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Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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• (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): This meeting is called to order.

Welcome to meeting number 68 of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is taking place on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

[English]

Given what we decided on June 23 with the House of Commons order, this meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. While public authorities and the Board of Internal Economy no longer require mask-wearing, it is highly recommended, because we still have—as the World Health Organization says—a pandemic of COVID-19 and its variants.

I want to take this opportunity to remind all participants that at this meeting, it is not permitted to take screenshots or photos of your testimony or your questions. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website, so you can go there to see whatever went on.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by this committee on Tuesday, September 20, 2022, the committee is meeting to continue its study on safe sport in Canada.

I want to welcome the witnesses. We have Janine Beckie, Quinn, Sophie Schmidt and Christine Sinclair, who are all player representatives of the Canadian national soccer team.

Now we will begin the official opening remarks from the witnesses.

All four of you have a total of 10 minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): A point of order, Madam Chair.

I understand that our assistants who are following the meeting via Zoom do not have any sound.

[English]

The Chair: They're having sound problems. We'll let the clerk find out what's going on. The broadcast equipment might have been interfering.

Can you hear now?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Apparently not.

The problem is not with the interpreters. It is the Zoom application that is not allowing access to the sound in the room.

[English]

The Chair: I will speak and you can see if you're getting me translated.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: It is not an interpretation problem. I can hear the interpreters well.

It is the people using Zoom who do not have any sound right now.

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Chair, my staffer on Zoom is saying she can hear the English, so perhaps it is just the French on Zoom that's not working.

The Chair: Can we suspend for a couple of minutes while we find out what's going on?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Indeed, our assistants can follow the meeting on ParlVU. I think the issue is too important to suspend the meeting. Since we have sound in the room, it should be okay.

[English]

The Chair: I got on a plane this morning, so I can hardly hear anybody because my ears are still popping. I can't hear what anybody is saying in English or French. I have to put my earpiece in.

We will pause for a couple of minutes while we find out what's going on.

All right. I am told that we are meeting all of our requirements for translation, etc., and the sound in the room is fine, so I don't know.

Are you okay?

• (1535)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Yes, of course. Today we have some very high-profile witnesses and I do not want to see a repeat of what happened on Monday. So we can continue. Our team will watch the meeting on ParlVU.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. I will tell everyone on Zoom to look at Par-IVU.

We will begin now with the opening remarks.

You have 10 minutes. You can make a decision about who is going to speak for how long.

I know some chairs like to hold up a piece of paper, but if you're reading notes, you don't look up. I'm just going to tell you "30 seconds" when you have 30 seconds to go. If you don't get to finish all the things you want to say, you'll have ample opportunity during the questions section, when you can elaborate on the things you want to say.

Welcome again, and thank you very much.

Ms. Sinclair, please begin.

Ms. Christine Sinclair (Player Representative, Canadian National Soccer Team, Canadian Players Association): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and honourable committee members. Thank you for having us here today.

There is no greater honour for athletes than stepping on the competitive stage and representing our country. The four of us have had that privilege for many years, and we would all tell you that these have been some of the greatest moments of our lives. However, they have not come without frustration and sacrifice.

Our sport is having a critical moment in Canada. Last year, the men participated in their first World Cup in 36 years, and we will host the next men's World Cup in 2026. The women's team also won gold in Tokyo in 2021. The success of the national teams is inspiring the entire country, and the future should be brighter than ever.

However, as the popularity, interest in, and growth of the women's game sweep the globe, our most painstaking battle has been with our own federation while trying to obtain fair and equitable treatment in the way we are supported and paid.

For over a decade, members of the women's national team have asked Canada Soccer for detailed disclosure of its finances and for the compensation provided to the men's national team. Some information has been provided, but it has never been enough to allow the women's team to understand the breakdown of revenue and amounts allocated to both national team programs. Canada Soccer's usual response is to refer us to the annual reports and financial statements on its website. As a result, for many years we were forced to negotiate in the dark.

Canada Soccer's approach has reflected a culture of secrecy and obstruction. As players, we were constantly told that our compensation—or lack of it—was all Canada Soccer could afford. In 2017, the women's team and Canada Soccer finally reached an agreement that would pay the players a small salary. Once again, we were told this was all it could afford to pay the players. Therefore, imagine our shock when we found out, in 2021—the year we won Olympic gold—that the men's national team players were earning more than five times what a women's national team player was earning.

On a personal note, I have never been more insulted than I was by Canada Soccer's own president, Nick Bontis, when we met with him last year to discuss our concerns. I was tasked with outlining our compensation ask on behalf of the women's national team. The president of Canada Soccer listened to what I had to say. He then, later in the meeting, referred back to it as, "What was it Christine was bitching about?" To me, this spoke volumes about the lack of respect Canada Soccer has for its women's national team.

As a team, we do not trust Canada Soccer to be open and honest as we continue to negotiate not only for fair, equitable compensation and treatment but also for the future of our program.

Ms. Janine Beckie (Player Representative, Canadian National Soccer Team, Canadian Players Association): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and honourable committee members.

In 2012 our women's national team stunned the Olympic podium when they won bronze in London after finishing in last place in the 2011 Women's World Cup.

In 2015 Canada was host to the Women's World Cup, which put a spotlight on soccer in our country in a way we had never seen before. Victor Montagliani called it "a watershed moment for Canadian soccer". In its 2015 annual report, Canada Soccer boasted a 26% increase in total revenues, including a 56% increase in sponsorship revenue.

In 2016 we were back on the podium, with bronze around our necks again, moving our team into FIFA's top five ranking for the first time ever. This time Canada Soccer saw a 15% increase in sponsorship revenue. Soccer in Canada was big, and anybody who was paying attention knew it.

Only two short years later, in 2018, we were one year away from the next Women's World Cup. This was a huge year for Canada Soccer. In June 2018 Canada won the bid to be one of the host countries for the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup.

As players, we all know what hosting a World Cup means and the unmatched potential for upside, yet, despite this amazing trajectory, it has been widely reported that Canada Soccer entered into a very long-term agreement with a private company called Canadian Soccer Business, or CSB. We understand that this agreement gives CSB sponsorship and broadcast rights for both the men's and women's national teams, potentially until 2037. In return, Canada Soccer receives an agreed-upon fixed amount of money from CSB each year.

This means that no matter how well the CSB does in selling the national teams' sponsorship and broadcast rights, no matter how much money it makes, Canada Soccer receives those same agreed-upon amounts. This was our own association blatantly betting against the success of its national teams.

We don't know why Canada Soccer made this deal. Either it had no idea it was a terrible deal for Canada Soccer or it knew it was a terrible deal and did it anyway. Either option is unthinkable.

In August 2021 we became world champions, Olympic champions and gold medallists. Then our men's team qualified for the World Cup for the first time in 36 years. Sponsors, it seemed, came knocking in droves—Gatorade, CIBC, Carlsberg, Degree, TikTok and the list goes on and on. This was Canada Soccer's moment.

Imagine our complete shock, then, at learning last year that Canada Soccer would see none of the financial upside of this excitement and engagement, that it had given it away to a third party that runs and funds a domestic men's league, and that our success is the engine driving a business that is not promoting the women's game in our country.

This would be tough news for anyone to swallow in any circumstance, but it was impossible for us not to take action when we learned what Canada Soccer's financial constraints meant. Here we are, less than six months from our Women's World Cup, and we will not even be given the resources to properly prepare for our World Cup and our Olympic qualifications.

• (1540)

Quinn (Player Representative, Canadian National Soccer Team, Canadian Players Association): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and honourable committee members.

The resource constraints that Canada Soccer has created for itself through the CSB deal have forced Canada Soccer to make choices about where it allocates funding. Those choices invariably favour the men's program. Canada Soccer's long-standing narrative has been that we should be grateful for what we receive. This has even translated to our operational budget. We are asked to simply make do with less.

We have now had to cut not only training days in camp but also full camp windows, which gives us fewer of the crucial opportunities we need as players to play together as a team leading into major international tournaments. We have had to cut the number of players at camp as well. That means not having enough players to run drills on the field. We've had to bring in staff members to just have enough bodies to run a full field scrimmage. We have had to cut the number of staff members at each camp. That compromises our training, our rehabilitation and our preparation. It means that we as players sometimes have to make choices about which medical treatments to receive when staff physiotherapists are stretched.

In 2021, the year our team won Olympic gold, Canada Soccer spent twice as much on the men's national team as it did on the women's national team, despite their not having a World Cup or Olympic Games. In fact, according to Canada Soccer's audited financial statements, it has spent more on the men's national team than the women's national team every year since at least 2019. The disparity between the treatment of the men's and women's national teams is glaring. It shows that Canada Soccer views the women's program to be of secondary importance to the men's program.

This disparity is even more shocking when you account for the fact that approximately half of the women's national team funding comes from Own the Podium. Own the Podium is a performance-based investment that provides funding to Canadian programs in order to deliver Olympic medals. This is money coming into Canada Soccer that is earmarked specifically for the women's team.

