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Chair

Mr. Massimo Pacetti

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• (1540)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.)): Good afternoon.

Thank you to the witnesses for taking time out of your day and coming before us to provide us with your submissions. If possible, try to keep your interventions or briefs to a seven-minute time slot. We would appreciate it, because we have more than one group here, and the members are going to want to ask questions.

We're here, pursuant to Standing Order 83.1,

[Translation]

as part of the 2005 pre-budget consultations. The witnesses will appear in the order listed. Our first witness is Ms. McDonald from Action Canada for Population and Development.

[English]

Ms. Katherine McDonald (Executive Director, Action Canada for Population and Development): Good afternoon. My name is Katherine McDonald, and I'm the executive director of Action Canada for Population and Development. My colleague with me, Dina Epale, is the public affairs officer at ACPD and our French spokesperson.

Let me take a minute to tell you about ACPD. We work to ensure the full implementation of the UN International Conference on Population and Development, which was held in Cairo in 1994. One hundred and seventy-nine countries, including Canada, agreed in Cairo to fund programs that address the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and their families throughout the world. ACPD works to advance sexual rights and reproductive rights at the international level, and we encourage Canada to incorporate sexual and reproductive rights into its foreign aid policies and programs.

We are here today to ask you to make strong recommendations to the government concerning its official development assistance, and to take particular care to meet the needs of women, men, and children around the world by funding the sexual and reproductive health programs promised at the Cairo conference.

My colleague, Dina Epale, will begin.

[Translation]

Mr. Dina Epale (Public Affairs Officer, Action Canada for Population and Development): Thank you, Katherine.

I will be speaking on behalf of Action Canada for Population and Development, more specifically about sexual health and reproduc-

tive issues, including HIV/AIDS, since prior to joining ACPD, I worked in Swaziland, a country that, as you undoubtedly know, has the highest rate of HIV infections in the world. I've also worked with the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network.

Canada's International Policy Statement clearly states that HIV/AIDS issues rank among Canada's top priorities. Sexual and reproductive health, along with sexual and reproductive rights, are key components of HIV/AIDS. Canada will assist countries to improve outcomes, particularly among the poorest, through a focus on: preventing and controlling high-burden, communicable, poverty-linked diseases, especially HIV/AIDS; strengthening the capacity of health systems; improving infant and child health; strengthening sexual and reproductive health; and improving food security.

In recent years, Canada has increased its commitment by playing a leading role on the world stage in fighting the spread of communicable diseases and in strengthening access to sexual and reproductive health, particularly for women. Canada was one of 100 nations that in 2001 signed the Declaration on HIV/AIDS as part of the 26th Special Session of the UN General Assembly.

By signing the Declaration, Canada undertook to improve the effectiveness of its national HIV/AIDS programs and to combat this worldwide pandemic.

Less than one year from now, that is in August 2006, Canada will play host in Toronto to the 16th International AIDS Conference. A total of 20,000 people, ministers and government representatives, researchers and health care professionals, advocates and supporters of the cause will attend this gathering. The federal initiative calls for a coordinated response.

Decision makers attending the special session of the UN General Assembly also undertook to adopt by the year 2005 initiatives to help the world's women and adolescents better protect themselves from infections such as HIV through the provision of safe health care and services, including sexual and reproductive health, as well as through preventive education programs that promote gender equality. A commitment was made to introduce measures to help women and adolescents to better protect themselves from the risk of HIV infection, first, through the delivery of health care and services, particularly in the area of sexual and reproductive health. Preventive education efforts will focus on gender equality, taking into account specific cultural and serospecific characteristics.

Canada is in a favour of an integrated holistic approach that focusses on attacking the root cause of problems, the risk and other factors that led to this disaster. At the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, 179 countries, including Canada, agreed to a Programme of Action and committed to ensuring universal access to reproductive and health care services by the year 2015. ACPD's mandate focusses specifically on these issues.

Therefore, we are well aware of the consequences should Canada, among others, not follow through on its commitments. For millions of men and women, failure to meet our commitments to provide access to services and a full range of reproductive health care will mean that they will not be able to make decisions that are crucial to their very survival — decisions such as choosing the right time to have children and deciding on the number of children to have and when to have them.

• (1545)

The leaders of the international community also made a key historic decision when they agreed to adopt the Millennium Development Goals. Eight goals were set, including reaffirming the need to strengthen sexual and reproductive health and the need to reduce maternal mortality rates through access to overall reliable care and services.

Such services include family planning, skilled birth attendants and emergency obstetric care; surveillance and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and a range of adolescent services and health care. The MDGs will not be met if we fail to pay special attention to sexual and reproductive health.

In a number of world countries, the basic needs of women and adolescents are quite simply not being met. Canada pledged in its International Policy Statement to improve access to information and services and to bring down barriers. This commitment reflects Canada's desire to play a leading role in global efforts to promote health and sexual and reproductive rights.

[English]

Ms. Katherine McDonald: In 2002, at the UN International Conference on Financing for Development, Prime Minister Chrétien promised to increase Canada's aid level by 8% each year, thereby doubling aid by 2010.

We have kept that promise, and in some years have exceeded 8%. However, we must put the recent increases in context. Canada still lags behind many other donor countries. When we submitted this brief in early September, I was hoping I would be able to sit here

today and congratulate the government and the opposition parties for implementing the groundbreaking promise made in June of this year. That resolution, endorsed by all of the opposition parties, called on the government to set a timetable to reach the UN target of 0.7% of gross national product for foreign aid spending.

This target has been affirmed and reaffirmed over and over again by donor governments, including Canada. Many governments, other governments, have reached and even exceeded that target. In April, Canada released its international policy statement setting out Canada's role in the international community. That policy statement affirmed the 2002 promise of doubling aid by 2010 as an absolute minimum. This of course opens the door for larger increases beyond the 8% per year.

In June, the G-8 summit met and the Prime Minister was silent on the issue of the UN target. In September, at the millennium summit, the Prime Minister was silent again. Yet polls show that 43% of Canadians believe that foreign aid should be increased even at the expense of other spending priorities.

CCIC estimates that Canadian aid will have to grow by 10% to 13% over the next 10 years if Canada is to meet its millennium declaration commitments. At current rates of increase, we will reach just 0.33% by 2010 and 0.37% by 2015, which is just a little bit more than halfway to the UN target.

This committee is in a position to make strong recommendation to increase foreign aid. This committee is in a position to remind the government to keep its promise and to reach that target and make poverty history.

In conclusion, ACPD's message is simple and consistent with our past recommendations to this committee. We ask that the Canadian government keep its promises: keep its promise to do its fair share to meet the millennium development goals, keep its promise to meet the financial target agreed to in Cairo, and keep its pledge to allocate 0.7% of GNI to ODA. Thank you.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we continue—

[Translation]

I'd like to welcome participants in the Parliamentary Officers' Study Program.

