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—
Chair

Mr. Bill Casey

Standing Committee on Health

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• (0900)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)): Good morning. Welcome to the 147th meeting of the health committee.

We continue our study on fitness in young people.

We have, from the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, Josh Berman and Adam Joiner.

We have, from the Canadian School Boards Association, by video conference Josh Watt.

We have, from Physical and Health Education Canada, Melanie Davis, the Executive Director; and Tricia Zakaria, the Director of Programs and Education.

From Sport for Life Society, by video conference from British Columbia, we have Richard Way and Andrea Carey.

Hello there. It's wonderful to have you.

We'll give each of you 10 minutes for your opening remarks, and we'll begin with Josh Berman.

You have 10 minutes.

Mr. Josh Berman (Director, Research and Public Policy, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada): Madam Chair, honourable members and committee staff, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and to contribute to this important study on physical activity levels in Canada's youth.

Community-based activities, positive relationships and life-changing programs: as Canada's largest child- and youth-serving organization, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada provides vital services and programs to over 200,000 young people in 700 communities across Canada. During critical out-of-school hours, our clubs help young people develop into healthy, active and engaged adults. Our trained staff give children and youth the tools they need to realize positive outcomes in self-expression, academics, healthy living, physical activity and mental health.

At clubs, we are there for children and youth during critical out-of-school hours, that time before and after school and during weekends and school breaks that represent the largest block of discretionary time in a child's day. The average child between the ages of six and 12 has approximately 67 hours of free time each week, which is more time than they spend in school.

Research suggests that having a lot of largely unstructured, unsupervised and unproductive time can undermine positive development.

At Boys and Girls Clubs, young people have structured programming and supervision that helps them stay active and healthy. All of our clubs operate under the core programming of our model for success, which includes daily physical activity and access to healthy food.

As this committee knows, physical activity has been demonstrated to have broad effects, including improved academic performance and reductions in depression, anxiety and stress, loneliness, and self-destructive behaviour. It plays a fundamental role in healthy child development.

We know that only 35% of Canadian children between the ages of five and 17 are getting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity every day. We also know that participating in quality, organized out-of-school activities is a constructive, safe and active way for young people to spend their free time.

In a recent national survey, when asked how they would like to spend this discretionary time, the vast majority of children and youth said they wanted to spend more time engaging in physical activities, hanging out with friends and participating in arts-related activities such as music and drama. However, getting access to these activities can be difficult for families of low socio-economic means.

This is where Boys and Girls Clubs come in. Our clubs offer every one of these programs at little to no cost for members. Our clubs are often located in neighbourhoods that have few recreational centres, with young people coming to think of Boys and Girls Clubs as a place where they can belong.

Clubs have been largely focused on physical activity, including team sports, recreation, dance, and adventure sports. Increasingly, we are adding nutritious meals to the traditional after-school snack and are providing programs on nutrition and other aspects of healthy living. They help children and youth develop the positive attitudes and behaviours that will promote their safety, health and well-being.

Children who regularly participate in after-school programs make considerable health and wellness gains. They exercise more regularly, eat well and are more protected from injuries and threats. Because they are learned in childhood, these behaviours are more likely to affect participants' lifestyle well into adulthood.

Given the short- and long-term mental and physical health benefits that structured out-of-school programming provides to children and youth, we ask this committee to consider including support and expansion for such programs, especially for those families with low socio-economic means, as a strong recommendation in its report back to Parliament.

I now want to give the opportunity for my colleague, Adam, the Director of Programs for clubs across Ottawa, to speak about some of our more specialized physical activity programs.

Thank you.

● (0905)

Mr. Adam Joiner (Director of Programs, Boys and Girls Clubs of Ottawa, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada): Thank you, Josh.