We have been told as players that it is essential to achieve a top-three finish in the Olympic Games in order to keep enough funding to be able to run a program. Both coaches and players have been fearful that without repeated Olympic success, our program would no longer have enough resources to function.

Despite all of our success for over more than a decade, we have had to fight for every incremental step in playing conditions, treatment and compensation. Both the men's and women's national teams are committed to continuing to move the sport forward and achieving equity. However, in order for this to be possible, immediate steps must be taken to address the equality of treatment between our programs.

• (1545)

Ms. Sophie Schmidt (Player Representative, Canadian National Soccer Team, Canadian Players Association): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and honourable committee members.

In Canada we have the third-largest player pool in the world. Globally, the women's sports market and the women's player pool is growing faster than the men's market. Attendance and viewership are up. The commercial value of the women's soccer game is expected to increase sixfold in the next decade.

Canada Soccer is supposed to be responsible for the development of women's soccer in Canada. However, Canada Soccer treats the women's game as an afterthought. It has failed to put in place any structure, resources or plan for the development and future success of the women's game in this country. Instead, it has diverted significant resources to men's soccer in Canada, including through its support of the Canadian Premier League.

The division of resources deeply impacts the support and future development of players in our youth program. Our staff have been forced to cut youth programming, leaving our youth national team with only one camp for this calendar year, which puts the future of the women's program in jeopardy. Fewer camps mean less opportunity, which means we're less competitive on the global stage. The system for developing players is broken, and women are making the national team by chance, not by design. What kind of message are we sending to the youth who dream of representing Canada?

Our passion and commitment have always strived to grow the game of soccer at home and to be a world leader in women's sport. As a team, we have looked to inspire Canadians as we strive to be the best in the world with values of respect in the pursuit of being world-class humans and players, and a top contending soccer nation.

Currently, Canada Soccer does not reflect similar values on how it is planning, growing and governing. The opportunity for Canada to lead the way is here and now, but it can happen only with real change and the right leadership.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks very much to the witnesses.

We're going to go into a question session. The first round is going to be six minutes, but those six minutes are for the question and the answer. Everyone should try to be as concise as they possibly can, so we can get in as many rounds as we can.

We'll begin with the Conservatives and Kevin Waugh, for six minutes.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to Sophie, Janine, Christine and Quinn for coming. I'm sorry you have to be here. This should not happen in our country.

Your team has made Canada proud for over a decade. I'm appalled when I read about pay equity, but more so about your taking part in the tournament in Florida, where you mentioned that you didn't have enough players to practise. You didn't have enough physiotherapists, doctors and whatever, or team support.

You know, Christine, you have been the face of soccer in this country for over a decade. I'm going to start with you, because I'm embarrassed by Canada Soccer. You have been the face of soccer in this country, as I mentioned, so how do you feel about coming today to talk about this?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: Obviously, this is not ideally where we players would like to be. We feel much more comfortable being on the soccer field, training and preparing for games. However, our team and the players on the team have a motto that when we leave the national team, the sport will be in a better place than it was when we found it. Sitting here, there's no greater honour than to try to make significant changes for young kids in Canada. We are here to do right by them.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you for your beliefs in the tournament. It's hard as an athlete to stand up and push back, because your name is in the media. You're being looked upon by Canada Soccer as disturbers of the game, maybe.

I wore the colour today that you wore in the United States, because I'm proud of you. I have a granddaughter who's playing soccer because of you. I go to the soccer facility in Saskatoon on Saturdays, and it's packed. It's because of you. It's not because of the men's team. It's not because of Canada Soccer. It's because of the Canadian women's team and what you have accomplished in the last 10-plus years.

Canada Soccer, knowing you're coming today, does a news release on the CBA. Do you have any thoughts on that today? How disgusting is it, as you sit in front of the heritage committee, that Canada Soccer would be so bullish and give a CBA contract to you?

Sophie or Janine?

• (1550)

Ms. Janine Beckie: First of all, thank you for having us here today. It's an honour to be in front of all of you.

We feel quite disrespected by the way it went about its business this afternoon, but we also don't feel that it's the right place to stoop

down to that level, if you will. We're here to speak about this issue. We believe that what was talked about in good faith bargaining between our players association and the association should have stayed between the players association and the Canadian soccer association.

We feel quite disrespected that this wasn't respected, that it didn't stay behind closed doors before that agreement was actually signed. There were terms, numbers and pieces that were in its statement today that have not even been communicated to us. That was a bit of a shock to us, but again, we're excited to be here to talk about this with all of you.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I'm seeing a trend in this country with Sport Canada. They don't follow up. We saw that with Hockey Canada.

Has the heritage department ever reached out to any of the team members? Has the sport minister talked about this chaos that has gone on far too long?

I saw Sport Canada do nothing with Hockey Canada from 2018 on, and I'm wondering right now if Sport Canada or even the sport minister reached out to any one of the team members to deal with this catastrophic issue that we're facing here today.

Quinn: Yes, the sport minister reached out through avenues to us. There has been movement from the minister's office.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: What did she offer, or what did the department offer?

Quinn: They were looking to us for guidance on what would be helpful through their department.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: What would be helpful? Equity. What the hell? That's a pretty simple ask, isn't it? It's 2023. You've made the sport what it is in this country. In the next three years, soccer will be the number one sport in this country. Christine, you've been around a long time. What is wrong?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Waugh: You've been around very, very....

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Waugh: You've represented us very well over the years. What are we going to do? This is not good on the world stage. You're preparing for New Zealand and Australia. You don't have any money after that. There's no money in the budget for you to prepare to defend your gold medal from Tokyo the year after in Paris.

Ms. Christine Sinclair: I'm not sure, honestly, where we go from here. I think there are a few simple things that need to be addressed with the CSA in terms of its transparency and finances. That's a big one for us as the women's national team. We have no idea where the money is coming from or where it's going, and the difference between the men's and the women's national team program....

For us, pay equity is just a little piece of the puzzle. It's about equal treatment. It's about equal opportunities and equal resources. Honestly, until that happens, we're going to be at a stalemate.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Kevin. Your time is up.

I'm going to go to the Liberal Party and Lisa Hepfner.

Ms. Hepfner, you have six minutes.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I want to express what an honour it is to have these four elite athletes here. They have represented our country so well on the international stage and have made us all so proud. It's particularly appropriate that they're here the day after International Women's Day, to fight for gender equality and equal pay.

You've explained a bit about the situation you're facing, but I'm wondering if we can dig into why your team makes so much less than the men's team. Does it cost less to train women players? Does it take fewer resources to get girls up to an elite level? Is there something rational there that we can point to?

Any of you can answer that.

• (1555)

Ms. Janine Beckie: Is there anything rational? I would answer no. Does any of that make sense? No. We play with the same size ball. We kick at the same size goal. We play on the same size field. We play for the same number of minutes. We are doing the same work as our male counterparts. In any other avenue of work in the world, you sit at the same desk as your male counterpart, you're doing the same job as your male counterparts here.... That's essentially what we're asking for, like Christine pointed out: equal opportunity and equal resource. That's not just for us; it's also for our youth teams.

Like we said in our opening statement, our youth teams have been cut down to one camp this year. As Sophie pointed out, girls are making the women's national team by chance, because they have talent, because they're talented enough, not because we have systems in place to put them in a position to make the national team.

I would also say that there's a very large discrepancy within FIFA and how FIFA treats the men's and women's games, but we expect to be part of an association that, if it values equity, will be able to make up for the FIFA discrepancy. That means, again, paying us the same as the men make, despite the number of games they play a year, despite anything like that.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Ms. Beckie, you spoke about how you felt when the team's funding was cut after you won world gold medals and Olympic gold medals.

What does this do to your team's mental health?

Ms. Janine Beckie: We have an incredibly strong group of people behind the scenes. We have a lot of teammates who have put so much time and effort into what we're doing and how we're sitting here today. It's not just the four of us; it's 25 to 30 people behind the scenes. This is one of those things that have genuinely just made us stronger. We have been successful, not because of our federation

but actually in spite of our federation for so many years. Like we said in our opening statement, we have been successful with less and have been expected to do more with less.

I think we have just got to a point where we are so sick and tired of having to fight the same battle, have the same conversations, and scratch and claw for transparency when that should just be expected and given when asked for.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: That was an excellent answer, and I thank you for that.

With the last few minutes I have, I would like to move in a bit of a different direction.

I was looking at the case of Bob Birarda, who I'm sure you know was coach of the Vancouver Whitecaps from 1998 to 2006. There were several allegations against him, so he left that team and went on to another team. It was just last year, I think, that he pleaded guilty to many years of offences and was sentenced.

Could any of you describe whether this is an isolated incident or whether it points to any bigger problems within Canada Soccer when it comes to women feeling safe on the teams?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: I can try to answer that.

I don't know all the details, but I don't think it's just a Canada Soccer problem. I don't think it's just a sport in Canada problem. We all play professionally down in the U.S., and the same things are happening there. I'm sure the same things are happening in every office building in Canada and the U.S. I can't sit here and say it's just a Canada Soccer or Sport Canada problem.

