete can't be the one who's constantly taking on these battles.

I don't know why...the women before me weren't making teams but they weren't standing up and arguing as loudly as I am. I don't know if it's because of the background I have or because, at the end of the day, I don't care. I want to represent Canada, and I would hope you want me out there representing you, but if you don't want me there, then fine, I'll find something else and excel at that. It might take more money and it might take more time, but the government and the different federations—Sport Canada and the COC—need to have our backs. If I'm willing to stand out there and be vocal and face the retribution or retaliation of my federation, I would hope that I'd be able to rely on you and on the bigger federations to come to my aid when I do need it.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Thank you.

Ms. Mandy Bujold: Yes, I agree 100%.

One instance I can relate to a bit was when we were preparing for the Olympics or for the Pan Am Games. There's one female coach who is registered and she is a very high-level coach, and we actually wanted to have her there in our corner. We had to fight with the federation and then we actually had to pay out of our own pockets to make sure we had a female coach in our corner at these major events.

I don't think that's right, but at the same time we're arguing against them, and then it puts us in a really bad position when we're trying to continue to excel in our careers. It becomes very difficult, but by using the female athletes we have right now, by spreading the word and just trying to really encourage young girls to get involved in sport, and for the right reasons, I think Canada can really be a leader for that. I'm just excited to see where we're going with this project.

•(1255)

The Chair: Mr. Waugh.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Sport can be very brutal. I don't have to tell you that. We've heard it's very political.

So what can we do about pre-teens and teens? We have more failures in sports before we succeed. Do we have anything education-wise? We're starting to get sports psychologists involved. We're talking about females and young girls here, participating. Is there anything that government should do or organizations should do to lend support?

You both know you fail more in sports than you succeed, and sometimes at that age of 10, 11, 12, we can't take failure and we need somebody to draw upon once in awhile. And it can't be mom and dad; it has to be somebody else. So I'm just wondering. As we look at girls and women in sport we need supports.

I don't know where this comes in and I don't know what age it comes in but you can see the drop-off. As you said, you finish eighth, and everyone wants just the medal podium. How can we support our athletes more, the young ones coming up? That's the million-dollar question.

Start first, Mandy.

Ms. Mandy Bujold: if you think about where these girls are most of the time, they're in school, and so maybe we need to start with our teachers. Maybe there needs to be something in schools, and our teachers encouraging this a bit more than just gym class.

The other thing I said is that in grade 10, gym class is no longer mandatory. Why is it no longer mandatory? Are we teaching them that after that age you don't have to be involved in sport?

There are so many different things. We have to think about the people who see them most often and how we can get them to be more encouraging.

I didn't really have any teachers encouraging me to get involved in sports until I got involved in boxing. When I got involved in boxing, I had people trying to get me involved in wrestling or rugby, because they saw that maybe it was a cool fit. Before that, I never had a teacher or anyone come up to me and ask if I had thought about doing this outside of school.

Maybe it just needs to be a program in school. I don't know, but that's just my idea.

Ms. Lanni Marchant: I would also state that it's what we see in school. I was in a sport that wasn't part of school when I started high school. I was a figure skater. I was the weird girl who left class every day at 10 a.m. to go drive an hour to Kitchener, skate, and do my homework at 10 p.m., before we had iPhones that you could use the flashlight on, using an actual book light.

Once I joined the cross-country and track team, I was part of the school, but I wasn't. We have mainstream sport, and we don't. We have women and girls who can compete on basketball teams and maybe a soccer team, but unless you have gender equity and neutrality in the sports that are offered at high schools, and unless you have a way of encompassing and welcoming athletes who are doing sports such as gymnastics or boxing that aren't in the school system, how do you account for the women athletes who aren't going to run on the school cross-country team and be a fringe team, or who aren't on the mainstream volleyball or basketball teams?

A lot of women in sport are in other non-team sports. They're in individualized sports or sports that aren't tied to the typical education system. I think if a government wanted to, it could step in and develop programs and introduce girls to those triathlons and cycling and boxing. We might not all excel as pretty little girls in pretty little boxes. We might not all be team players, six feet tall, and capable of playing basketball or volleyball. If you show that there are other opportunities, and if you have role models who come in to speak to the schools and the teachers and who are from different sports backgrounds, maybe you'll inspire some girls to stay in athletics, whether in team sport or otherwise.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I think we have run out of time, and so I will have to end this particular meeting.

I want to thank Lanni and Ms. Bujold for coming.

You have really been inspirational and presented us with a lot of challenges for our report. Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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