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The Honourable Rob Moore

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC)): Welcome to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

We are pleased to have here representatives from the Canada Media Fund, Nathalie Clermont, director, program management, and Sandra Collins, vice-president of operations and chief financial officer.

You were both here previously and have already made an opening statement, so we'll go right into our round of questions and answers.

For everyone's information, we will wrap up this part of the committee by 4:25 p.m. and go into the next half of our meeting at 4:30 p.m.

To begin the seven-minute round of questions and answers is Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming back. We appreciate that. Since we are not getting opening statements from you, I will ask you to explain how the Canada Media Fund was created and simply touch on the fund's mandate.

Ms. Sandra Collins (Vice-President of Operations and Chief Financial Officer, Canada Media Fund): The fund was created in March 2009 and was a combination of re-branding and revision of the Canadian Television Fund and the Canada New Media Fund. That was the birth of the Canada Media Fund.

The mandate is to champion the creation and promotion of successful innovative Canadian content and software applications for current and emerging digital platforms. In essence, we fund through two streams, the experimental stream and the convergent stream.

Nathalie, did you want to talk a little bit about the two streams?

Ms. Nathalie Clermont (Director, Program Management, Canada Media Fund): Yes.

In the convergent stream in which we are spending almost \$340 million this year, we finance both television components that are related to the digital media component, so components that are related to the television IP. Every program that comes to us in this convergent stream needs to be presented on at least two platforms.

On the experimental stream, it is a bit different. We are financing projects that are not related to television or to the film industry. They are projects that are created only for other platforms, that are

interactive, audiovisual, innovative projects in digital media. In this experimental stream, this year we are spending \$36 million, compared to the other stream.

Mr. Paul Calandra: As you can imagine, we have heard from a number of witnesses who have talked about the experimental stream. Could you elaborate on that with respect to who's applying, the success or failure thereof that you might be having, and the resources that are being allocated to the experimental stream? Are you consulting with stakeholders? How are those consultations taking place and what are you hearing from them?

As I said, we have heard from a lot of companies and individuals who have come before us and said how important that stream is. We have heard how successful this industry has been. They said that you have had a good role to play in that, so what more can we do?

I will leave that with you.

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: As I said, in the experimental stream, Canadian companies can apply to this fund. In fact, we are financing three or four types of different projects. We are financing interactive content, such as websites and interactive web series. We are financing games; a large part of this is comprised of games. We also are financing mobile applications and software. We are financing four types of products.

Producers can come to us at different stages. They can come to us at the development stage or in production, when they are ready to design their project and to be market ready, and they also can come to us for promotion and marketing. We usually spend 70% of our money on production, 20% on development, and 10% on marketing.

We receive applications for many more projects than we can support. I think we are financing 30% of the projects for which we receive applications. It's a very popular fund.

We finance approximately 40 or 50 productions per year. We select them on the basis of four different criteria. We look at the production team and at the innovation, which is really the key for this program. We really need to see how projects are innovative and how they differentiate themselves from what has been done elsewhere in Canada but also around the world. Innovation is the main criteria in the three different types of activities. We also look at the business plan and at the distribution strategy. In production, we ask for an international jury of experts to help us choose the most innovative projects and, along with our own assessment of the other criteria, we select the projects that we will finance.

We are starting to see some success in this program. It's still a young program. We launched it in 2010, in July, I think. By the time we sign contracts with projects and they produce and go to market, it takes many months, if not years. We are starting to see results. Some are very successful. I think we named some last time, such as Big Win Soccer, or X-Agora in Montreal.

We've seen some that don't seem to work well, but at the same time, it's an experimental fund, so we don't expect that everything we finance will be successful. I think it's part of our mandate to take risks on projects that are innovative. We don't know if the innovation they are going to develop will be successful or not, or will work or not. Some projects were not as successful as expected, but still, it is an experience for the producers.

In the coming months, we will have more reports on activities and revenues in the projects we financed in the first year. In the months to come, we will have a better idea of the scope of the successes we have, but we hear and we see in the press and on the revenue side that some are getting a lot of attention for sure.

• (1535)

Mr. Paul Calandra: I'll leave it at that, because I know that time is running out.

Did you want to add something?

Ms. Sandra Collins: I was just going to add something. You asked about the consultation with the industry which is a very important piece for us. When the fund was first announced, we did a number of cross-country tours, landing in every province and territory and meeting with members of the industry to get their feedback on our programs. We have targeted industry working groups and invite members of the industries, associations, etc., to participate. That really helps us to shape our policy and programs.

As well, through our various events and the partnerships that we sponsor, we have staff who are often speaking with the industry and are available to meet with on those occasions.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calandra.

We'll now go to Mr. Nantel.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ladies, thank you for joining us. I am pleased to hear your comments on the Canada Media Fund.

I have a question for you about this environment that is constantly evolving. It is constantly changing. Based on various contacts with industry stakeholders, we feel there is a lot of confusion on three aspects related to the Internet: promotion, accessibility through streaming and the acquisition of material, the use of the Internet as a conveyor for the acquisition of cultural goods or goods for rights holders.

It is quite a tall order for people like you. Were you with Telefilm Canada previously? What is your background? What did you do before you started working for the Canada Media Fund?

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: Actually, both Sandra and I were at the Canadian Television Fund. I was with the Société de développement des entreprises culturelles, SODEC, for 15 years. SODEC is the provincial funding agency from Quebec. Our experience prior to the Canada Media Fund was very focused on television and cinema, mainly feature films. So our expertise came from those organizations.

Two years before the Canada Media Fund was created, we had set up a pilot program to finance digital media convergent with television. So we have gained experience and knowledge about this sector through the two-year pilot program. When the media fund was set up, we had a good idea of what it was all about, without being experts. We are still not experts.

• (1540)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I don't think there are any experts who master the market perfectly.

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: We are learning from everything we do, at any rate.

We are beginning to have a really good idea about the issue as a result of the consultations we are conducting, the events we are participating in and the issues we are dealing with. We are dealing with hundreds of files every year. We are really starting to build this type of expertise and knowledge.

We are supporting studies on the industry. We have funded a number of them this year. They are providing us with a better understanding. We are making these studies public to help the industry understand how things work. There are a lot of new producers in this universe, and a number of them are more traditional television producers who want to break into this field. The studies that we publish and the various workshops and conferences that we sometimes organize and that they attend also help them gain this experience.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: We often see the logo of the Canada Media Fund at the end of the credits of shows we watch.

Is it basically to make content available and to promote it on the websites of shows? Or are you contributing to something else? I am thinking of the TV series *Trauma*, for example.

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: As a matter of fact, it is for both. Unfortunately, I don't remember the year when *Trauma* was funded and whether it was funded through the Canadian Television Fund or the Canada Media Fund.

However, as part of the convergent component, as I said, we are funding the two sides: the TV show itself and, if applicable, a website, game or phone application related to the show. However, those projects are not in the experimental component, since projects are not supposed to be convergent with television.

When you see our logo on television, it means that we funded the actual show, and, if we funded the website, for instance, our logo would also be displayed. So visibility is part of all the components we are funding.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Do you think that you might be commissioning a study on Canadians' viewing habits?

Actually, I am sure that Mr. Cash will want to talk to you about that. The other day, he was telling me how shocking it was to see the audience migrate toward the Internet. Clearly, it means competing with a medium that has always been there, conventional television. But the Internet is increasingly becoming the place where things are happening.

Have you commissioned a study on that issue, a study that could be shared with the producers that do business with you?

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: Actually, we have recently funded a study on the viewing habits of young Canadians, pre-teens—from 9 to 12 years of age, I believe—which is available on our website. The study entitled “Are the Kids All Right” assessed television viewing habits—which is actually exactly what you are asking—against viewing habits on the Internet or other digital media.

