



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

CHPC • NUMBER 020 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, June 7, 2016



Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Tuesday, June 7, 2016

•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. I call the meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee is dealing with the study of the activities of the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Committees on the eve of the Rio de Janeiro Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Welcome to all of our witnesses.

I will give the Canadian Olympic Committee 10 minutes to present. You can decide how you divide up the time. At eight minutes I will give you a two-minute warning so that you know you have to wrap up. The Canadian Paralympic Committee will get a similar 10-minute time. There will then be a question-and-answer segment.

Without any further ado, I call the Canadian Olympic Committee.

Mr. Christopher Overholt (Chief Executive Officer and Secretary General, Canadian Olympic Committee): Honourable Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to update you on our preparations for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, South America's first Olympic Games.

In 59 days, sporting fans from across the world will focus on Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as our lead athletes pursue their dreams of standing atop the podium.

My name is Chris Overholt, and I am the chief executive officer of the Canadian Olympic Committee. With me are Eric Myles, our executive director of sport and our lead executive in the sport department, and Carla Anderson, our director of games for Rio 2016.

Before I begin, I would like you to please look at the screen. You will get a first-hand glimpse of what we focus on at the Canadian Olympic Committee.

[Video presentation]

[Translation]

Mr. Eric Myles (Executive Director, Sport, Canadian Olympic Committee): This video reminds us of the excitement building in Rio as we approach the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games in 59 days.

The Summer Olympics are the largest global sporting event, and we are preparing to send the largest delegation in our history: over 315 Canadian athletes will compete against more than 10,000 athletes

from 205 countries. Competition is fierce but our Canadian team will be ready.

[English]

Mr. Christopher Overholt: The goal of the Canadian Olympic team is to contend for top 12 in the world in terms of overall medals won. It's an ambitious goal, and given the level of international competition, it will not be easy. So fierce, in fact, is the competition that just a couple of medals can make the difference between coming in 19th or 11th, but we've never been more confident in the ability of our athletes to rise to the challenge.

Our recent success on the international stage is a testament to their readiness for these games and to the incredible support team around them that helps them on their journey. Canadian athletes have won 19 world championship medals at the most recent world championships in Olympic sport.

[Translation]

Mr. Eric Myles: We are targeting to exceed the 18 total medals won in London. To get there, we will need guts, lots of preparation and a strong support team.

The COC is making every effort to make sure that the athletes' performance lives up to their incredible talent. We have great expertise in this area because we listen to the needs of our athletes and coaches. It is real team work. We learned from them that Olympic competition is very different from any other competitive environment. It is by analyzing these differences that we have been able to offer the best Olympic preparation program to date.

[English]

Mr. Christopher Overholt: Our preparation includes familiarization events to help acclimatize athletes and coaches to the actual games environment. By the time we arrive in Rio for the games, we will have sent 30 of 35 sports to familiarize themselves with the competition venues in general and the Rio environment they will be competing in during these games.

We've also provided information for family and friends, which gets sent directly to the national sport federations to pass on, and developed documents for them that we put on our website. We also provide services, such as helping with visas, and we have dedicated personnel for family and friends on site in Rio.

[Translation]

Mr. Eric Myles: These initiatives help reduce stress and distractions for our Olympians. This is another way to ensure that the whole Canadian Olympic family will be well prepared to support our athletes in Rio.

• (0850)

[English]

Mr. Christopher Overholt: Our sports and logistics team has made several visits to Rio over the past years. Our operations team is responsible for planning all the logistical details for more than 720 people for almost four weeks of the games period. It takes five years of preparation for four weeks of games.

To give you an idea of the scope of our operations, last month we sent our cargo shipment with clothing, equipment, and healthy Canadian snacks to the port of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

[Translation]

Mr. Eric Myles: This cargo of clothing, equipment, and healthy snacks filled 18 sea containers that are 40 feet in length. This is important because we all know that sometimes it's the small things that make the difference between success and failure. Supporting our athletes is therefore essential.

[English]

Mr. Christopher Overholt: It is important because we all know that sometimes it's the small things that make the difference in an athlete's performance. Again, to give you an idea of size, over a two-day period the outfitting team will pack more than 720 bags to send to our athletes and support team in Rio. In each bag will be 24 pieces of clothing and accessories. It's incredible to see the determination and pride that wearing the Canadian maple leaf brings to our athletes.

There'll be five main COC operational venues for the Canadian Olympic team: our Olympic village, two performance centres, the main press centre, and of course Canada Olympic House. Our athletes will be housed in the Olympic village or the COC's performance centre in Ipanema, with others spread out in other locations.

We have a ticketing team to help arrange for athletes to view competitions of their teammates from other sports. We have complete health, sport, and technology services filled by an expert Canadian health and science team, and the COC's performance technology services in the Olympic village includes video analysis technology to capture and analyze all Canadian Olympic team performances.

The COC has also developed a wellness centre to provide a calm and relaxing environment for Team Canada in the Olympic village. All this preparation is shared in collaboration with Own the Podium and our national sports federations to ensure every minute of every athlete's journey is smooth and efficient and that no stone is left unturned.

Our collaboration, especially with Sport Canada, is significant across all relevant sectors and is crucial to our success.

[Translation]

Mr. Eric Myles: In the Olympic village, the Canadian Olympic Committee offers many services for athlete orientation and entertainment between the competitions and training. They will have at their disposal concierge service, computer access, a training centre exclusively for the Canadian team, ticketing and access to Canadian coverage of the Games. Our specialists in health and

wellness will help our athletes to focus on performance and not be distracted by the Olympic environment.

Again, we will welcome the athletes, their families, and their friends to Canada Olympic House, a home away from home for Canadians, where friends and family can get away from the distractions, away from the Olympic crowds.

[English]

Mr. Christopher Overholt: Few things mobilize as many sectors of our society as the Olympic Games. Team Canada, of course, comprises not only athletes, coaches, technical support staff, and team leaders but also doctors and physiotherapists, operations personnel, communications and digital teams, outfitting teams, and security services, including, of course, RCMP officers to ensure the safety of the Canadian Olympic team while Brazilian security forces look after the general safety of all those involved.

We're also working on the Rio games communications plan. Heading into Rio, we're building on the strong connection between Canadians and their Olympic team. As we did for Sochi 2014 in the Olympic Winter Games, we'll be announcing all our teams before Rio and have announced six teams so far. We can feel the anticipation building as Canadians seek to learn the inspiring stories of athletes who will represent our country.

[Translation]

Mr. Eric Myles: We continue to look for creative ways to bring Canadians closer to our athletes on the road to Rio and to tell their inspiring stories. We are committed to raising the visibility of our Olympians, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year.

Organizing the Canadian mission in Rio is a colossal task and a complex one. It represents five years of work. We will rise to the challenge, however, taking the cue from our athletes' courage and persistence.

[English]

Mr. Christopher Overholt: We are particularly pleased to have this opportunity to address this committee because the Government of Canada plays such an important role as a contributor to sport in this country, in particular to our national sport federations and our athletes and coaches in Canada. We're so grateful for that support. Without question, continued strong and stable government funding is critical. The collaboration between our organizations is essential to the success of our athletes today and to ensure future generations of Olympians soar to even greater heights.