I want to take a moment to discuss some of the cutting-edge programs we are implementing across the country for children and youth who need us most. Exposure to childhood trauma, whether it be parental divorce, jailing of a family member, or a newcomer to Canada who is fleeing violence, is a deeply stressful and emotionally painful experience that leaves a lasting physical and mental imprint on children and youth. It has been found to disrupt normal child development in profound ways, in the brain, the body and social and behavioural interactions. With the rise of neuroscience, our understanding of the impact of trauma on the brain and body has dramatically increased.

A child affected by trauma may exhibit behaviours such as emotional dysregulation, hypervigilance, aggression, an inability to form prosocial relationships. Fundamentally, trauma causes a rewiring of the brain, often causing children and youth, as they grow, to have incredibly difficult times dealing with stress.

Through our trauma-informed sport program called the bounce back league, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada is playing a role in improving health and wellness outcomes for children and youth who have experienced trauma. Currently running in three clubs and soon to expand to another 10, including here in Ottawa, youth are invited to participate in an ongoing competitive sports activity. Each session starts with a warm-up, skills development and then a competitive game that introduces a level of stress. The trained staff member talks to and coaches these youth through the game about strategies on how to handle stress, and supports making connections to stressful events or times outside of sport, such as at school, their part-time job or home life. At the end of the game, the group comes together to share and learn from each other.

I highlight this program as a way to support the whole child and youth. Increasing physical activity is incredibly important, but we also need to meet youth where they are. Well-developed sports-based programs grounded in multidisciplinary research and evidence, such as our Bounce Back League, can improve physical health outcomes while also improving mental health outcomes, such as confidence, emotion regulation and the establishment of positive relationships.

Our programming across Canada is offered at little to no cost and is delivered intentionally with the goal of providing high-quality and consistent active programs where physical literacy skills can be developed. Underlying all of our programs is intentional social skill

development, where children and youth can learn skills such as positive communication, positive decision-making and leadership.

As mentioned before, meeting children and youth where they are and at their ability is incredibly important. Programs and services at Boys and Girls Clubs are developed with that intention. Whether it be our Walk This Way program, which brings 120 children and youth across our city here in Ottawa to different walking destinations, or our competitive sports programming, our goal is to get children engaged and to ensure they have a positive relationship with physical activity. That will, in turn, support them to be active for life. Watching a young person who is not active finally achieve their goal is not only life changing for that child, it is life changing for everyone around them.

Boys and Girls Clubs provide wraparound programming to help children and youth learn about the importance of healthy eating and nutrition, such as our Kid Food Nation program, and how to prepare cost-effective, nutritious meals to help fuel growing bodies. As young people become more engaged in sport and activities, we know there is a direct correlation to mental, physical, emotional and cognitive growth.

As a child growing up at the club, I can attest to the difference it made in my life. Physical activity and the costs associated with programs were unattainable for my family, so the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa was my only outlet. Before going to the club, I didn't have regular access to sport. I had poor nutrition and therefore lived a very unhealthy lifestyle, at one point resulting in my weight surpassing 350 pounds. The club allowed me to lose weight, become healthier, learn about proper nutrition and gain confidence at a time when I was most vulnerable. This was life changing for me. My greatest gift now is the ability to provide that same experience to young people in our communities today. As a multi marathon and half-marathon runner, I now live a far healthier lifestyle. I believe the Boys and Girls Club saved my life in more ways than one, providing me with the chance to become the person I am today.

For the 200,000 young people we work with annually, Boys and Girls Clubs across Canada allow the same opportunity to learn about the importance of physical activity in their lives and how it makes an impact.

Thank you again for letting us speak. We look forward to your questions.

● (0910)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Excellent.

Now we will go to Josh Watt in Winnipeg.

You have 10 minutes, sir.

Mr. Josh Watt (Representative, Canadian School Boards Association): Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Honourable members of Parliament, it is with a profound sense of duty and responsibility that the Canadian School Boards Association accepted the Standing Committee on Health's invitation to share our views on motion M-206 further to the committee's study on the level of fitness and physical activity of youth in Canada.

