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Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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•(1100)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): I'd like to call the meeting to order.

As you know, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this committee is doing a study of Canadian women and girls in sport.

I would like to welcome the witnesses.

We have witnesses who are here as individuals, and some are with associations. Generally speaking, we give everyone 10 minutes to present. If you can do it in less than 10 minutes, that's great. Then we go to a question and answer interactive session.

We may have to cut the time to five minutes because there are so many of you.

We have some individuals starting in the first part, Dr. Diane Culver, associate professor, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa; Dr. Guylaine Demers, professor, department of physical education, Université Laval; and Dr. Gretchen Kerr, professor and vice-dean of the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education at the University of Toronto.

Each of you can have five minutes to present the salient points, and then we will open up to a question and answer session.

Let's start with Dr. Culver.

Dr. Diane Culver (Associate Professor, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Good morning, everybody.

Thank you very much for inviting us to present on this topic, which is of course very important to us.

As a bit about my background, I was an athlete. I was on the Canadian National Ski Team many years ago, and then went on to be a coach at all levels, including at the national and Olympic level for Canada and then for New Zealand. I have about 20 years of experience. It was hard to keep a career as a high-performance Alpine ski coach and also have a family, so I decided to go back to university. I didn't think I was going to be there for 10 years, but I ended up in my position as an associate professor with a specialization in coach development.

You have a lot of stats, and so. I'm not going to speak very much to the stats because I think some of the other witnesses will. I am going to focus on women in coaching and particularly the theory that I have been working with for the last 15 years, which is social

learning theory, that has to do with learning in safe social spaces, and I'll explain a little bit about what that is.

I'm going to talk to you about how we have some evidence that this is a useful approach to supporting women in coaching. I will also present some of the solutions we feel could easily be implemented.

Why is this important? It's because retention and recruitment are important for women coaches. You'll see that there is a low percentage of women coaches. Women have different ways of knowing, they work more collaboratively, and they have different communication styles. They have something different to contribute to the athletes and to the world of sport.

Also, if we have more women role models in coaching, then that means we can encourage more women and girls to get into both the sport and into leadership roles.

If we have mothers coaching more, particularly at the community level, that will encourage more girls to participate, which is also a problem.

Finally, if our female elite athletes, in whom we have invested so much, wish to go into coaching, then we would be able to support them to stay there.

I will give you some definitions related to social learning spaces. What is a social learning space? It can be anything from a one-on-one conversation to a group of people who are all working around the same practice. It can include your networks, conferences, workshops, etc.

I have some evidence from a recent study we did. We looked all over North America. We didn't find any examples of what we considered to be communities of practice in Canada in coaching, but we found in the NCAA, the American collegiate association, something that they call "loop groups", which met the definition of communities of practice.

•(1105)

In the handout, you can see some of the quotations from this qualitative study exploring what this did for these women to participate in this supportive group, which met about once a month. It included all people coaching women in their respective universities. There actually was one man involved, but it was mostly women, and there were all different sports.

The first one talks about knowing that you're not alone and having a safe zone to realize that you have support if you want it whereas normally you'd just be working away in your office and with your athletes.

The other one is very important because the woman says she had thought about starting a family in the next few years, but thought that would be the end of her coaching career. Being in this group showed her that she could in fact be both a mother and a successful coach. Now she's not worried about that.

The last one is from a very experienced coach who was really surprised. She didn't realize how much support younger newer coaches coming in needed. She thought that it would come from personnel. In fact, these kinds of groups allow you to have some support from outside where you won't be judged and where it won't be thought that you're not able to do your job because you need advice on facing certain challenges.

Women coaches lack a network. This comes out of our meeting in Quebec City, Conversation 2015, which Dr. Demers organized.

What can we do to help this?

We can use communities of practice as a form of continuing development, which is required to remain certified as a coach. We have some examples already. There's one going on right now with wheelchair curling, which is not specifically with women coaches. We've also done one with Special Olympics. We can also leverage the existing Canada Games apprenticeship program and move that online. These are low-cost solutions. We just use existing platforms that we have. We can use these social learning spaces to spread great stories about women leadership in sport and help elite female athletes who want to go into coaching.

A second problem is to increase the number of coaches, which you'll probably hear about later on. Similarly, we need to support these female athletes when they want to go into coaching. We need to offer all-woman coaching clinics. We also need to offer clinics to the men who are in the coaching world about coaching women and about working with women coaches.

The third issue would be around making it a viable career for women. This speaks to that quotation of the woman in the NCAA study who thought she could not be a coach and a mother at the same time.

• (1110)

The Chair: Dr. Culver, you need to wrap up, please. I'm so sorry.

Dr. Diane Culver: I'm finishing.

I won't read those because you have it on the paper, but essentially what I'm recommending is that we use this low-cost solution to formally introduce a role of social learning leadership to support women. It will also be for general leadership roles, but in particular it's for coaching.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I think we're going to have Madame Demers.

Perhaps you can begin for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Guylaine Demers (Professor, Department of Physical Education, Université Laval, As an Individual): Thank you for having me. I am going to speak in French, my mother tongue.

Ms. Culver referred to Conversation 2015. Last summer, in June 2015, I and two other colleagues you will hear this afternoon, Penny Werthner and Marion Lay, organized the fourth national Women and Sport conference. The previous conference had taken place in 1996, so that was a long time between the two conferences. The 2015 conference enabled us to identify a large number of solutions, some of which are not expensive, as Ms. Culver pointed out.

My part of the presentation relates mainly to women in leadership positions. There are coaches, of course, but I am going to speak, rather, about women who hold positions in administration, such as executive directors, technical directors, presidents, and so on.

In the documents I have distributed to you, you will find the latest statistics published by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Woman and Sport and Physical Activity. Those statistics show that the higher you go in the hierarchy, the fewer women there are. Only 10 or 12 or 13% of president positions are held by women, while 15 to 20% of executive director positions are held by women.

The problem is that those numbers seem to be set in stone. They do not budge. We know the numbers, we repeat them constantly, we bring them out, and there are studies: they do not budge.

I worked closely on writing the 2009 policy on sport for women and girls. By the way, a lot of people do not know that in Canada, we have a policy on sport for women. We believed it was very important that this policy have teeth, but it does not have any. As a result, there has been no follow-up on our lovely recommendations and all the work we did.

Marion Lay, who will be with you this afternoon, has been repeating the same message for 40 years. She is a woman of great perseverance. Let us hope that this time, her message will be heard.

I want to talk about three problems in particular. First, the policies do not include any accountability. They are there, but if someone does not abide by them, there are no consequences.

Second, there is no system that prepares women to achieve leadership roles. Often, there is just one woman, and we throw her into the arena and hope that everything will work out. This means there is a lot of pressure on her. We have to prepare these women to fill decision-making positions in the sports system, to be comfortable and to be able to stay there.

Third, we are very concerned about the pipeline. Where is the next generation? Where are the girls who will move into the sports system?

If I look around me here this morning, and not wanting to insult girls, I see only women aged 50 and over. Where is the next generation? This is one of the problems we are concerned about.

The first very concrete solution we have, as a number of people have told you today, is accountability. There has to be accountability if we are putting so much effort into developing policies or programs. If they are not adhered to, there have to be consequences, but if they are adhered to and progress is made, that will be recognized and assistance will be given.

The financial aspect is important, clearly. If my budget does not budge, whether or not I abide by the policy, there are no consequences. We observe that there is always some priority other than women, and we have the history to remind us. Whether we are talking about 1970, when we held the first conference of the 1970s, or 2002, when we hosted the international conference, the same message kept coming back: the policy has to have teeth; there has to be a commitment alongside it that comes from above and makes its way down. We need a top-down approach.

There also has to be oversight. We have to check whether progress is being made. You should have seen the network that was set in motion for today's exercise. Where are the numbers? How many women are there, precisely? Exactly where are they?

We have to search and dig to get the data. It is not reasonable to be able to find statistics quickly. There absolutely has to be an oversight system so we know who is doing well, who is doing less well, whether our policies and actions are bearing fruit, and whether or not our efforts have had an impact. At present, we do not know.

What is also missing, in the system that prepares women, is networking. Women have to be able to help each other. We also have to look outside the world of sport. There are organizations doing good work to help women access leadership positions. I am thinking about the business world and health care. We have to look outside the world of sport precisely to take inspiration from best practices, and not have to reinvent the wheel. A lot of things are being done, but we do not even know it is being done.

• (1115)

[English]

The Chair: Dr. Demers, I'm very sorry. You have about three seconds remaining.

Dr. Guylaine Demers: Okay: so I'll have time for questions.