Participation and inclusivity in amateur sport is one of our greatest avenues in creating improved health and safety, confidence, community, and culture. We have to admit that sport is taking a bit of a hit right now with disturbing allegations of systematic doping that have surfaced in the past months. We can say that Canada is standing firm on the side of clean athletes. That is why we are testing all our athletes before the games and why we emphatically support our partners, including the Montreal-based World Anti-Doping Agency, which works so diligently to ensure a fair and level playing field for all.

It's critical that we protect the integrity of sport so that it can continue to unite the world and transform our societies. It's also critical that we continue to support our athletes in all areas of their life and wellness; this is at the centre of our mantra at the COC.

Our work isn't just about getting athletes to the games. We work all year round on various programs, some in collaboration with provinces and governments, to ensure healthy and prosperous sport systems from the playground to the podium.

We call on all Canadians to rally behind our athletes once again as they compete against the world to make our community proud. Canada's mission for Rio is a huge undertaking. By working together with all the partners, we will succeed for our athletes.

Thank you for your attention today. We'll be happy to answer any questions you may have in English or French.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we will go to the Paralympic Committee for ten minutes.

[*Video presentation*]

Ms. Karen O'Neill (Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Paralympic Committee): Good morning, honourable Chair and committee members. Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide an update to you today, which will include a number of things: first, an update on the Rio Paralympics; second, a bit about our Team Canada preparations; and third, how we intend to tell the story and share it with all Canadians from coast to coast.

Before I start, I would like to acknowledge the continued strong leadership and financial support of the Government of Canada and the leadership and work of our National Sport Federations and performance partners such as Sport Canada, Own the Podium, and the Coaching Association of Canada as they support our athletes to compete in the games.

Now let's turn our attention to the deck that you all have in front of you. We will walk through it, and at least you will have a memory and some reminders of some of the information that we are going to share with you today. We will start with page 3.

The Rio Paralympics will be held from September 7 to September 18, and approximately 176 countries will be competing, with a total of 4,350 athletes. There will be 23 disciplines—that means 22 sports, and cycling has two disciplines—and there will be 11 days of competition. Most important for all of us to note is that there will be 528 medals to take away. That is what our focus is on, the 528, and

second, the two new sports that have been added, triathlon and canoe, for both of which Canada will be providing athletes.

The next page speaks about Team Canada's composition. Currently, we are looking at about 155 to 160 athletes, and this also includes the guides. As Chris mentioned earlier, when you add all the support—the coaching, the medical personnel, the mission staff, and the admin staff, and a small village to make this effective and help support the athletes—our overall Team Canada size will be approximately 300 individuals.

Leading this large team will be none other than one of our most decorated Paralympic athletes, five-time Paralympian Ms. Chantal Petitclerc. Her leadership is based upon an incredible level and years of experience in knowing what it takes to win and the kind of performance environment we need to provide for our athletes to do their very best on the world stage.

Chris also referred a little bit to the sequencing for the notification of the sports. It is a whole process, and currently we have confirmed and nominated seven sports to be part of Team Canada leading into Rio. The remaining sports will be nominated and appointed from today up until about August 7, after which we will announce the overall Team Canada sequence.

● (0900)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Catherine Gosselin-Després (Executive Director, Sport, Canadian Paralympic Committee): For the majority of sports, the athletes are already on the ground in Rio.

We also worked very closely with the Canadian Olympic Committee for certain sports that are integrated, to visit the sites and become familiar with them, where appropriate.

For these Games, we have invested much more in familiarization and visiting sport sites. In 2016, there was an orientation for the team in Rio, and all our team leaders and head coaches were there.

We decided to have a performance centre very close to the Olympic site. This will help manage comings and goings and all the on-site activities.

We have worked closely with the Canadian consulate in Rio and with the RCMP on security aspects in the lead-up to the Games.

[*English*]

Our key priority for Rio is performance. Our key pillars, which you will see in your deck, are to be athlete-centred, to be high-performance-oriented, to provide professional services, to plan proactively ahead of the games, and to have an effective delivery of operational services on site at the games.

[*Translation*]

For the Rio Games, our goal is to be in the top 16 for the number of medals overall. This will be hard to do though since the paralympic movement has grown a lot since the London Games, it has grown incredibly. We would have to win about 30 medals overall to achieve that goal.

There are various problems in Rio, such as the Zika virus and security. We are putting plans in place to ensure that all the risks are managed effectively and proactively. We are working with partners such as Sport Canada and the RCMP to ensure that these problems are managed in advance and that plans are in place.

[English]

Mr. Martin Richard (Executive Director, Communications and Marketing, Canadian Paralympic Committee): Now, around telling our story, to meet our athletes is, for us, incredible, and to hear their stories is definitely unforgettable, but to watch them compete, as you saw in the video, will change you forever. The games are tough, but Canadian athletes are definitely tougher. This is why it is important for the Canadian Paralympic Committee to ensure that the stories of our Paralympians, both on and off the field of play, are shared with all Canadians from coast to coast.

In 2013 the Canadian Paralympic Committee acquired the broadcast and digital rights for the Sochi and Rio Paralympic Games. That led to the creation of the Canadian Paralympic media consortium, which consists of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation/Radio-Canada and Rogers Sportsnet, as well as AMI television, both French and English, in addition to digital partners such as Yahoo! Canada, SendtoNews, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Videogami—a big group of people. It delivered groundbreaking coverage of Paralympic sport to Canadians. This, obviously, was all funded by our corporate partners at the Paralympic Committee.

Rio will bring unprecedented coverage, the triple of what we brought to Canadians for Sochi. We are looking at more than 200 hours of television broadcasts.

[Translation]

Yes, I said 200 hours of television coverage for Canada.

[English]

That's coast to coast.

We will also bring to Canadians 800 hours of live digital streaming across 12 different channels. The content will be described for a visually impaired audience through our partnership with AMI television and AMI-télé. There will be more than 150 live Canadian moments brought to you via the Team Canada digital platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.

To build excitement in the lead-up to the games, Team Canada will be launching its brand campaign, entitled ParaTough. It will focus on the hard work and investment required to become an elite Paralympic athlete. It will feature a variety of sports and a variety of athletes whom you will all see in Rio competing, seeing the training pay off, so to speak.

Obviously the brand campaign will move a step forward in engaging Canadians in a challenge that we call the ParaTough challenge. We will reach Canadians through a variety of channels and key influencers to really try out what it takes to be a Paralympic athlete and what it takes to be active. Our goal will be to replicate the ice bucket challenge that you saw last year in building awareness for the Paralympic movement, but also to get Canadians active, which is a key goal for this campaign.

There are 92 days left until the opening ceremonies of the Paralympic Games in Rio. You're probably asking yourselves how you can be champions for Team Canada. Well, as the Olympic Committee and Karen mentioned earlier, we will have individual sport nominations throughout the country in the lead-up to August. We would like your participation and support in your local communities to build excitement when we announce athletes from across the country.