Contrary to what we might have expected, oddly enough, those kids still watch television a great deal. Television is still the primary tool, but there is in fact a migration towards other platforms. For the time being, I don't think we are planning to extend that study, but we could certainly do so.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: The link to games is actually part of our study on video games. Are you hoping to establish some kind of relationship between video game creators or developers and the television industry?

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: Of course, one of the goals of the experimental component, where we finance a lot of games, is to incorporate the new technology into the more traditional television industry. We are also trying to draw people whose first experience was with platforms other than television. So yes, that is one of our concerns.

The convergent component is further proof. We require that the content be available on at least two platforms. That is another way to make sure that the content travels as much as possible and that it reaches the public on the platform they want to use to see Canadian content.

As you said, I think that people are slowly migrating to other platforms. They want to see the content when and where it suits them. That is what we are trying to promote with our program

• (1545)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you, Ms. Clermont.

[English]

The Chair: Next we have Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to our guests. I've been a fan of your organization for a while. Your moniker appears on a lot of good things.

I've always wondered what it must be like to set up the criteria for what to fund and whatnot. Whenever I see your moniker now, I think to myself that it must be one challenging position to be in, given the parameters you have and the subjectivity of what it is you're funding. That being said, that's in the general sense. As far as the experimental stream is concerned, it must be even worse because of what you have to consider.

Quite simply, that's my question. What do you consider to be experimental? Once you've gone that far, what are the criteria you use to place one above the other in areas of importance?

Ms. Sandra Collins: The primary criterion in the experimental stream is innovation. As Nathalie mentioned before, that's where we engage an international jury to assist us in going through and evaluating all the projects to assess and rank them and determine which ones are deemed eligible for funding.

Mr. Scott Simms: Are we talking about the experimental stream as well?

Ms. Sandra Collins: That is under the experimental stream, yes.

Mr. Scott Simms: Do you have to take a step back from that and ask what kind of area you get into as far as experimental is concerned, before you get to the jury process?

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: We take the other criteria internally, such as the business plan and the distribution strategy. For innovation, we say in the guidelines what innovation is for us. Innovation can be found in content, in technology, or in business models.

We have identified four different levels of innovation. Innovation can be an iteration, an enhancement—that's not the term we use, but it's something like that—a differentiation, or groundbreaking, something that has never been done.

If you are revolutionary, you have a better chance of being selected by the jury, because you'll rank higher in the pyramid on this criterion. That is the main one. If you have only an iteration of something that has already been done, there is a chance, because the competition is so high, that you won't be selected.

Determining these criteria at the beginning is where it's important for the CMF to consult with stakeholders. They give us ideas on how they think it should work. At the beginning, they knew more than we did, in fact. We are really benefiting from asking them how we should be evaluating these files.

For sure there is always subjectivity. That's why, when we hire a jury, for example, each project is read by at least three jury members so that we can have a good balance of opinions. We take all these opinions together. It's not only one person who decides if it's innovative or not. All projects are read by at least three people, and there's debate during the comparison we do. That's how it works.

On the convergence side, for the performance envelope program, which is the main program we run, we do not choose the project. It's in the hands of the broadcasters. They give the producers the opportunity to come to the CMF to have money from an envelope we give them at the beginning of the year.

Mr. Scott Simms: Getting back to the experimental side of things, do you look at strictly content when it comes to the game, or would you also consider the platform? It seems to me that the games are either the first person or not. I'm not a gamer, so.... If somebody comes to you and says that they can do it on a different type of platform—for example, the games on the video screens on the seatbacks of airplanes; maybe someone has a new technology for that—is that what you consider to be revolutionary?

• (1550)

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: If it's something that was never done before and it's the first time a new technology is developed specifically for a new market, yes, it could be considered innovative. Yes, it would be eligible. We are financing technology, and we are looking for innovation in technology.

We saw some games where the content was revolutionary. I'm thinking, for example, of *Papo & Yo*. The way they were telling the stories and the way the players were engaged with the story were different. For sure in the gaming industry we see a lot of innovation more in the technology. However, if it's only to port, as they say, one project from one platform to another platform, if they don't develop a really different technology and they are using a technology that everybody else is using, then it probably won't be eligible.

Mr. Scott Simms: It won't be as high on the eligibility scale.

Would that encompass many of the big players we've already heard from, the Ubisofts of the world? What if they come up with something revolutionary? Do you consider that?

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: I don't know if it's a big player, but most of the bigger players in the gaming industry are not Canadian companies. They are working in Canada, but their head offices are not in Canada. We don't see those projects because they are not Canadian companies. It's hard for us to comment on that. But many Canadian companies are developing their own IPs. They are getting bigger and bigger budgets as they get experience.

Mr. Scott Simms: Certainly that wouldn't exclude them from being considered from funding of a revolutionary product they may develop, despite their size, would it? It's the criterion of being Canadian that's of great importance. Ubisoft was a bad example.

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: Yes, they need to own the rights and they need to be Canadian.

Mr. Scott Simms: That's interesting.

What constitutes the jury on what is experimental in this particular case? As I say, you decide that a video game is a possibility. Do you select the jury then? But you don't do it that way. You select the jury, and then they decide what it is. They could look at a whole assortment of streams of entertainment, we'll say.

Ms. Sandra Collins: Yes. When we select the jury we have to try to gather people from the various parts of the digital media industry to be able to evaluate these projects. Then, as Nathalie has mentioned, we have a number of jurors look at each project to evaluate it.

We don't establish up front a certain percentage of funding for games or for software applications. Each competes with the other on an equal footing, so we allow innovation to come from whatever aspect of the digital media industry.

The Chair: Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you. That's a gentle way to cut me off, isn't it?

The Chair: Mr. Armstrong, for seven minutes.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome. I wasn't here the first time around, so I have some other questions for you.

Can you explain to me what the digital media performance measurement framework is, and how that affects the experimental side of your program?

Ms. Sandra Collins: We've just established the digital media measurement framework. It's a framework to measure the impact of the digital media projects we fund. As in television, where there's a standard for average median audience, etc., it's to come up with a measurement to compare one project against another, whatever the appropriate metrics are.

So far in that industry there are lots of different metrics, but there's not really an established industry standard. Here's where we've actively engaged the industry to come up with a framework that we're testing this year. We're looking at a variety of metrics to see whether they are appropriate measures for the variety of digital media projects that we fund, both through the experimental stream and the convergent stream.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: My academic background is statistics. What you're developing this year, I'm assuming, is like a baseline, something you measure against in the future, correct? Is that where you are with this?

Ms. Sandra Collins: Yes. It is very much a starting point for us. It likely will evolve over time, and we've established what our advisory committee has agreed is a good place to start. We're actually applying it against a number of projects this year and we will look at those results to see if it accurately measures the performance. Then, if so, we'll go forward with it for now, but it probably will be something that will evolve over time.

• (1555)

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I know this is its first year, so don't think I'm trying to jam you in a corner here, but in its current form, what type of things are you looking at? Are you looking at sales of games as one part of it, or distribution? What types of things do you look at as part of these matrices?

Ms. Sandra Collins: Some of the metrics we are looking at include such things as unique individuals, new individuals, sessions, downloads, streams, video starts, user actions, page views, and time spent consuming content. Those are the standard metrics we are going to try to apply to each project.

In addition, we do track other information, such as downloads, to complement, I would say, some of the statistical information that we hope to gather through this process.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Some of these items you are measuring are going to be free. Some of them are going to cost money. Then you have to look at comparing apples and oranges as well. It's a huge challenge. As you said, I don't think there's another type of measurement like this in the industry. This might actually be something that becomes an industry standard. Hopefully that turns out to be the case.

To go back to the experimental projects, you said there were four criteria: team, innovation—innovation being the largest component—the business plan the company has, and the distribution practice.

How do you evaluate distribution practice? Are you looking for more physical distribution, or online distribution? How do you evaluate that?