[Translation]

This time, there have to be repercussions if things are to change, please.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to welcome Senator Nancy Ruth to the listening audience today.

Dr. Kerr, you have five minutes.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr (Professor, Vice-Dean, Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education, University of Toronto, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

There's nothing more challenging than trying to get an academic to speak for only five minutes.

The Chair: Try a politician.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: Well, we're in good company, then.

I'll focus in this presentation on one sector of the Canadian sport system, which is the Canadian Interuniversity Sport system. This is otherwise known as the CIS, Canadian Interuniversity Sport. This is the national governing body for university sport. There are 55 universities participating. It's a highly competitive league that contributes members to our Olympic and world championship teams.

It's an important context to examine, because it's perhaps the only one that involves full-time, paid coaches. It's also important because sport is perhaps the only sector of society left that's sex-segregated, with male and female teams. This brings an additional responsibility to the sport world to achieve gender equity.

What's the current state of affairs? Across the university system, just to give you some context, females make up 56% of the general student population at universities. There is an equal number of teams for male and female sports, but for head coaching positions across the universities, only 17% are female. Perhaps more importantly, this number is a decrease from 2011, and another decrease from earlier in the 2000s. The basic message is that we're losing ground, and it wasn't great to start with.

It also bears mentioning that we have no shortage of data. There's a tremendous amount of data on the percentage of coaches across the Canadian sport system, so we've done that homework. Where do we go from here? First of all, we need a commitment, a commitment that comes with targets and measurable benchmarks, whether this is increasing the number of female coaches, decreasing the attrition from those who are within the field, or increasing their job satisfaction.

One solution that's been recommended is the NFL's Rooney rule, which you may have heard of. It was brought in to address the fact that there were so many black football athletes but no black coaches or sport administrators. The Rooney rule said that you must interview minority candidates. Over time, this expanded to a requirement to interview women for sport administration positions. This has made a significant impact on changing the culture of football.

There are other ways in which we can change this commitment into action. It includes everything from education about unconscious bias to appealing to highly competitive female athletes who at the moment, research indicates, do not perceive coaching to be a viable career option. We need to do something about that. We need to go beyond mentoring and sponsor women by opening doors for them, advocating for them to move up the sport system.

Very importantly, we have to do something about the accountability toward policies. The Canadian Interuniversity Sport system has a gender equity policy with various details laid out around athlete participation and coaching. This policy, like many others, has not been revisited in the past 12 years. There is little evidence that there is any data management or monitoring. Very importantly, there is a lack of accountability. There are currently some excellent programs and policies in place. It's the accountability piece that seems to be where things fall apart. One recommendation to deal with this is to link gender equity and the details of the policies to the funding received by sport organizations.

• (1120)

In conclusion, this CIS system, where we find the most full-time paid coaches, has fewer than 20% female coaches despite a 56% female university student population.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Kerr.

Now we begin the question and answer period. This is a seven-minute round, which means that the seven minutes include the question and the answer.

We're going to begin with Ms. Dabrusin from the Liberals, who, by the way, is the person who brought forward this motion to the committee.

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

I'd like to start by thanking all of you for appearing and for all your work in this area. I'm very excited to start this study today.

I want to note that October is Women's History Month in Canada, so it's worth noting over the course of the study women who've done so much in sport. One name that comes to mind is that of Abby Hoffman, who did so much. I'm hoping that through this study we will get to highlight a whole bunch of other women who have been so important in this area.

I am a mother of two girls. I coached ball hockey for several years because a friend encouraged me, and I picked up ice hockey at the age of 40. I see how it's important, and I've seen a lot of the challenges along the way.

Today all of you focused a lot on women in leadership roles and on coaching, but can you talk about issues of participation? I see that the 2015 conference in Quebec included as a theme the poor participation of girls in sports, and also, I guess, limited media coverage, and some other issues. I was wondering if you could highlight some of those other issues.

Dr. Guylaine Demers: The five issues were around media, girls' participation, homophobia in sport, women coaches, and women in leadership positions.

On girls' participation in particular, the numbers show that girls are dropping out of sport by the end of primary school, and in high school, that's dramatic. It's all about peer pressure and the media, and the images they get about what is a good girl and what you should look like. They drop out of sports because they feel they're not competent enough, or they feel that at that age it's time to look nice

and beautiful, not too sporty, because we're not expecting that from them.

One of the problems that relates to this is those people who work with girls but don't know the girls. Who are the girls coming into their gym or into their pool? Girls have not been socialized in the same way as boys. They haven't had the same chances to develop their motor skills, so they don't feel competent, and they drop out of sport very early.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Maybe I'll put it to the other two. Have you seen any good solutions proposed in other studies along the way in terms of that issue of how you maintain female participation in sports?

• (1125)

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: In answer to that question, I'll add that there's a lot to be learned from other sectors outside of sport. It's well known that we are less likely to become what we can't see, so when young girls are going into sport and are coached by males in more of a male style, that certainly has been documented as a barrier to keeping girls in sport. There are many others, but that's one.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: There's one thing that I wanted to follow up on with you, Dr. Kerr. One of the things we were looking at is that the last time this committee looked at this issue of women in girls in sport, it was 1998, and there were a number of recommendations made. We're going to find out a little more about what has happened with those.

One of them was that:

The Government of Canada, as a major funder of the new system of national sport centres, enact three criteria for ongoing funding; significant representation by women on the boards of directors; programming that serves the unique needs of women and the other underrepresented groups; and higher numbers of apprenticeship and employment opportunities for women coaches.

Seeing that this recommendation was there, what do you think about that? You talked about linking funding to women in leadership. What do you think about that? Have you ever seen that actually put into action? What we can do?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: I should preface the answer by saying that some of the speakers you will hear from at noon will address some of these other topics. We tried not to overlap too much.

There was a tremendous number of initiatives in response to the 1998 report. Not all of them have been sustained since then. One thing that we know across the board, not just in sport, is that when there are economic challenges at a broader level, the programs that tend to disappear are those for women and children.

There are policies that have not been enacted because there hasn't been funding. I think it's also a resource issue in terms of holding people accountable to what was written in such documents as the 1998 report.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Do either of you have other ideas about that recommendation and linking funding to leadership?

Dr. Guylaine Demers: At the NCI in Montreal, at its birth, it was decided right up front in the bylaws to have on its board a 60/40 balance, either 60% female and 40% male, or vice versa.

When we talk about having quotas or having those numbers for equity in representation on boards, usually we hear the answer, “Well, we can't find any women; there are not enough women who are interested or there are not enough competent women.” To that I reply, “So all the men there are competent?” That's my answer.

We find those women. When it's there, you make the effort. Most of the time, if you don't have to, you don't make the effort. Then it's easy to say there are no women or they are not interested. In fact, when you have that in the bylaws, as we have had since 2008, it works. We have amazing women on the board now because it was right there, right up front at the beginning, and nobody questioned that. So we do have some examples like that and it's working. There are women out there who want to do that.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I'll just put it out there.

I know Canada Games had quite a policy. Maybe somewhere along the way you can bring something out about the Canada Games strategy for encouraging women to participate.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dabrusin.

Now we'll go to Mr. Kitchen from the Conservatives, for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you all for coming today and for your very interesting presentation. I wish we could have more time.

I come from a kinesiology degree background from the University of Waterloo, probably one of the original kinesiology programs. It shows how old I am. I also have been a coach for many years and involved as a team doctor not only for the summer Canada Games and provincial summer games, but also coaching.

So I'm very interested, and I'm glad to hear you talk about coaching and participation. I've coached both male and female teams over the years and I've always found that as a coach, it's a totally different mindset when I'm coaching girls versus coaching boys. Part of the issue I see is that it's a question, especially at the young age, of getting girls participating in sport. It's not only the girls, because the girls have an interest in it, but it's really the parents and getting the parents to recognize that it's not only a health benefit but also a social benefit to have them involved, getting them to participate and the women to participate, not only the mothers participating in helping with the organization but also coaching and officiating. To start, I think those are important things that we need.

I wonder if all three of you could comment on where you see the parent's role in this process. I will start with Dr. Culver.

• (1130)

Dr. Diane Culver: It's huge. For sure, it's the families.

What occurred to me is that it is a cultural thing. I think one of the things we really need to face here is the fact that we have a lot of new Canadians. We've actually done some studies on getting new Canadians into coaching, not specifically women coaches but this is definitely an area, as a sidebar, that needs to be looked at because there are many cultures where women are not supposed to participate in sports. If we want these new Canadians to be part of the Canadian society, we need to encourage that and we need to look at addressing that for sure.

In regard to the role of families, there are quite a few studies out there that show how important it is.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you.

Dr. Demers.