Also, we will be launching the official Team Canada roster at the end of August. As you will probably hear from the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Team Canada will be launching the Paralympic flip-flops, which is a unique item that will support fundraising for the Canadian Paralympic team and its athletes in the next wave of athletes, so to speak.

The ParaTough campaign will be launched July 4 on Parliament Hill. If you are still in Ottawa, we would like to invite you to take part in this launch, and also to take part in the challenge.

● (0905)

Ms. Karen O'Neill: Speaking of the flip-flops, we have brought flip-flops for each of you so that you'll be able to enjoy a soft launch and inspire everybody with you.

In closing, sport has a tremendous power to transform all of us as individuals, as communities, and as a country. I hope you will all join us in your continued support and cheer for our Team Canada Paralympians in September.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Before we go to questions and answers, I need to ask the committee a question.

Mr. Lauzon, the parliamentary secretary for Minister Qualtrough, wondered whether you would allow him to just have a few words. Do I hear any...?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Fine The committee agrees.

Go ahead, Mr. Lauzon.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities): I would like to thank you all for being here this morning. I appreciate it.

[Translation]

I am here today as the parliamentary secretary to Carla Qualtrough. I am pleased to be your spokesperson right across Canada in the lead-up to the Olympic Games. It is something I really enjoy.

I would like to thank you for your work thus far. I wanted to thank you personally. I wish you the best of luck in the next Games. Keep up the good work.

Thank you very much.

[English]

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

Now we go to the question-and-answer part. The first round is going to be seven minutes. That includes the question and the answer, so I would like everybody to be as crisp and concise as they can be.

We begin with Mr. O'Regan of the Liberals, for seven minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question pertains specifically to the Paralympic Games. I have noticed that viewership has increased considerably from one Games to the next. Can you explain why?

Moreover, can Canadians expect more extensive coverage of the Paralympic Games in Rio in 2016?

Also, has the Canadian Paralympic Committee taken steps to have additional sports included in future Paralympic Games? Could you give the committee a short list of the sports that the CPC would like to see in future Games?

Thank you very much.

[English]

Ms. Karen O'Neill: Thank you very much, Mr. O'Regan.

Let me make a few general comments, and then I'll ask my colleagues to speak about some of the specifics.

In terms of the number of viewers, you're right, because one of the biggest challenges we have for increased participation by individuals with a disability across the country is that they know there are possibilities and options.

One of our top swimming Paralympians, Stephanie Dixon, with about 21 awards and medals, often tells the story that she didn't even know it was possible. She's a single-leg amputee, and she didn't know it was possible until she saw another Paralympic swimmer on TV. That's what initiated it. She saw the interview afterwards. The same story is shared with one of her equivalent colleagues, Benoît Huot. The stories from our athletes is that again and again they hear there's an option they never considered. It was a very specific strategy, starting in Sochi, to ensure that the story got out.

I'd like to ask my colleague Martin Richard to speak a little about the specifics and the whole idea of the CBC buying the rights. The idea was that we could develop a strong content strategy in addition to the extraordinary innovative partnerships in terms of having multiple channels on the platforms of many of our partners so that they're integrated and aligned for many audiences. I'd like him to speak a little more about it because you're right, it's probably the number one priority. If we go ahead and compete and nobody sees it, I fear that, number one, Canadians will not know the story of our fabulous athletes, but we will also not inspire what we believe needs to be the next generation.

● (0910)

Mr. Martin Richard: As Karen mentioned, one of the key items for us was to bring the stories back home. We had the fortunate

experience in Vancouver of having our athletes compete in front of Canadians. How can we bring that energy and impact back to Canadians consistently when the games are not hosted in Canada? After London, we were quite disappointed with the amount of coverage that our Paralympian teams got, so we took the bold move to acquire the rights.

We're not a television station and we're not professionals in that medium, so we forged partnerships with the biggest media outlets in the country and sought their guidance on how we could bring more coverage to Canadians through a variety of channels, from digital channels for a younger audience to the traditional linear broadcast platforms.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: If I could interject, the time zone works in your favour this time too, which is a huge issue.

Ms. Karen O'Neill: Absolutely.

Mr. Martin Richard: For Rio, it could not be more of a perfect storm for us. We can bring the quantity, but we can also focus on the quality and on ensuring that the story of the Paralympic brand was told consistently across all platforms. This is where the Paralympic Committee's leadership played a part. We're going to see some very exciting things on the field of play, but you will also see them on your television set or your iPads throughout the games.

Ms. Karen O'Neill: With reference to your second question, which was about the number of sports, the sequence for a sport coming on a program is about a seven-year advanced window. We are looking at sports now in 2022, 2024, and we will be lobbying the International Paralympic Committee on sports for the program. For instance, Rio will be the last time that sailing is on the Paralympic agenda, but they've replaced triathlon and canoe for this set, and then badminton and taekwondo are going to be added for games afterwards. It's a very rigorous process of review against criteria, depth of field, participation, availability for multi-classes, and disability.

[Translation]

Ms. Catherine Gosselin-Després: Once we find out which disciplines will be accepted, we will develop an internal strategy to determine which sports we could promote to our advantage. Canada often excels in new sports. So we are trying to take advantage of these opportunities.

For the Winter Games, for example, para-snowboard was tried out in Sochi. The number of categories has increased. We are trying to invest more time in this sport so we can win more medals. With our winter conditions in Canada, we have more opportunities to win medals in winter sports.

We are conducting our analysis and developing our strategy accordingly.

[English]

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

The Chair: You have one and three quarter minutes.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: I offer to share with my colleague.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): I read the evidence before we went to London. There were some very interesting points.

[*English*]

I was reading what Charmaine Crooks said when she was testifying. She said that while women's participation in sport has increased, there is still a huge gap in terms of female leadership in sport at the very high levels.

We are going to run out of time, so if I don't get the full answer, maybe I can get some information in writing as well. I am curious about the number of women who are involved in the Canadian Olympic movement and the Canadian Paralympic movement as coaches, as a percentage, if we compared it, and the number of women who are involved as directors within the two movements, and in addition, what programs are in place to encourage women to take leadership positions in sports.

Let's get started.

• (0915)

Mr. Christopher Overholt: I'll take it quickly, because from a sport leadership perspective it is, relatively speaking, a very good story in this country, as evidenced by Karen's leadership on the Paralympic side, and of course our president, Tricia Smith, has just taken the reins at the Olympic Committee. As many of you may know, she has just been nominated to the IOC in the last few days by the executive board, and we're all hoping her confirmation will come in early July as part of the IOC session meeting in Rio.

With regard to our sport leadership within our system, the statistical number escapes me at this moment, but it skews heavily toward women. In fact, more than 50% of our current sport administrator leadership in the system right now is being provided by women.

I don't have our coaching statistics for you at this time.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Perhaps Ms. O'Neill can find a moment to stick that answer right into another question.

Thank you.

Now we go to Mr. Kitchen for the Conservatives.

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

Thank you all for coming here today.

Ms. O'Neill, thank you for answering my first question, which was how I could get those flip-flops. I appreciate it.

I've talked with Sport Canada in the past and I'm aware of the next-generation steps that are being put forward. Ms. O'Neill, can you comment on what your steps are for the next generation?