[English]

I have Ms. Johnston from P.E.I.—I assume that's not from another country. There's Mr. Murgulia from Georgia, Mr. Lee from Korea, Ms. Mupurua from Namibia, Mr. Oru from Nigeria, Mr. Dasanayake from Sri Lanka, and Mr. Phiri from Zambia. I hope I didn't mess up the names; I apologize if I did. Welcome, and I hope your stay here in Canada is an enjoyable one.

We have work to do, so if we can go to the next group....

[Translation]

Our next witness is Ms. Dempsey from the National Council of Women of Canada.

[English]

Ms. Karen Dempsey (Vice President, National Council of Women of Canada): The National Council of Women of Canada was founded in 1893. It's a non-profit, non-partisan organization of women's groups representing a very large section of our population with diverse occupations, languages, origins, and cultures, reflecting a cross-section of public opinion.

The NCWC has been recognized by the government as being of national historic significance. That said, I would just like to say that we appreciate this opportunity to present to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. Please note that this brief is submitted without the cost projections that would lend significant weight to our policy recommendations, as funds are not available to hire necessary research staff.

As per instructions from the Standing Committee on Finance, the NCWC has primarily addressed investment in human capital, our people; physical capital, our communities; and entrepreneurial capital, our businesses. If our citizens are happy in the sense of being fed, clothed, and housed adequately and appropriately, and productive in the sense of contributing to their own well-being and that of their families and their communities, it goes a long way to ensuring the growth and prosperity of our communities and our businesses. Our people are our communities and businesses. Therefore, we have addressed many issues that pertain directly to people, as we feel that human capital is the most important part of the equation.

Some of our recommendations for investment in human capital are that across-the-board income tax cuts not be introduced; that specific tax relief for the working poor be implemented; that clawbacks by provinces of federal benefits from families on social assistance be stopped; that refundable income tax credits and CPP credits be made available to unpaid, full-time caregivers; that the present system of basing taxation on individual income be continued; that payroll taxes not be reduced; that alleviating poverty be a priority; and that the Canadian government continue to strive for available, adequate, and affordable housing for all Canadians.

Our recommendations for physical capital investment include the following: that the principles of the Canada Health Act and a one-tier system continue to be maintained; that midwives and nurse practitioners be more widely used to lessen the strain on other health care providers; that proactive approaches re preventative medicine be encouraged; and that the ELCC initiative be realized and wages for workers in this field be raised; that employment insurance be more inclusive and responsive to those who need it; that the removal of the requirement to stop working as a condition for early pension take-up be ended; that we maintain an appropriate and adequate level of funding for women's health care centres of excellence; that a social safety net of government services and income maintenance continue to be secured for those in need; and that environmental issues be considered of prime importance.

Under the topic of entrepreneurial capital, I just want to pay special attention to pay equity. We urge the federal government to replace the existing federal pay equity scheme with comprehensive and proactive pay equity legislation; affirm that pay equity is a fundamental human right protected under the Canadian Charter of

Rights and Freedoms and international human rights law; devise effective methodology for job evaluations, job comparisons, wage adjustments, and the timing of corrective payments; and have easily accessible procedures for non-unionized women as well as part-time, casual, seasonal, and contractual workers.

Note that the Canadian taxpayer has already invested in the necessary equivalence figures, which were developed by Status of Women Canada.

- (1555)

We also recommend that maternity leave benefits be made more inclusive and be determined separately from employment insurance in order for this to happen; that national accounting statistics recognize the value of unpaid work to the economy, with publication annually of the auxiliary accounts, as Canada committed to do at the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995; that legislation be enacted that would require employees to pay prorated medical, dental, pension, and vacation benefits to part-time employees; that companies be given incentives to refrain from practising large-scale "part-timing"; that Statistics Canada be asked to develop a research agenda that would lead to an improved measurement of productivity; that any definition of productivity include criteria related to distribution of income; that we increase emphasis on education and skills development; and that funding support to the provinces for post-secondary education and training and for social assistance programs include accountability criteria.

We further recommend that a social safety net of government services and income maintenance continue to be secured for those in need, and that the limits to free market systems be recognized in areas such as health protection, food inspection, and environmental protection.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dempsey.

The next group I have here is the Social Planning Council of Ottawa.

Ms. Gullen.

Ms. Jenny Gullen (President, Social Planning Council of Ottawa): Good afternoon.

My name is Jenny Gullen. I'm the president of the board of the Social Planning Council of Ottawa. Helen Saravanamuttoo, the treasurer of the board, is here with me.

We are very pleased to have the opportunity to present this brief to the standing committee this afternoon.

The Social Planning Council is a registered charity that has served the Ottawa community since 1928. It has long been the planning body supporting the voluntary sector in our community, and this voluntary sector has in turn provided community-based social services in Ottawa. The importance of these services often seem to be little appreciated at present, yet they make up the sector on which the social cohesion of the community is built.

In fact, until the Canada assistance plan was replaced by the Canada health and social transfer in 1994, the federal government cost-shared funding only for social programs delivered by other levels of government or by non-profit organizations.

Non-profit organizations are accountable to boards of directors that are generally elected by community members, and these boards have viewed their services as a public trust. As such, they are responsive to community concerns and over the decades have built up many high-quality services that have contributed to social cohesion and community strength.

I have a few examples. Research has demonstrated that different local services have decreased calls on police and the number of court appearances; they have provided home care that has kept people out of hospitals and out of residential homes; and they have provided a higher quality of child care that has resulted in better early learning, which has in turn increased life chances to such an extent that it has compensated for many of the negative effects of growing up in poverty.

This brief addresses how the non-profit sector contributes to productivity and how funding changes are resulting in the loss of human capital. The value of the voluntary sector is immense. Canada has been very wise in the past to have supported the development of a cost-effective and efficient system of social services that is responsive to local community needs. We need to maintain this important part of our social infrastructure with adequate resources.

•(1600)

Ms. Helen Saravanamuttoo (Treasurer, Social Planning Council of Ottawa): I'm talking about, first of all, productivity and the non-profit sector.

Roy Romanow has said that the services eligible for funding under the Canada social transfer build health more effectively than those funded under medicare. Non-profit services are a very important component of the social safety net, and the following information will give us some statistics.

The sector employs 1.3 million people, about 9% of the workforce. The contribution of this workforce is increased by 6.5 million volunteers who dedicate more than one billion hours each year in the voluntary sector, the equivalent of 580,000 full-time jobs. The voluntary sector generates about \$90 billion in annual resources and has \$109 billion in assets.