Dr. Guylaine Demers: For me, definitely the parents have their say. We have girls who have been in a family where the father in particular encouraged his daughter to do sports and is totally into it. Definitely there is a huge impact there. For me, the lever would be in the school system with the phys. ed. teachers. I think this is where it should start, because every kid goes to school, so this is where you can reach every single parent.

Absolutely, we should think about how can we educate the parents about the importance of sports for girls and boys. The impact it has on grades is usually a good point to convince parents of the importance of doing sports. So, for me, the lever would definitely be going through the school system and working with the parents, because they have a huge impact.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you.

Dr. Kerr.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: The recommendations need to be multi-faceted and multi-layered, and parents are certainly a part of the sport culture and coaching.

I was also going to pick up on the value of sport, physical activity, and physical education in the school system, because schools are the great equalizer. It's there where every child goes to school and gets exposed to physical activity in such a way as to develop the physical literacy skills they need to enjoy sport participation. I think, when we're looking at sport, that the education system needs to be a piece of that puzzle.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you very much.

I see all of you saying basically the same thing. When we talk about the schooling system, maybe it's more of an education program as opposed to a costing program. It is good to see that we can hopefully approach that and put some policies in place for that.

Dr. Kerr, you talked about participation, in particular in coaching, and I'm just wondering if you can comment. You mentioned that the coaching levels in the CIS have dropped since 2011. If I understood you correctly, you said it was about 17% initially, and it's now down to....

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: It was 19% in 2011, and it was 17% in 2013. We're working on the 2015 data right now. It's not been confirmed, but it's certainly not better.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: You told us that 56% of university students are female. What participation rate do they have in intramural and CIS-type programs?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: In the CIS program there is a relatively equal number of competitive spots for males and females, and there are the same number of male teams as there are female teams within the CIS.

It's at the coaching level where you really see the discrepancy between males and females, and that applies for coaches of female-only teams, coaches of coed teams, and certainly coaches of male teams. There's only one woman in the CIS system coaching a male team.

• (1135)

Mr. Robert Kitchen: I'm looking at the intramural program. Are there statistics that you have on the female participation rate in those intramural programs? I know there are male and female sports—such as broomball, etc.—but there are also coed programs. Is there an equal participation rate of females at the university level?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: That data exists, but I don't have it at my fingertips. If we're going to ask that question, I think we need to look more broadly, because more women participate in instructional fitness classes than men, as another example. More women participate in the dance program than men. I think, if we're going to look at the numbers for physical activity participation in addition to sport specifically, we need to consider all of those opportunities.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: That's very true. Those are activities that we want to see greater participation in.

Very quickly—

The Chair: I don't think you'll be able to make it in the three seconds you have left.

Thank you.

Now we have Ms. Trudel from the NDP.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Good morning. Thank you for your presentation.

I also thank my colleague from Toronto—Danforth. We have not talked about this subject for 18 years, and I am very pleased to be taking part in the committee's meeting today. I want to thank it for its project.

I found your presentation very interesting. In fact, it reminded me of a colleague at my former job. She was a marathon runner who represented Canada. She sold tickets on the side of the road to fund her sports activity. She asked me whether I could do something to help her continue to practise her sport, which she had to combine with her career. This morning, that extraordinary woman has a very special place in my mind.

That brings me to my question. So far, we have talked at length about the presence of women on boards of directors and how to encourage them. Can you explain why women like the one I have just mentioned get fewer sponsorships than men? Do you see a striking difference?

Dr. Diane Culver: Certainly there is a difference. That is not my field of research, so I do not have any data on that subject.

Dr. Guylaine Demers: It is very well documented. As Ms. Kerr was saying earlier, we do not have the figures, but when it comes to sponsorships for men's and women's sports, it is day and night. In fact, we almost cannot compare the two situations, because there are so few sponsorships on the women's side.

That brings us to the question of media coverage of women's sports. Sponsors are looking for visibility, so if there is no media coverage of women's sports, it will be much more difficult to attract them. Television gives us women's tennis, because the athletes are wearing skirts and are pretty, and a bit of golf and some figure skating. Otherwise, we do not see any. The importance the media assign to men's sports as compared to women's sports creates an incredible gap.

Ms. Karine Trudel: We are talking about media coverage. At the Rio Olympic Games, the first ten medals for Canada were won by women. My team and I asked how that would have been covered by the media if those medals had been won by men. The fact that 10 women won medals is something to be proud of, but the way it was reported lacked balance.

I would like to hear your impression about that media coverage.

• (1140)

Dr. Guylaine Demers: When the media made a big deal out of the fact that women were winning medals, my first reaction was to remark that if they had followed their training for the previous year, they would not have been surprised. The media took no interest in them, and all of a sudden, they realized we had good athletes. The first reaction I had was to tell them to wake up. We knew ourselves that they were going to win.

There is also the risk, following the Rio Olympic Games, that people will think there are no more problems when it comes to women's sport. Women won medals and everything is going very well. Canada had more female representatives; I think 60% of our athletes in Rio were women. They won 16 medals out of 22. So we think that women's sport is going fine. Our women athletes' success masks the imbalance when it comes to funding and support. We forget what the athletes had to do to get to Rio. If we consider the training and the financial support they needed to get there, they deserved to win two medals each. There is a real gender gap. That was my reaction.

Dr. Diane Culver: Women probably did not succeed in some trials because they did not receive the support they would have needed. Canada might have won more medals. For example, we now have integrated support teams, or ISTs. Apart from a few physiotherapists and Ms. Werthner, who is a sports psychologist, most of the teams that provide support for women are made up of men.

Ms. Karine Trudel: You mention support teams. I had a strong reaction when you talked about the pressure women endure in secondary school. They do indeed endure pressure there.

I have two sons. I do sports with them now, to encourage them. I had no female examples when I was young. How are we doing as women to persuade governments, particularly at the federal level, to do more to support women's sport? The example I would give is the marathon runner to whom we had nothing to offer.

In addition, there is balancing work and family. How can a woman athlete think about starting a family while continuing her training? Can you talk about that specifically? You were interrupted earlier, and since I have some time left, you can finish your explanation.

Dr. Guylaine Demers: Michael Messner is an American researcher whom I adore. He has written that if little boys have women sports coaches or female models in leadership positions, later, in their adult lives, they will consider it normal — not a word I like — for a woman to be in a leadership position. Having a woman boss is part of life. As well, young boys who are exposed very early to female leadership are going to exert influence as they grow up on the people around them concerning how women in leadership positions are perceived. So you are doing something extremely important for your boys.

Second, how can we help women? In order for it to be possible to have a career and train, obviously there have to be financial support and structures in place. Do women have babysitters?

When you are a coach and a young mother who has just given birth and is breastfeeding, can you get a babysitter paid for, for the baby you have to bring to the competition with you because you are breastfeeding?

There are things that could be done, but we have to keep in mind that in 2016, it is still women having babies. We sometimes see that as an obstacle, but if there were a support structure, some women would be able to pursue their career in sport for a very long time. Those are the facts of life for women in the world of sport.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Trudel.

Then we go to Mr. O'Regan for the Liberals, for seven minutes.

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

Thank you all for appearing.

We're very excited to be able to talk to you today. It's very timely, namely because I think that all of us around this table and almost all Canadians I know of were so excited by our performance in Rio. As somebody who used to be in the media, I think the amount of attention that our female athletes received, and beyond that, the fact that I know so many.... My nieces, for instance, and young girls of my friends jokingly, but not jokingly, said, "When are the men going to do their bit?"

It seemed to me to be an incredible turning point. As you mentioned in the report that you gave us on the status of female sport participation in Canada, media coverage is key, and it's key not only to ensuring that we have enough women participating as athletes and coaches, and as support, but also for endorsement and sponsorship, and sustaining female champions and female excellence in sport.

As you pointed out, it tempered my enthusiasm. It wasn't the turning point that I thought it was. Is that fair to say?

• (1145)

Dr. Diane Culver: It's never too late.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Let me be clear: was it a good thing or not a good thing?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: The performance issue that you've raised is an interesting one because I think it's certainly the second, maybe the third summer Olympic Games where the women have dominated the medal count.

We have this participation rate at the more recreational levels by girls. We have high-performance participation and success by girls and young women in such games as the Olympics, and yet we don't see that kind of representation within the coaching and leadership positions.

You're quite right about the media. It depends, of course, on the network. It was interesting. If you flipped around to other networks, there was far more coverage of the male sports than the female. My understanding from people with the CBC is that they are trying to redress that.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: So the CBC did not represent female sports as well...?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: No, they were making a tremendous amount of progress.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: They did, yes. That was my impression.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: It was progress that was not replicated in some of the networks to our south, for example.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: Oh, the American networks, yes.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: So, yes, they are.