You're a female. You've lived your whole life and know what women go through. It's completely unacceptable.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Would anybody else like to weigh in on this? How can we make our sports safer for young people? How can we protect our children who are playing?

Quinn: We have to have systems in place so that there is a safe sport system. We're seeing the independent safe sport mechanism roll out. I think with that we need to have organizations on board, through grassroots up to the level we play at.

Through our careers, we have understood the value of education from the perspective of protecting ourselves and understanding what abuse and maltreatment look like. It's no different from our level down to the grassroots.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Those are my questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we go to the third questioner. It's the Bloc Québécois and it's Sébastien Lemire.

• (1600)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, members of the Canadian women's soccer team.

Ms. Sinclair, it is truly an honour to meet you. You are perhaps the greatest athlete in Canada, in all sports, and probably all genders, even surpassing Mikaël Kingsbury, some would argue. I think that could be a topic for discussion on open-line sports shows. I acknowledge your tremendous achievements and the impact you have had on the growth of soccer in Canada, especially women's soccer. I think we owe you a debt of gratitude. I salute your courage and that of the entire team.

It is shocking to see that change in our society is still marked by a culture of silence, especially in the sports world. By speaking up and given the unity of your team, you are models for all other sports federations. Your public statements, especially those with the American women, have been striking and produce social change. You can count on me and, I believe, on all my colleagues to back you up on your demands.

I would like you to expand on your thoughts on what has been presented since last week and up until today. What is your top demand? Is it a work contract? Is it the ability to negotiate a collective agreement? What is the first thing to be addressed in negotiations?

You talked about training time and conditions. How can we improve conditions for Canada's women soccer players?

[English]

Quinn: There are a lot of objectives. Like Janine mentioned earlier, we're not just talking about pay equity. We're talking about equitable allocation of resources as well.

With our youth programming, it's not just equitable allocation of resources for our programs specifically. It's for our youth programming as well. For us, it's making sure that we achieve equity from a bunch of different levels. Moving beyond that, we want to make sure Canada Soccer is in a place to make proper business decisions moving forward, so I think from a governance perspective it's something that needs to be addressed as well.

Those are a couple of the topics that are crucial for us moving forward.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I am of course drawing many parallels to the challenges in the management of Hockey Canada. Canada Soccer has said that it does not negotiate in public. It must be said, however, that that is the path it has chosen, judging by the intimidation you have faced. It is embarrassing and appalling.

Since 2018, Canada Soccer has had a strategy for explaining its agreements with Canadian Soccer Business, and the rebuilding of

the organization has been a success. That is what we see in the documents distributed to us.

Today we see that Canada Soccer is being allowed to attack female and male players.

What steps have to be taken right away to work towards equality and better practices?

What can the various stakeholders do, namely, Canada Soccer, the minister, parliamentarians, and your association?

[English]

Ms. Janine Beckie: The first thing we need is to rebuild the trust with our association. It has, on multiple occasions, broken our trust. In my opinion, the statement put out today is another indication of how difficult it has been to put trust in them.

The number one thing we have asked for is transparency of finances. We're still unclear on any finances past 2019. Prior to that is important, but especially over the last three years.... We need to know what has been going on in the finances in order to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement that makes sense for them and for us.

For the last 12-plus years, we have been negotiating in the dark. That makes things very difficult for us because, as we stated before, imagine the shock when we heard what they have been able to pay our men's team, after we have been bargaining in good faith for 12 years.

The next thing we need, like Quinn said, is systems of all kinds of things in place in order to make sure this change is lasting and there's accountability in place for whoever is in the leadership at Canada Soccer, so that we don't continue to take steps backward in 2023.... We live in a country that can be a shining beacon of hope for women's teams and federations all over the world in terms of what can be possible in football.

That's one of the main things. How can we put these structures in place to have lasting change?

• (1605)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: From what you are saying, from public statements, and with the situation being highlighted by various media outlets and journalists such as Rick Westhead and Olivier Tremblay from Quebec, I can see that sport in general is not a healthy environment.

What you are experiencing is very similar to what we see in gymnastics and what we have seen in hockey or other sports.

Do you think a public and independent inquiry is needed to shed light on how our sports federations manage their dealings with athletes so we can ultimately create a safe and healthy environment in which athletes are at the centre of sports development in Canada?

[English]

The Chair: I have given you an extra 30 seconds because of the translation but we should move forward [Inaudible—Editor].

Quinn: Yes. I think a public inquiry would be beneficial. There are multiple avenues by which the committee could potentially help—or other avenues, maybe within the minister's office—but a public inquiry in sport could be beneficial because, as you mentioned, it isn't a singular case. I believe there are problems happening in other sports across Canada and beyond, so there needs to be accountability through those processes.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will now go to the New Democratic Party and Bonita Zarrillo.

Ms. Zarrillo, you have six minutes.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Thank you so much.

I just want to say that Canada is behind you. You really have Canada behind you. We're just so happy and proud that you're coming out and doing this work. I know it's heavy, but the power is amazing.

I just want to say on behalf of the residents of Port Moody, Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra—which is right beside Burnaby, where there is a community centre named after you, Christine—that we are just so behind you and proud of this work. We know it's difficult.

There was some commentary today about the CSB deal. We're talking about withholding financials on revenue. We're talking about transparency not being there. We're talking about not having that trust around negotiating in good faith. I'm interested in exploring this CSB deal a bit more.

Janine, I don't know if you can share any more details about the CSB deal. I certainly would like to know, for this committee, what we can get from CSB on this deal. It seems really wrong that a third party would be taking the profits off the table, not funding the sport the way it should be and not using the channels that we as Canadians would all expect would support women's soccer in this country.

Ms. Janine Beckie: I'll reiterate what I said before.

It's been widely reported that this deal is confusing. I think we have to trust our instincts when we see details of this deal come to the public. It doesn't make a lot of sense.

We don't understand why members of the board would approve a deal like this, knowing that it puts a ceiling on the amount of revenue that can come in from sponsors and broadcasting. We've hit our heads multiple times without, as a singular entity, being able to

sell our broadcast rights. We have to go through a third party. That makes things very difficult.

When you give a third party 100% control of where that goes, you then don't have that control. You have players asking questions about where the money is when we've come back with a gold medal and our men's team is playing in a World Cup for the first time in 36 years. You have players coming to the table and knocking on the door, asking the question.

First of all, we don't know what money is available. We don't know what we can negotiate for. Now we know that there's a limitation on that money. Generally what would be considered the largest pot of money for an association would be sponsorship revenue and broadcast revenue. We know that no matter how successful the women's and men's national teams are, there is a set amount of money. For us as players and for the future of our program, that is incredibly concerning.

Having an association decide in 2023, less than six months before our World Cup, that they want to be financially competent this year is very concerning as well—and frustrating. We have said many times that CSB needs to reopen the deal if possible and negotiate new avenues of revenue to come into the association. I think that's for CSB and Canada Soccer to figure out on their own. Also, there should be an inquiry and questions asked of Canadian Soccer Business and the executives at Canada Soccer who signed that deal. What were their intentions and knowledge of the future, considering that this deal could be in place until 2037?

• (1610)

Ms. Christine Sinclair: Can I add something to that?

It's also important to realize that the money that comes into the CSB is going to help fund the Canadian Premier League, which is a male professional league. There's nothing in place for women that is equal. On the backs of both the women's and men's national team and our success, that money is going to fund the men's league in Canada, which helped bring the World Cup here. There's nothing equal to that on the women's side here in Canada.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: You deserve to be able to see that. You deserve to see transparency around how that money is being allocated and the percentage split. You definitely deserve to see that.

You also deserve to see that deal and the signatures on that deal. Has that been shared with you? Have you seen the contract and who signed it? I think that's a big one. You should have access to those numbers and those financials.

You mentioned when you began that there's secrecy and obstruction. Canada Soccer has used that secrecy and that obstruction to hide how much money it actually had to pay the women over time. I'm really disappointed in that. I hope we can get to the bottom of that, Madam Chair.

We have some young folks watching. I know there are some in my community too. This is about the future too. It's been mentioned here.

I want to hear some of the stories.

Maybe, Sophie, you could talk to me. You mentioned equal treatment and equal allocation of resources. This starts when players are young. I was a city councillor, and I know that it was hard to get allocation for women and girls in sport. It was hard to get better fields. We got the worst fields and the worst times. I wonder if you could share what it's been like coming up to the professional level from when you started, and what we can do to fix that too.

Ms. Sophie Schmidt: When I was growing up, there was no pathway, really, for women's teams. You had no women's soccer on TV. You didn't have any of that.

Right now, we're so grateful for women's soccer, but our games are still not on TV. That's lacking, especially in terms of getting young players to engage in the sport. For us, the big thing is our youth programming. There's no step-by-step process for following dreams or inspiring dreams or trying to make it as a professional athlete, as a woman soccer player in Canada.

I talked about how we have one camp this year, and that's for one age group—that's not even for all the age groups. Sincy and I were talking about it and reminiscing. We had so many camps growing up. That's where our memories were made; that's where our skin got toughened and that's where coaches discovered us so that we could make it to the national team. We're doing a disservice to our youth, and it breaks my heart. They deserve this, and I think you're going to start seeing the repercussions of it very, very soon.