The importance of the non-profit sector is hard to exaggerate. The fact that Canada was, for a long time, the number one country in the world under the UN index on human development is a testament to, among other things, how well the non-profit social services have actually worked. The sector is not only effective, but it is also cost-efficient.

The good of the community is a critical part of the work ethic. Services have been well-used, much-valued, and attract many hours of volunteer help. They contribute to productivity very effectively by building strong and supportive communities; assisting children and adults to learn effectively and to therefore further their education, thus enabling them to become part of a skilled, well-trained workforce; helping individuals and families cope with the stresses of

modern life and thus to nurture the next generation, and they also become valuable employees contributing effectively to society.

Ms. Jenny Gullen: As Helen mentioned, the federal government, through its funding arrangements with the provinces, has chosen to fund a range of necessary social services through the non-profit sector. At the same time, it has permitted and encouraged local control of these services, making them more accountable to the community and more responsive to local need. In this way services have grown up responsive to local needs and fulfilling a very important role in communities across Canada.

In recent years, however, there has been a dramatic change in funding arrangements that has had an enormously detrimental effect on the non-profit sector. Over the past decade, there has been a growing emphasis on program evaluation, effectiveness, and outcome, without a full understanding of what the effectiveness of programs really means, what the definition of effectiveness is. Unfortunately, as well, these increased demands have not come with increased resources.

Ms. Helen Saravanamuttoo: The non-profit sector is under tremendous stress. There has been a drastic method of funding non-profit organizations, as Jenny mentioned.

To quote from the Canadian Council on Social Development report, *Funding Matters*:

Recent trends in funding...appear to threaten the continued viability of the sector.

It is ironic that these funding changes, which are designed to increase accountability, self-sufficiency, and competition, are threatening to destroy the sector and to date have at very least dramatically reduced its effectiveness.

To summarize these changes, there's virtually no more core funding. Funding is granted for a specific project only. Administrative costs that can't be directly tied to a project or program are very seldom funded. Funding is provided for short periods of time and there's no guarantee that it will be renewed. Reporting requirements have increased to the extent that they are often excessively demanding, especially for small contracts. Funders are increasingly requiring organizations to make joint submission with project partners and to demonstrate that they have secured funding from other sources.

While these changes may not seem on the surface to be unrealistic, the results have created a crisis. So we get administrative costs, proposal writing, and evaluation reports being unfunded. The time needed to build partnerships with organizations with different missions and to get together prior to making a submission is also unfunded. Programs are expected to contribute global results beyond the scope of program goals.

I'll just give you one small example. Recently an organization was forced to turn away a contract grant of \$2,000 to service clients over a six-month period. The required evaluation report would have been many pages long and would have taken too much time to complete, time that the busy service did not have. Moreover, the report would have required the agency to indicate its global effect on poverty. Perhaps the funder expected a modern Old Testament miracle.

The competitive nature of the bidding relies solely on costs and does not take into account program effectiveness. For work that often depends on building strong relationships, this model can be disastrous for clients.

• (1605)

Ms. Jenny Gullen: In June 2004, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa held a community consultation on the voluntary sector in this city. That's the report we handed out to you, the report of that consultation. I'll just list some of the findings.

First, time has to be taken from the delivery of services for such tasks as paperwork, proposal writing, fundraising, and lobbying. The cost of completing the work funded under projects is usually more than the amount granted. Funders often pay no more than 60% of the cost of the work so that hard-pressed agency staff must work unpaid overtime to complete the rest. As a result of this, staff turnover has reached epidemic proportions. There is insufficient money to pay for the qualified staff the work requires, and because of funding instability and the chance that they will be laid off if new funding does not come through, people will often move on to a longer-term job if one becomes available.

There can be no long-term planning, making it impossible to attract the necessary skills to build the capacity of the organization. The voluntary sector no longer has the ability to plan for new initiatives or to prepare for demographic changes such as homelessness, the arrival of new immigration populations, or the aging population. Although the organizations are required to have boards of directors, the funding arrangements unduly interfere with the autonomy of the board, often making directors silent partners. The loss of responsiveness to community need is striking.

Ms. Helen Saravanamuttoo: Here are a few more statistics.

According to the voluntary sector initiative, the support is drawn from a variety of sources: 22 million Canadians who make financial or in-kind donations totalling almost \$5 billion to help organizations achieve their mission; millions of individuals who volunteer their expertise and labour; governments, foundations, charitable funding organizations—for instance, the United Way/Centraide, and corporations that provide financial and in-kind resources; and funds raised by the voluntary sector organizations through service fees, product sales, investment income, and other charitable fundraising activities.

So we have the private sector. Non-profit organizations are urged to use the—

The Chair: I hate to interrupt, but you're way over your time. Could you please wrap it up?

Ms. Helen Saravanamuttoo: Okay.

So this is really a national concern. The Canadian Council on Social Development has done their consultations. They are coming up with recommendations. The voluntary sector initiative has codes

of conduct on its website. The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and Status of Persons with Disabilities has made recommendations.

Our recommendations are: that the code of conduct for good practice in funding be made mandatory to cover government funding practices in the voluntary section; and two, that the Government of Canada direct the voluntary sector initiative to publicize the code widely throughout the sector, both to funders and to agencies supplying services, and to fund this initiative sufficiently to ensure that this publicity can be effective.

Thank you.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is the Sport Matters Group. Mr. Bird.

Mr. Ian Bird (Senior Leader, Sport Matters Group): Thank you, Chairman Pacetti. We'll try to be as brief and as direct as we possibly can be. This is our fourth time here. It is good to see many familiar faces as well as some new ones.

The Sport Matters Group is made up of 100 organizations, 100 sport leaders. We come together around policy issues to do what we can to move them forward and connect with folks like yourselves and those at the heritage standing committee, including the subcommittee on sport.

It happens that your mandate is our mandate. We have been working in the area of citizen participation, social capital, and the role of sport and physical activity and its contribution to economic development. This has been the shared policy interest of our group for the past year or two, building on the Canadian sport policy and looking ahead to 2010 and the opportunity you are no doubt aware of in Vancouver and Whistler with the Olympic Games.

The one thing we're going to try to do here is paint the picture of just what a sizeable thing sport and physical activity is in our country. You'll have each bumped up against it at some point, no doubt. It could have been—I suppose it would be—the sport of politics on a daily basis, but whether it's rugby in Montreal, field hockey in Vancouver, or ice hockey in Flin Flon, it is something we bump up against as parents, fans, volunteers, or coaches. It's the Canadian way, in a sense, in every community. You can't walk out into Canadian society and not show up at a soccer pitch or see an ice hockey arena.