Dr. Guylaine Demers: Just this week in the newspaper *La Presse*, Karen Paquin, one of our rugby seven bronze medallists, was in the newspaper commenting that you saw the enthusiasm of Canadians around women's sports during the Olympics, so why did it stop right afterwards?

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: It disappeared.

Dr. Guylaine Demers: Last week, in my equity class, they had to analyze newspapers, and all the students were surprised that they could not find any articles on women's sports. That is the purpose of the paper. Right after the Olympics, boom.

The media keeps telling us that people are not interested in women's sport. If you're in marketing and you want to launch a new product, the first thing you do is promote it, and then people are interested. If we don't talk about women's sport, and if we don't see women's sport, then of course people will say they're not interested. It's because they don't know they're interested. During the Olympics, they are there.

There is definitely a problem with the media representation of women athletes.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: The enthusiasm that we see across Canada when the Olympic Games are on, unfortunately, does not translate into higher participation rates after the Olympic Games, as one might expect it would. The research does not bear that out.

We're back to questions around access, and opportunity, and resources.

Mr. Seamus O'Regan: What would your message be to the Canadians who are taking note of these hearings and to the many Canadians who felt that sense of jubilation or felt that we turned a corner? How do we act on that to make sure it's sustained?

Forget us for a moment, I'm asking you to speak about people who just watched it on TV and thought it was a good thing.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: It ranges from encouraging physical literacy in early childhood and physical literacy development once we get in the school system, so that children feel more competent and self-assured when they go into learning new sports.

The after-school programs that many of us grew up with have dissipated. Without opportunities after school, and with all of the child care issues, there are not the same opportunities for children to participate in any physical activity or sport. Those opportunities we had did not require financial resources. Those families who couldn't afford to put their children in organized sports still had after-school programs.

Going back to the questions that were raised earlier around parents and family involvement, the more we can get parents involved in physical activity along with their children, then the more likely it is they're going to sustain participation.

We could go on and on. That's where it would start.

• (1150)

Dr. Guylaine Demers: I would say, write to the newspapers, send stories, and make your voice heard. If they don't talk about women's sport, then stop your subscription. We do have a power as consumers of media. I call the radio all the time. They would say that there was a basketball game last night, and I would thank them for talking about the women's team, but no, they were not.... Talk, call, and make your voice heard. We do have a power, but we don't use it. Show up at girls' games and women's games.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Demers.

Why don't we try to be concise, and we can do a three-minute round.

Mr. Waugh, from the Conservatives.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): My question would be to Dr. Kerr. I've covered CIS for 40 years. Let's face it, coaching takes place after school. These coaches are there from four o'clock to eight o'clock. We've improved the scholarships in CIS. We've improved the sabbaticals. It's up to you and the board of governors to say at your general meetings that you need more coaches. Just put it in the bylaws.

I look at the University of Saskatoon right now, and our most successful programs are coached by women. Put it in your bylaws. Go to your athletic directors and say it's done. You can do that. You've done it with sabbaticals. You've done it with scholarships.

We have an equal number of women's and men's teams, why aren't you putting it into the bylaws?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: I wouldn't say it's not in the bylaws.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: You just told me you've gone down in coaching for the last three years. It's easy. You can go to the universities after the year and say, "You haven't met your quota." I see the men's hockey team, right now, in Saskatchewan. The male coach is on a sabbatical and they've hired a former player, a female player to coach this year. You can easily institute this.

I've been involved in CIS for over 40 years. It's up to you people to lead, and I don't think you've been leading for the last 40 years.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: I would also comment that the CIS coaches don't appear out of nowhere. They're developed somewhere else.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Yes. We developed Lisa Thomaidis. We took a gamble on her from McMaster University. We went through 10 awful years and, all of a sudden, now we have won a CIS championship. That's the message that you have to give your athletic directors coast to coast, and you're not doing that.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: The athletic directors, of course, are about 80% male.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: You can start there then. Why don't you put it in your bylaws? You haven't answered that. Why don't you follow that up?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: I can't speak for all universities as to whether it's in their bylaws or not. I think it's a very good suggestion, but I think it's one piece of the puzzle. I don't think it will solve the entire problem we're facing. When you have a predominance of male university presidents, right down to 80% of the athletic directors, and you have search committees composed of males who say they can't find any females to draw in to the applicant pool...it's not as simple as that.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: They're there.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: I think we need to do a lot of education around unconscious bias and blind spots for gender and other forms of diversity. It's a matter of recruiting and taking risks. When you recruit and take risks, you need more resources. More resources cost money so absolutely, I wouldn't argue with you, but I also don't think that that will simply solve the problem.

• (1155)

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

We'll go to Monsieur Drouin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would also like to thank the witnesses for being here. I see that you write your titles, "Dr.", with an "e" in French, and I recall that not so long ago, when I was in university, there was a big debate about that. I understand what my colleague opposite is saying, but there was still reluctance on women's part. I think this is really about an educational process and the situation cannot change overnight.

My question is for Ms. Demers. You say you had difficulty getting statistics for your study.

In your opinion, who should have responsibility for making good statistics available and providing easy access to the data?

Dr. Guylaine Demers: Sport Canada. Certainly the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, CAAWS, is an ally, but it does not have the same resources as Sport Canada. It is our Canadian association, but it only has one and a half employees. That is completely ridiculous.

In my opinion, it is really up to Sport Canada. In fact, it should even be part of the evaluation process for the grant applications from each of the national federations. There should be a mandatory aspect dealing with gender equity and funding should be attached to that, and the federations should be required to provide figures. We have got to have them somewhere, and I think it should be at Sport Canada.

Mr. Francis Drouin: At the beginning of your testimony, you mentioned that many organizations promote women on boards of directors and in sports, but they do not talk about it. What can we do to break down those barriers? There is probably no umbrella organization to get the various organizations to talk to one another.

Dr. Guylaine Demers: I have proposed that we create an observatory on women and sport in Canada. That observatory could look after monitoring the statistics and the research. It could also promote best practices. In Quebec, there is an equivalent called the Observatoire québécois du loisir that does exactly that. It compiles the research and prepares simplified reports for the general public. You can always consult them and there are all sorts of resources.

The Conversation 2015 conference last summer enabled us to identify a lot of solutions, but also a lot of problems. At present, I am putting the final touches on a website that will be launched shortly at the Petro-Canada Sport Leadership sportif 2016 conference. That site will highlight best practices and will encourage people to participate. But I myself, Guylaine Demers, do not have an organization behind me to help me.

As well, if the Canadian government decided to consider the presence of women in sport to be an issue, because women make up 50% of our population, and created a Canadian observatory on women and sport, that would be an incredible tool, and, to my knowledge, it would be unique in the world, since I do not know of any others.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madam Trudel, you have three minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: I am going to get to the heart of the matter, because I do not have a lot of time left.

We talked about the Canadian Olympic Committee here, in June, and what forced the resignation of Jean-Luc Brassard. Did the controversy surrounding the former president of the Canadian Olympic Committee have repercussions for your members?

We also talked a lot about women role models, women coaches. That might not eliminate this kind of situation, but are there really concrete measures that could prevent it happening again?

[English]

Dr. Guylaine Demers: Gretchen, you're the sexual harassment expert. It's about the COC, what happened, and the impact it has on our sports organizations as women. Do you want to talk about it?

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: As background to this entire discussion is the notion that sport needs to be safe for boys and girls and for male and female coaches, but there is a plethora of research on the unfortunate

cases of sexual harassment and abuse of girls and women in the sport system.

I'm not sure what your question was.

• (1200)

The Chair: I am sorry. I thought you were aware of the translation device.

Dr. Gretchen Kerr: Ideally, you have examples set at the top for how other organizations are to behave. Through all national sport-governing bodies, there are requirements for a harassment policy and for arm's-length harassment officers to deal with cases. A recent research project undertaken of these national sport organizations found that fewer than 20% were adhering to the policy requirements to have harassment officers and a publicly available harassment policy.

We have a problem there in terms of translating policy into action, not just at the COC level but across the national sport-governing bodies. We don't want to encourage more women and girls into sport if it's not a safe environment, so this has to be a consideration.

The Chair: Thank you.

I think we have finished your three minutes, Madam Trudel.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming. I know it sounded like we were rushing you, but I think everyone got a chance to answer questions, and we were able to fill in that three-minute round.

We will break for a few minutes while everyone leaves and we get our next set of witnesses in.

Thank you very much.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1205)

The Chair: I will call the meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this committee is doing a study on Canadian Women and Girls in Sport. We have our witnesses here today.