The Canadian School Boards Association, or CSBA for short, represents over 300 school boards in Canada, providing public education to nearly four million students from kindergarten to secondary school.

Collectively, in fulfilling their many mandates, school boards provide young people with a safe and healthy learning environment where they can develop and grow so that they can achieve educational success.

We educate youth and adults with a view to shaping informed, conscientious and independent members of society who will actively contribute to its development.

Finally, we recognize the importance of health and wellness, and we work to promote healthy living through physical activity, healthy eating and substance abuse prevention.

Through these mandates, we help foster the kinds of behaviours we hope all our students will adopt, both before and after they graduate high school. These objectives represent the lasting contribution and heritage of trusteeship of the school boards that make up Canada's public education system.

[*English*]

In fulfillment of these objectives, school boards across Canada strive to provide all students with a core and essential program that is designed to enhance the well-being of the whole student across the physical, cognitive and emotional spectrum. It includes their participation in physical education programs; health studies courses, including sexual and reproductive health education components; extracurricular athletic and sporting activities; human nutritional programs; and the promotion of general well-being among all students through a complement of ancillary programs, supports and services.

As an association, we also remain active partners of the Joint Consortium for School Health, a partnership of 25 ministries of health and education across Canada who work to promote a comprehensive school health approach to wellness, well-being, achievement and success for all children and youth.

Through our mandates and these relationships, we as school boards have become concerned by many of the same issues that motion 206 has sought to address. In this respect, your study of fitness and physical activity among Canadian youth could not be timed more appropriately. Four years ago, an organization known as Active Healthy Kids Canada developed an international report card on physical activity for children and youth. Their goal was to determine how our youth compared with those in 14 other nations in terms of physical activity. Needless to say, Canada received a D-grade on that report card in terms of physical activity overall, while we scored a D grade for active transportation. Our score on youth

participation in organized sporting opportunities was better, yet we still received a final grade of C.

Somewhat more promising, however, and this is where we as education partners have been able to respond to the local needs of our communities, is that the report card found that the vast majority, 95%, of Canadian students have regular access to a gym; 91% have access to playing fields; and 73% of students were found to have access to school areas with playground equipment during school hours.

Increasingly, however, in spite of our best efforts as school boards, we find our objectives for our students at risk or under challenge. The challenge comes from many different factors. They include the risks associated with sedentary lifestyles; the growing role and application of technology to perform what were once physical routines and tasks across seemingly all aspects of life; the availability of resources for populations and communities that may not have benefited from the same degree of generational exposure to physical education as other Canadians; the ongoing impacts of poverty upon youth; the risks inherent in youth addictions and substance abuse; and the ongoing pressures of infrastructure renewal in terms of both the built environment and such consumable capital resources as supplies and equipment.

Another significant concern relates to the degree to which academic achievement in core subject areas related to literacy, numeracy and the sciences have come to dominate public policy focus and discourse.

● (0915)

While we remain in support of vigorous and rigorous action to promote these knowledge-based domains for the benefit of all Canadians, other subject matters, including physical and health education, unfortunately have not received the rightful emphasis they deserve, particularly in the senior high school years of education.

As CSBA, we know that physical activity remains an important determinant of academic success, backed by ample evidence-based research. If Canada wishes to increase its success and achievement and knowledge-based competence, then it remains essential to also promote the physical domain in equal measure. In the longer term, this speaks not only to Canada's economic competitiveness but also to its public investment in health and social programming. It follows that if we as a society fail to address the whole needs of every student—body, mind and spirit—then we will have failed in our mission and denied our vital interests.

While the promise of long life and health expectancy is one that we hope for all of our students, the preceding factors do continue to limit the possibilities that can be provided through public education toward our ability to help our students to fulfill this promise.

This said, we know that together with our partners we can rise to meet every challenge, and so we welcome this opportunity to share our thoughts with you, our federal colleagues, toward the development of greater emphasis on promoting youth fitness and physical activity.