The Chair: You can follow that thought up with another question when there is one.

We're going to go to a second round, and this one is for five minutes.

We begin with the Conservative Party and Marilyn Gladu.

Marilyn, you have five minutes, please.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for being here.

One of the benefits of coming to a parliamentary committee is that sometimes when we shine the light on a subject it changes the attitude of the organization.

For example, when Hockey Canada first came here, they thought they had a bit of a communications problem, and at the end they saw the nature of the beast and cleared their whole executive level and put major measures in place. When Gymnastics Canada heard that they were coming to committee, Ian Moss, their CEO, stepped down.

I'm hopeful that by the fact that you are here today, this deal, which has just come out in the press and says they're going to pay you equally, comes to fruition. However, The Globe and Mail is reporting this:

Canada Soccer says its proposed labour deal would pay the teams the same match fee, with the squads sharing equally in competition prize money...[b]ut Canada Soccer acknowledged that equal pay does not mean equal dollars when

it comes to team budgets, saying the competitive calendar and FIFA World Cup qualifications pathway for the men comes with "very different costs" than that of the women.

It seems to me that there's still an inequity in the way that the teams are being treated.

One question I have for you is, does Sport Canada fund Soccer Canada, or is there direct funding from the federal government?

• (1615)

Ms. Janine Beckie: I don't think we know the answer to that, and I think it points a lot more towards the lack of transparency in the financials. We don't actually know where all the money that's coming in is coming from.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Well, I know, and it's \$2.3 million.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: My problem is this. We have a feminist Prime Minister. We have a government that has put pay equity in place. I sat on the pay equity committee, and I was the chair of the status of women committee for years, fighting for the equality of women. We have an analysis called "gender-based analysis plus" that is supposed to be done on every piece of legislation and on all the funding that goes out the door.

My question is, what has the Minister of Sport done to ensure that on the funding that is coming eventually to Canada Soccer, gender equity is a part of it?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: As of right now, nothing.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Nothing. Well, that's what I expected, sadly.

Let me ask you a question about what the government should be doing to get equity, and not just pay equity. You talked about playing conditions and treatment. What is needed in order to make this an even playing field, no pun intended?

Ms. Janine Beckie: It's mandating that governing bodies provide more granular reporting around where their funds are being allocated. If you have a certain amount of money for the men to operate on the level they're able to, you should then be using as much money as possible to create the same situation for the women's team.

You said something about the men having a different schedule from us. That goes back to what I said about FIFA being different. They have a Concacaf Nations League. It was referred to by our federation. Their games are mandatory, meaning they view our games as optional, friendly games. Our fear is that if we don't have it written in our contracts that we must use every window of the year, we will lose windows, because the men's games are mandatory and ours are not.

To answer your question, there has to be some kind of mandate that forces federations to provide clear and honest transparency about where their funds are being used. If there are more windows the men must use in a year, the women's team should absolutely have to use all the FIFA windows in their year, as well. Naturally, that may sometimes result in more or fewer games played. We can't control that. We don't control that, as players, or as a federation. There should be a mechanism in place to offset that.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: I would think the women's team is way more successful than the men's team. In other sports, it works this way: When the sport and players are very successful, the players get salaries of millions of dollars.

Is that not happening in soccer, because of discrimination?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: That's a whole different story we could spend days talking about.

Yes, I assume that, if we were playing for PSG or whatever, we would be making millions of dollars—which we aren't.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Marilyn.

I'll now go to the second questioner for the Liberal Party, Anthony Housefather.

You have five minutes, Anthony.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

First, I thank all four of you for being here today. It is so appreciated. You've done Canada so proud on the field: bronze in 2012 and 2016, gold in 2021, and all the other victories. Thank you.

By being here today, as Marilyn mentioned, not only are we shedding light on stuff, but we can also deal with transparency and governance. We're mandated to look at all the federations and see how they can improve transparency and governance. One thing we can do, and which we have done, is summon the contract—the CBA—so we can actually see it. To the extent we want to share those terms.... We're not just going to read about it in *The Globe and Mail*, in terms of what it may or may not say.

Let me ask you a few questions.

One, did anyone try to discourage you from coming here to testify before the committee today, whether Canada Soccer, Concacaf or FIFA?

• (1620)

Quinn: A concern was raised, through Canada Soccer, about how this could potentially conflict with FIFA's interference with government policy. I wouldn't say it was a threat. There was a con-

cern raised by Canada Soccer about how this could potentially be in conflict with its policy.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I think that's something we'd all want to follow up on with Canada Soccer. Trying to stop people from coming before a parliamentary committee is a very serious matter. Thank you for sharing that.

I also want to ask about Nick Bontis, who recently left the position of president of Canada Soccer. Reportedly, he's earning \$125,000 for being on the board of Concacaf, of which Victor Montagliani is the president.

Do any women playing for the Canadian national soccer team get \$125,000 a year from the national team, outside of anything they're earning from the women's soccer league in the U.S.?

Ms. Janine Beckie: No.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Just by sitting on a board that meets a few times a year.... I think that sheds a lot of light on everything, in terms of how Canada Soccer is run.

His resignation came at a weird time. It was around the time when there were calls for nominations for the board of Canada Soccer. My understanding is that, as a result of his leaving, Ms. Crooks was left almost unopposed to become the president of Canada Soccer.

Do you believe there should be a return to calls for nomination, in order to allow for a competitive process, so everybody who wants to can put their name forward to join the Canada Soccer board?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: The short answer is yes. Obviously, being females, we appreciate seeing Charmaine in the position. However, she has been part of the higher-ups in Canada Soccer for a long time. During her tenure, she has shown nothing to the women's national team that proves she's there fighting for us. Since she has been elected president, she has not reached out. In fact, her first action involving the women's national team was releasing that statement earlier today.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Yes, and I found it to be highly inappropriate, in terms of the timing and the way it was done. I appreciate that.

I have one question, and again, yes or no is okay. Do you believe that the women's team and the men's team should have a representative, either a current player or a former player, who represents them on the board of Canada Soccer?

Ms. Janine Beckie: Yes.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I would call on Canada Soccer to reopen the nominations to allow for a fair nomination process, allow for a change in the rules and allow for representatives of both the women's team and the men's team to be on the board, so that you're not wondering what is going on in the financials and what the transparency stuff is.

You mentioned to my colleague, Bonita, that you had not even seen the CSB agreement. Nobody has shown that to you. Were you consulted in 2017 and 2018, as the negotiations were going on, about whether negotiating by a third party and allowing a third party to take over sponsorship and television rights was a good idea?

Ms. Janine Beckie: No, we were not.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Has the board ever come to you and ask the women's team if you think this is a good idea?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: No.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Okay. That is certainly problematic.

I'm just going to end there. I'll have another round after. I find it bizarre. A guarantee is normally supposed to be that you have this minimum amount guaranteed, and then you benefit from all the rest, such as going to the Olympics, winning the Olympics and having the World Cup. It's bizarre to me that anybody would agree to an agreement on the basis of what we've seen. I look forward to reading the agreement.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Anthony.

Now we go to the Bloc Québécois for two and a half minutes. Go ahead, Monsieur Lemire.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a question to follow up on what Mr. Housefather asked.

How confident are you in Canada Soccer's leadership?

• (1625)

[*English*]

Quinn: As Christine mentioned earlier, I don't believe we have confidence in the new leadership of Canada Soccer. I don't want to belabour Christine's point, but Charmaine has been a member of the board since 2013, and through her time on the board, again, she has not shown her support for the women's program, as we've seen through all these issues that we're facing today. I believe that she is part of the old guard of Canada Soccer and the members of the board who have been in place for a long time now and continue to be in place on the board.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Ms. Crooks was appointed interim president. What are your expectations for the renewal of this position or the official mandate of the president of Canada Soccer?

[*English*]

Ms. Janine Beckie: Can you just rephrase your question?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Ms. Crooks was appointed interim president and there should be an official nomination process to elect a new president for Canada Soccer. What expectations do you have for this process with regard to transparency, openness, the process, and the profile required for the president of Canada Soccer?

[*English*]

Ms. Janine Beckie: It needs to be made clear what the requirements are for that position. I understand they're written in the Canada Soccer bylaws. It's also been reported that the Canada Soccer board is potentially trying to change those bylaws in order to open up the position for members who haven't served on the board to be president. That is a great opportunity for those who maybe didn't think they could before to put their names forward. I also think it is a dangerous place to go to open the position to someone who hasn't had time in Canada Soccer.

I would just emphasize what my teammates have said in the sense that the new leadership isn't new. It's the same people who have been there before. I think we sit here and expect lasting change and expect someone to come in who has the interests of both the men's and women's national teams, the youth teams, the paralympic team and the beach team all in mind as we continue to move forward as the soccer nation that we've turned into. We expect that process to be very intricate and very lengthy, in order to find the right person to lead the federation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to Ms. Zarrillo for two and a half minutes, please.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I just want to reiterate the inspiration of having you come today. With all the folks who are going to be watching this today, this is going to make change for not just the current but also future generations. I just want you to know it's so impactful.