As it happens, there's an economic impact to your interests around economic capital, for \$15.8 billion in household spending—2.2% of consumer spending in the grand picture—goes toward sport; \$2,000 per family, Ms. Ambrose, is a specific figure. Can you imagine?

If we think about that in the global context, you might think that's professional sport. As it happens, 80% of this is driven through the non-profit, voluntary sector in what many know as amateur sport, the lived experience of sport.

The health benefit will come as no surprise to you—for those who are active and who are involved. Mr. Romanow, to cite the commission once again, reflected that we could save somewhere between \$2.1 billion and \$5.3 billion in health care costs simply by increasing our level of physical activity by 10%. It was a good recommendation, it turns out, because federal-provincial-territorial ministers adopted this recommendation together—all jurisdictions—in 2002, and we're now working together to move it along.

I won't dive in on the economic benefit of major games and the role of sport on campus at our universities and colleges. I think it's self-evident what that means. No doubt the world aquatics championships brought it home in Montreal most recently this past summer, but it's also true for our trails, parks, and bike paths. This is the big spectrum of sport and physical activity in our country.

It also happens that a landmark study in 2004 conducted by Statistics Canada and what's now called Imagine Canada outlined the scope of citizen participation as it relates to sport and physical activity. It's the single largest element of the voluntary sector: 21% of the sector is taken up through sport and physical activity. That's 34,000 organizations—just think of that for a second—75% or almost three-quarters of which are at the local level. In your riding, no doubt they're walking through your riding association door from time to time seeing how they can move ahead on field access, gym time, or whatever it might be. That's Canadian sport at its most fundamental, at the foundation level.

As it turns out, we have a situation here where the biggest part of the voluntary sector, with the most volunteer positions—over five million positions—has the least amount of paid staff. In the voluntary sector aspect of sport and physical activity, there are only 131,000 people employed. Set that up for a moment: it's 131,000 paid staff against five million volunteer positions.

The concern we have and that my colleague will speak to in the recommendations is the decline in volunteer capacity, the human capital you spoke about in your brief. Whether it's coaches or governors or volunteers or the people out there lining the fields on Saturday mornings, the number of those people is in serious decline. It's the kind of thing we think your committee should be paying attention to. You should be considering the role of government in this aspect of the voluntary sector, and we're highlighting a few simple and, we think, realistic changes that can be brought about as a result of the Government of Canada's work.

• (1615)

I started out today by saying our goal was to give you a sense of that picture, whether it's an economic picture, the health picture, or the role of citizens in building social and human capital through sport, physical activity. I hope that in the limited time you've gathered a picture of that.

My colleague will help outline what we think are four particular areas you can pay attention to in your report: a new governance model for Canadian sport, adequate long-term federal investment in sport and physical activity, innovative tax changes, and long-term investments in facilities and infrastructure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Victor Lachance (Chair, Sport Matters Group): Today we will be talking primarily about economic and social capital. Clearly, given the importance of sport and recreation, emphasis must be placed on sport and physical activity. I hope that this is the committee's focus as well.

[*English*]

Our first recommendation, then, is a new governance model. Why? Because, as with any enterprise, with such a large economic and social enterprise as sport and physical activity we think leadership is really important. What does that mean? We recommend a full ministry for sport and physical activity operating in combination with an arm's-length agency.

A full ministry is not a brand-new idea. In fact, we had it here before you last year. Even better, the Prime Minister thought it was a good idea and appointed a parliamentary secretary this spring to come forward with a proposal for a ministry for sport and physical activity. We would therefore urge the committee to look into the status of the parliamentary secretary's report, which was submitted to the PMO in July. We haven't heard; perhaps you can look into it.

Our second recommendation is to redress the imbalance between what sport delivers and what government invests. Culture gets about 28% of its funding from government, environment about 27%, sport about 12%. We think that to redress that balance it would be nicer if it moved up into the twenties. That would be approximately \$280 million allocated to sport and physical activity or, more simply, the equivalent of 1% of the federal health budget, something we're glad to note the Conservative Party put out last year as part of its sport policy.

Our third recommendation is this. Many people have reported through recent surveys—for example, in work done by the Strategic Council just recently and yet to be released—that many people can't participate in sports simply because it costs too much. We would like the finance committee to look seriously at the recommendations that have been around since the Mills committee of 1998: an increase of up to 150% in the allowable tax deduction for sponsorship in community sport—it's currently 100%—a non-refundable tax credit for parents, a non-refundable tax credit for registration fees, and a non-refundable tax credit for money paid by volunteers. People who want to be coaches have to pay to become coaches. People are now reporting this to be a barrier.

Our final recommendation is that the federal government should designate a percentage of the federal infrastructure budget to sport and physical activity. This is also not a new idea. The 14 federal, provincial, and territorial ministers

[*Translation*]

identified their priorities when they met in August, namely a need for infrastructures and for investment in our communities through sport and physical activity. We believe our four recommendations warrant consideration by your committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lachance.

[English]

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you for your presentations to the committee today.

I wanted to raise an issue with Ms. Dempsey and Ms. Laidlaw-Sly about child care. In particular, I know we've been hearing in the pre-budget consultations this week a lot about tax cuts and about increasing capital cost allowances. One of the questions I put to the panel this morning was about human capital. So I'm glad to see all of the groups here today.

For myself, I think this is more where our long-term strategy should be, in terms of investing in human capital. But specifically, I wanted to talk about the link between child poverty and the need for child care support for our parents in Canada, and the unpaid work of women. I know you didn't talk about the unpaid work of women, you talked about caregivers, but I'm thinking of parents who stay home to take care of their children.

In the National Council of Women's open letter to the Minister of Social Development, you said, I think in the fourth paragraph:

Our advocacy is substantiated by research that shows that a universal approach to quality child care promotes healthy child development at the same time as it supports families in their workforce participation, reduces child poverty, advances women's equality....

I couldn't agree with you more on all of those levels, which is why I have, and our party has, raised concerns over the present policy of the Liberal government on child care.

As you might know, 70% of Canadian women in the workforce have children under the age of six, which is a great achievement for Canadian women. But what we have is a huge child care challenge in this country. My concern is that the present policy of the Liberal government, the early learning childhood program, targets only a particular segment of working women or working parents. What we're seeing when we look at the Quebec model is a lot of the analysis showing that it's actually low-income women who are being left out. That's my concern when you talk about the link between child poverty and the need for child care.

When a program supports only a certain kind of child care, which is nine-to-five institutional child care—and that's needed by a segment of the population. But we have statistics that show, and I'm sure you've read them, that two-thirds of Canadian children who are actually using child care right now are using another form of child care. When you dig down deeper, it's not because the nine-to-five institutional child care isn't available to them. It's because it's their last choice, and they're choosing something else outside that form of child care.