The remaining portion of our remarks are therefore designed to focus on how Canada's public school community can benefit from enhanced federal partnership toward promoting these objectives.

The first recommendation is that we suggest the childhood fitness tax credit be expanded to school-related athletic and sporting activities.

Two, we recommend the establishment of an application-based transportation or travel expense fund through the minister of amateur sport, or potentially the establishment of a national charitable status to assist schools with demonstrated need to compete in provincial and national sporting competitions and also in support of required fundraising activities for the same purpose.

Three, we strongly encourage the reinstatement and expansion of federal funding for after-school active and healthy living programs, as it would be a prime consideration in meeting targets for increased activity for fitness for students.

Four, as it has always done, the federal government can continue to invest in community recreational infrastructure. What we suggest is that, if this is not already the case, funding could be targeted through specific criteria that would favour projects that benefit those recreational structures that are often co-located between community clubs and centres and public schools.

Five, as has been said by our colleagues from Boys and Girls Clubs, proper nutrition plays a key role by enabling physical activity and promoting fitness. Diet precedes exercise as part of a healthy daily routine. Unfortunately, high rates of poverty continue to impact some of our students and deny them this right to food security. There are three distinctive federal responses that we advocate on this particular recommendation.

The first would be increased funding in support of meal programs and healthy eating in schools. For some students, the meals that we provide are not one of the many meals they might receive but the only meal they receive. Funding to expand existing programs would prove to be a direct enabler of fitness and physical activity for Canada's most impoverished students. Second, we advocate for the promotion of localized food security measures designed to respond to needs in remote and northern communities. Third, for Canadian families with lower income, food stamp programs and milk coupons received as a component of social assistance programming can provide essential benefits for meeting daily nutritional requirements.

Six, we propose that consideration be extended to the expansion of federal roles in funding disability-related assistive technologies by redefining this role in terms of both disability mitigation and disability redress. In this respect we believe that, while this would by no means be a replacement of your current support for assistive technologies by enhancing focus on athletic equipment, at the same time you can provide real benefit for Canada's youth through your support for students with special needs and exceptionalities to meaningfully participate in sport and physical activities alongside their peers.

We remain an active partner of the Assembly of First Nations—

● (0920)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Mr. Watt, could you wrap up your comments quickly. You're at the end of your 10 minutes.

Mr. Josh Watt: Sure.

On that note, I will defer to our written brief. There are several additional recommendations that we've outlined as the Canadian School Boards Association. We're certainly open to any questions you might have concerning the brief we've submitted.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Excellent. Thank you very much.

Now we're going to Physical and Health Education Canada. I believe we're starting with Melanie.

You have 10 minutes.

Ms. Melanie Davis (Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, Physical and Health Education Canada): Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today.

I'd like to acknowledge that we're meeting today on the traditional land of the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people.

The issue of fitness and physical activity among children and youth in Canada is an important one.

I'd like to acknowledge that this particular study is both timely and strategic. It comes at a time when there seems to be a political will to get moving and to strengthen relationships across jurisdictions and sectors. There is some cause for optimism here, and this is a jumping-off point for us all.

PHE Canada is over 85 years old, and we have earned a unique placement within Canada. It is an ear to the ground with regard to both the levels of fitness and physical activity in Canada and the systems that bind it. Our work spans the physical activity, physical literacy, sport, physical education and health domains.

Within the school system, PHE Canada supports two streams of education that the Canadian School Boards just spoke of: the health and the physical education streams. More broadly, we also promote the health of the whole school system through the comprehensive school health framework.

PHE Canada is driven by a table of physical and health education teachers' associations from across the country and also by a research council with over 100 members from the Faculties of Education, Kinesiology and Health.

We're the founding member of the Canadian Alliance for Healthy School Communities, which is built on the notion that the issues young people face today are not one system's responsibility, just like this is not only a sport issue. We all have a part to play.