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: In fact there are many different ways, depending on the types of projects we are financing. For example, if it's an interactive web series, we know that it probably won't go on DVD. We look at what the producer is proposing, to see if it makes sense. Will they succeed? That's another question. But we need to see if they've thought through how they will exploit their projects. Even at the beginning, even when they start doing the production, we want to know if they have an idea of how they will launch their project.

It's different from television. In television, you launch your project and it's done. There's nothing you can do. You do promotion, and broadcasters do promotions around it, but when it's launched, it's over.

On the digital media side, it's very different for many projects, not all types of projects, but many. You have to build your audience. When you launch, you are only starting to exploit your production. You have to create new content, because it's easier than it is for a television production to create new content, and to keep your website, for example, alive, to have audiences come back because you are providing them new content.

We are looking at their strategy, at whether they have thought of how to do that. If we see they are proposing new ways of doing this, they will get more points, because it will be a different way to do that. That's what we are looking for.

In terms of the criteria, we are looking at the distribution strategy—it's very transparent in our evaluation grid—and at the marketing and promotion plan. There's also the targeted audience. If we are financing things that are targeted to the industry, is it to help the producer create content? Sometimes it's targeted to the general public, and we'll look at that. Are they going to launch in Canada or also in international markets?

We also look at whether they have what we call market channel partners, people who will help them exploit their product on different platforms. Some have experience internally in exploiting their assets, but some are producers who don't know how to follow up with all of the promotions. We look at that.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Right.

Part of this is about evaluating the team. That's what you are getting into now. When a production company, or a group or a business, comes to you and says they would like to apply for this, they can go through and see the criteria. They can actually build their application around the criteria you have put out there. They understand what they are getting into and how they are going to be evaluated, which I think is very fair.

You would look at the team. You might invest in the most innovative idea in the world, but you don't have anybody around who can actually market it or distribute it, or who has any experience in the field. You are looking at them coming to you with the marketing plan in place, the business plan in place, and the distribution, and also with an experienced team with some sort of experience of how to get this out.

If someone came to you with some of these pieces missing, would you give them some support in how they could strengthen their application, or is it just entered and that's it; they win or fail based on what they've put in?

• (1600)

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: In fact, once they have applied, we don't communicate with them because, last time, we received 92 projects in production. In fairness to everybody, we do not ask some of them to complete or to enhance their production or their application. We do not communicate with them.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I'm short of time, so...

The Chair: You're very short on time; you're actually out of time.

Now we're going into our five-minute rounds for questions and answers.

First up is Mr. Cash.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for coming back to our study. We recognize this as a sector which largely we're trying to understand. It's new and it's growing fast, so your input is really valuable.

The first thing is, what is the budget for the experimental stream?

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: It's \$36 million this year. The first year it was \$27 million. Last year it was \$33 million. This year it's \$36 million. We are trying to grow this envelope from year to year to help finance more projects.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Right, and how do you grow that?

Ms. Sandra Collins: The revenue sources for the Canada Media Fund come from the department, as well as contributions from cable and satellite providers. Up until now, we've benefited from that. The revenue source from the BDUs has increased year over year as their revenues have increased. We've been the beneficiaries of some growth on that side.

Mr. Andrew Cash: On both sides, the experimental and the conversion sides?

Ms. Sandra Collins: Well, the funding comes in toto, and then we allocate it. It's a board decision on how we allocate it among the funds, but the whole pot has grown over the last few years.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Okay.

I think it's worth underlining that the convergent pot is something we think is important, and it's doing some very good work, but what we're looking at right now is this pot.

When I hear about the number of applicants, and the number of applicants you can't fund, it really strikes me that you need greater capacity, which is another way of saying more money.

Do you feel that the demand is there, or are you comfortable with the amount of support you can give to the sector right now?

Ms. Sandra Collins: Since the experimental stream has launched, we have definitely seen more demand than we have been able to fund, up until now. There certainly is demand in this sector for financing from the Canada Media Fund.

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: For sure, not all projects that we receive merit financing. We don't have enough money to finance all worthwhile projects, but some are not at the level we expect. Even if we had \$100 million, for example, we wouldn't be able to finance all the projects because they would not respond to the main criteria.

Mr. Andrew Cash: We've heard from a number of the bigger players in the sector, but hopefully we're also going to hear from some of the smaller operators. These are the people you mostly work with. Is that correct?

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: Which ones?

Mr. Andrew Cash: The smaller groups, or can you give us a sense of some of these companies? Are these independent operators or do they employ 15 people, or—

•(1605)

Ms. Nathalie Clermont: We don't have statistics on that, precisely. It's not something we specifically ask when they apply.

Probably most of them are smaller or medium-sized companies, but some are larger companies. Some are integrated in larger groups and they have their digital media related company. Some others in the gaming industry, Frima Studio in Quebec for example, have over 300 employees working full time on games. Some are their own IPs. Some are in service production; they do special effects or develop technology for other companies.

I think we are dealing with many different sizes of companies. The companies with 300 employees and more are probably fewer than the others because, as we said, the bigger companies are from outside Canada or are working in Canada but are not owned by Canadians. These are the bigger companies, but we deal with the bigger players, for sure.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cash.

Thank you to our witnesses.

We're going to take all of the information that we hear on this study into account and consider all the information we've garnered. We do appreciate your being here.

I'm going to suspend for two minutes. We have our witnesses here for our next round, and we'll let them come to the table.

•(1605)

(Pause)

•(1605)

The Chair: Welcome back. Now we're moving into our study on the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London. We're going to try this one more time. Last time, we were interrupted by votes.

I should mention once again that we're going to have votes again this evening, but the bells won't ring for those votes until 5:15 p.m. We've got plenty of time to hear from our witnesses.

From the Canadian Paralympic Committee, we have Henry Storgaard, chief executive officer and secretary general; and from Own the Podium, Anne Merklinger, chief executive officer.

Welcome, to you both, again. We will give you time for your opening remarks and then we'll go into a round of questions and answers.

We'll start with the Canadian Paralympic Committee.

Mr. Henry Storgaard (Chief Executive Officer and Secretary General, Canadian Paralympic Committee): Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure to be here today to talk about our wonderful paralympic team and the Paralympic Games in London.

•(1610)

[*English*]

We had an exceptional experience two years ago in Vancouver at our home games in 2010. That really provided the foundation for us to prepare for the London 2012 Paralympic Summer Games.

Recognizing the gap between Olympic and Paralympic funding at that time, the Government of Canada affirmed \$5 million in the March 4, 2010 federal budget to the Canadian Paralympic Committee for five years. The two main purposes are to invest in our Canadian Paralympic team and high performance through to the Toronto 2015 Parapan Am Games and to increase participation of Canadians with a physical disability in sport and recreation.

CPC is unique among national multi-sport organizations in that we not only manage Canada's national team, but we also create a sport system for people with a physical disability. We undertake the recruitment of athletes and encourage people with physical disabilities to participate in sport and recreation.

That was kind of a set-up for who we are. Now let me tell you about London.

Two great things happened in London that will impact Canadians and our strategy moving forward. These two things were on the field of play and off the field of play. Both are critically important to our future. The London Paralympic Games marked a new era in Paralympic competition.

In London we saw more countries competing at the Paralympics than ever before. In fact, 164 countries took part, up from 146 in Beijing four years earlier. World records were broken at an incredible rate at the London Paralympic Games. No less than 251 world records were set. To give you a comparison, by contrast the London Olympic Games set 27 world records during their two weeks of competition.

Countries around the world are investing unprecedented resources in Paralympic sport and it is showing in the medal count.

[*Translation*]

We are very proud of our athletes' accomplishments.

[*English*]

Canadian athletes earned a total of 31 medals at the London Paralympic Games: 7 gold, 15 silver, and 9 bronze. This is a fantastic performance given the ultra-competitive climate of the Paralympic sport. To put this into context for you, in Beijing in 2008, we earned 50 medals including 19 gold.