We have four sets of witnesses. You each have five minutes to present and at the end of that time, we will go into a question and answer and an interaction with the committee.

We have present as an individual, Dr. Penny Werthner, Professor, Dean, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary. Dr. Werthner is on screen via video conferencing. We also have the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity. We have two witnesses, Karin Lofstrom and Allison Sandmeyer-Graves, and you can decide how you're going to split up your five minutes. From Égale Action, Éline Lauzon, the chief executive officer, is also here by video conference. Then we have from Think Sport Ltd., Marion Lay, the president, who is also here by video conference.

I will begin with Dr. Penny Werthner.

Dr. Penny Werthner (Professor, Dean, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary, As an Individual): Thank you for this initiative and for providing us with an opportunity to share our knowledge and experiences. My topic, as requested, is women in sport at the competitive level, their experiences and their needs as athletes and para-athletes, as coaches, as sport science professionals, and as women leaders in the sport system.

I've been involved in competitive sport for most of my life and it's certainly shaped who I am, hopefully for the better. I've competed for Canada. I've worked in the field of sport psychology with many of our Olympic athletes and coaches through many Olympics and Paralympic Games. I've researched and published in the area of women in coaching. Before I started my graduate program, in the early eighties I led what I think was an excellent internship mentorship program for women athletes that enabled them to move into administrative positions. That program created some of our strong women leaders who are currently in the system.

On athlete participation levels, we know that women athletes are doing very well from a numbers standpoint. In 2012, we had more than 4,000 women athletes, which comprised 44% of our Olympic teams across numerous countries. At the Paralympic Games, the increase went from 44 women and 91 men in 1960, to roughly 1,500 women and 2,700 men in 2012. That's excellent news.

However, when we look at women coaches, we're still in the 11% range across all countries. In 2012, it varies from 10% to about 16%. Certainly at the high performance competitive level, the sport science professional, so exercise physiologists, sport psychologists, medical personnel, the numbers are still incredibly low. That's what is part of the environment that high performance women athletes compete and train in.

Why should we care about this? I'm hopeful that everyone around the table does care or we wouldn't be doing this. I think there are two primary reasons from my perspective. One is the significant benefits of moving and playing, and I think we all know that. I use the example of Chantal Petitclerc who had an accident at the age of 13 and ended up in a wheelchair.

•(1210)

What changed her life—and she would say this—was her first coach, her high school swim coach, who got her into swimming and really changed who she was, allowed her to become a very independent, and physically and psychologically strong woman, in sport and in life in general.

However, the other reason I would argue we should care is that the environment of competitive sport is still very male dominated. While our participation rates are approaching 50%, the other categories are not. I would say it's often not a comfortable environment for our women athletes, and, at worst, it's an environment of subtle ridicule. Sometimes, as I'm sure you heard from Gretchen Kerr, it's abusive, because male skills are still seen, and the physique is still seen, as the norm in women's sport, or in sport in general.

What can we do about this? Again, from Guylaine, I think you probably heard that we discussed issues and developed many solutions around Conversation 2015, which was held in Quebec

City. We had six themes there. One was around women and coaching, girls' participation, and women as decision-makers.

Briefly, to think about a couple of solutions, I would suggest, increasing the number of women in leadership positions, as coaches, as leaders in our system. If we were to create mentoring programs, and we know this works—I gave a simple example a few minutes ago—we have a prototype.

Creating learning environments, etc., that would help create a supportive environment.

I will stop there.

The Chair: I hope you can finish when you get the question-and-answer period. You can raise some more points.

Now, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Allison Sandmeyer-Graves (Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

[*English*]

My name is Allison Sandmeyer-Graves, and I am the CEO of the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, commonly known as CAAWS. I will be using that acronym going forward. I'm joined by Karin Lofstrom, the former executive director of CAAWS, and an internationally recognized expert on women in sports today.

CAAWS's vision is a Canadian sports system that is equal and fair for girls and women, in which they are actively engaged as participants and leaders. Since its founding in 1981, CAAWS has been the leading voice for girls and women in sport in Canada.

We must start by applauding the committee for initiating this study. It's a topic that we are very passionate about. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of 30 years of leading thinkers and practitioners across Canada, there is still much work to be done.

As Mr. O'Regan commented, we all celebrated the success of the women in Rio. However, it would be a mistake to take that as an indication that equality has been achieved, and we hope that it won't in fact be a distraction from that.

Unfortunately, as you can see in the report that we circulated in advance, women's participation is not improving and remains lower than men's across all measures.

As a few examples, female sport participation, en masse participation, has been falling since the 1990s. Adolescent girls in particular drop out of sports at a very high rate, which is a huge issue in fact. Their sport participation at that age is a primary indicator of their participation on a lifelong basis. Female representation, as we've heard, on boards of directors, in paid leadership roles, and in technical roles, remains stubbornly low.

Our work focuses a lot on identifying what the barriers are to this. What we've discovered is that this is not a matter of girls and women not being interested or not being capable, but rather of them having no choice but to participate and to compete in a system that often fails to address their unique needs and interests, and in which they are at times made to feel unwelcome.

The barriers are complex, and Canadian Heritage and other departments have taken some important steps to help address them with us. We believe there is more that can and should be done, and, of course, CAAWS is here to help.

We would like to put forward a few recommendations that you, as a committee, ask Canadian Heritage to take action on as priorities that would help to bring about this equitable sports system we are all aiming for.

• (1215)

We recommend that sport organizations funded by Canadian Heritage receive clear criteria to meet and are held accountable. There is a commitment to gender equity through the women and sport policy of 2009. However, there are no targets, nor are there any consequences for failing to address persisting inequality. This ultimately conveys the impression that the Government of Canada is indifferent.

Sport organizations need a business case for change. Accountability introduces an effective motivation for finally taking action on this issue.

As a second measure, we recommend measuring and publicly reporting on the status of women and sport in Canada. The data we have is fragmented, unreliable, and inconsistent, which is an obstacle to establishing a benchmark against which progress can be measured. We recommend that Sport Canada require that all funded organizations provide their data on a gender basis so that we can see, for each measurement they are tracking, how many women and how many men there are. That then becomes the basis of a report that could be delivered on a recurring basis to help provide key insight to the sector and draw the necessary attention to this issue.

Finally, we recommend that there be increased support for sport organizations to rise to the occasion and successfully implement gender equity measures. We know, from our long experience working with sport organizations across the country, that they all need better access to education, training, and guidance to build their capacity to create quality sport experiences for all girls and women—including further under-represented groups—and to create conditions that will help foster the pipeline and the achievement of women in leadership roles.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we go to Égale Action and Éline Lauzon.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Lauzon (Chief Executive Officer, Égale Action): Good afternoon.

First, I would like to thank you for the opportunity offered to me to discuss the question of the place for women and girls in sport with you. I am speaking to you today as the chief executive officer of Égale Action, which, since 2001, has provided provincial leadership

in Quebec in relation to everything having to do with girls and women in the world of sport.

The information I will be providing to the committee relates exclusively to sport. I will also be happy to answer your questions about how Égale Action operates.

In the last 100 years, many breakthroughs have been made in terms of participation by girls and women, but they are still poorly represented in sport.

Why should we be concerned about girls and women? We know that before the transition from elementary to secondary school, there is a dramatic drop-out process that continues into adulthood, and this phenomenon is much greater among girls.

In 2006, a study was done in Quebec that showed that women represented barely 14% of coaches, 28% of officials — about 15% fewer than how things looked in Canada in 1998 — and 25% of board members in sport bodies, including 18% of presidents and vice-presidents.

Women hold paid decision-making positions in sports federations, but account for only about 25% of those positions. Access to decision-making positions in sport is still difficult in Quebec, but also in Canada.

In 2001, 63 women out of 420 athletes and founders, or 15%, were inducted into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, a very low percentage.

What are the determining factors for ensuring a presence for girls and women in sport? First, I think we have to support measures that promote women's participation, and this means understanding the issues surrounding their participation and raising awareness on the part of the largest possible number of decision-makers and actors. Expanding women's participation will call for political leadership, but that responsibility must be shared with the Canadian sports bodies and the roles of each entity in the equation must be clearly identified.

Second, we have to encourage participation by making decisions. The cultural and historical context, coupled with the Canadian model put in place for the sport system, has meant that we have tried to insert participation by women into a framework put in place by a male sports culture, one that is not suited to women, the result being the few results seen.

I think that to increase women's participation, we have to start by simply deciding to do it. We are not talking about robbing Peter to pay Pauline; we are talking about balancing everything, and that can mean practising positive discrimination, to get there.