My concern is that none of this funding is going to those children. When you talk about a link between child poverty and the need to put child care dollars into the hands of parents.... That's why we in the Conservative Party have been talking about giving this money directly to parents in a universal way, because I'm concerned that there's discrimination happening through the Liberal plan. It's not reaching the women who need it the most, women who work shift work and parents who live outside an urban setting where they don't

have access to an actual infrastructure of a day care. That's my concern.

I think we can do a lot for child poverty with this issue, but I think the plan has to be completely different. We have to give the money directly to parents, and give it for every child in this country so none of them are left off.

I wonder if you could address the issue of unpaid work in terms of women's work as caregivers on the child care issue, and also the issue of the plan leaving out a certain segment of child caregivers.

• (1620)

Ms. Catharine Laidlaw-Sly (Past President, National Council of Women of Canada): Thank you.

I know it is a vexatious question. The national council has been looking at this issue for a long time. We see a very clear connection among poverty, child poverty, and the lack of facilities.

You've quite correctly mentioned that, across the board, not all jobs runs from 9 to 5 and that most child care is available from 9 to 5. The national council has not even specified the hours. We're looking at the entire need for families, where both parents, for whatever reason, feel that both of them have to be in the paid workforce in order to manage their affairs. For their consideration, we need to have flexibility.

I would have to say that it's very nice to know there are members of parties on all sides of the House who understand that the need extends beyond 9 to 5. However, we're not particularly in favour of privatization, because it once again means that those who have the most can afford the best care for their children. We are in favour of a common standard and of good care raised to a good standard across the board for everybody, affordable and available to all.

For those at the lowest income levels, in the most difficult centres and most difficult places, difficult because of distance and isolation, there would probably have to be more flexible arrangements made. We realize that.

We're looking at the whole picture. We're hoping that all parties will address it on a very broad basis, because of course it's children who are the next generation. It's the quality of care they get, whether their parents are in the paid workforce or are able to afford the luxury that I enjoyed in an earlier age of being able to care for my children myself.

• (1625)

Ms. Rona Ambrose: What is your opinion on the unpaid work issue of women or parents, moms and dads who stay home, receiving an equal benefit?

Ms. Catharine Laidlaw-Sly: We don't see a conflict there. We think that particular uncounted statistic should be there. The value of the care should be there. As a whole, the country should be aware of the value of that work. It's not only mothers who are doing that work. There are some unpaid fathers who are doing that work or doing it on a temporary basis.

Over the years, we have been very impressed with some of the models in the Scandinavian countries, where there are longer maternity and paternity leaves, and so on.

We would very much appreciate having an opportunity to do more work on a broader basis on this whole subject. But again, economic constraints make it very difficult for an organization that can only afford one full-time employee to do so much research.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Laidlaw-Sly.

Madam Gagnon, Mr. McKay, and then Mr. Comartin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Good afternoon, everyone.

You've presented us with a number of social policy proposals targeting equality for women, men and children.

My initial comments are directed to the National Council of Women of Canada which has made a number of recommendations on social policy issues. That's true of all witnesses, but the Council has made a substantial number of requests, and likely all of them are legitimate ones. In an ideal world, we would be in a position to grant every single one of them.

Among your list of demands, which ones do you consider essential? Which recommendation should be given priority consideration in the government's upcoming budget?

Virtually all of them appear equally important to me. Ideally, we'd like to implement every single one so that needy women, children and families achieve an optimal quality of life.

However, are some priorities of a more urgent nature?

[*English*]

Ms. Karen Dempsey: Yes, we do have some priorities that are more urgent than others. When I was going through this, I just really listed our recommendations with regard to human capital, physical capital, and entrepreneurial capital, but in our brief there are issues that are extremely important, and perhaps we would give more weight to things such as income tax relief for the working poor.

Again, we're pleased that the government has made some effort to address this by increasing the basic amount of income that individuals are allowed to receive on a tax-free basis, but, for instance, by gradual increments, this amount will only reach \$10,000 by 2009. We would like to see this increased.

No, we do not have financial statistics to back this up, because, again, we do not have the resources to do the research, unfortunately. However, specific tax relief for those in the lower socio-economic brackets is an investment in their future, and I think that is something that's well spent and would enable them to better afford adequate housing, decrease their dependence on food banks, and give them greater economic stability, which I think would be a greater investment in human capital, a very good investment in human capital.

Also, I'd like to bring your attention to tax breaks for medical or disability-related expenses. The way it is now, you can deduct only a percentage of your medical expenses from your income. When I was reading the budget this year, the budget plan for 2005 gave this illustration: a person who earns \$20,000 a year—that's before taxes are taken off—and has \$3,500 in medical expenses would only be able to claim something like \$725 as a tax credit.

We strongly urge the government to give this issue more consideration and give these low-income taxpayers a true tax break, because most of these people are not able to have supplementary medical insurance or dental insurance, etc. So this is an out-of-pocket expense from their gross income, and after taxes are taken off and medical and disability-related expenses are paid, they are really and truly at the poverty level.

Something else we'd like to give special emphasis to is benefit for unpaid caregivers of adult family members. A tax deduction is presently permitted in some cases, but if you have someone who is earning very little income or no income because they are a caregiver, a tax deduction really is of absolutely no use.

We would like to see refundable income tax credits and CPP credits made available to unpaid full-time caregivers of adult family members. If not, these people will eventually end up just living on pensions, the OAS, and the guaranteed income supplement. They will have a limited Canadian pension plan because they were not able to accumulate credits during this time.

Housing for the homeless is something else that we give much emphasis to, and we commend the government for their work in this area in the past years. However, we strongly urge the government not to lose focus on this issue. We need the government to continually commit new money to affordable adequate housing for the poor.

At the moment, many people are constantly in danger of becoming homeless, especially with the crisis in oil, in fuel costs and electrical costs. Many people this winter could see themselves losing their homes, not able to stay in their homes. So we put great emphasis on good, quality, affordable housing, which is needed not just for families but for anyone on a low or modest income, such as singles, the mentally or physically challenged, seniors, immigrants, and students.

Shall I go on? I have a few more things.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: That's quite a list of priorities, but at the same time, I'd like to know what your top priorities are. You've made your point quite clearly. Many of the issues that you alluded to this afternoon were raised at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

You mentioned maternity leave and caregivers. That will be another opportunity to meet with you and review some of the policy directions that would allow us to be proactive in making recommendations to the government.

You mentioned parental and maternity leave. We know that the federal government would prefer to bring in a policy, but each province may want to take a different approach. Some recommendations should take that fact into account.

Finally, you stated that the government should be more generous. I'd like to hear your views on maternity leave provisions.