As a result we did not achieve our very ambitious target for London, which was to place in the top eight in gold medal count. Our final ranking was 20th in the gold medal count and we ranked 13th in the overall medal count, which is exactly the same as our Olympic counterparts.

We are grateful for the Government of Canada funding and we are judicious in our use of it. London showed us, though, that medals do indeed cost money. The leading nations invest significantly more in their Paralympic programs than Canada does. Countries like China, Korea, Russia, Ukraine, Spain, Britain were ahead of us in medal counts and they invest many times what we do.

As proud Canadians, we are determined to fight back, to continue to use every dollar and resource we have to propel Canada forward. We're determined to regain our top 10 status at the summer games. The winter games in Sochi are a little more than a year away. We are targeted to finish in the top three, the same as in Vancouver, and we will get there.

The world is changing in Paralympic sport and we need to change with it. Building podium potential athletes takes years of investment. This is a long-term commitment.

What this means for Canada, especially as a G-8 nation and as a country considered to be one of the best places in the world in which to live, is that we must continue to work on building a more robust parasport Paralympic system, so that we can once again become a Paralympic leading nation. We are investing in the critical areas of athlete recruitment, development, and retention as well as supporting our coaches through further education and training.

While our business is sport, we invest in people. There are 4.4 million Canadians with a physical disability. The other 30 million Canadians are inspired by our athletes' incredible performances. We invest in communities. We invest in health, in fitness, in diversity, accessibility, and inclusion. These are all landmarks of Canadian values, I believe.

To achieve this, CPC has made a commitment to match the Government of Canada's investment with private sector funds. I am

pleased to report to you that we are approximately two years into our funding and ahead of schedule to match those dollars from the private sector.

We agree that all Canadians have the right to enjoy the benefits of physical activity. We know that sport not only builds great athletes, but it also builds great people. Here is our other challenge, and this is what I think is really important and what we must pay attention to: only 3% of Canadians with a physical disability are currently active in organized sport compared to 30% of the general population. We are driven to change this at the Canadian Paralympic Committee. It is unacceptable. It is not good for the health and well-being of our nation.

To encourage more people with a disability to get involved in sport, we launched, during the London Paralympic Games, on national television in Canada, a campaign called "It's more than sport", so that more Canadians will experience first-hand the many benefits of an active lifestyle.

For Canada to have a podium full of medallists, we also have to have a playground full of kids. We need to ensure that children with a disability know that they, too, deserve the right to play and to be physically active. We've also invested in equipment and programming grants in communities across the country. We hold parasport festivals in every province and territory, where people can come and try out different Paralympic activities. Our thriving schools program sends our Canadian Paralympic athletes to classrooms and gymnasiums to motivate students. Our athletes have personally connected with over 300,000 young Canadians in the last couple of years under this new funding.

Our Paralympian stories are being heard. They are empowering, motivating, and encouraging to all Canadians. Our athletes give back constantly and generously by speaking and appearing at schools, communities, hospitals, and service clubs, to mention a few.

In London, if the first great advance in the Paralympic movement was on the field of play with a rising tide of athletic performances, the second giant leap was off the field of play. It was a leap in public awareness, social change, and empowerment. A record 2.7 million tickets were sold for the games in London, with most events and sessions selling out. This is unprecedented internationally.

It is regarded as the family games. Why? It's affordable, it's accessible, and it's inspirational. England's channel 4 broadcast the Paralympic Games live in prime time all day and all evening, for 15 hours each day. Thanks to the games a generation has been inspired, empowered, and changed. The perception of people with a disability has changed, especially in Britain. Post-game studies show the positive impact of London 2012.

Here in Canada we had unprecedented growth in our traditional media coverage and social media activity around London.

• (1615)

In fact, there are over one billion Canadian media impressions of the London 2012 Canadian Paralympic team which was more than three times the amount of our Vancouver coverage. However, in stark contrast to the Olympic Games broadcast, coverage in Canada of the Paralympic Games was limited to one hour late at night, and it was hard to find. I know because I received hundreds and hundreds of letters from Canadians who were, I might say, royally annoyed by that coverage.

Canadians are telling us that they want more Paralympic games on television and they want them more readily available online. I need your support today to ensure that every Canadian has the opportunity to watch Paralympic athletes and Paralympic games in the future, on television and on their computers. From playground to podium, we are working with our sports partners to build a stronger parasport system in Canada.

We recognize that systemic change is not going to happen overnight. Developing a robust sports system takes time and will require a long commitment from all partners, such as my colleague, Anne, at Own the Podium, Sport Canada, Canadian sports centres, national sports organizations, the government, and corporate Canada. The investment from the Government of Canada has paid huge dividends. Our athletes and coaches are grateful. We are asking for renewed and increased investments post-2015, and I guarantee that CPC will continue to match any government investment with corporate partner funding.

Our London 2012 results confirmed the importance of CPC's strategic objectives of raising awareness, enhancing recruitment, a sport system alignment for people with physical disabilities, and embedding Paralympic sport within Canadian high performance. Our objective is to produce a sustainable Paralympic podium performance.

This is what is required for Canada to regain and maintain a position among the top 10 nations in the summer Paralympic medal standings. Finding and nurturing that next generation of Paralympic champions is one of our most urgent tasks. It's one that we're embracing with enthusiasm and energy, with passion and pride. In doing so, our Paralympians are inspiring all Canadians to dream of excellence, to never give up, and to be their best.

• (1620)

[Translation]

Together we will succeed. We are Team Canada.

[English]

We are proud to be Team Canada, and we thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Storgaard.

Next we will hear from Anne Merklinger.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Merklinger (Chief Executive Officer, Own the Podium): Thank you.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

[English]

On the heels of our discussions last week, I would like to once again acknowledge how important it is to Canada's athletes with a disability to know that the Government of Canada and you, as our elected leaders, care about how they perform. On behalf of Own the Podium, I cannot thank you enough.

Henry mentioned earlier, and allow me to also acknowledge, that the Government of Canada is the single largest contributor and investor in high-performance sport in Canada. It's only with your investment that Canada's athletes with a disability can continue to perform on the world stage.

I'd like to focus on three primary areas for my remarks: Canada's performance relative to the rest of the world; a closer look at the sports that were targeted by Own the Podium and how they performed; and the key findings and lessons learned for 2016 and beyond.

How did we do? Well, Henry already touched on this, and it's not as rosy a picture as it was when we had our discussions last week around our Olympic team's performance. Our objective going into the 2012 Paralympic Games was to finish in the top eight in gold medal count. We knew going into the games, based on our analysis of our performance in 2010 and 2011, that target would be pretty difficult, if not impossible, to attain.

In the end, we won seven gold medals in total and finished 20th overall, based on the gold medal count. That was down from our 19 gold medals in Beijing and our seventh place ranking in 2008. We won a total of 31 medals and finished 13th overall, as Henry mentioned. This, too, is down from the 50 medals we won in total in 2008 with a 10th place ranking in overall medals as a nation.

The trend line for Canada's performance in the summer Paralympic Games is clearly downward. Canada was an early leader in Paralympic sport from 1988 to 2004, very much due to the strong position our government and Canada took in terms of social policy. Since then, over the past eight years, many nations have surged and the competitive landscape is significantly different. Nations like Russia, Poland, Australia, Ukraine, and China have focused heavily on Paralympic sport and their results in London were terrific, with increases in the number of gold medals won ranging between 18 and six.

Next to South Africa, Canada suffered the biggest drop in gold medals won, down 12 from 2008. Again, for us, as the technical organization, we knew going into this particular set of games that we were in a tough position, but we know very well that we need to make some significant changes going forward.

Let's take a look at how some of the sports that were targeted by Own the Podium performed in London.

In the summer Paralympic environment we traditionally rely on two big sports to garner the majority of our medals: swimming and athletics. There are 950 medals available just between those two sports alone at the summer Paralympic Games, a fact that really reinforces the importance of those two sports to Canada's overall performance at the games.