We also have to think about developing favourable environments, in terms of both the social and physical and the administrative and financial aspects. In social terms, obviously, we are talking about attitudes and behaviours in the person's entourage, whether it be their spouse, parents, friends, coaches, decision-makers or peers, who have a strong influence on the practice of sport and involvement in sport. We are only just beginning to have a slightly better understanding of the major impact of social influences on girls' and women's participation in sports.

• (1220)

[English]

The Chair: You have two minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Lauzon: In terms of the physical and administrative environment, the limited number of facilities and adequate sports equipment makes practising sport difficult for all participants. If we add to that safety, accessibility and discriminatory management, we get bigger barriers to break down in order to encourage women to practise and get involved in sport.

In addition, the financial environment is an unavoidable issue. In order for there to be real improvement in women's participation and involvement, we have to invest financially and the money has to come from government, partners or collaborators, in addition to seeing a change in mindsets and responsibilities for granting budgets on the part of the organizations and groups that are directly involved with this clientele.

And last, we have to encourage excellence in coaching. I think this is the cornerstone that guarantees an excellent experience. It is entirely in the interests of the people doing the work on the ground to understand girls' behaviour and know how to communicate with them and act in dealing with them. To do that, we need massive investment in training all of these people and the decision-makers.

In conclusion, with the phenomenal results our women achieved at the last Olympic Games, in spite of the limited and deficient supports provided by the system, we have to realize the enormous potential of our women in sport. However, if we settle for the minimum, the results will continue to be sporadic and we will continue to deprive our girls and women of the opportunities for growth that sport offers.

Thank you for your attention.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We now go to Marion Lay.

Ms. Marion Lay (President, Think Sport Ltd.): Thank you very much.

I really am privileged to be here today and I appreciate the opportunity to share some of my thoughts with you.

My background briefly is that I am a past Olympic athlete, having competed in the 1964 and 1968 Olympics. I also coached an athlete to our 1976 Olympics and I'm a founding member of CAAWS. Actually, my whole career, not on necessarily the money side but on the commitment side, has been in the area of gender equity and benefits for girls and women in physical activity and sport, so thank you for asking for my thoughts.

I wanted to take a slightly different approach, because I think you'll hear from many of your witnesses about the statistics and a number of the problems. I wanted to look at a practical approach to how we might move our agenda forward from where we are today.

We've had government involvement from the federal side—and I'd like to thank you for that—for over 50 years for women in sport.

We've had policy papers and recommendations from not only the governments but also a number of conferences, whether provincial, national or international, on women in sport. I think it's fair to say we have a plethora of things we could do, but we've had a very difficult time even under the leadership of CAAWS to get the resources we need and to get an approach that helps us implement those recommendations in the area of girls and women in sport. I think that due to the number of associations that we have in our system as well as the different levels of government, it's often hard to get coordinated approaches. We've made significant progress and I think Rio is a place we could take as a launching block as we move forward here to try to bring about continued, sustainable, long-term change.

I'd like to talk about a couple of statistics. Some of them were mentioned, so I'll be very brief. One statistic from the Canadian mental health survey, which I think is really important, is that only 9% of children and youth as of 2012-13 spent 60 minutes in physical activity—not even rigorous sport, but physical activity. ParticipACTION is taking this on, and it's going to be part of what they do and really try promote for their 150th birthday. I think we need to realize that we have a very small base of people who believe that physical activity and sport are part of how we identify ourselves as Canadians and who understand how important they are for the health of our youth.

• (1225)

CAAWS, of course, has a number of stats—and you'll be able to read those, and Penny Werthner mentioned the numbers around the coaching. On the boards of PSOs and NSOs, and those that are delivering our sports systems, we have probably only 25% to 30% women.

I would like to see us really look at those opportunities where we feel we can really lever change. One of the best has been Canada Games. Canada Games has been funded on a long-term basis through commitments both by the federal government and by the provincial government, and we have seen change because of those commitments. They have a board that is totally committed, they have an affirmative action program called women in coaching, they have targets for what they're going to do, and they have to publicly report back their findings every year.

We need leadership; we need focus; and we need to be able to lever what's there to really measure whether we can, in a specific area, take a platform and bring about real change. I think we've seen the same things with Own the Podium. It was always considered that women were not as competitive as men. I think that myth was shattered in Rio. However, that takes an organization that puts the equity of women and men in sport right at the top of the agenda. If you perform, if you're on the pathway of performing, you will get funded. We need to have that kind of gender equity criterion in the things we do.

I would like to say it takes focus, it takes leadership, and it takes sustained funding. If we have those, I think we have the recommendations that we can pick and choose from. I would say we need three things that will start to bring about long-term change: gender equity at the governance level of NSOs, gender equity in our resource allocations—and we can do that by writing those things into our bylaws and having snap audits to make sure those amounts not only are in the budgets but actually are being spent on girls and women—and gender equity in our national coaching staff.

It's quite simple if you look at how Canada Games and how Own the Podium have gone about it. They have criteria. The criteria are very clear and very focused. If you don't meet the criteria, you cannot receive full funding. I think if we did the same things in those areas for gender equity, we would see real change.

I also would like to ask—

The Chair: Thank you, Marion.

Now we begin the question section. This is a seven-minute section, and it includes both questions and answers. You'll get an opportunity to say what you didn't say in your presentation, but we need to be concise.

We begin with Mr. Breton for the Liberals.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank our witnesses. Your testimony is really useful for the study we have begun.

I am going to get straight to the point. With the first group, we spoke very quickly about the role of education when it comes to sport and women's choices to engage in sport. Ms. Lauzon, you also talked about that earlier.

I have questions about the balance between the male and female models for girls. All children, so that means all girls, go to school. Girls have male role models as physical education teachers, teachers who take on the role of coach at noon and after school for extracurricular sports activities. At least, that was 100% the case for my daughter. The teachers and coaches who were her role models were all male role models. In a more competitive context, in swimming, she had only male coaches. I wonder about this balance, and about the role of schools and sports education programs.

In your opinion, what is the school's role in this?

• (1230)

[*English*]

The Chair: Who would you like to have answer?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Perhaps we could start with Ms. Lauzon.

Ms. Éline Lauzon: In the Quebec school system and the federated sport system, our biggest problem is working in silos. We are desperately trying to break down those silos, but there are sort of unwritten rules. This means it is very difficult to penetrate the system in order to train school coaches. Getting access to those coaches gets very complicated.

At Égale Action, we are trying to get into the school system. We have established a training program that specifically addresses coaches who coach girls, whether at school or in the general public. We will be putting on a training program in one of the school systems in Montréal. We think we are managing to make a chink in the wall.

In the schools, there are many more women teaching children in regular classes, but it is the complete opposite for physical education courses. There is a much higher number of men there. You are correct to say that female role models are not as numerous in the schools.

On the subject of male role models, however, I think the teachers or coaches who get adequate training for interacting with these girls are going to be just as good at getting them to achieve the level of development they aspire to. Yes, female role models are the priority, but I think our male role models need help in how to work with our girls and make sure they make adequate progress. We have a way to go yet and there are silos to break down and mindsets to change in the systems, but it is doable. We have started to do it, gradually, and it is working quite well.

Mr. Pierre Breton: Ms. Sandmeyer-Graves and Ms. Lofstrom, do you have anything to add on that?

[*English*]

Ms. Karin Lofstrom (Former Executive Director, Consultant, KL Sports Consulting, Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity): We've seen some good examples of male coaches who understand that it's different to coach females, and sometimes they bring in a graduated player, a female player, to serve as a role model, as an assistant coach.

The Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association has a female coach mentorship program. Graduated players come back and work with the program. Again, a lot of head coaches are male, but it's a training ground and it also gives that female experience.

I think Éline is right in the sense that we need to educate as we're trying to get more women coaches. In the meantime, it's men who are coaching the daughters and the female athletes. Getting them that education for the psychosocial factors would make a difference.

In terms of the physiology, the tactical kind of training piece is quite similar. It's really on that whole psychosocial side of girls and women as athletes, as coaches, and as leaders where the difference is that male coaches need to work on addressing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Would you go so far as to say that we even have to engage in positive discrimination to try to achieve a better balance between men and women, when it comes to coaches and teachers?

I do not want to invent a new problem, but I am trying to put myself in the shoes of a girl watching the boys play basketball. Only the best ones will be chosen to be on the team, girls and boys together. The teacher, who is a role model, is six foot two. I find it hard to imagine that we are going to resolve this issue, even with a lot of education and better training for male teachers.