[English]

Ms. Karen Dempsey: The problem we have found with maternity leave is, while it's been wonderful that it's been extended so that people can get a year, it's not all-encompassing; it's not inclusive. Not all pregnant women are able to take advantage of it because of the way it's been structured.

Because it is tied in to employment insurance, it leaves out many women who have their own businesses, many women who fall just short of enough hours of employment insurance.... It's a long way, I think, from being inclusive. We think that to be truly inclusive and something all women can access, it really has to be taken out of employment insurance and treated as a separate issue; in other words, separated completely from employment insurance.

You asked for something specific. I think the things I've mentioned have been fairly specific; at least I hope they have been.

We commended the establishment of a parliamentary committee on the status of women, and we would like there to be a full ministry for women, actually.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Minna, and then Mr. Comartin.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to say that it's hard to tackle, because all the presentations were good, and thank you. I have not too much to disagree with, for a whole lot of it. I've been working on a lot of this stuff for some time, as some of you know.

For the voluntary sector—the social planning council—I know the stresses. I did 20 years of volunteer work before I ran for election, and I was the volunteer chair of a board of directors of a large organization, so I know what it means to have to give up the time, and I know the value of the voluntary sector in our society.

I also know there have been some tremendous problems recently—I can certainly name the call for proposal process, and what have you—with respect to the administrative burden that is put on organizations when they are trying to fund programs; this is being looked at right now. But also there's the fact that funding is not sustainable in the short term in many cases.

While I know the priorities within departments sometimes change from year to year, they do not necessarily change on the ground all that readily and rapidly. When a program is established, to then be changed too soon afterward really doesn't do any good. It actually creates more disruption than anything else; I agree with you. I personally and my colleagues have been working on this to try to get to the point where we not only diminish the administrative burden but also get to the point where we have some more sustainable funding for organizations.

I have one question for you. I know that in the HRDC problem that existed with the call for proposal, the voluntary sector was not properly consulted. I won't go over all the difficulties that happened there, but I understand them.

I want to ask you this, though. When Minister Robillard was there, the government signed an agreement with the voluntary sector. In your view, what has happened to that?

Ms. Helen Saravanamuttoo: I don't think much has really happened. We have the two codes of practice, but they have no teeth in them. They are not mandated and there's no accountability.

Hon. Maria Minna: How would you put teeth in them? I want to, so I'd like—

Ms. Helen Saravanamuttoo: Yes.

Hon. Maria Minna: Give me some suggestions on how to grow teeth. I have my own ideas, but I thought you might have some.

Ms. Helen Saravanamuttoo: Perhaps you'd like to give your ideas and then we'll comment on them.

Hon. Maria Minna: Mine are simple: mandating it—creating a bill or something, which every department would have to adhere to as part of the process, such that they cannot change programs without first consulting with the partners.

It's simplistic, but maybe you have some other ideas that might be a bit more....

Ms. Helen Saravanamuttoo: I think it would help a great deal if we had some legislation that came in and really guided the departments. We have a history of wonderful ideas coming through and not being put into practice. We've seen that in a number of fields; for instance, looking at budget proposals to see whether they take into account the needs of women. I don't believe that's ever been put through in legislation either.

I think this would be a really good first step. We would need to have some watchdogs, I think, to make sure they are really followed through.

Hon. Maria Minna: Maybe a commission or a commissioner, or some sort of specific—

Ms. Helen Saravanamuttoo: That would be excellent.

Hon. Maria Minna:—or a minister responsible for the voluntary sector.

Ms. Helen Saravanamuttoo: That would be really dreaming in Technicolor. That would be great.

Hon. Maria Minna: Those are just some things I've been throwing around.

Ms. Helen Saravanamuttoo: The sector is so hard pressed. We see our staff and the organization doing, really, double duty sometimes. How they can keep going, I don't know. Thank you very much for your concern.

Hon. Maria Minna: You're welcome. I see it all the time, so I understand.

Mr. Ian Bird: I think it's a great question. If you're asking for recommendations on what you can do, we've certainly seen what legislation has done with the act for sport and physical activity. Replicating something similar for the voluntary sector makes sense.

You could consider a commission, an ombudsperson, something that would provide that neutral voice that could connect the sector to government.

I also think there's a great deal of consideration towards the whole concept of citizen participation. It broadens the view around what the voluntary sector is about. It's certainly something that we bump up against. It's not just volunteers; it's participants and governors. It's in that mechanism that we come in contact with you and your colleagues in ridings, and here, for that matter.

The other thing we've experienced is that we've benefited recently both from the VSI, the voluntary sector initiative, and building our capacity, as well as enabling joint policy work with governments—federal, provincial, and territorial—across the board. We know of colleagues, for example, in the environmental community, on multi-sector round tables, bringing together private sector, public sector, and the voluntary sector.

Taking the accord that Madame Robillard signed, that the voluntary sector signed, and that the Prime Minister at the time signed, and giving someone the responsibility to see that through, through legislation, through mandate, through investments, through a ministry and citizen participation, these are the kinds of things that turn paper—dust on the shelf, in a way—into something that lives and breathes, for ourselves, for colleagues in the social services, for those in the environment—

• (1640)

Hon. Maria Minna: Thank you. We agree. I just want to get to Madam Dempsey before the chair cuts me off.

On another question, you can piggyback this answer, if you'll allow me to ask, because I want to focus on a couple of things that you both presented. I have an extra two or three questions for you.

Going back to the CPP situation, I think most of us know that the RRSPs, as they're structured today, do not really meet the needs of the low-income, average Canadian. Unless you're a high-income person and you're able to save in a fund well over \$100,000, at least, you're not really going to benefit much. In fact, an economist advised me that people should really cash in before they reach 60 if they're under that. But we won't go into that.

Have you done some studies at all as to what other alternative method one could come up with? I've been trying to look at alternative methods, in addition to the RRSPs, because we're spending a lot and increasing the top, but that only takes care of a very small number. And women tend not to fall up there; they tend to fall somewhere else.

So CPP is one mechanism, but have there been any studies to look at alternative mechanisms, like RRSPs but would work better for lower-income, middle-income, average-income Canadians? Has there been any analysis or have there been any studies done around that, or have you stuck basically with what exists?

Ms. Karen Dempsey: Are you speaking with regard to retirement savings for women?

Hon. Maria Minna: Yes.

The RRSP doesn't work for most people. Have you looked at any alternatives?

Ms. Karen Dempsey: Exactly. By increasing the limits and that kind of thing, it really just benefits people in the higher socio-economic bracket.

Hon. Maria Minna: I agree, but I'm asking, has your organization looked at any other type of mechanism that could be used that would be more beneficial to women and to people in that income bracket?