I'm thinking about a conversation. The Minister of Sport came to the gender equity committee recently. We were talking about the word "excellence". There is a mandate to have excellence in sports, and I was asking the minister what she defines as excellence.

Women have been excluded from this whole conversation about excellence in sport. It shows in the deal. They're thinking about the men and what they can do to advance the work of the men.

I just raise my hands to all of you who are here today fighting the good fight for equity, because it's ridiculous, the amount of pressure and the barriers you have to go through every day.

I'm just going to ask this, because we know attitudes will change. Even based on what happened in February when all the news came out about what was actually happening, Canadians' eyes were opened to what was happening.

I'm just wondering if there has been any change and if you've noticed any change in attitudes by Canada Soccer towards the treatment of your team as a whole or each of you individually, negative or positive. We want to protect you from that, so I'm interested to know if there have been repercussions from shining a light.

Ms. Christine Sinclair: There haven't been repercussions. Unfortunately, not much has changed since earlier this year, which is surprising, because we had a list of asks for the CSA. As they addressed today in their statement, as Janine mentioned, some of those have not even been brought up to us before, and here they are, making it public.

No, no one has reached out to us. Obviously they have been in touch with our lawyers, but, like I said, no one has reached out to individual players at all.

• (1630)

Ms. Janine Beckie: Is it okay to just add on to that?

The Chair: Yes. You have 10 seconds left.

Ms. Janine Beckie: What's been made clear to us is that Canada Soccer will act when we go public with things, and its action has come on the back end of our taking action. In that respect they've moved a lot more quickly on some conversations than they have in the last six to 12 months.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Canadians are with you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Martin Shields from the Conservative Party for five minutes.

Martin.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here today.

Ms. Sinclair, yours is a name I know. I don't have a clue about men's soccer, but you I know, because you've represented our country and I follow the international sports and what you do, so thank you.

The other thing I commend you for is for coming and sharing your presentation. It shows the teamwork you're about. You're representing a whole bunch of other people behind you, but you're representing here as a group and you address us as a group. That shows the strength of team. That's good. I really appreciate that.

When we're talking about people and what we can do and what we can't do, shedding light is what we're doing today, and you get media coverage.

We have the ability to call other people here in Canada. In the U.S. it is a little tougher, but I'm asking you this. Who would you like us to see sitting in those chairs to question about this? What names would you...? You may not have them right at this moment, but you can always give them to us later. If you have names or or-

ganizations that we should have appear here for accountability on what's occurring, we'd love to have them, because we have a very strong ability to ask people to sit in those chairs.

Ms. Christine Sinclair: I personally would like to see anyone associated with the CSB deal who was part of Canada Soccer when that was signed, as well as the people from CSB. Those are my big ones. People who were on the board who agreed to it.... Is there anyone else? I think those are the big ones.

Mr. Martin Shields: That's great.

If you think of others, please don't feel shy about sending them to us, because we would follow up on it.

A voice: We'll send a list.

Mr. Martin Shields: The other thing I would go back to is understanding how sports work in the development of our youth. I've been a coach of many different sports through my life, and I know how critical youth development is when I see my 12-year-old son playing soccer for the first time.

I coached a lot of high school and community sports. Where they get that grounding and interest in the sports is critical. When you say "lasting change", what's an example of the lasting change we really need to ensure happens?

Ms. Janine Beckie: What comes to mind when you ask about lasting change is that one of the avenues of revenue for the CSA is player fees across Canada. Those absolutely cannot be raised in order for Canada Soccer to profit. It has to be affordable for people to play this game and for kids to participate. That's my first one.

Second, we have to take care of our youth teams in the sense of giving them camps to be seen by national team coaches, to be given the same opportunity we were. I've played with Quinn since the age of 18 through the youth program. We wouldn't have been teammates if it weren't for that. You gain camaraderie and lasting, life-long friendships through those youth teams.

When you look at other women's teams across the world, let's say in England and France, they have youth programs set up and youth academies set up through domestic leagues. Girls are playing in pro environments at 14 or 15 years old, some even younger. You see those players start to come through the system and make the national team at 17 or 18. They're pushing out the players who are elders, because that's how the game is supposed to work.

I'm not talking about you, Christine.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Janine Beckie: When Sophie says she believes we're going to see the impact of that very soon, I completely agree. Our youth are not being taken care of. That's not only from the national team program, but it starts with the national team, because our federation, as a countrywide federation, has the power to implement better academy systems across the country.

We look forward to Project 8 being implemented across Canada for a professional women's league. We hope that can create academies to enable young girls who are super talented to be playing in professional environments by 14 years old.

• (1635)

Mr. Martin Shields: To finish up, one of the last things I would ask is that when we're talking about what happens a year or two from now, this is a committee that will continue to exist. We're not going anywhere. The members may change, but we will continue to exist. The opportunity to come back is something that we would offer you.

If you believe you need to come back to see us, to tell us that things have changed, to give us good news or to give us reports or whatever, do not be shy about contacting this committee. It will still exist. We need to know if change has occurred, whether change has occurred in government or change has occurred for you one way or another. Don't feel hesitant about contacting us to come back.

Ms. Christine Sinclair: We appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

I will now go to the Liberals and Chris Bittle.

Chris, you have five minutes.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

To echo my colleagues, thank you for being here and telling your story. I know it's not easy.

I was hoping you could remind me of your team's FIFA ranking. What place are you ranked at?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: What are we right now? Eight, maybe, or six....

Mr. Chris Bittle: If you know off the top of your head, what ranking does the men's team have?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: Are they in the 40s, or...?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Bittle: That's an excellent question, I think that goes to show. That's fair enough.

There was some discussion about the new acting president. I see they're negotiating online. Has the acting president reached out to anyone since her appointment? No. Has there been no consultation in regard to improvements in programs or trying to undo the damage that's been done?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: No.

Ms. Janine Beckie: No.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Are there any countries we should be looking to? You just mentioned England and France in terms of on-the-field improvements that can be made. Having friendships and seeing other athletes go through similar struggles, I'm wondering if there are any countries you've looked at and said, wow, they do an exceptional job in terms of governance and increasing women's participation in the game and improving the sport overall.

Are there any that you could point us to, or is it just dismal across the board?

Quinn: Yes, I think there are a lot of countries you can look towards. I wouldn't say there's one that has everything right, because I'm sure they're all going through their trials and tribulations, but I think there are a lot of countries that have reached incredible CBAs over the past five years, both with pay equity and with the standards of their players.

As well, looking at the development side, you have countries that are putting huge resources towards the development of soccer in their country. That's being shown through the performance of their senior teams. I think you're seeing this across the world, from Australia and New Zealand to a lot of countries in Europe, to even countries like Mexico. You're seeing huge developments in their youth pathways through their professional programs, and in their equitable treatment of their senior programs as well.

Ms. Janine Beckie: Purely because of the work that the women's senior national team did following their Euro 2022 win, just days ago England implemented a strategy to make soccer available to young girls across the country by writing a letter to the government asking for equal opportunity for young girls in schools to participate in football. That was granted by their government almost immediately, and that was a very important change for that team. We have similar aspirations for our youth in that we hope we can continue to push the standard for the sport in our country.

Mr. Chris Bittle: I know people have mentioned, in terms of the work of the committee, that we can shed light, call witnesses and ask for certain documents, which we are in the process of looking at. I too would like to see this business agreement, and I'm sure you all would like to as well. Canada Soccer is an independent organization. It's not an organization of the Government of Canada, but is there advice you can give us? Ultimately we're going to have to do a report and make recommendations. What would you like to see the Government of Canada do to help in terms of soccer? Even beyond that, would you have any recommendations?

Ms. Sophie Schmidt: I'll start off on this one. Canada Soccer is a charitable amateur athletic association, so just from a player's perspective, we shouldn't have to be begging them for finances, and granular finances. They shouldn't just be giving funds to us, but it should be public for everyone to see, and I think that's a bare minimum starting point that we would encourage you to have.

• (1640)

Mr. Chris Bittle: Not to belabour the point, but is there anything other than transparency...? I think everyone around this table is committed to helping you achieve that goal, but in terms of the relationship between Sport Canada—the Government of Canada—and you, the athletes, what can we do as a government to better improve things beyond transparency?

You can always get back to us, as Mr. Shields has said.

Quinn: I know this is a point on transparency, but it's around pay equity. Transparency goes beyond the pay equity of even us, but also into our staffing and our coaching. I'm not sure what that looks like, but I believe that's another point that needs to be addressed. I think federally regulated public and private sector employees are covered under the Employment Equity Act, so I would like to see similar things with our sports organizations.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you. That finishes this round. I think we have time for a third round. That's good. We have a few extra minutes floating around here, but I want everyone to try to be as concise as they can. We begin with the third round, and we have the Conservative Party with Rachael Thomas for five minutes.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Okay. Thank you.