Swimming did okay. They performed reasonably well, but athletics really struggled. They were down 10 medals in total from 2008 and captured only one gold medal as compared to the 10 gold medals that they won in Beijing.

OTP's investment strategy for Paralympic sports heading into London was focused entirely on gold medals. There were 11 sports targeted to win one or more gold medals, and five of those sports delivered. We definitely have some work to do with those sports that weren't successful in delivering gold medals.

I have some important observations to share with you that tell a story over and above the actual performance metrics. There were some terrific performances.

I mentioned swimming. They led the way, capturing four of Canada's seven gold medals and 16 of the 30 medals won for our entire nation. Summer Mortimer emerged as a new Canadian hero in her first Paralympic Games and an athlete with a huge career ahead of her in Paralympic sport.

Canada's team sports, similar to how we performed in London in the Olympic Games, did extremely well in the Paralympic Games, with the men's wheelchair basketball team winning the gold medal against an extremely tough field. The wheelchair rugby team won a silver medal, and much like the women's Olympic soccer bronze medal, it truly had a gold-medal lining.

Conversely, London served as a wake-up call for several targeted sports.

● (1625)

We knew going into the games that several sports would struggle in delivering medal performances. The stark reality of the level of competition, which Henry so accurately described, really emerged in

Paralympic sport. This sent a powerful message to every leader involved in high-performance sport for athletes with disabilities in our country.

London 2012 established a new benchmark for every nation involved in Paralympic sport. It's a serious business. It's much more serious than it ever has been. With the depth of competition, the level of competition, the number of nations winning gold medals, the number of nations competing, the quality and number of full-time coaches involved in the top programs, and the level of investment being made by other top nations, the world is taking Paralympic sport much more seriously than it has in the past.

Finally, let's look at the key findings and lessons learned. What do we need to do differently going into 2016 and beyond?

First and foremost, we need to invest in more and better full-time coaches and technical leaders in Paralympic sports. Without great coaches and technical leaders, we can't produce podium potential athletes.

Second, and Henry mentioned this, we just do not have a deep enough talent pool of athletes. Without a broader base, we are really stretched to produce podium potential athletes in our country. We need to invest in a deliberate recruitment strategy. We simply need more athletes with disabilities at all levels of our high-performance system.

We can improve the integration of Olympic and Paralympic programs where relevant. This can assist in elevating the overall level of professionalism within some Paralympic sports. We need a strategy to recruit more severely disabled athletes, particularly in our two big sports: swimming and athletics. We will be working closely with Canadian Sport Centres, Canadian Sport Institutes, and all the provinces and territories to help develop a much stronger system of excellence in our country.

Canadian communities need Paralympic heroes. They inspire and motivate Canadians with disabilities to embrace anything is possible approach to everything they do. They serve as role models for aspiring to excellence, and they instill a belief that we can win. Our Paralympic champions connect with Canadian families and reinforce the importance of sport and physical activity, healthy living, and being active for life.

Thank you once again, on behalf of all Canada's athletes and coaches, for the tremendous support you have provided in our quest to help more athletes win more medals in the Paralympic Games. Knowing that you care, believe in, and support these athletes in their pursuits means so much to them.

Thank you very much.

•(1630)

The Chair: Thank you.

We will move to our question and answer time. First up, in a seven-minute round, is Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you both for being here. First let me just say that obviously, we are extraordinarily proud of our athletes.

I just wanted to ask a question at the beginning of my round. I read an article after the games by one of the athletes who was disappointed when comparing the perceived treatment of both types of athletes. As I read that I felt disappointed for the athlete and how she felt, because these are extraordinary people who do incredible things. They accomplished some absolutely incredible performances not just in London, but even in the training leading up to the games.

Could you address that for me? I know you talked about funding issues. I just have a big concern that any of our athletes would have felt in some way like second-class athletes. How do we stop that from happening?

Mr. Henry Storgaard: I wish I knew the answer to that. It is true. I see it every day, our athletes see it all the time. The Olympic athletes come home, and professional athletes, and they get bonus money for competing. Watches and jewellery are tossed at them. Our athletes simply don't receive that. We don't have the resources, the wherewithal, to provide those kinds of gifts or luxuries and bonuses, if you will. There is a certain built-in double standard.

Part of our work is to ensure that there's equity and respect. We're working with our colleagues in all areas of sport to make people cognizant that there should be an equal approach to all athletes. We met only last week with the Canadian Olympic Committee to make sure when our athletes come home and they're feted in a parade, that all of our athletes are there and that all are treated the same.

We want to do that. We have to step up to the plate as much as anyone, but it's hard when you have one organization that is fairly well-to-do, and the other organization is struggling financially.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I hear you, and I can appreciate that. I don't want to focus too much on this, but I can't tell you how disappointed I was when I read that article. I know you were talking about funding, and coverage is obviously important because the more people get to see these athletes, the more they will understand how incredible what they're doing is.

How closely can you work with the Canadian Olympic Committee to make sure that all athletes are treated equally post-games?

It's very important to help build the next generation. When they see their heroes, these athletes, coming to the House of Commons, and they see them at schools and they see them at parades, that's what motivates a lot of people to get into it sometimes, when they're very young. How closely can you work with the Canadian Olympic Committee to make sure this happens in the future?

Through Own The Podium—I guess if you had the answer, you'd be doing it, I suppose—how do we get corporate Canada to do a

better job of getting more funding for athletes so we can maybe provide incentives for the Paralympic athletes as well?

•(1635)

Mr. Henry Storgaard: Since I've taken this job, my elbows have certainly gotten a little bit sharper in trying to toss them around a little bit more to make sure there is equitable and respectful treatment of all of our athletes. In many cases that is true; they are treated very, very well and very equitably.

Post-games, we didn't get the kind of information we should have received with respect to the parade, with respect to a lot of information.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Do you know why? Where was that parade? Why didn't you get that information?

Maybe I will spend my seven minutes on this. Why didn't you get that information? That bothers me. I'm covered by immunity here, so maybe that's—

Mr. Henry Storgaard: I can't really answer that; I have to be honest—

Mr. Paul Calandra: Was there a breakdown in communication from the Olympic—

Mr. Henry Storgaard: In the context that the parade was called the Olympic Heroes Parade, it was organized by the Canadian Olympic Committee. We officially had five athletes who were invited to attend, so I respectfully refused that invitation. How do you pick five athletes out of 145? We gradually got to about 30 athletes who were able to attend. This was while I was at the games. Honestly, we really had to scramble. Most of my staff at the games were scrambling to try to make accommodations and make things work and coordinate after the fact.

To answer the second part of your question about how we can work better with the COC, we addressed this last week with the president of the COC. He was very gracious in indicating that there were mistakes made and oversights, that we definitely want to work collaboratively in the future, and that all athletes who wear the Canadian maple leaf should be feted and recognized and celebrated.

Ms. Anne Merklinger: May I address the question around the level of support that's provided to athletes with a disability? The approach is identical for athletes, be they in the Olympic or the Paralympic environment. We identify those sports that have athletes who have podium potential, and we provide them with the necessary technical and financial support to reach their performance objectives.

Our shortcoming in London was not having enough athletes in total. Our pool of podium potential athletes was insufficient. The support that was provided to them was exactly the same approach as it was in the Olympic or the Paralympic environment. From a technical agency perspective, it's important to understand that.

Mr. Paul Calandra: With the exception of course of the performance for gold, silver...

Ms. Anne Merklinger: That's right; that, too.

Our performance metric going into the Paralympic Games traditionally has been a gold medal approach and that's due to a difference in depth of field between the Olympics compared to the Paralympics. Certainly in our discussions with our various funding partners post-London, going forward we're looking very closely at investment that is broader than a gold medal focus, certainly in the big sports like swimming and athletics.