Ms. Karen Dempsey: I wish we could come up with something, but no, we haven't been able to do that. The only thing we've looked at really is recommending that the government allow people, such as adult caregivers who stay at home, to have access to CPP credits so that they will have some, hopefully, adequate retirement income when that time comes.

Hon. Maria Minna: I think the overall structure needs to be reviewed to make sure the majority of Canadians can actually benefit. The structure we have now doesn't do that.

Ms. Karen Dempsey: Exactly.

Hon. Maria Minna: Madam McDonald, do you have some suggestions?

Ms. Katherine McDonald: This is actually outside the mandate of our organization, which focuses on international issues, but I did work as the president of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women for a number of years. One of the ways to address a lot of poverty is to go back to a notion we all talked about in the 1970s, for those of us in the room old enough to remember that—the guaranteed annual income. It is a very simple, straightforward mechanism that would address the needs of women who are at home with their children, single mothers who are dependent on a bureaucratic, hierarchical social assistance system that penalizes them every time they turn around, women who lose assets when they divorce or separate, and elderly women who are alone.

It would be very straightforward. The Canadian Council on Social Development did wonderful work on this in the 1970s and 1980s, and it would be fantastic to see this committee revisit that structure.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Minna.

Next is Mr. Comartin, and then we'll go to Ms. Smith and Monsieur Bouchard.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for being here.

I echo Ms. Minna's comments; it's not possible to adequately question you.

Ms. McDonald, could I start with you? Could we quantify the 0.7%? I think the last figure I saw was that Canada's GDP is roughly \$390 billion—just shy of \$400 billion annually. Do you know that figure?

Ms. Katherine McDonald: Do I know Canada's GNI?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Yes.

Ms. Katherine McDonald: No, I don't have that figure.

Mr. Joe Comartin: I'll reverse that—do you know what the 0.7% would actually be, in absolute dollars?

Ms. Katherine McDonald: It would require an increase of foreign aid spending of between 10% and 13% between now and 2015, based on the best guesstimates done by the Canadian council.

The Chair: Could I help out the committee? I think it's about \$1 trillion.

Mr. Joe Comartin: I'm sorry; I didn't hear you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The GDP is about \$1 trillion.

Mr. Joe Comartin: It's about \$1 trillion.

The Chair: Yes, so 0.7% would be about \$7 billion.

Mr. Joe Comartin: We're talking about \$7 billion, having spent at this point somewhere around \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion. Those are the increases we're talking about.

Ms. Katherine McDonald: Yes. The increase we're talking about right now, over current aid spending, would be.... The figure I'm certain of is that the increase over current-level aid spending would go from 8%, which is the increase we're looking at since 2002 on an annual basis, to between 10% and 13% over the next coming years.

Of course, it would depend on a lot. We don't know what the gross national income is going to be in 2015 either. It would have to be adjusted, and that's why these figures are a little dicey—because you have to readjust them annually, or probably every three or four years, to make sure you're actually going to meet that target. The economy could grow and we could end up seeing the 0.7% being a larger amount; the economy could stagnate and it would be a smaller amount.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Is the figure you had thrown out on the need to invest specifically in reproductive health included in the 0.7% figure, or are these dollars above and beyond that?

Ms. Katherine McDonald: The mandate of our organization is to look at the sexual and reproductive health programs adopted at the Cairo conference in 1994. That comes out of Canada's overall aid spending.

In 1994 Canada committed to its fair share of spending at that time. I think it was estimated that Canada's fair share, in 1996 dollars, would have been \$200 million per year on sexual and reproductive health programming. We're somewhere over \$100 million right now in spending, if you include HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health programming, so Canada has more than doubled its spending in the area of sexual and reproductive health since our organization was established in 1997. I'd like to take personal credit for that, but I'm sure Ms. Minna, the former minister, had a lot to do with it as well. Of course, the priorities of the Canadian government in promoting and protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights have meant a significant increase in the spending.

• (1650)

Mr. Joe Comartin: I'm not clear on where we're at, though, in terms of reaching the target that you said, which I think you said was 8%.

Ms. Katherine McDonald: We're at about 0.28% of GNI right now. If we continue at the current rate of an 8% increase, by 2010 we'll be at 0.33% and by 2015 we'll only be at 0.37%, which is just over halfway there. Sorry for all the figures.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Ms. Dempsey, you made a suggestion about requiring employers to do that prorated for part-time workers. I don't know if you've done an analysis, but I would think that a good deal

of those requirements are going to have to come from provincial governments, rather than from the federal government.

Ms. Karen Dempsey: Prorated benefits.... I really don't know, to tell you the truth. I don't know if it could be enacted federally; I don't know why it couldn't be. Could it not be enacted federally? I'm not sure.

Mr. Joe Comartin: If we did it under employment standards, which would probably be the way to go, that's a provincial responsibility.

Let me do a follow-up. In terms of your analysis, do you have a sense of how many workers would benefit from that kind of program?

Ms. Karen Dempsey: Just off the top of my head, I can say a lot. I think it's a lot. If you look at a lot of the large corporations—not to name any names—a lot of them hire a lot of part-time people. They have a maximum number of hours they're allowed to work in a week. When they have those hours in, then someone else is called in, etc.

We would like the government to discourage this practice by legislation or whatever means possible, because it really is detrimental to all of the part-time workers, many of whom are women, some of whom are young, some of whom are older.

Because they are part time, they also have less job security. If there's any downturn in the economy, they're usually the first to lose their jobs and they have very low security as it is. They usually have no benefits—no dental, no medical—so they are quite powerless, usually, to do something when there is a downturn in the economy and they do lose their jobs.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Bird or Monsieur Lachance—I'm not sure which one—I don't know how you came to the overall figure of 1% of the health. Are you including the money we transfer to the provinces for health in your calculations? I don't know the formula you'd use; could you explain that a bit more?

Mr. Victor Lachance: It's less transfer payments. It's the equivalent of the 2004 federal health care budget. I think that was what we looked at. The Progressive Conservative policy is actually 1% of the transfer.

Mr. Joe Comartin: So yours is not?

Mr. Victor Lachance: Well, our concern is this. We don't want people starting to say you want to divert the existing health care budget money toward sport and physical activity, but if you look at the size of the budget and the return on investment, what we're doing now is paying very expensive dollars, and difficult dollars, at the downstream, where you've got treatment and so on, and we're not spending as many easy dollars—more cost-effective dollars—in prevention.

Physical activity in Canada...the size of the problem, childhood obesity, diabetes—what does the federal government currently invest in physical activity from Health Canada? It's \$3 million, and they're talking about pulling back all contributions and starting to spend it through the public health agency.