• (1235)

[English]

Dr. Penny Werthner: I would like to add a couple of things. If I bring it back to the educational system, I might say that we do need to go back to the training of physical education teachers. I think the federal and provincial governments need to get together on that. In many provinces, there's no training of that in teacher education. We would solve a lot of problems. I believe strongly that if we had training of physical education teachers, both men and women, then you would have a lot more women teaching play, and not necessarily sport in the school system, but physical activity.

I would also argue—a second piece—bring it back and make it a large part of the curriculum that we've lost in almost every province.

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

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: The next questioner is Mr. Kitchen from the Conservatives.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for being here today.

Dr. Werthner, I'm just hoping you might be able to throw some statistics at us.

In the previous study that was done by the House back in 1998, they suggested that 29% of all coaches in 1992 were female. You've indicated to us that 11% of high-performance coaches are female at this point in time, if I took that correctly.

Do you have any statistics on the participation rates of coaches in the general physical activity body in all sports?

Dr. Penny Werthner: Perhaps somebody else has numbers. What I would say that we know from the Coaching Association of Canada is that we do have women coaches at the introductory level of sport. In their education system, that's at level 1, 2, and to some degree 3, although they've changed those levels now at competition development.

So there are women coaching. What I would say in Canada is that we don't do enough skill development so they're actually teaching effective skills to our children and budding athletes. I would say that of both male and women coaches. To come back to your question, what we do know is that when coaches rise to the provincial and national level, the drop-off is significant. There are a variety of reasons for that.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Can you give us some of those?

Dr. Penny Werthner: I think coaching still needs to be seen as a paid profession. What we see at the varsity sport level, so in the university system, is some pretty good equity around women and

male coaching varsity teams, certainly coaching women's teams, and it's because it's a viable profession. Our difficulty at the national level is there are very few positions where you can actually be paid. I think that's definitely a barrier, but I would argue the other barrier is that sport remains the last bastion of maleness. It is a very difficult environment for one individual coach in an individual sport to be in.

On Marion's three points that she finished with in terms of putting some gender equity numbers around national women coaching, I think that's absolutely crucial. I would add that the other crucial component to that would be to create a supportive environment with a number of women coaches so we can actually create an environment that makes it viable for them to continue.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: A lot of the emphasis seems to be on university level high performance athletes. I think we all would agree that we need to have a good foundation. You don't build a house from the roof down; you build it from the basement up. You build that foundation, and you make a good solid foundation, in particular for girls and women in sport. We've talked about that a bit. We've heard suggestions about changing the education system so we make certain we're educating our youth so that as they progress they develop those levels.

One thing I've noticed over my years in coaching is that there isn't a great deal of emphasis on bringing women into the coaching role. A lot of times girls get involved in sport, they participate in playing soccer, and their parents take them to that when they're little. Then they get involved with hockey, or baseball, or community softball, but there isn't an emphasis at that level for them to get involved in coaching and to start them learning the rules of the game. I'm hearing that it sounds like it should be coming from women to emphasize that to these young girls. Right now, we don't have that position. We have males trying to put that role model out to get them involved. The coaching programs out there don't seem to emphasize women getting involved.

I'm wondering if someone would want to comment on that.

• (1240)

Ms. Marion Lay: There are a couple of things.

In B.C., in Coquitlam, we had a human rights case that went forward to say that the facility usage was dominated by young boys and boys' teams, and young girls were not allowed to play on the fields or in the various facilities. On that ruling, Coquitlam now has the most robust participation of girls and women in sport. They also have one of the largest number of women coaching at the lower level around their sport.

At some point, I think we need to do some audits around the country to look at the uses of facility and what some of the tools are, legal or otherwise, to bring about change to allow gender equity in our facilities.

I think we also need to look at some of the best practices. In the elementary schools in Alberta we have the Ever Active Schools model, and in B.C. we have Action Schools. They are working with elementary school teachers to put physical activity into the daily routine of their students. They have ten-minute breaks where they get up and are physically active during subject time. They also design their playgrounds so they have facilities or active spaces like running over rocks, getting their proprioception developed, and things that allow them to start to be able to move and be part of sport.

The other thing we found is that teachers on the women's side don't wear high heels to elementary school in B.C. anymore, and their back problems have decreased. They also have to get up and participate with the kids. These little ten-minute episodic breaks make a difference.

I think you have to build...that's what I'm trying to get us to look at. What are some of our successes, and how do we build on those successes? If we have elementary school and that's happening, then can we get those teachers who are doing activity into coaching? How do we approach that?

I think we can find the solutions if we focus in on what it is we want to achieve.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: There's a study out of Texas Woman's University on girls participating in football. One of the biggest things it was talking about was the love of sport. Their biggest emphasis was that girls participated because of the love of sport.

How do we emphasise that in our programs?

The Chair: You will have to answer that in the next group of questions, because we've run out of time.

Ms. Trudel, maybe you might allow that question to be answered in your seven minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Yes, please.

[English]

Ms. Karin Lofstrom: I think that love and that connection to sport is what probably drives girls and boys. Some of the factors are different for the girls' love of the sport. It's often about being accepted in that environment. That social connection is the driving force for them to then love the sport. For boys, it might be about their performance, and then their teammates will accept them in the group. Often for the girls it's having that social connection with others. Then they love it, and they want to stay because their friends are there, it's fun, and all those other kinds of pieces.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Thank you.

My question is for everyone.

Hello to the people participating by videoconference.

You spoke about the love of the sport just now. We have also talked about infrastructure, and in particular locker rooms. There have to be appropriate facilities for it to be easy for women and girls to practise sport. In the existing programs or the ones that should be put in place, what could persuade girls and women to engage in sport and like it more?

• (1245)

Ms. Éleine Lauzon: Certainly, even if our facilities are not all up to standard in terms of safety, for example, there are things that can be done, for example when it comes to the schedule and the availability of slots for male sports as compared to female sports. We can say the same thing about skating rinks. I am talking about blocks in the rink schedule that are reserved for women and girls and blocks that are reserved for boys' hockey, and so on.

There is certainly a shortage of facilities, but we should at least manage the existing facilities properly, so it is fair for boys and girls and for women and men.

[English]

Ms. Karin Lofstrom: I would say, on getting girls into programs, that it's about finding opportunities in the communities where they live. It's not about them signing up for an eight-week program but trying it and bringing a friend. We know for sure that girls and women are more likely try something if they're doing it with someone else. Have those kinds of pieces, and make them low cost, for sure. For the parents who are not sure if they want to have their daughters at that activity level, they'll try it if it doesn't cost too much. Definitely we can see those kinds of pieces.

I think also having female leaders in those programs really encourages the young girls. If they get there, they have a fun time, and they have these role models they want to spend time with, for sure that keeps them around.

Éleine raised some questions around the infrastructure. A lot of the facilities have had grandfathered leagues in them forever. If we want to give more girls and women access, the policies around facility allocation and those types of things have to be looked at. We have to start from scratch and give everyone time in the good prime-time slots and those types of things. I mean, you don't want parents bringing their 10-year-olds to play at ten o'clock at night.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: It is often said that female role models in sports encourage women to take that path.

My question is for all of you. What could we do to have more women in sport? Is there training? The objective is always to encourage physical activity in the long term, regardless of age, but when our Olympic athletes, or people who are really in professional sports, get to a certain age, they have to quit.

Is there a training program for them? What kind of support could we provide for them to encourage them to become coaches or physical education teachers, or to stay connected with sport?

[English]

Ms. Karin Lofstrom: We're seeing it in age groups, in national team, and in university programs. Coaches, as part of their team-building, will have their athletes go to either an officials training program or a coaching training program. That way they get to experience those pieces. When their hockey team, let's say, is doing a hockey camp, the players who took the coaching education will run the camps for the young girls. They get a taste of coaching to see if they like it. It gives them an opportunity to think about maybe being a coach.

It's about giving them the opportunity for perhaps officiating, or about getting them involved in their communities. Could they get involved as an athlete representative on the local sport community board so that they get the experience of being on a board? It's about exposing them to different opportunities. Sometimes you see university kids from teams going to coach at a high school or an elementary school. That way they can actually see if they like the coaching thing, or if they don't, or if they would rather organize events or volunteer on a board.

It's about giving them multiple experiences so that they get a taste of something that they may want to do in the future.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have about two minutes left. Ms. Lauzon had her hand up, Marion Lay had her hand up, and Dr. Werthner had her hand up.

If you want to share the two minutes, go for it.

We'll start with you, Ms. Lauzon.

• (1250)

[Translation]

Ms. Éleine Lauzon: Thank you.

In Quebec, at present, there are no official programs for retaining our athletes or our best role models. This is an atrocious oversight. These athletes do it very spontaneously when they see an existing role model, for example, a woman who is a coach or an official.