The Chair: Ms. Sitsabaiesan.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): I want to echo once again what everyone here has been saying about how proud we are of our athletes and the coaches and families who are there supporting our athletes every day of the week, and of course you guys too, and all the work you do. Thank you for that.

Even though this is a post-mortem of the 2012 Paralympic Games, I want to look forward. Ms. Merklinger, you spoke about your priorities for 2016 and beyond, but I want to look a little more closely than that at the Parapan Am Games that will be happening in Toronto in 2015. Obviously we want to put on a good show, have a great display on home soil, and get Torontonians and Canadians as a whole—I'm from Toronto, so I have a little bias—engaged in the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games.

Mr. Storgaard, I know you're an expert in strategic marketing and branding. In that vein, I'm curious to know what plans you have to get more people engaged with the Parapan Am Games and what you are doing to do to get people excited to take advantage of this opportunity, both from an economic standpoint for the city of Toronto and surrounding area, but also from a social standpoint in getting our local youth engaged with the games. I guess with that it would also mean expanding the talent pool, as Ms. Merklinger has been speaking about.

● (1640)

Mr. Henry Storgaard: With respect to the Toronto games in 2015, we work very closely with the Toronto Pan Am and Parapan Am Games organizing committee with Ian Troop and his full team. We're in conversations every week and are working on a number of fronts to achieve what you've just talked about. It involves everything from collaborating on school visits and educational programs and pulling together our curriculum programs for schools. A significant number of our athletes are going into the Golden Horseshoe area and other parts of Ontario, in particular, as well as across the country to speak at a variety of events and talk about Toronto 2015.

A summit is being organized next week in Toronto and the Whitby region at the Abilities Centre for Paralympic adaptive clubs and different organizations that will speak to those very issues. What do we need to do to be fully prepared, to have thousands of volunteers, to have the stadium filled?

London was transformative, and we want to try to bring that to Toronto as well. In that regard I think we're tackling something like 15 different fronts right now, together with the games organizing committee. We want to have the biggest and the best Canadian Paralympic team at these games.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: That's fabulous.

It might be useful that there are 308 MPs who have access to schools and young people in their communities. If there's something we can do, maybe you can let us know. I know for sure that I'd be happy to engage with my community in getting the word out and increasing the awareness. I'm going to speak on behalf of all my colleagues and say I'm pretty sure that they'll all be on board.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: Thank you very much.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: As you both mentioned, our medal haul at the recent games was below what many had expected. Mr. Storgaard, you also mentioned that many other countries are taking the Paralympics more seriously and investing more in them. With that in mind, would you be changing how you prepare or how we as Canada prepare for the Parapan Am Games, based on our results in 2012?

Mr. Henry Storgaard: Absolutely, and I think Anne can answer part of that. If there's any time left, I'll answer as well.

Ms. Anne Merklinger: Thanks, Henry.

Certainly, we know that in order for the Parapan Am Games to be successful, just like Vancouver, our Canadian athletes need to perform well. We're in the midst of working with every targeted sport right now.

We're having the discussion with them in terms of making sure they send their best athletes with a disability to the Parapan Am Games. That hasn't necessarily been the case, so that's first and foremost. We need to make sure that our best athletes with a disability are actually going to be competing in Toronto, in the GTA, in the Golden Horseshoe, the best athletes and as full a team as possible, so that the impact on all Canadian communities is as broad as it can possibly be.

Then it's about making sure that we work with the host organizing committee so that the physical legacies, the new venues being constructed, meet the needs of athletes with a disability in a high-performance world in the longer term. The legacy out of the games is another very, very important factor around the impact on Paralympic sport.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: It's going to take a lot of effort, obviously, to achieve our goal and more effort to keep up with other countries, because they're already leading now. Do we need to increase our funding as a country? Do we need to increase our funding into the Paralympics to be able to compete at the same high level and then to exceed the other countries' performances? Is there something else that we can do or that you can do with your current resources to make that happen? I'm sure that if there is, you're probably already thinking of it.

● (1645)

Ms. Anne Merklinger: Well, we certainly need to protect the investment that is being made by the Government of Canada into the Canadian Paralympic Committee, which actually impacts the base of athletes with a disability. The number of athletes being attracted to sport programs is not sufficient for us to develop future podium potential athletes.

We still are not able to allocate.... We take a top-down, targeted approach in Own the Podium in terms of investing in the sports that have the highest potential to win gold medals; we need to expand this so that it's all medals. We also need to make sure that we're going as deep as we can possibly go in terms of both 2016 and 2020. Building in the next generation of podium potential athletes is another key priority.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Storgaard, I loved it when you said that your business is sport, but your investment is in people. Truly, I think you're building dreams.

In Scarborough, once again where I come from, there's Variety Village, which is a fantastic place that is doing exactly what you're asking for. It's providing a space in our community for our youth who have a physical disability to actually integrate with youth who may or may not have a physical disability, and who are being enabled to play.

You spoke of that connection to go from playground to podium. Without investment in places like Variety Village, which is creating those places, creating those safe, accessible playgrounds, how are we going to be able to get more to the podium?

Mr. Henry Storgaard: Well, that's a big part of what we're working on very closely with Variety Village, the Abilities Centre, and other facilities like those across the country. We're helping to finance specialized equipment or recreational wheelchairs so the kids can play wheelchair basketball. These are very expensive pieces of sports equipment, as you can well imagine. We talk about how it's costly to play hockey, but imagine having to buy a wheelchair for your son or daughter to go out and play wheelchair basketball. It's very costly, so we need all the assistance we can get. We're partnering with all kinds of companies, service clubs, and organizations to do that.

We have a very aggressive community-oriented program to break down barriers and make facilities more accessible, such as playgrounds, play yards, parks, and recreation, anywhere where people with a disability can participate and have a more active lifestyle. Imagine the health benefits that emanate from this, and the employability factor. I think all of us around this table know about the figure of 50% unemployment among people with physical disabilities.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: It's a shame.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: It's a shame. Some people even say it's 25%.

There are a lot of great outcomes and benefits from investing in some of these facilities and activities. We're trying to do it as cost-effectively as we can and as much as we can on the backs of corporate Canada as well.

But thank you very much for your support and your funding.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Sitsabaiesan.

Mr. Simms.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you again for coming, Ms. Merklinger, and Mr. Storgaard.

You put out an alarming statistic earlier about the participation rate in physical activity regarding those with physical disabilities.

I brought up a question some time ago. I don't know if you were in the audience or not, but I talked about engaging the school system to identify certain athletes to get them into the system. In your case I think it would be more of gradually elevating their abilities to the point where they become a potential Paralympic athlete.

Obviously with the resources you have, it must be a very difficult task to get all eyes and ears across this country.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: It's not easy, as you know, to develop curriculum and to get it into every school across the country, but we have an incredible curriculum piece right now that is highly regarded by teachers. We're working very hard on that.

We are collaborating with Toronto 2015 in the, let me call it, Toronto, Ontario area. We hope one of the outcomes of our partnership with the Canadian Olympic Committee would be to partner with their educational programs so we can go out collectively, save money, share resources, and reach a greater audience.

I agree with you. The school system for us has been so open and willing to work with us. It's such a great system to be able to help educate and inform, and to allow youngsters who have a disability to participate not just in the classroom but also in the gymnasium as opposed to being the scorekeeper.

• (1650)

Mr. Scott Simms: Yes. I've always thought that maybe a way to do this would be by attending first ministers' conferences on education where the ministers of education of each province are in one room. Have you ever thought about that? They have their own forum. Maybe you could make a presentation to them indicating how to identify athletes because we need them. You look at the stats. Every country is now on board. We're in tight, and this is serious competition.

That's a segue into my next comment. I watched great stories of individual efforts and how they overcome from the sense of growing up with an affliction to now they are an Olympic athlete. What I didn't see was that athlete getting in the pool or out on the track kicking some serious butt, as it were. They can do that, but I didn't see it. You're right.