In my role as Executive Director at PHE Canada and in Tricia's role as the Director of Programs and Resources, we have the privilege of working with over 100,000 teachers, school administrators, community leaders, health professionals and youth to improve the health and well-being of Canada's over 5 million children. As a result, today I'm pleased to contribute what we know to this important topic. Sadly, the key message that I bring to you is not a good one. To set the stage, I'll share a few points.

I'll begin with the simple fact that regular physical activity sustains and promotes life. You're in your second day of these talks, so you know all of the facts in regard to cardiovascular health, diabetes and so on. Despite knowing this, people are still living increasingly sedentary and inactive lives, and the systems in which we work perpetuate this.

The inclusion of the K-to-12 education system today, especially PHE Canada, is a valuable link to have made. The health of our young people and the answers to our problems cross the policy domains of health, education and sport.

There are three main reasons why today's conversation is both timely and strategic.

First, we know why we need to act. Young people in Canada are living sedentary lives more so than at any other time in history. The evidence is abundant and clear on this. The consequences of this have lifelong physical and mental health repercussions. The reasons for this are easily blamed on screen time and gaming, but of course they're a lot more complex than that. They're about how we design our communities, our schools, our governments, our roads, our infrastructure, our culture and our perceptions of safety and so on. The level of complexity requires that all stakeholders are at this table.

Second, it's important that we are part of this conversation because the timing is right. Establishing healthy behaviours early in life increases the likelihood that young people will be physically active throughout their lives. K-to-12 schools have more influence on the lives of young people during these formative years than any other social institution. What is set in motion during these years lasts for a lifetime.

Third, schools are the only social institution with the ability to reach virtually every child regardless of their gender, age, ability, culture, religion or socio-economic status. Schools, therefore, provide a prime opportunity to support children and youth and their optimum development equitably.

The most recent health measures survey found that 95% of Canadian children do not get the recommended amount of daily physical education. Moreover, evidence tells us that 51% of children in Canada do not get opportunities outside the school day to participate in physical activities.

● (0925)

For these young people, this 51% or 49%, physical education and school-based sports are the only form of physical activity that they get. It's easy to see. If we know why it's important, if we know where the kids are and we can reach them all, then physical education and physical activity opportunities before, during and after school are critical if we are going to make a change in their lives. Yet the percentage of schools in Canada that report providing the recommended level of physical activity minutes in a day—60 minutes—varies between 8% and 65%, depending on the grade level. Why is this so?

It's a systemic problem. This is largely due to the intersectoral nature of physical activity. Among the missing pieces or gaps that contribute to this lack is the lack of a deliberate, planned, sustained partnership and the lack of collaboration or mechanisms between

sport, physical activity, health and recreation and the education sector. In truth, there's been very little that has been put in place, and what has been put in place is small in scale and project-based.

But this is also an education problem. Physical education curricula vary across the country and each province has different minimum requirements for daily physical education. As a result, it is estimated that only 22% of Canadian children are active at school every day.

Our recent test scores showcase and highlight what the earlier speaker said. On the PISA tests—these are international tests—Canada recently scored second in science, third in reading and 14th in math. Comparably, we are in 17th place for physical activity out of 29 countries.

The overall well-being of our youth is at risk. Within Canada as well, we received D+ on our levels of physical activity. The future does not look good with these numbers. Beyond just the physical costs, such as diabetes, etc., there are also the mental health risks associated with a lack of physical activity. Seventy per cent of mental illnesses have their onset during childhood and adolescence. One in five Canadians under the age of 18 suffers from at least one mental health problem or illness. We also know that children face bullying, exclusion, intolerance and rejection in and outside of the school. This undermines opportunities to connect and engage in healthy relationships including during active play and other leisure activities.