Most of them become speakers. They also become role models to encourage girls to get moving, but we lose them when it comes to being coaches, officials or administrators on various committees. Something needs to be developed so we do not lose them. We must not simply wait for an existing role model to take them under her wing, even though that does happen. That may answer Mr. Breton's question about coaches in the schools. Often, it is young people who play at the college or early university level who coach girls or boys in the schools. They have not been trained and they have no idea what they are going to do there. Often, they are beginners.

We really have to put a structure in place that is not complex, that will give them good training for their new role, whether as an official, a coach or an administrator.

[English]

The Chair: A quick answer, please.

Dr. Penny Werthner: A really quick answer, coming back to Marion's comment about best practices, is I think we've had some programs in place. So quite historically now we had a program that created a year-long program for women athletes who were interested

in being women administrators, and we put them in a national sport organization environment. We put them with women as mentors and we created that environment where they developed the skills to be successful over a lengthy period of time, a year, and as a result some of those women are actually still in the system leading our sport organizations, few as they may be. So I think we have a model there that we could work on because I do agree they have to learn some skills just as anyone does.

The Chair: Thank you.

Marion, did you have a quick answer?

Ms. Marion Lay: I think for the sake of our women athletes, because what we've just heard is you hear about them in the Olympics and then they're dropped, if we had a mentorship program where they could get a stipend, it doesn't need to be fully...and they get some training and they see that their skill set they've learned is useful. It could be working with girls in refereeing, or officiating, going into coaching, looking at sports administration, looking at research that they may eventually want to do. But we never open that avenue to them. So we give them money to go and get their academic career, but we don't give them funding where they can come back and look at how they want to contribute back into our system. Current real athletes, unless they're retiring, may not be able to do that as they're going to go on for a longer career, but we have the last number of top athletes from our Olympics and Pan-American and Commonwealth Games who I think would be thrilled to be part of something where they have a sense of belonging and can contribute back.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Vandal.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Thank you very much for a great discussion. I think we were all proud of our athletes in Rio, especially so with the great performance by our women athletes. My question is around a program called the athlete assistance program, and it's open to anyone who has this information, if indeed anyone does. I know that there was \$27 million distributed to roughly 2,000 athletes in Canada in 2014-15. Would anyone know how much of that actually went to women athletes?

Ms. Karin Lofstrom: One of my colleagues in the room might know.

The Chair: It doesn't seem like it.

Go ahead, Dr. Werthner.

• (1255)

Dr. Penny Werthner: I'm sorry, I don't have the specific answer, but what I would say is that athlete assistance money is going to all our nationally carded athletes. So given that we're at about 44% give or take—because that's across all countries, somewhere in that neighbourhood—of women athletes competing for Canada, somewhere in the neighbourhood half of athlete assistance is going to young women athletes who are competing for Canada.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Forty-four per cent of our carded athletes are women?

Dr. Penny Werthner: That's an international statistic. I'm not sure if anyone has it just for Canada, but it's somewhere in that vicinity for sure.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Would anybody have any information on the Own the Podium program and how many female athletes get funding through Own the Podium? Perhaps those are questions better asked to—

The Chair: Ms. Lay.

Ms. Marion Lay: I was going to say that I don't think we have those stats; however, I think Penny is saying the same kinds of things. There are those who qualify at the performance standards, and we have a number of women there. We're in that 40% and we know that 59% of women athletes went to the Olympics. I would say they are receiving their programs, maybe not directly, but the programs they're part of would receive that proportion of the funding that's going out. We could find those stats quite easily.

Mr. Dan Vandal: We will have other witnesses, I'm sure, who will have that precise information.

As a father, and as a grandfather to my granddaughter, this is for CAAWS. One of the things you've said is that adolescent girls are dropping out of sports and physical activity in early adolescence. I don't think your recommendations actually addressed that issue. I'm wondering if you could tell us what is the best thing that we as government could do to prevent this.

Ms. Karin Lofstrom: I would say that we need to have the system recognize that girls potentially want different things than boys and we need to have conversations with the girls about what they want in order to make their sporting experience something that they want to stay with.

We find that if we get girls in programs and they're having successful experiences, they want to stay. Also, culturally and in the media, we need to show that it's normal for girls to be active in their teenage years. It's not all about the magazines and the fashion pieces. It's about the role-modelling pieces and seeing other women who are in sports, and having those women come back to see the younger girls and be involved in their training. We need to have those kinds of catches, those hooks that make them think that this is where they want to be, that this is the cool place to be amongst their peers.

Mr. Dan Vandal: Right.

Ms. Allison Sandmeyer-Graves: If I may add to that, CAAWS has run quite a successful program over the years that has really focused on training the program designers and the front-line staff who are creating the sport experiences, so that they come into it and—just as we were talking about with coaches and phys. ed. teachers—design those experiences that ensure girls have the competency, the confidence, and the motivation to stick with it, not to try to fit into a male model of sport, but to have one that really is adapted and supportive of them and the experiences they need in order to have that longevity.

Mr. Dan Vandal: That's great. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Julie, you have two minutes.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: There's one thing we haven't touched upon. We've talked a lot about elite athletes, but we haven't touched very much on the professional athlete side. When we talk about

infrastructure and infrastructure investments, is there anything there that can touch upon promoting female professional athletes? When we look at our media pages, you're right: we're not seeing much about professional athletes.

I'll start with CAAWS.

Ms. Karin Lofstrom: For sure, I've seen a lot of work in the last few years on the Canadian Women's Hockey League.

We have great success and a great following for the women's team at the Olympic level, but when it comes to the Canadian Women's Hockey League—with an American team thrown in there—it doesn't get the same following. A lot of those same athletes are playing on those teams. Again, we talked about it in an earlier session around media and sponsors in terms of having people coming to watch the events and buying tickets. If they don't know it exists because it's not reported in the papers.... It's a kind of vicious circle. How do we get the first part started?

We've had some success at CAAWS in partnering with the Dairy Farmers of Canada. They're getting behind the Women's Hockey League and women in sport, which is a kind of odd pairing, but it's been really positive. Farmers also have daughters. They're out there in every community. It's been positive.

• (1300)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: From the federal perspective, does anyone have any ideas on what our role can be in helping women gain a profile in professional sports?

Ms. Karin Lofstrom: I don't know if there's anything in tax breaks for sponsorships or for organizations to donate to or sponsor women's organizations. Maybe there are pieces that way that could help, so that it's an incentive for them to sponsor women's teams or women's sport.

Ms. Marion Lay: We've sort of defined—and it might be a bit old-fashioned—what national sport organizations and multi-sport organizations get funding. There's no reason why a professional women's team—especially as an affirmative action effort—couldn't be eligible for federal funding in the same way that national sport-governing bodies are. If they're providing the service and we're.... It could be something that could be worked out. We need to ask or we need to put that forward.

Now that continuum from start to professional league is very different from what it used to be when we created our NSOs and our PSOs.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I have a quick question.

If you all recall, in June 2012 the federal, provincial, and territorial sports ministers actually endorsed the Canadian sport policy 2012. Does anybody know whether that had a focus at all on gender equity in sports? Has it been doing anything with regard to women? They're looking at this from school as well as amateur and professional athletes. Does anybody know what's happened? Have they been focusing on that?

Ms. Karin Lofstrom: On one of the these I can add quickly—and Marion, you can jump in.

In this last policy, women, discrimination, and equity were not even mentioned. It's kind of like thinking that the work is done, but it's not. We don't want to take that foot off the gas pedal because we're not over the hump yet, and that everything is fine. It had had focus in previous versions of policies but not in this last one, specifically.

Ms. Marion Lay: Yes, there was a commitment from our most recent minister of sport, Minister Carla Qualtrough, that she is going to put girls and women in sport back on the federal-provincial agenda, that it has slipped off, and that it needs to go on, as well as more work around sport for people with disabilities and special needs.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank all the witnesses.

I think this was a very interesting session, and I want to thank again Julie Dabrusin for bringing the motion forward to study this.

I just wanted to call for a motion—

Yes, Marion.

Ms. Marion Lay: Do we have one minute? I have one thing I would like to say that I didn't get a chance to get in there.

The Chair: We should be leaving this room but go ahead. You have one minute.

Ms. Marion Lay: I think we have a lot of really important things happening in Canada, like our 150th birthday and money for infrastructure coming from the federal.... We have Calgary going after a bid for the Olympics. Hosting is coming back on the agenda.

All of those federal initiatives should look at what they want for people with disability and for gender equity, to ensure they're starting to answer some of the issues we've brought up in these discussions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): I move we adjourn.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Maguire.

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