I'm curious. The statement was made that you live by a bit of a motto—that you would leave the sport better than when you came into it. If you were to put forward a picture as to what that would look like.... Ms. Schmidt, I understand that you are planning your exit. What does it look like? What does it look like to leave it better than when you came?

Ms. Sophie Schmidt: There's a huge emphasis for me on the youth, on opportunity. I think it's gotten worse, to be honest, for the youth. There is not as much youth programming. I grew up throughout all ages. They're not there. They have limited camps. The opportunity to play in a pro environment in your home country is still not there. That's something that even Nick Bontis said that he wanted to see when he first started his tenure as president, and there have been no strides made in that direction.

Yes, I feel disheartened that we're not there, but I think this fight is important in making sure we get things right moving forward—and it's not just for this year or for last year. It's about making sure we put things in place so that we're in a stable place 10 years from now. I think that's why we're not fighting for tomorrow or for this World Cup. Yes, that's imminent, but this fight is longer, and I think we need to keep in the backs of our minds that there's still a long way to go. I'm disappointed that it's not better than it is currently, but we're putting up a good fight. I know we have people in our corner and the country's behind us.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

Quinn, I believe it was you who mentioned that the minister reached out and asked what would be helpful in terms of this scenario and figuring things out going forward.

Was any assistance offered once that answer was provided?

Quinn: I believe there is a potential follow-up of a financial audit happening and, potentially, a look into the governance code.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: What would that look like?

Quinn: What would a financial audit look like?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Yes. What would that look like? How would that benefit you?

Quinn: It just moves forward with the transparency of our financials that we've been talking about today. With the governance code, it's to make sure there is accountability, from the Sport Canada perspective, for what our association's governance looks

like. For the transparency of our financials, that's hugely important, and it's what we've highlighted today.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Do you have a commitment from Sport Canada that it will look into that for you or insist on that audit?

Quinn: No. I think that's in the process right now. It's in conversation.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Can I ask what makes you think that's in process?

• (1645)

Quinn: It was my understanding that they're keen to do it.

As we mentioned earlier, I think the conversation about FIFA's potential government interference was what put the conversation on hold, from our perspective. It was to make sure that we understood that we weren't putting our World Cup preparation and our World Cup at risk.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I'm curious, though. Was there a conversation? Was a letter written? Was a phone call made?

What makes you think or gives you the impression there is going to be some sort of audit or accountability created?

Quinn: We received the contact information for the minister's office to set up a conversation, and we held back on that conversation. As I said before, we were unsure if that would jeopardize our World Cup because of the FIFA government interference policy.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Tell me more about that. Why would that put you in jeopardy?

Ms. Janine Beckie: FIFA has a policy in place that is essentially to help avoid having players get government involved to overthrow their associations. It's normally associated with smaller associations. The concern that was brought up was that players were directly asking for government to step in to aid in this situation, which was not the case. We had not, as players, asked for government interference.

We held off on replying to the offer from Sport Canada for a financial audit, because the concern was raised by Canada Soccer that if that or something similar were to happen, then potentially we would be kicked out of the World Cup.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: But—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Rachael, but your time is up.

I will go to Tim Louis for five minutes, for the Liberals.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. I appreciate it.

I appreciate everyone for being here—especially that you're representing a team and coming here together. It's truly inspiring. I think you should hear the word we're all whispering to each other, which is “unbelievable”. That's what we're saying. Your being here is letting an entire nation know what's happening here.

As you leave committee today, I'd like you to be reassured that the courage you've had to stand up until now and the courage you have to stand up today at committee and go public and speak up.... It may be the end of your testimony, but I think you can clearly see that this is just the beginning of a bigger picture. That's something you should already be proud of as we move forward.

I'm going to see if I can get a question in to everyone. I will start with Quinn.

You mentioned in your opening remarks that you don't have enough resources to bring 20 players to camp. You can't do 11-on-11 drills. What kinds of limitations...? How does that make you feel? How can you work around things that you shouldn't have to work around like that?

Quinn: It greatly impacts our preparation for major tournaments and what the quality of our training looks like.

I'd like to applaud our staff members for how well they play soccer, but I don't think it's at the calibre of our national team. I think it impacts us when we have staff.... It not only takes away from their active role, because they're not able to perform their duties as whatever staff members they are, but also, when they're jumping in on our scrimmages, it's not at the quality that we'd hope for our competition. That's just one example of the way we're impacted.

Mr. Tim Louis: Maybe I can ask Sophie Schmidt this. You mentioned that you got Own the Podium funding. That's earmarked for the women's team because of the podium potential you have. The women's team has that.

You mentioned in your opening statement that you're feeling this kind of pressure and that you've been told if you don't place in the top three, this funding won't be sustained or could be reduced.

Given what Quinn just said, how do you strike that balance? Someone's saying, "Here are fewer resources, but continue to do well or do even better." How do you feel about that?

Ms. Sophie Schmidt: Regardless of funding or that pressure, there's always pressure to be successful. It's part of our job to perform under pressure.

It's not helpful in the sense that we have a men's budget and our budget from CSA, and then COC money tops it off. I'm not going to go into numbers or whatever. The fact is that if we hadn't performed, if we had not been successful at the Olympics, I can't even imagine what would happen to our program or our resources, or how we would function on a year-to-year basis, because they provide so much money to us and are key to our success.

There's a lot of pressure on us, and I think we thrive under pressure, but we also should not be in that position.

• (1650)

Mr. Tim Louis: As you said, that's what you do, and that's appreciated, but you should have a level playing field to do that on.

Maybe to Janine Beckie, with respect to Canadian Soccer Business, you said that deal is potentially until 2037, for a fixed amount. Again, if teams make playoffs, as they advance, they get paid more. That's a potential. We haven't seen it yet, but that's something

you've helped to raise awareness of. We're going to be looking into this.

Is that right? Was I right that 2037 could be the potential deal if something doesn't change?

Ms. Janine Beckie: That's correct. If it's renewed for an option, which is 2037, it's a yes.

Mr. Tim Louis: Okay. That's a short answer. Hopefully, we can work on that.

In my final minute, Christine Sinclair, you have a chance here—there are so many people watching, so many young people watching—to give, maybe, two messages to our youth. One is a message about this inequity on a broader scale as well. The other is about how you're handling it as a team, as a group, how you're stepping up. Those are two lessons that, hopefully, can inspire the next generation.

We heard that there was no pathway for you, that you actually made the pathway. Your performance on the team is, obviously, inspirational, but this legacy that you're taking on right now is, I think, equally important.

Can you share messages, in the last minute, to youth, one about the inequity and the other about how working together as a team we can fix this?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: Well, I think the answers to the questions are related. Being a part of this team has been the honour of my life. There's no other group of people I would want with me for this fight and to stand shoulder to shoulder with.

My message to youth would be to keep training, to keep those dreams alive. We're fighting for them so that when they reach 13, 14, 15 or whatever age, this sport will be in a better place and this national team will be in a better place. They'll probably have different struggles, for sure—we always do—but they won't have this struggle.

Mr. Tim Louis: Thank you all for being here.

The Chair: Thank you, Tim.

We're going to go to Sébastien for two and a half minutes.

Go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I come from a region that is considered remote. Although we account for about 2% of GDP, our main city of Rouyn-Noranda does not have a sports centre with a covered soccer field. Our athletes, especially women's teams, are very successful at the provincial level, but our sports infrastructure is inadequate and it is impossible to play on a field year round.

In your opinion, should we be able to invest more in training centres and sports infrastructure? Should it in fact be a priority to create a national training centre? Should the government be investing in that kind of thing?

[English]

The Chair: Anyone can take it.

Ms. Janine Beckie: Absolutely.

I think the answer is without a doubt. As national team members we don't get to train in Canada either. We are not in Canada often at all. I said when we landed in Ottawa this morning, this is the first time I've been back in the country since last April, I think it was. It's a matter of ability, like you said. There's one, maybe two, playable grass pitches for us across the country. Obviously weather is something you cannot change, but the way you invest in covered fields, as you said, is. That should absolutely be a non-negotiable when it comes to spending. It's creating opportunity for our youth to train and play year round. That's not the same struggle that countries around the world are facing, because they have the infrastructure, funding and allocation of resources to their youth.

To have a national training centre.... It is a dream of all of ours to be able to use that for the national teams, as well as to enable youth to come in to host tournaments. When you have that kind of place, it opens the door to a lot of opportunity. I think that's absolutely vital for the future of our sport.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I would say that the weather is under federal jurisdiction, but perhaps we are in a better position to invest in our infrastructure.

In my few remaining seconds, I want to wish you every success. I think this is one of the most inspiring political moments I have had since I was elected. You are among the best examples of courage and leadership I have had the opportunity to witness in my life. Thank you so much. I hope to see you bring the cup and the gold medal back to Canada.

• (1655)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Sébastien, and I go to Bonita Zarrillo, again, for two and half minutes, please.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you so much.

Canadians want a culture change. They really do. From the number of folks who talked to me knowing that I was coming to this committee today, I know people are really excited about what's going to come out of this for women's soccer and our youth.