Ms. Karen O'Neill: Absolutely. This is a critical program for us, particularly when you talk about individuals with a disability.

The next generation, loosely defined, speaks to those athletes who might be approximately five to eight or nine years away from the

podium. In the Paralympics and for athletes with a disability, this is not necessarily the case. Because of the engagement of our athletes, often athletes can be identified, and depending whether it's a traumatic or a congenital injury, if they have a strong fitness and sport background, they could be in the next generation program as soon as in a year to three years.

It's of utmost importance for us. We've initiated a program very similar to what the COC has for identification and recruitment of athletes. Ours is called "Paralympian Search". Most important for us is to be able to identify and recruit athletes and then provide the strong, quality, technical leadership in coaching in addition to a quality daily training environment, a facility that's accessible, and equipment that's appropriate and accessible.

When we talk about the next generation, the opportunity for us to develop a longer-term view to support participation all the way up to the podium is most critical for us, because currently our programs and our resources and capacity are more focused, I'm going to say, on that tighter window to the podium. That's why it's important to have the longer-term view.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Catherine Gosselin-Després: Have have conducted our Paralympian Search four times. About 64% of our new athletes have come from these four events. So it has been extremely positive.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you very much.

The next question will be for both groups.

I've had the privilege of being to Rio. I realized when I went there that there were all sorts of hurdles I had to step through—not only consular issues and visa issues, but health issues as well, such as worries about yellow fever and dengue fever. At that time Zika was not an issue.

I'm wondering whether both groups can comment on what steps you've taken and what precautions you've taken.

Mr. Christopher Overholt: I'll start and then I'll turn it over to you, Karen.

First of all and importantly, the health and safety of our athletes and coaches is, for all of our mission team members, always our first priority whenever we're preparing to go for games.

We're in the fortunate position of having great leadership within the medical community and attached to our Olympic mission. Dr. Bob McCormack has been involved with us for as long as I've been involved over the last six years. As our chief medical officer, he provides great continuity for the Olympic team, games over games, and has many relationships around the world at the highest levels, which allow him not only to monitor the circumstances around health and safety but also to be an active part of the conversations.

We have great comfort in the information we're getting both from the Rio organizing committee and first-hand from our chief medical officer, and in the steps we've taken to mitigate those circumstances.

Of course, we've seen headlines in the last couple of days that I think would provide possible cause for concern to almost any person, but the information we get is that it's well under control, and certainly the recent statements from the World Health Organization would indicate that they feel the same, despite some of what has been said by the broader medical community internationally.

As most of you will probably be aware, the WHO has convened a meeting later in June in Geneva to discuss it further, but, again, the comfort and assurances we have, as provided by our medical team and by the international authorities, give us good confidence.

● (0920)

Ms. Karen O'Neill: I would echo that. Chris stated it extremely well.

Going back to the earlier comments about when we start planning, on our horizon we're already looking at the next three sets of games, and certainly Rio has been on our radar for at least the last half-dozen years.

Part of the games planning is not only how many suitcases, jackets, and coaches we need to take and support in the athletes village, but also an ongoing risk assessment of what the variables are that will impact the team. That starts with the planning even way back, in our five or six years prior. Health concerns, security, water—those are all part of our planning, as well as risk management and mitigation.

I would also echo and build upon Chris's comments about taking a small village to deal with this. Between us and the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Canadian consulate, and the other associated federal agencies, there is a very tight and strong working partnership to make sure that we have accurate data on a real-time basis and have the capacity and the system, as Catherine pointed out in discussing how we were looking at our emergency preparedness response and our issue management, to be able to activate a response immediately as required.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you.

We've had a number of cases in the news in which a number of athletes have said they're not going to go, and it's a personal preference as to whether they do or not.

How are you going to fill those spots as you hear about them? If something happens on the last day, how do you fill that position?

Mr. Christopher Overholt: We submit a long list of potential athletes to the organizing committee for consideration, and then we leave the rest to our national sports federations, each of which has its own independent process, separate from us, that allows them to nominate athletes and coaches to their team.

That's a process that has hard deadlines that come up in July. Working with our national sports federations for the many months leading up to the games, then, we have all potential athletes covered in our long-list registry with the organizing committee, and then we leave it to our national sports federations to address that question up to the deadline.

Ms. Karen O'Neill: Ours would be a very similar situation, in that the long lists are submitted several months beforehand. At this point, we have had no athletes decline the invitation to participate,

but I'd also reinforce that it's not only the athletes. If you remember the numbers I spoke about, our team is about 155 to 160 people, but to support that team we have the technical support mission and operations. They bring it up to 300. Our concern is for the total team.

We also ensure that from an information standpoint, everybody is very clear on the scope of the issue, the implications, and the support—and full support—for whatever decision they make. They're supported in every aspect with the information to make the best decision that's appropriate for them.

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

I now go to Mr. Nantel for the NDP.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you for being here this morning. Clearly, the next Games are approaching quickly. No doubt you are counting the minutes.

Your appearance here will certainly encourage athletes in their performance. Each federation has its athletes. I see your role as similar to that of an impresario who makes sure everything is set for an ideal performance.

Mr. Myles, Ms. Gosselin-Després, the media are covering the situation there, especially the social context and health. I would like to know how all of that is influencing performance-based training and preparation. How do you maintain our athletes' concentration?

I hope to have some time later on to ask some questions about more sensitive subjects, although the answers will more likely come after the Games are over. Actually, I don't think that every subject should be addressed before the Games, so as not to interfere with performance.

In short, does the media coverage of the situation have an impact on you, your athletes or your federation in terms of performance and training?

● (0925)

Ms. Catherine Gosselin-Després: In my opinion, the most important thing is to provide all the necessary information to our sports federations so they can determine what might distract their athletes. Each person reacts differently to any given scenario. We really want to be proactive to make sure the team leaders have the information and filter it by analyzing all the inherent issues, whether good or bad, so they can manage their athletes as effectively as possible. Filtering information, briefings, education, that is what we do. I think it's the best approach.

We have also done a lot of simulations with our athletes at the sites in Rio. That helps them understand the environment and how the city works. Yes, there will be traffic; yes, there are beaches and tourist attractions. Managing distractions is something we take very seriously. We are trying to determine what might distract our athletes or not, and to put proactive plans in place accordingly.

Mr. Eric Myles: We follow the same process as regards preparation. “Team work” is the term that comes to mind. We are talking about federations but there is a great deal of collaboration. Consider for instance Sport Canada and Own the Podium. These groups really support the federations and the athletes. The work that coaches do is important, to be sure, but in terms of preparation, the whole support team around the athletes is also crucial.

For Rio, and for the majority of Games, about five years of preparation goes into site familiarization or preparatory visits. For most sports, the athletes went to Rio for a preparatory stage. The preparation for the Games is minute by minute. So the athletes have a very precise view.

As to political or international issues, our athletes are special individuals who are very focused on their task, so our role is to make sure the environment is as safe as possible to support their performance. Athletes are used to those kinds of realities. They travel year after year. Getting to the Olympics takes about 12 years of an athlete's life. It is really the aggregate of all those experiences.