The \$280 million we've identified breaks down like this: there's currently \$140 million for a base at Sport Canada; we think that should go to \$180 million. There is a pan-Canadian strategy for physical activity that the government helped pay to develop through the physical activity sector. It calls for \$100 million per year over five years—so it's \$180 million for sport, \$100 million for physical activity. That's \$280 million, which is roughly 1% of the federal health care budget.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lachance.

I don't have much time left. I have three members who want to speak: Ms. Smith, Mr. Bouchard, and Mr. Bell. We have less than eight minutes, so we will give four minutes.

Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you.

I want to thank all the members who have presented today. Some of you had some very compelling presentations.

My question is going to be to Mr. Lachance. I was very interested in the presentation Mr. Bird and Mr. Lachance gave, simply because we do have a lot of childhood obesity. The health care system is being overtaxed because our children and Canadians are obviously not doing enough physical activity to maintain that health.

The other aspect is the athletes who are training at community centres all across Canada. They look to the Olympians and the Wayne Gretzkys of the world for their role models.

I know that our leader, Stephen Harper, spent some time in Toronto with John Carmichael and with three-time medal winner Marnie McBean. He sat down with them and 21 of our young MPs and talked about what the problems were in sports and in the Olympic field. I was quite surprised to find out that the Australian sailing team got as much money as the whole Olympic event got from the current government.

I think that in this committee we're talking about priorities and health as much as we're talking about sports activities or anything else. When I looked at your ways to strengthen the investment in our sports programs and our children and the health of our nation, you were talking about the long-term federal investment. You did talk about the 1% that the Conservative Party had suggested would be a start.

I would like you to expand on that, if you could, because I feel we are at a crossroads right now. Our health budget is being taxed to its nth limits. We have to think of ways of making sure our children and our seniors and everyone in between has a healthy lifestyle and understands the benefits of activity.

Also, in your presentation you were talking about infrastructure money. In my constituency of Kildonan—St. Paul in Winnipeg, we have been trying to build a recreation centre for years. The community members, community volunteers, did fundraising and raised a lot of money. That extra help, that extra influx of money from government would help.

Could you please expand on these areas? Maybe we will start with Mr. Lachance and go to Mr. Bird, so that both of you could have input into it—either way, whichever way you want to go.

Mr. Ian Bird: Thanks. I guess in sport parlance I'll be hitting third and Mr. Lachance can bat cleanup.

What we are trying to do is present some opportunities to the committee. You can look at the 1% and the investment of \$280 million as a means by which you can just put the base in place.

Let's be clear—what we're talking about here is that these are the basic elements to allow the sector to make the contribution to Canadian society that it ought to, but there's also an opportunity here that picks up on what we see through polling data and through the research—and no doubt through your own experience—around how tax reform can be a useful tool.

It can be a tool. Nova Scotia has picked it up. They are doing a healthy tax rebate. Ontario is looking at it. Quebec is already far out in the lead as it relates to sport being a social driver, so there's another vehicle.

On infrastructure, you will be interested to know that all federal, provincial, and territorial sport ministers have made this the number one priority. In fact, it will be on the agenda with the big mayors' caucus this November. Ms. Smith, to your point, there are really three vehicles here.

We have also highlighted the governance requirement.

I was a teammate of Marnie McBean's in at least one Olympics. I was at a second Olympics, but not with Ms. McBean. I spent a whole lot of time in fact building a role model program to shift that Olympic experience into the community. We can certainly take that up when we have more time.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Bouchard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks as well to all of the witnesses for their solid presentations.

My question is for the representatives of the National Council of Women of Canada. You stated that the protection afforded under the Employment Insurance Program should be more comprehensive. As you know, the EI Fund has a staggering surplus of some \$46 billion. My party, along with several organizations in Quebec and elsewhere, is calling for the creation of an independent EI fund. There was even a vote taken in the House of Commons and a majority of parties came out in favour of an independent EI fund.

We're also calling for improvements with respect to seasonal workers and for the introduction of the 360-hour rule for worker entitlement to EI.

First of all, are you in favour of an independent EI fund? As a sub-question, do you have any recommendations to make regarding a more comprehensive EI program?

[*English*]

Ms. Catharine Laidlaw-Sly: Thank you for a good question.

I'm old enough to remember when unemployment insurance was started. It was run as an actuarially sound program, and it was complete.

As to what our position is on it at present, the National Council of Women of Canada has not examined this question and we don't have an official position. We're simply looking at the problems we're seeing right now. Perhaps this is a very good suggestion for a study in the future.

Do you want to go on with it, Karen, to develop the other part of the question?

The Chair: It's not necessary.

That's fine, thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: My second question is for the group Sport Matters. I understood you to say that while 5 million volunteers in Canada work for local organizations, the numbers appear to have declined somewhat.

Briefly, to what do you attribute this decline in the number of volunteers? Correct me if I've misunderstood you.

Mr. Victor Lachance: The overall number of volunteers has either remained steady, or is down only slightly. Volunteers are overworked and no longer can count on the support of full-time staff. In Canada, the ratio is one employee for 40 volunteers to handle the increased volume. Given rising costs, volunteers face fairly significant challenges.

Volunteerism is a nationwide phenomenon. It's proven successful for sport, in light of high participation. However, if we're not careful, the volunteers who contribute to the economy and to the development of social capital will burn out.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bouchard.

Mr. Bell.

• (1705)

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Do I have time for one last question?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Fine then.

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Bell.

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Just in the very brief time left, I have a number of questions for Karen Dempsey. On child care, the phraseology used is "fully inclusive". Could you just expand very briefly on what you meant by that term?

Ms. Karen Dempsey: Yes. I thought it was fairly self-explanatory; I guess it was not.

It's just that it would include all—

Mr. Don Bell: Has it followed the QUAD principles?

Ms. Karen Dempsey: Just that it really be available to all children who need it—that would take into account people who work shifts and that kind of thing—and that it be...

Mr. Don Bell: My question relates to the QUAD principles we put forward in the initiative we've got—quality, affordable...no, accessible—

Ms. Karen Dempsey: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Don Bell: Thank you.

I'd like to ask more, but I know my time is gone.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bell. I appreciate it.

I have one final word. I'm not sure if anybody received the letter we issued in July. I'm not going to name names, but the presentations should be limited to 10 pages. The committee really wanted to enforce that.

We also really wanted a page of recommendations, because that helps the committee afterwards in determining what your recommendations are. It was on the website. I'm saying it because the next group is going to be up and I want to... It helps us and it makes our job a little bit easier. It's difficult to go through all the briefs, so if we have a one-page summary and you prioritize the recommendations, it makes our job a little bit easier. If you do appear next year, try to keep your interventions to seven to 10 minutes, so that we don't run out of time and we don't go over. That helps us as well.

I appreciate your taking time out of your day.

We've still got some more work to do.

The meeting is adjourned.

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