I wanted to just go back to the callous and flippant attitude that all of you have experienced in relation to this transparency, but also in relation to the cuts. We know that the Canadian women's soccer

team is entering into a World Cup with major cuts to the national program for 2023.

I just wanted to ask if anyone could tell me about how they heard of the cuts in the national program. I know some of it's been covered but I would like to hear directly about the cuts to the national program and also about any of the reasoning that you heard around why they need to cut.

I just wanted to hear from you.

Ms. Janine Beckie: We were made aware of the budget cuts when we arrived at the national team camp in Florida. We could see the impact that those budget cuts were having. As Quinn stated, there were fewer players in camp. There were fewer staff members in camp. We actually had fewer camp days than originally scheduled. These are things that our coach will have planned very, very far in advance, because she has to submit a budget very early on. When we came into camp, she was then able to give us the news that this had happened. She said this was what we could expect, and she said, "As you can see, you're already experiencing some of those things." That's when we learned. That's when this whole thing really took off.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: I just wanted to talk a little, and you don't have to share this, about the emotional struggle of having to go play. Later on, when you were having these conversations and these negotiations back and forth, you went on the pitch for the game.

Can you tell us about that? What goes through a person's mind?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: We are all competitors. We went into that tournament wanting to play, but I think the four of us here have been the ones in all these phone calls and meetings, and it has taken its toll on the four of us. At one point I asked our head coach to sub me after a minute, just to prove a point. As we all stated, we were playing those games under protest.

You step on the field. You're representing Canada. We're all so proud to be Canadian and to wear that maple leaf, but those were hard games. That was a hard camp.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I go to Ms. Gladu for five minutes.

Marilyn.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you, Chair.

I think we've heard a lot of disturbing things today. The most disturbing for me is that federal funding is going to an organization that clearly is not delivering pay equity or support equity. I would call on the Minister of Sport to use her position to correct that, but in addition to that, I think there are other opportunities. The federal government could pay attention to the points that were made today about youth and the importance of making sure that Canada is well positioned for the future. That would be the second thing.

We are also, as part of our safe sport study, hearing testimony of sexual, emotional and verbal abuse across different sports. We don't hear about this in every sport, but I wonder if you could give me an indication of where you think soccer is on that spectrum. Are you seeing those issues? If not, what are the best practices that are preventing that?

Ms. Janine Beckie: We have obviously seen struggles with it in our sport in the past, and the mistreatment or the mishandling of that situation for far too long.

I'll speak on behalf of our team when I say, with the women's national team, we have always had—since I've been on the team—a fantastic group of people working as our staff and as our teammates. They have always created an environment where we feel safe—where I feel safe, speaking for myself, personally.

We have a very clear culture of morals and values that we all share and that ring true for all of us. I think all these players next to me would agree that when you walk into our team environment, there's a vibe. There's an ambiance of positivity and family orientation, as well as an expectation of operating at the highest level in a high-performance environment. That's something that has had to be created over a long period of time. I would say that's created by the human beings who are in our environment, by the education we have been given and by the fact that we've chosen to go towards this as athletes, as women and as humans.

We've done some education as a team, in the past, on issues that our society faces. One thing that should absolutely be in place for all sporting teams in Canada is mandatory education on abuse, gender equality, openness, discrimination and those kinds of things. Our team has always been a very shining light in that regard, but there have absolutely been issues with those topics in Canada Soccer and across the country.

• (1700)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you very much. It's good to hear that it's not the situation that we're hearing about in other sports. Certainly, you are all quite an inspirational crowd.

Just in the last couple of minutes that I have here, is there anything else you would recommend to us, as the federal government, that we could do to further support you?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: No, I think everything has been said.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Good, then we will continue to shine a light. As we have seen with some of the other organizations, things change, and we look forward to seeing Canada Soccer, as well as this deal that goes out to 2037, being revisited to get some equity for the players.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Marilyn.

Before I go to Michael Coteau for five minutes, we have this room until half past the hour, so we could potentially have one more round, if you want. I'm going to put this to you, because I don't know what your commitments are after this meeting.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Michael, you have five minutes.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Thank you very much, and thank you so much to the witnesses for being here. It's a pleasure to have you here, and it's a very enlightening conversation.

I was in the not-for-profit sector before I got involved in politics. For every single not-for-profit, there are rules that are put out that you have to have complete transparency through audited statements.

You're saying that you have no access to any audited statements by Canada Soccer? There's nothing that's produced that shows exactly where the money is spent?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: Their audited financial statements are available in March.

Quinn: Yes, they produce audited financial statements, but they're a high-level overview that doesn't get into the detail of the finances with regard to equity.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Could you take a few minutes, anyone, just to paint a picture of what it is like for someone who gets onto the national team? What's their life like with regard to finances? If you want to invest everything you have to be on the team, it's a huge investment of time. What do your financials look like? How challenging is it? What are your options? How difficult is it for someone to give everything they have to be on the national team?

This is for Canadians, so that they understand what it takes. Are you sacrificing more than you're receiving in compensation? Someone said earlier that even getting to certain locations is sometimes a challenge for players. Can you just describe that a bit more for us?

Ms. Janine Beckie: Women's soccer is in a difficult space in comparison to the men's game. Christine spoke on it earlier, about when you look at our male counterparts on the men's team playing and you're up.... Even in MLS, their salary will be significantly different from our salary. A lot of players who are coming into our program are NCAA athletes who are not on salary, who are still in school and who are hopefully on scholarship, but they are not making any money of their own. When you look around the world at federations that are doing things at the highest level, they're providing an incentive for players to play on the national team, because they're being paid.

I don't want to lose the sense that it's very, very great—the biggest honour—to play for your national team, and a lot of people will come and say, “Well, it's an honour. You should be grateful to play for the national team. There are a lot of people who would take your place,” but where we are in sport is that it's not the reality for our male counterparts. It hasn't been for years. They've made a lot of money. I know for a fact that the England men's national team doesn't even take money from the national team. They donate it to charity. They don't need it, because they make that much more in their club environments.

When you paint the picture of what a player looks like coming into our environment, most of them don't have a stream of income. They're coming in to play, enjoy the game and represent their country for all the right reasons, but there's absolutely no reason they shouldn't be compensated for that work.

We spend more than a third of our year with the national team away from our families. Players take time away from school. For some of us who play in the domestic league in the U.S., we're taking time away from our professional teams because of the way things are run. When you're spending that much time and using that much energy to perform for a country to the level that we have, you absolutely should be compensated, and players should be coming into the national team environment with absolutely no doubt that they will be set up for success as they move through their life.

• (1705)

Mr. Michael Coteau: Regarding this model of the Canadian Soccer Business, is it a common model, or is this specific to Canada? Have you heard about this model being used in other countries, the monetization of your sport?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: Yes, I believe U.S. Soccer had one year ago. I can't remember off the top of my head when it ended, so no, it's not the only time we've heard of this, but I don't know of any other countries that are currently involved in a deal like the one with CSB. It was more in the past.

Ms. Janine Beckie: I believe U.S. Soccer used it when the MLS was created in a similar way to the CPL, but it was shut down after a few years, because I think the reality of it is not correct.

Mr. Michael Coteau: A point was brought up in regard to the federal government's investment into—

The Chair: You have six seconds.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'm sure someone else can take that. We have another round.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now I'm going to go to a fourth round, but that's going to have to be quick. We may not be able to do the complete five minutes, five minutes, two and a half minutes, two and a half minutes, five minutes and five minutes. We may just do five minutes, five minutes, two and a half minutes and two and a half minutes. That's all we may be able to do.

I'm going to start with Kevin Waugh for five minutes.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you, Chair.

Kaylyn Kyle showed that anybody can make the Olympic team. She was from Saskatoon. You guys played with her. I think because of her, we're seeing a big uptick in soccer.

Here's the issue I have coming forward in the next three years. FIFA's coming to this country, as you all know, in 2026. There will be two games, in Vancouver and Toronto. There is a lot of sponsorship, and there are a lot of eyeballs on television and games, but it's all for the men.

I am very worried that the Canadian Soccer Association is not prepared for soccer to be the number one sport in this country, if it isn't already.

I would like you guys to talk about the next three years. It's going to be key in this country for soccer. You may be left out, unfortunately, because of the men's program getting the World Cup in the next two years—certainly 2025 and 2026—leading up to FIFA.

Do you have any thoughts on that and how the game in this country is going to be reshaped?

Ms. Janine Beckie: It's important to mention that our men's team is currently in the same situation we are. Their budget has been cut for this year as well. We haven't done them justice yet in this conversation by saying that they are very much a part of this, just as we are, and we speak on behalf of them, as well, here today.

Yes, they were given all the resources they needed to participate in their World Cup last year. They are 100% on board with the fight that we have here, and they understand what's on the table for them as we move forward to the 2026 World Cup.

It's concerning that this deal is still so much of the conversation. It's concerning that this was just brought to our attention in the last year and a half. Before then, personally, I had no idea about anything in this deal. As I stated in our opening statement, the upside is so massive that if we don't take the chance to capitalize on that upside, Canada Soccer, the players and the youth are going to pay for that lack of going after it for a long time coming.