Finally, I would like to point out that not a single Canadian athlete has said that they will not go to Rio because of the situation there.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: We have read in particular that ticket sales to sports events have not been fantastic so far. I don't know if that is the case for both Games.

Could that have an impact on the quality of the reception and services that will be provided to you?

Mr. Eric Myles: I'm sorry, I didn't understand the beginning of your question.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: The news is not great as regards ticket sales to attend the various sports events.

Mr. Eric Myles: Honestly, we are not worried about that. Different games will have different circumstances. Look at the 2015 Pan American Games, which were held in Toronto. In my view, that's the best example we have, closer to home. The same things were said before those games were held and certain concerns were raised. However, as you all know, they were an unbelievable success.

I wouldn't describe the situation as worrisome. Moreover, we have the complete support of the organizing committee, with whom we are working closely. There are Canadians who work within the organization. It's a strong international movement. In short, there's nothing to worry about on that level.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Wouldn't the potential appointment of Tricia Smith to the International Olympic Committee provide additional motivation and be a source of pride for our athletes, given that she, herself, is an athlete?

Mr. Eric Myles: That's a good question.

Our president represents not only the athletes, but also everyone: staff, all of our leaders, and people who believe in the Olympic movement. We need more people like her in Canada, and internationally as well. Given everything that's going on right now, we can see the key role Ms. Smith is already playing, and it's attributable not only to her appointment as president, but also to the

experience she has acquired over the years. She had already been quite involved in rowing internationally.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: That brings me to the question that's bothering a lot of people. I'm not expecting an answer today. There are some subjects that are better dealt with later.

Ms. Smith arrives with a breath of fresh air in terms of motivation. I hope that in the fall, after the games, the Canadian Olympic Committee will be able to do a post-mortem of the scandal that rocked it.

As you so eloquently put it, athletes are used to facing big challenges and planning for the long term. Mr. Brassard, who is certainly one of the best ambassadors out of all sports figures, threw in the towel, saying it was best that he leave. That really bothered people. I think someone needs to explain to us why this guy decided to deal with this on his own. He left with his troubling questions all wound up in a ball, saying it was best that he leave, that he would not speak just yet, and that he'd let his sports colleagues do their work.

We expect the Canadian Olympic Committee to give us a clear answer, although not right away. I think it's important not to distract people before their performance.

My question is for representatives of the Canadian Paralympic Committee.

You purchased the rights. Have the Paralympic organizations of all the other countries purchased the rights to sell to broadcasters?

● (0930)

Mr. Martin Richard: No, this is very unique to Canada. We like to say that we're innovating with respect to this strategy.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Good for you!

Mr. Martin Richard: We hope that other countries that may not necessarily have high ratings will look at our model. We are always ready to share our ideas with them.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: That's absolutely fantastic.

I heard talk of Para flip-flops. I imagine that everyone will want to participate in the process I would also like to thank The Bay for doing this.

Is the situation still the same? Is there less interest from advertisers or for marketing the Paralympic Games?

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Nantel, I'm sorry; we'll have to cut you off there. Thanks.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Next is Mr. Vandal of the Liberals.

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): I would like to thank you very much for your presentation.

[English]

My questions were going to be around the Zika virus. Mr. Kitchen has asked several of them, and you've given us the general advice that based on the best information from your public health professionals and your doctors, our athletes will be safe.

As one follow-up question, can you give us specific examples of what sort of counsel or advice you're giving our athletes to mitigate the risk to them and their loved ones when they go home? Can you give us just a few specifics?

[Translation]

Ms. Catherine Gosselin-Després: Thank you.

[English]

Basically, we have a number of ways by which to mitigate the risk, such as wearing bug spray, mosquito repellent, on an ongoing basis. Also, basically we indicate to them that if they're uncomfortable, they should wear long sleeves and long pants. It's those kinds of things.

We're also making sure with the organizing committee that there's going to be air conditioning within the village. We're trying to ensure that windows are not open and are really reinforcing some of those messages. As well, obviously we want each of them understand with their own team doctor what they're getting into, and we have our chief medical officer working with each of the team doctors to highlight some of those risks and ways of mitigating any area that may make them uncomfortable.

Mr. Christopher Overholt: I would only add that of course the organizing committee takes the first responsibility. All of us have heard first-hand about some of the mitigating steps that the organizing committee has taken on the ground. There's been lots of spraying and work done around the venues and so on that they're managing.

Otherwise our instructions quite literally to our athletes, coaches, and all of our mission team members is generally preventive in its orientation. We have many opportunities to intersect with them in that regard. We hold seminars for our athletes and coaches. In recent weeks we had our team orientation preparation seminar, which involved most of our mission team members. In these we have the chance to brief them on all matters of games operations, including security, health, and safety. We have team orientation sessions that we undertake before the team goes, and then again orientation sessions once they arrive in Rio.

All of those are opportunities to give them quite literal instruction about preventive measures. Then, of course, we lean on the World Health Organization and the other bodies that are advising Brazil on preventive measures for those who might be prepared to take families or for those who attend and are perhaps preparing for families after Rio. They are quite direct and literal instructions around family planning, which we consider, of course, and advise our athletes and mission team members on.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Completely switching gears, I understand that the CBC is the official broadcaster of the Olympics.

Mr. Christopher Overholt: Yes, sir.

Mr. Dan Vandal: One of the unique aspects of the 2010 games in Vancouver was a partnership between—I forget who was the official broadcaster—and Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. I thought it was a fantastic way to reach young indigenous potential athletes.

Was that considered this time around, or would it be considered in the future?

•(0935)

Mr. Christopher Overholt: I can't speak to CBC's plans as it relates to the aboriginal community, sir. I'm sorry, but I'm not familiar.

Mr. Martin Richard: As far as the Paralympics go, I will take that as a very good idea to follow up on. Obviously our consortium is growing. We have more and more partners coming to the table, and it is a unique opportunity for us to explore to bring further hours of coverage to Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Vandal: Thank you very much.

Mr. Samson, is there anything you would like to add?

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Yes. Thank you. I have a few brief questions.

You mentioned the number of athletes who are going to the games. Could you tell us about the makeup of the delegation in more detail?

Ms. Catherine Gosselin-Després: Do you mean specifically the sports in which we will be competing and excelling or, rather, the number of men versus the number of women?

Mr. Darrell Samson: I'd like to know the representation of men versus women, the average age, in short, the overall makeup of the delegation.

Ms. Catherine Gosselin-Després: All right.

In our case, we are going to have a large contingent of women at this edition of the games. I think this will probably bring the ratio to nearly fifty-fifty, given that we have a few teams that qualified on the women's side, such as in goalball and in sitting volleyball, but did not qualify on the men's side. That should bring us to a greater balance, compared with previous editions of the games.

As for sports in which we should have more participants, there is track and field, swimming, cycling, as well as team sports, including wheelchair basketball and rugby.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Okay. Thank you.

Do the people from the Canadian Olympic Committee wish to add further information?