I guess what I'm asking is when it comes to negotiating broadcast rights, does coverage of the Paralympics become a standard to which they have to measure up to as well, or is that just not there?

Mr. Henry Storgaard: At the closing press conference we had in London, we had an athlete, a coach, myself, and our *chef de mission* all on the panel in front of the media. The question the media asked was, what is the most transformative thing that would allow you to succeed at future games? Every one of the people on the panel indicated it would be extensive broadcast coverage. With respect to the questions some of you are asking, that would get the message out to families and people with disabilities, 4.4 million people, and encourage them to participate, to get active and do things. It would broaden the pool and allow the upgraded participation and ultimately people who want to perform as elite athletes.

That's the key for us. Unfortunately, we just went through a situation with the Olympic Broadcast Media Consortium, which was CTV, and Rogers to a lesser extent, and honestly it did not go well for us. They basically said to take what they gave us and that's it or they'd do nothing. We didn't have a choice.

The IOC, the International Olympic Committee, negotiates Canadian TV rights for the Olympics, but we have to try to find our own broadcast deal.

Mr. Scott Simms: What has been the trend? Compare 2008 to these past Olympics, or even prior to that, 2004.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: It's been typically the same I think over several years: late night, one hour, with the exception of Vancouver, our home games. There we had about 65 hours of coverage. It was much better. We had live opening and live closing ceremonies thanks to MPs who I think pressured CTV into coverage, but then we were right back to where we were.

CBC has just purchased the Olympic broadcast rights in Canada. We had a visit last week with them to see if they're at all interested in the Paralympics.

Mr. Scott Simms: It seems that only the host country is serious about broadcasting these games.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: That's been our experience to date.

Mr. Scott Simms: It's the exhilaration of somebody winning, with the Canadian flag on their back. To me, it's paramount.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: We really need to surround the wagons around CBC to make sure they're going to get a good broadcast deal. We're not looking for money. We're looking for air time and exposure. We even had to pay our own rights fee to the consortium.

Mr. Scott Simms: Can you state that again?

Mr. Henry Storgaard: To be able to own the broadcast rights for the Paralympic Games in Canada—the Olympic Broadcast Media Consortium would not pay for those rights to the London organizing committee—it was \$140,000. We had to pay for those rights so that we could actually get the little bit of air coverage that we did. This just keeps on going in terms of the whole Paralympic movement. This is one other example of where there's such a difference in, and I don't want to say fairness, but it's just a different ball game.

• (1655)

Mr. Scott Simms: I have some time, right?

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

Mr. Scott Simms: It's been an absolute pleasure talking to you today, an absolute pleasure.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: Likewise, thank you.

Mr. Scott Simms: I would like to continue this conversation, but I hope our report does reflect the importance of broadcasting the competition itself and not just their stories.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simms.

Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to touch on a couple of different things here.

I'm going to start with expanding the pool of athletes. We talked about that last week when you were here.

I second what Mr. Simms said. I think the school system is your best hope. I think it's something that will work tremendously well. I think you can really tap into it. There are special education teachers around the country who work directly with these students all day long, every single day. If they knew there was a place where those students could go, I'm sure they would engage in this. Also, I think the physical education teachers in all the schools would embrace this. With inclusion now being 15 or 16 years old in most provinces around the country, there's a huge opportunity to increase your participation. I think you said it's 3% nationwide. If you focused on this generation coming up and worked with the school system, it would let them know there's a place to go, a goal to achieve. I think you'd see a great amount of success.

I don't want to focus on that a lot, but do you agree with that?

Mr. Henry Storgaard: Absolutely, I do.

Ms. Anne Merklinger: There are several routes to increase the participation. Schools are very obvious ones, for sure. There are also the various disability groups that we're establishing partnerships with. The military is another significant opportunity. On many of those, Henry and his team are already well along the road to establishing the necessary alliances.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I was a principal in a small, rural elementary school, and the disability groups just aren't close to a lot of our athletes, to a lot of our children. If you can work with the schools, the facilities are there. There's expertise in those communities, so let's tap into that as well, simply because they can't get to the bigger communities a lot of the time, and particularly for disabled students, because it's more difficult for them to be transported. I think we have to focus on that.

I'm listening to the whole conversation. I'm really glad we're having this study.

Why do we have two games? We have the Olympics, where we have male athletes and female athletes, and they compete differently. A lot of these problems could be solved if the games were intertwined and we had one games. You wouldn't have to worry about television coverage. You could attract more investment because your disabled athletes would be participating in the same games. Their medal count would go to the same total, so the country would put more resources into that, because a disabled sprinter's 100-metre dash is going to have the same value as the men's 100-metre dash or the women's 100-metre dash.

I think with inclusion at almost all levels of society, and that's something we're pushing for, at least in Canada, do you see a time when we might have one games?

Mr. Henry Storgaard: It may well be possible. If so, I think it will be well into the future. Right now, for the ability to host such an event, you're talking about the largest multi-sport games and the second largest multi-sport games in the world. By putting those two events together, and with the magnitude of the logistics and the timelines, it would really have to be cut back. Both games would have to be significantly cut back in the number of athletes and the number of events that occur to be able to do that in one city.

It is certainly debated in all circles and it's something that keeps coming up all the time, so at some point that may occur.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Logistical challenges aside, a lot of it could be done through scheduling, I'm assuming. Over the space of about four, five, or six weeks we actually hold both events now. There are two weeks where there are Olympic Games. You might have it mixed together and have different events at different times and use the facilities better. I think it could be done. That would solve broadcast issues. It would solve some investment issues because the value of that gold medal would be contributing to the overall gold medal count and the competition of the whole Olympics.

This is chasing unicorns at this point in time. I just see a lot of these problems we've discussed today being solved through that.

You mentioned that we need more severely disabled athletes. I know there are classifications in Paralympics. Are we having trouble attracting the severely disabled because of the additional challenges they are facing?

• (1700)

Ms. Anne Merklinger: It's sports specific, so certainly our observations in London, even in the swimming pool where we did very well, were that we won our medals in the less severely disabled classes. It's really about where the other medals are on the table. We didn't even have athletes who entered in the more severely disabled classes. Our job, as the technical agency, is to identify where the medal opportunities are, and the severely disabled classes are a big medal opportunity for us.

Why do we not have more severely disabled athletes involved? Their logistical challenges are much more severe and difficult to overcome. We have a harder time reaching out and identifying the athletes who are more severely disabled, and then being able to create a training environment and provide the necessary coaching expertise for them to be able to succeed. For example, in a swimming pool, a very severely disabled athlete would need his own

lane and a very customized daily training environment, which most of our community pools and most of our swim clubs have not been able to provide.

The approach that the Canadian Paralympic Committee has been taking is to develop the pathway that each sport needs to have for the whole range of classes. That is some recent work that the Canadian Paralympic Committee has been doing, really a development focus within their organization, so we then have more athletes who we can work with throughout the whole range of classes.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Armstrong.

Next we have Mr. Dubé.

Now we're into five-minute rounds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am not going to repeat the same questions, although I share the same concerns as Mr. Calandra and Mr. Simms about the broadcasting of the Games. As a matter of fact, we all share the same fear. It was very clear when we watched the Games in the summer. We could see the difference and it was quite striking.

The point I would like to discuss has already been raised by Mr. Storgaard, who talked about the cost of equipment for disabled people who play those sports.

Before I ask my question, I am going to tell you a little story from my riding. I recently met with the Association des personnes handicapées de la Vallée-du-Richelieu in order to test the equipment they use. The cost of the equipment not only depends on the size and the number of pieces. It also depends on the innovation behind the equipment. It is often very new. We are trying to improve those things, which, in themselves, add to the cost.