It's absolutely crunch time for the CSA to figure out with CSB how to capitalize on the World Cup coming to Canada.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: The elephant in the room is the \$9 million from FIFA that the men got last year.

Where's that money going to go? That's the elephant. Everyone's talking about it.

Where does the \$9 million from the men's team last year...? Everybody wants to know where that money's going.

Don't you guys want to know?

Ms. Janine Beckie: We'd like to know as well.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Don't you feel that you should get some of that?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: Unlike the CSA, we are not going to go into details about our bargaining here, but the CSA has publicly come out and said it's committed to pay equity, and part of that is a percentage breakdown of World Cup bonuses for the men's and women's teams split.

That's all we can say about that.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: We have some companies stepping up in this country. Canadian Tire, for the first time, is 50% women's sponsorship and 50% men's sponsorship.

I think the dialogue in this country's starting to come to where it should probably have been years ago.

Again, thank you for having the courage to do what you did at the SheBelieves tournament, and for coming here to tell your story. I want to compliment you and the teammates going forward to Australia and New Zealand. Hopefully, you get a shot at another Olympics as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Kevin.

We're going to go to Anthony Housefather for five minutes.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you, Madam Chair.

There are just a couple of things before I start asking questions.

I wanted to clarify some points that were raised. The women's team is now actually ranked sixth in FIFA rankings, and the men's team is 53rd.

In terms of the money that Sport Canada allocated to the CSA, \$805,109 was for core operations, \$2,007,350 was via Own the Podium for the women's team, \$125,000 was for the next generation initiative—through the women's team, as well—through Own the Podium, and \$40,500 was for safety in sports. The vast majority should have gone to the women's team.

I want to come back to something that I think both Monsieur Lemire and I have raised about your participation at the board level. You told me something that shocked me, which was that you have not been asked by the board for your opinion on anything.

Let me ask the question. When Bev Priestman was hired as the women's national coach, were you guys involved in the selection committee in any way?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: I wasn't.

Quinn: I wasn't.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: You were just told in the end who the coach was. You didn't get to interview the candidates, see the CVs or give feedback as to who would work most effectively with the team.

Ms. Christine Sinclair: No. However, I would like to say that it came to a point at which Diana Matheson and I... Obviously, there was COVID, and it seemed like the CSA was dragging its feet a bit in making a hire after Kenneth stepped down. It got to the point where Diana Matheson and I had to call up the general secretary of the CSA and say, "Are you ever going to announce a head coach?" A week later, that happened.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Christine, I think that one of the things that's missing here is that you're not a kids team. It's not an age group team. The men's and women's national teams are made up of adults. It sounds like the CSA doesn't treat you as such, and you're not involved in any way in the decisions.

To me, when a national team coach is being chosen, which I think is very different from an Olympic coach, who's there once in four years and not on an ongoing basis, there needs to be some mechanism whereby there's an involvement of players. I think we need to go to the administration of Canada Soccer and have it take into account both the men's national team and the women's national team, including you in the decision-making one way or another. That's done in some sports. It's not done here.

I want to come to another thing. I think we all understand that this initial deal with Canadian Soccer Business was done because we needed to have a men's professional league in Canada in order to bid for the 2026 World Cup. Why do we not have today a women's professional league in Canada? Have we not done anything since 2012, when the Whitecaps closed? You guys play in Portland and in Houston. Why do we not have a Canadian women's league?

● (1715)

Ms. Christine Sinclair: That's a good question.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Is it a lack of attention from the board or a lack of effort? It's obviously a lack of resources, but we have the third-biggest player pool. The United States is able to have a league. I know it has a bigger population, but we could theoretically have a couple of teams in the league that you guys play in.

Why is this? I'm a bit baffled.

Ms. Janine Beckie: In the buildup to the bid for the 2026 World Cup, it was clear that a country needed a men's league in place in order to host the World Cup. That was the intention of Canada Soccer when it bid for the 2026 World Cup. It was to create a men's league. It is our understanding that at that time there was very much a disregard for a women's league in that conversation.

That's a very umbrella example of why we're sitting here today. There's been a blatant disregard for the women's program in the past on the part of Canada Soccer executives.

Quinn: On your sentiment of being baffled, you're not the only person. I think it's a sentiment that's shared not only by us, seeing that we don't have a professional league, but I think others around the world. When they see the success of our program, they can't comprehend that we don't have a professional league. I think, in that sense, we are an anomaly.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I would just like to say that before you retire, Christine, I'd like to see a women's professional league in Canada, so that you can close out your career in a Canadian league.

I have one last question. When Martin asked the question earlier, you didn't give names. Should we call Victor Montagliani?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: Yes.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: That's perfect.

I want to close by thanking you again. You guys are all inspirations. It really is a privilege to have you here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Sébastien, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I notice that fans in the room are wearing jersey number 12 of the Canadian team. In sports as a rule, players demand royalties for jersey sales. That is one of the ways they make money.

Ms. Sinclair, have you received royalties for the sale of these jerseys?

[*English*]

Ms. Christine Sinclair: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: That's a problem.

[*English*]

Ms. Christine Sinclair: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: So that should be included in the agreement. There are people who are using your success to earn money. Some of that money should be going to you. This illustrates the whole problem.

I would like to ask you something related to what my colleague Mr. Housefather was saying.

The organization has Project 8, but it seems to be a dead end. Do you have hope for this project or does it frighten you?

I note that most of you play in the United States or elsewhere. Would you be interested in coming to play in Canada? Could this project be a solution?

[*English*]

Ms. Janine Beckie: I absolutely have hope for Project 8. It was headed by someone who is a friend of all of ours, a former teammate, someone who has an incredible mind for the game in this country and an incredible passion for bringing women's professional soccer to Canada. I have very high hopes for Project 8. I think I speak for all of us when I say that we absolutely would love to be given the chance to play professionally in our own country.

What Diana Matheson and Project 8 are doing is something that others were not doing when they were thinking about a men's league. It's long overdue. However, the right people are working on this behind the scenes. I'll speak for myself when I say that I'm excited about the potential.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I understand that Whitecaps is involved. Do you have any expectations for the potential involvement of Toronto FC or CF Montréal in the organization? In the United States, for instance, we have seen that women's basketball has been successful, thanks to support from the men's league.

Do you have the same expectations of the main major league soccer, or MLS, teams that play in Canada?

• (1720)

[*English*]

Ms. Christine Sinclair: That is one of the many ways Project 8 can be successful. Obviously, three of us play in the NWSL for teams that are affiliated with MLS teams. It is successful. What's important for Project 8, and a professional league in Canada moving forward, is just getting the right people in place, whether that is affiliated with an MLS team or not. We've obviously all played in Montreal. It's such a great atmosphere. We'd definitely love to come back.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Ms. Zarrillo for two and half minutes.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: I'm just going to ask for something for this committee, and then ask a last question.

Mr. Housefather just talked about some of the money that's come through. It's always following the money and finding out about the money.

I would like to know about the money that went to Own the Podium and to Canada Soccer for women. I would like an audit. I would like that information, to find out where the money flowed to and what programs it supported. I'd like that information for this committee, please.

My question is just around other documents. As it's been mentioned, there will be a report. There is information. We want to get as much transparency and information for you as you need. Are there any other documents that you feel would be beneficial for a report, or to help women and girls in this sport now and in the future?

Ms. Christine Sinclair: It might be helpful to have CSB's financials as well. I'm very curious how much is going through CSB to the CPL.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Yes, that would be interesting to see.

Have we captured that? That's it.

I want to thank you for coming today and for having this very important conversation.

The Chair: Thank you.

One of the things the clerk and I were wondering about is that an audit is something that has to be called for, and we haven't called for that yet. It may be that if we do, we will get the audit and it may be part of the transparency that we're talking about. It needs to be directed to someone to get that done, so I'm flagging that for when we come up with our report at the end of the day.

I just wanted to thank the witnesses for coming, and I wanted to thank you for your...everyone has said it, and I feel redundant if I

say thank you for your team spirit, your courage and your ability to stand up and say that the emperor has no clothes. A lot of people are very afraid to do that, because it could impact their career—it could impact everything. I want to thank you for that.

I want to say, as a chair who has been here with Hockey Canada, that we are embarking on this safe sport study, and we are looking as a committee specifically at governance issues, which is a theme of much of this: transparency, accountability, knowing exactly where everything is going, and not just money, but equity and all of those kinds of things. I want to say that it shocked me when we heard earlier on with Hockey Canada—and now we're hearing again—that the places where we send our young children to learn how to be team players, to learn how to have courage and resilience and to go for it, seem to have so little transparency and accountability, and all of that.

I know this committee is focused on looking at governance, not only now but down the road, and I think Canada is new, not new really, but Canada is new to the issue of professional football. All of the European countries and Latin American countries, etc., have been playing football forever. A child can grow up and say, "I want to be a professional player one day." We need to start talking about how we catch up with the rest of the world, and I thank you for all your suggestions. You were very honest and clear in what you think needs to be done, and I want to thank you again for being here.

Thank you very much.

[*Applause*]

The Chair: We are now adjourned.

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