Mr. Eric Myles: Generally, in our case, the statistics are the same, in other words, about fifty-fifty. There has really been a lot of progress. Much work had been done in terms of team sports. In London, two of our teams qualified, while five teams have already qualified so far. There are till a few qualifying events, in particular for men's rugby and basketball.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Thank you.

I have one more important question.

How is the Canadian Paralympic Committee going to ensure coverage of the games is in both official languages, in Canada and abroad? How are you going to make sure that linguistic duality is respected?

Mr. Martin Richard: The Canadian Paralympic Committee is proud of the fact that there will be more than 40 hours of original broadcasts in French, with the participation of Radio-Canada and our partner AMI-télé. Broadcasting in both official languages is very important, but we think it's also important to make content available to the blind, to provide described video for sporting events. That way, all Canadians, including the blind, can have access to programming in both official languages, through the AMI-télé and AMI-tv services.

Mr. Darrell Samson: How many hours of programming did you say would be in English? I heard 300 hours.

Mr. Martin Richard: The number of hours of original programming will be 60 in English and 40 in French. In total, there will be 200 hours of programming, as there will be a number of rebroadcasts.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I go to a second round of five minutes each. Mr. Waugh from the Conservatives will lead off.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, everyone, for coming.

I'm going to go to you, Chris, and they've got to be short answers. I'm going to share with Mr. Maguire.

First of all, in Regina you have a couple of new board members. Congratulations. I think the COC has made a positive move for diversity, so I commend you for that. We needed some new board members. I think you have cleaned the slate.

I come from Saskatchewan. We're going to get a gold medallist in Rio, Brienne Theisen-Eaton. She married up, of course, but I have been in sports for a long time, and I'm seeing some of our best athletes not going through our sports performance centres but instead going to the NCAA.

In this case, fine, Brienne's going to be there, and we know she's going to win gold or silver, but how can we retain our athletes instead of seeing them go to the States?

Mr. Christopher Overholt: That's a terrific question. I'll be as brief as I can be.

First of all, I echo your sentiments 100% with respect to our board members. We just came off a board retreat in Halifax this past weekend where all of our board members made strong contributions, but in particular the contributions of those who have just joined us were quite visible and felt. Again, I echo your sentiments.

The matter of athletes leaving for the NCAA is both a blessing and a curse, I might argue. Obviously, it's probably one of the best-developed collegial systems in the world, if not the best, so our athletes who are afforded the opportunity to go greatly benefit from it and from that higher level of competition.

That said, many of our provinces, as you well know, have a commitment and have taken time, energy, and significant investment to invest in these centres.

As you probably well know, the Canadian Olympic Committee has been an outstanding supporter of those centres in recent times, having contributed \$3 million to programs and to a lesser extent operations in those centres across the country over the last four years. As recently as this weekend, we had a representative from the COPSIN network join us at the board meeting to talk about our way forward together. It's certainly something we're considering strongly for our strategic plan in the next four years.

• (0940)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I know we have five teams going this year, right now, and there could be more; men's volleyball just qualified. The Own the Podium money right now, however, for sports that aren't in it.... We're seeing big numbers in baseball and we're seeing them in softball, and I know they're coming in four years' time, but it seems that Own the Podium really rewards our medals, such as medals in canoeing.

Some of the sports that don't have higher participation numbers in this country seem to get it because they are getting gold medals and silver medals, as in rowing and canoeing, but our sports that are trying to get in there are being left out.

Mr. Christopher Overholt: Yes. First of all I want to acknowledge the very significant contribution the federal government makes through Sport Canada to Own the Podium and the collaborative work we've done with Sport Canada in our work with Own the Podium. I sit on that board, and I'm very proud to do so.

The country made a decision some time ago, more than 10 years ago now, to take on targeting as a declared high-performance strategy. I think from most people's perspective it could be fairly said that it has been a successful strategy for Canada, but it's also the case that it comes at a price for those sports that otherwise struggle to make ends meet, both as it relates to their operational elements but also as it goes to developing future athletes. It is something we spend a great deal of time talking about.

You probably also are aware that Sport Canada, under the minister's leadership, is currently undertaking a review of targeting as a strategy as it relates to the broader sport system. We're all involved in that very collaborative discussion. I think that will only produce good outcomes toward the end of the year.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I have one question, then, for Mr. Maguire.

Canada declined 2024 for holding the summer Olympics. We'll see whether L.A. gets it, but it has been 40 years since this country last held a summer Olympics. I know we've had Vancouver and Calgary, and there's talk about Quebec City joining for the winter Olympics, but I think our next step maybe should be the summer games, because—and I know this country can be seen as a country of winter Olympians—I think summer would be our next best shot, depending on what L.A. does.

Mr. Christopher Overholt: Was that a question, Mr. Waugh?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Waugh: That's a question. Would you go summer over winter? The summer athletes now are feeling somewhat neglected, to be honest with you, since we put so much money into our winter programs.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: You had better go to Maguire.

The Chair: No. There's no time for Mr. Maguire. You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Christopher Overholt: I'll only say that of course that decision does not rest with me, sir. That decision is part of a broader process that we've initially undertaken.

As you might know, we have sent out letters of inquiry to seven cities across the country. We've received feedback from I think all of them now. Through the process over the next several months, we will evaluate first whether or not hosting an Olympic Games is a good decision strategically for the country, and then from there our session will make a decision as to whether it would be summer or winter Olympics, if at all.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I go to Mr. Samson.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson: I have a very important question that I will ask representatives of both committees to answer.

What kinds of improvements would you suggest the government make in the lead-up to the next Olympics? You have been through certain experiences; these are not your first games. At this point in the preparations for the games in Rio, what sorts of improvements could be made in advance of the next games? There must be some challenges you are facing for which you could use some help.

[*English*]

Ms. Karen O'Neill: I think both Catherine and I will handle this.

At a very macro level, I would say alignment between the federal and the provincial governments is a challenge, because so much of our system from the initial pathway for our athletes all the way to the podium is directly related to the systems that span from our provinces right to the national level. I would say that alignment would be at the top of the list—alignment across funding, alignment across some of the technical development and leadership, and also across some of the tremendous facilities that have now been established in some of our provinces as a result of the legacy of the games, as well as those that are being built. I'll put a plug in for all of them to be accessible and available to all.

A more specific...?

● (0945)

Ms. Catherine Gosselin-Després: Yes, I'm going to speak more around financial investment.

Obviously we're competing against other nations in the world. We always want to do extremely well and we are applying pressure on our federation, but we're still behind in terms of overall funding to sport compared with other nations, so we need enhancements to the funding for the national sport organizations. They need the flexibility to hire the best of the world's coaches, to develop the “best of the

world” coaches who are coming from here in Canada and not have to go outside. We need to ensure that they have the resources to actually deliver a program that's at the same level as other nations, if we want to be at the top.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Overholt, would you like to add anything?

[*English*]

Mr. Christopher Overholt: I would only add that I think the alignment discussion is something we've all been focused on, in recent years in particular—even, in our context, in recent months. Eric has been working very hard on this aspect, not only within our high-performance sport system at the federal government level, but pushing down into conversations with the provincial sport organizations in an effort to seek integration of the high-performance strategy in those provinces. You might know that we've announced a co-operative agreement with the Province of British Columbia, and Eric and his team have been leading in several other provinces as well around this important topic.