Those people also told me about the challenge to find a league to play with and to find other participants. That presents all sorts of challenges. The representatives from Own the Podium want to recruit new people for the future. I don't think the sole intent is to build an elite. It also has to do with providing access at the community level.

In your humble opinion, how can we improve the situation? Is financial assistance the answer?

[*English*]

Mr. Henry Storgaard: I'll give you my card at the end of this meeting, and then you can share that with the club in your riding.

It is part of the challenge that we have because you don't have the same population base of people with disability, so forming leagues and teams and finding coaches and volunteers is a challenge. We do try where we can. Of course, in Quebec, Défi sportif is probably one of our top organizations nationally in assisting people with physical disabilities to participate in sport and recreation. I don't think it's so much a financial issue as it is a matter of finding the volunteers, the recruits, other teams, and other leagues. I'd be most happy to try to be that bridge to find out if there are some other teams in that area.

● (1705)

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: I believe I asked the same question when you joined us before the Games. Now that we are taking stock of the experience, we have the results of the Games in mind.

Could we actually do more in terms of innovation to make the equipment of the participants more accessible and less costly? Have initiatives been launched or can they be launched? Can the government and we, as members of Parliament, help in some way to promote innovation?

[English]

Mr. Henry Storgaard: Absolutely. We are currently working with Own the Podium as well as a number of universities across the country. The Université de Sherbrooke, which is not all that far from your riding, is one we're working with in all kinds of equipment innovation. You can imagine that if you can innovate a sit-ski or a sledge hockey piece of equipment and get it lighter and faster, it will be a great advantage for the team.

We experienced that with Michelle Stilwell. We were able to purchase, with OTP, a \$30,000 wheelchair. She went out and broke three world records with it before London, and ended up with a gold and a silver in London.

We are working with our partners in looking at equipment innovation throughout the country.

Ms. Anne Merklinger: We're also trying to bring equipment to their daily training environment so that they can train by themselves right in their communities, for example, the developing wheelchair basketball players or wheelchair rugby players, sending them rollers that they can train with on a daily basis in their homes or in their local communities.

We've had to be more innovative, but that's what's required for us to be more successful in Paralympic sport in the longer term.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: What about installation? I tried out the sledge hockey equipment. You need to have quite the upper body strength to be able to use it. It's not just the individual's equipment, there's also the installation.

Is there more that can be done, build a tailored gym, for lack of a better term, to build in that strength so you can properly use the equipment? It's hard to use it properly if you don't have that strength.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: I'm sure you didn't have any problem with that.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: It was surprisingly challenging, I will say.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: Yes, we are working, as was mentioned earlier, with the Abilities Centre and Variety Village, all the

Canadian sports centres across the country with specialized equipment and specialized personnel who understand the needs of various athletes with different disabilities, to ensure that there are training programs, training facilities, accessible equipment, whether it be pool time or gym time, all of these things.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dubé.

Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I want to go back to broadcast rights, but not necessarily to focus only on the Canadian broadcasters.

The IOC is the one that sells the broadcast rights. It's my understanding that it has become so expensive that the private carriers in Canada aren't all that excited about carrying the Olympics because they lose lots of money on them.

The IOC talks a really good game about how important sport is, the youth, etc., and the president goes there and gives a great little speech at the beginning of the games, all of that.

Doesn't the IOC have somewhat of a responsibility to live up to the standard to which it holds the athletes, to make the broadcast rights affordable so that when the broadcasters are competing for them it makes sense, so they can actually afford to broadcast the games?

On the one hand, it's so important. If you're not broadcasting, you're not developing. People aren't seeing you. I shouldn't have to watch the Olympics to see the gentleman from South Africa because he ran in the Olympics. Now everybody knows who he is, and they make such a big deal. It's great. The broadcasters showed that over and over again. Yes, great, but that happens every single day at the Paralympics.

I don't know if you can answer, but I find it passing ridiculous that the IOC isn't helping to develop the Paralympics as well. I don't know if you can comment on this without getting yourself into trouble, but people are going to stop broadcasting the games because they can't afford to buy the rights to the games.

How do we shame the IOC? That's what it comes down to, shaming the IOC into making the games affordable so that broadcasters can afford to broadcast them and not worry about taking a massive hit to their bottom line. That includes the CBC. The taxpayers want value from the CBC as well.

What can we do to shame the IOC? I guess it's more us than you.

● (1710)

Mr. Henry Storgaard: In a friendly sort of way, the Olympics are considered to be the corporate games and the Paralympics are considered to be the family games.

It's hard for me to comment on the broadcast rights of the IOC, other than to say, like you, I'm an interested observer and all of that. The price points have gone sky high, for sure.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Let me ask you this, then, because I know it's hard for you to answer.

If there were more coverage of the Paralympics, do you believe more people would know about it, more people would get involved, and that this would help build the pool of athletes? Just give me a yes or no.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: Yes.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Okay.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: And I'm dying to say something else.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Well, go ahead.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: Very quickly, not only would it do that, but I think just as importantly it would change society. It has that social transformative aspect to it.

Mr. Paul Calandra: It's annoying, in the sense that you hear the IOC president at the beginning of the games talk about the spirit of the games and so on and so forth, and then they let down those athletes by not making it affordable. They're making a lot of money on the one end, and not doing their job in helping to promote that on the other end.

I know you can't say it, but I can certainly say that maybe they would like at some point to start living up to the ideals they presume to be.... This will never change unless the IOC starts making the cost to broadcast the games reasonable.

Anyway, I'll leave it at that. I know it's hard for you to answer, and I'll leave it at that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Nantel, this will be the last question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Actually, I think it's a very good closing angle that we have here with Mr. Calandra's question.

[*Translation*]

I am wondering about one thing. Really, do the countries that have the best performance in the Paralympic Games deal better with the fact that disabled athletes are different? Do they have a better relationship with disabled people in general in society?

We have talked a lot about sports and all that, but the truth is that our relationship with people with disabilities is not easy. People do not feel drawn. People already feel uncomfortable, so are they going to watch those sports on TV?

For instance, should we not come up with an initiative where you have a person with two legs and a person in a wheelchair play basketball against each other, until one of them gets their butt kicked, if you will pardon the expression, gets beaten? Isn't that what we should look for?

However, the main question has more to do with figuring out if, in general, on a daily basis, the performance of a disabled person is more accepted in the countries that had a good performance in the Games.

[*English*]

Mr. Henry Storgaard: The answer to that, in one word, is yes. We were looking at best practices internationally, and some of our preliminary research would indicate that where there is the best broadcast coverage in a country of Paralympic Games, they coincidentally have some of the best teams internationally.

The broadcast coverage drives corporate sponsorship. It drives public awareness. It drives the familiarity, which you spoke of, with the public. The athletes become heroes and spokespeople on behalf of the country. It is one of the key things that will advance and accelerate the Paralympic movement in this country, almost more than anything else. I can tell you that.

Whatever pressure we have in this room to encourage our friends at CBC to get behind this—and I'm not saying they are not behind us; it's just that there's no deal. There's a deal for the Olympics. There's no deal done yet with the Paralympics, and we're 14 or 15 months away.

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: But the question that I am asking you is this. Do people in countries that do well in the Paralympic Games have a better relationship with disabled people in society?

[*English*]

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Nantel, once the bells are ringing, I have to interrupt you. With unanimous consent you can finish your question. Is there consent for Mr. Nantel to finish his question and a quick answer?

An hon. member: Sure.

The Chair: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you, guys.

Mr. Henry Storgaard: Could you repeat the question, please?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Sure. It's a very broad question. Would you say there's a relationship between the performance of the countries that scored the best at Paralympics and the way these countries integrate people with disabilities into day-to-day society?

Mr. Henry Storgaard: Absolutely. It's proven. There's no question.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nantel.

Thank you, Mr. Storgaard.

Ms. Merklinger, it's nice to have you here again. All the best. Good luck.

The meeting is adjourned.

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