I think the review of targeting is going to be interesting, because it will provide a very healthy way forward in terms of how we all work together collaboratively to establish or re-establish our strategy around high-performance sport. I agree that if we're going to continue to find ways to compete at the highest levels in both winter and summer, we're all going to need to find ways to be creative about how we raise revenue and how we support our athletes and national sports federations.

I want to say to all of the members of this committee, however, that I have personally never been more optimistic than I am right now about what sport looks like in this country. It has, I believe, a very bright future. These two organizations are as strong as they've ever been. Financially we enjoy incredible support at the Olympic Committee from our marketing partners at unprecedented levels, in ways that we have not even yet announced to Canadians. I can tell you that our marketing partners continue to support us in unprecedented ways.

That, combined with some of the good work we're doing at the board level—steps we've taken in the last months to address matters of governance and issues related to women in sport and a number of things that you've seen and read about—makes me feel very positive and very good, and after a great weekend with our board, I know they feel the same.

I want to say to this committee and to all Canadians that I think we should be very optimistic about the important role that sport is going to play in this country in the coming years, and our athletes provide outstanding inspiration around all of that.

Mr. Darrell Samson: A very quick question, if I have another moment, would be about education. What are we doing to educate our youth in schools to be mindful of what's happening and to see these things as opportunities?

When I went through the school system, the Olympics was something you watched on TV once every four years or two years, but what are we actually doing in education to promote the Olympics?

Mr. Christopher Overholt: First of all, we both talked about the importance of telling our athletes' stories, and not just once every two years or once every four years in the context of winter or summer, but every day, 365 days a year. Certainly we have watched great growth in both our organizations around telling athletes' stories and marketing our athletes and our brands respectively.

We do so in a number of ways: digitally, of course, in a world that is intersecting with our athletes quite literally and with young Canadians, but we're also established world leaders in education, youth, and community engagement in Canada. We have been, going back to 1988. It started with a school program that started there and has continued for all these many years and that we're even more committed to now. I think some of the work we are doing currently and will do in the coming years will continue to push that agenda forward.

Mr. Darrell Samson: I would venture to say that what we do in schools is still spotty, meaning that it's close to the Olympics or during the Olympics or after the Olympics. I don't see any real integration in curriculum. That's where I'd like to see more.

• (0950)

Mr. Christopher Overholt: I understand, and so would we. While it's not universally true that they don't include it, it depends on the willingness of the boards of education across this country to take up our curriculum, but we have it available to them across multiple levels.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will go to Mr. Nantel for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you very much.

Mr. Samson's question was a very interesting one. Indeed, could we do something to improve the promotion of the games to students in classrooms? You referred to a platform that was available for schools. Would this also apply to children in a different setting? Are there initiatives that have succeeded in promoting sports in some provinces?

Mr. Eric Myles: I'll let the Canadian Paralympic Committee representatives respond first.

[English]

Ms. Karen O'Neill: Yes, and I would echo much of what Chris said in terms of its being a big issue.

The gender question came up earlier. It's a critical time period, particularly in that age from three or four years old up to ten or 11 years old, just as an example, for young women. If a young girl is not active by the age of 10, then there is only about a 10% chance that she'll be active by the age of 22. Then when you look at the intersection of gender with culture, with other backgrounds, with disability, those numbers for current participation go down that much more.

To Chris's point, both of us have some great school programs. One of the specific ones we've looked at is the creation of a fundamental movement skills program, because young children, particularly for motor patterns, need to be introduced in a very targeted fashion. Particularly from a disability standpoint, often there's an exclusion

right from the get-go, and we need to make sure that this stream doesn't continue with the parallel track.

What can we be doing? We can be talking a lot about the links and the alignment. I would put that probably at the top of the list. Again, in the provincial work that both of the organizations are doing, the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee, it's to be able to look at those deep partnerships and frame a broader context about the importance of daily physical activity and appropriate physical activity not only in our school system but also with our specific sports, so that at that critical age there is a sensitivity to how we increase participation and full, authentic engagement by all sectors.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Overholt, I was speaking about marketing partners.

Mr. Myles, go ahead.

Mr. Eric Myles: Yes. Progress has already been made in that area, and programs exist. For the Canadian Olympic Committee, there's the RBC training ground program. Canadian Tire is also involved.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: That's true.

Mr. Eric Myles: We're working closely with these partners.

There is no lack of programs. There are excellent programs. We must work together to provide them. A key to our success is the fact that we work closely with both the Sport Canada team and the provinces and territories. We must often taken into account the realities of different jurisdictions. You are familiar with all these realities, and you have far more expertise than I do in that area. We are focused on co-operation, and we feel that most provinces and territories are quite open to that. Things are moving forward.

When organizations such as ours work together and share these responsibilities, the system runs more smoothly. We ask athletes to act as ambassadors, and they have been incredible role models for young people. We have common strategies, and we're seeing improvement.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: If there's any way we can help with the ambassadors program, please let us know. We want your athletes' stories to inspire young people.

Mr. Eric Myles: Absolutely.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you very much.

If there's time left, I'll continue.

[English]

The Chair: You have a minute.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Perfect.

Something has been really bothering me in terms of marketing. Advertisers are often less interested in the Paralympic Games. In general, the coverage is not as good. However, it is now becoming clear that the public really enjoys seeing stories in the media about people exceeding their own limits and striving to achieve their goals. All athletes excel, but yours have particularly moving stories.

You decided to acquire the rights and give the licence to the highest bidders, for the best package. Is there anything we can do to capture the interest of major broadcasters? Mr. Overholt spoke of marketing partners. I think that's the key.

● (0955)

Mr. Martin Richard: In the last three years, businesses have shown interest in not only contributing to the Paralympic team's success, but also in aligning themselves with the athletes' values. Our athletes succeed in their competitions. All their stories have a real and positive impact on the public. Often, instead of featuring a product, a commercial will highlight the value of our athletes. They are introduced as ambassadors to make that association.

The platform is important to us. It must be presented on television or through digital channels to encourage sponsors to become more involved. Obviously, the more the businesses become involved, the more the movement will be promoted. The businesses thus showcase their values, and not only a product.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: As—

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nantel. You were pushing that one.

Thank you very much. I want to thank both the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee for coming today to present to us.

Back in the 1980s, when I was very active in the provincial and Canadian medical associations, we had been trying to get one hour of daily quality physical education in provinces and in schools, and we were unsuccessful. I hope you will be more successful with your programs, because I do think, as Mr. Nantel said, that the ability to inspire with sport is a key thing for a generation of Canadians. They can learn and be inspired by it.

Just the health aspect of young people getting involved in healthy activity is really important. Who knows? You may find wondrous athletes in that group, but in terms of its own value, just getting involved in sports will help us to be able to become healthier as communities so that we don't get sick as often. That whole prevention aspect and the promotion of health aspect will occur.

I want to thank you again. I want to remind you, please, to send the clerk anything you have with regard to the gender question that Ms. Dabrusin asked. We will be able to distribute it to the committee once we get it.

I also wanted to say that with regard to the flip-flops, you won't be getting them immediately because I think our clerk wants to make sure he gets your shoe size right so that you're not walking around in flip-flops that are too big or too small.

Thank you very much. It was a pleasure having you here.

Mr. Christopher Overholt: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: We will break so that we can come up with the next part of our program in a few minutes.

● (0955)

(Pause)

● (1005)

The Chair: The committee needs to resume, please. I would like to call members back to their seats. Thank you.

We will go in camera for one part of the meeting, but right now, unless Ms. Dabrusin has any objection, we will deal with her motion in the public hearing.

Basically we have a motion from Ms. Dabrusin that reads...

We are looking for your motion, Ms. Dabrusin. We haven't lost it; it was here at some point.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: It was here?

The Chair: Actually, this is it. We have it. I will read Ms. Dabrusin's motion.

It reads:

That the Committee undertake a study of four (4) meetings on Canadian women and girls in sport, and how the Department of Heritage can increase participation and involvement in both amateur and professional sport.

Does everyone have that?

Ms. Dabrusin, did you wish to speak to your motion?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Yes, thank you.

I did a little bit of background studying, and the last time this issue was considered by a parliamentary committee was in 1998. There's a lot of time to cover since that last study.

In that study, they made a number of recommendations. These included such things as establishing a tracking system to ensure that a fair portion of the new funding in fact reaches targeted, under-represented groups; recommending cross-gender-based statistics; ensuring that as part of our funding, we have funding criteria that encourage a significant representation by women on boards of directors; programming that serves unique needs of women and other under-represented groups; and higher numbers of apprenticeship and employment opportunities for women coaches.

I'm only pulling out a few of the recommendations, but those were made in 1998, and I feel it would be very important for us to follow up to see what was done and where we need to go from here.

It may be that we will hear many good-news stories, and I really hope that we do get good-news stories, but it's important to see, having seen those recommendations, what we have followed through on. I will note that on the professional side, women are highly under-represented in many professional sports.

I know that many people here will have gone to an NHL game. I'm not sure how many of you would have gone to a Canadian Women's Hockey League game. It's great for the people who have. We just heard from our Olympic Committee. Many of our Olympic athletes, women who have done very well and have excelled, for example, on the Canadian women's hockey team, do not end up in our professional sports in the same numbers. That is another part of the study that would be important to me: to look at how we can ensure that women have those opportunities.

The Chair: Does anyone wish to discuss this further?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: I'll just say that I commend the study. I think it's a very good idea. Eighteen years is an eternity.

Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Kitchen.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: I'm wondering, and Julie and I have talked about the question, why it's four meetings. Can you give an idea why it should be four? Should it be two, should it be four, should it be six?

Do you have any idea about witnesses?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I believe a good place to start will be with the Department of Canadian Heritage, just to find out the background information on what has happened with these recommendations as a starting point. I have some ideas, and we can talk about witnesses along the line.

I mentioned that Charmaine Crooks had given evidence leading up to the 2012 London Olympics and is part of an association, a subcommittee for the Olympic movement, on women in sports. She also spoke, when she gave testimony, about the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity. There are a number of organizations that can give us some background.

As to the number, I thought it would be good to do a targeted study, and four seemed reasonable. We can revisit it. It may be one more or one less. Right now, it could be.... We can see, after we have heard from our initial witnesses, where we would like to go with it.

• (1010)

The Chair: Before I go to Mr. Waugh, I would like to suggest that it is usual to set a certain target for, in this instance, four meetings. As the committee begins to do its work, if it believes that it isn't covered, the committee, being masters of its own destiny, can decide that they want to take more meetings on. We've done that before in committee. That would be an interesting thing.

Obviously, we won't deal with the witnesses now. You can start thinking of them if this motion passes, but we won't deal with witnesses until the time comes to actually do the study, which I understand, Ms. Dabrusin, will be after we've finished our study on the media.

Go ahead, Mr. Waugh.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: You've answered some of my questions. After the Olympics, I think we need Tricia Smith here. She's in charge of the Canadian Olympic team and she could be on the IOC if they vote her in next month, so she'll be the most influential female person in sport in this country, and that's where this should go. Tricia, of course, just took over our Canadian Olympic situation.

There are people like that. I think we should invite Canadian Interuniversity Sport, the CIS, because in terms of gender, it's one scholarship for a male and one scholarship for a female. That has all changed in the last five years throughout every university in this country.

I don't know if we'll have four meetings, but certainly I have a number of witnesses that I'd be willing to bring forward.

The Chair: Absolutely. Everyone can think about that.

Would anybody else like to speak? No?

Go ahead, Ms. Dabrusin.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I don't want us to get into the weeds about creating a witness list, particularly—

The Chair: Not yet.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: —because my plan was that this study would follow what we're currently studying. We're looking at the fall at this point, at the earliest, so we can set timelines for people to come back with full witness lists.

The Chair: May I call the question?

Go ahead, Mr. Kitchen.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: I actually have the study and the recommendations. I took the initiative to look it up. The study talks about the Government of Canada continuing “to collect gender-based statistics”. I'm wondering where we would find those.

The Chair: That would be now in the new long form census. You will get good gender-based statistics there, because Canada has been doing gender-disaggregated data for quite a long time.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: This would be data that has been collected since 1998, because that's when the study was done. We'd be looking at statistics from 1998 to today. Basically, we're talking 16 years.

The Chair: We are talking 16 years. For your information, that gender-disaggregated data was being collected in 1998. We stopped collecting that kind of data when we cancelled the long form census, but I still think we have enough data, because that didn't happen until 2008. We have about 10 years' worth of data we can get, and now we're going to pick up again from the new census.

Are there any further questions?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Again, that goes to the question for our study, though: what are the statistics?

The Chair: Yes. We're kind of leaping ahead of our time here.

Mr. Maguire, is there anything before I ask the question?

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Yes, that was my question earlier. It was on the timing. I think Ms. Dabrusin has answered that in regard to the number of meetings. I think it's fine to go ahead and look at the new information. It has been 16 to 18 years here since this came up. There are a lot of changes. We just heard Mr. Overholt talking about some of those changes in our own Olympic system here. I think this would be a good update.

The Chair: Shall I call the question? Those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The motion is carried unanimously, so as we move forward, we will discuss that.

Now I'll move on. There was a notice of motion from Mr. Vandal, but I am told that Mr. Vandal wishes to withdraw it.

•(1015)

Mr. Dan Vandal: Yes, Madam Chair. Based on the very clear testimony we heard this morning, I think I'd like to withdraw my motion. I'm not sure how much added value we would get from having perhaps a two-session study. The delegates were very clear that all steps are being taken to protect our athletes and their families, and certainly I have confidence in their ability to manage our challenge. I'm satisfied with their answers. I'd like to withdraw my motion.

The Chair: Thank you.

Everyone agrees with the withdrawal of his motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Good. Now I'd like to go in camera. We'll suspend for about a minute while we get that process under way.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

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

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

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

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

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

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

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

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

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

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