The result for many schoolchildren is loneliness, anxiety, depression and stress. It has profound implications on their future health and well-being. Simply stated, movement and physical activity cannot be things that we do. They need to become a part of who we are. They need to be part of our identity. When we see physical education and physical activity marginalized in schools and outside, we send a message to young people that the body is indeed separate from the mind, and in many ways we portray a lack of importance towards moving. It's easy to see what happens. Based on empirical evidence, when movement becomes part of our daily activities, we see academic scores increase, we see innovation, social and emotional learning opportunities. We even see decreases in anxiety and increases in mental health outcomes.

We have a long way to go to bring our physical activity scores in line with our math and science scores.

For a moment, let's look at the bigger picture. Canada's health care system is being sandwiched by economic demands between an aging population and an increasingly unhealthy youth. The cost of physical inactivity in Canada's health care system is roughly \$6.8 billion annually and almost 4% of Canadian overall health costs.

No doubt other witnesses will share similar statistics. The message is that at a population level, our children are heading in the wrong direction. They're moving less and sitting more. The fact is we can afford to do better. What we can't afford is to do nothing.

Reversing this trend is not simple. As we work to support children to move more and sit less, we face many challenges, too many to document today. There are several challenges we must face head on. The first is equity. Not all children have equal access to the benefits of regular physical activity. As I said, only 51% are participating outside of the school.

● (0930)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Please wrap it up, as you're at the end of your 10 minutes.

Ms. Melanie Davis: As I mentioned earlier, low-income children and youth, indigenous youth, LGBTQ youth and youth with disabilities face fundamental barriers to participating. These barriers are related to their social, emotional environments and poorly designed infrastructure.

We have several recommendations to make, but I'll just mention them quickly in order to wrap up.

The first is that we need to focus on the symptoms of inactivity, not just on the end result. The second is that we need a whole government approach, just like we have a whole child approach. We need to tap into the motivations of Canadians today. Finally, in the realm of education we need to face the challenge to ensure that the minimum requirements of daily physical activity are met across the country.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Very good, and thanks so much.

Now we're going to Sport for Life Society.

Richard, are we starting with you or Andrea?

Mr. Richard Way (Chief Executive Officer, Sport for Life Society): I'll start, and then we'll go back and forth.

Good morning. As mentioned, I'm Richard Way, the CEO of the Sport for Life Society.

Ms. Andrea Carey (Director of Operations and Special Projects, Sport for Life Society): I am Andrea Carey, Director of Operations and Special Projects with Sport for Life Society.

We'd like to begin by acknowledging that we're on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people and acknowledge the traditional territories across our country.

Mr. Richard Way: I'll start with the definition of insanity, which is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

I know the committee's been thrown a lot of different statistics, so we'll throw in that today, less than 9% of school-aged children meet the recommended guidelines of physical activity. What's further disturbing is that we see a gender difference, with only 26% of the girls from age five to 17 averaging 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day as opposed to 48% of the boys.

We know that physical inactivity is a major risk for premature mortality, early onset of illness and a host of chronic and mental health conditions. Research also shows that chronic sedentary behaviour, like watching TV and playing video games for hours at a

time, is also associated with chronic health problems and premature mortality. In other words, it's not enough to be active; we must reduce sitting time every day.

If these behaviours—inactivity and sedentary times—do not change, the concern is that, for the first time, our children will not live as long as our parents.

We must implement new strategies. We must remember the definition of insanity. In terms of that, we need to create strategies that are based on strong policies and plans to take a multisectoral approach. We need to deliver quality programming that develops physical literacy. As Melanie said, we have to go after the symptoms of physical activity, so develop physical literacy. And as we all know, we need to include everyone. The result will be increased physical activity and health.

Ms. Andrea Carey: There are strong policies in place to support this work. The World Health Organization's global action plan on physical activity looks to implement effective and coordinated international, national and subnational action to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour. This global action plan has four primary objectives: create active societies, create active environments, create active people and create active systems.

These actions address governance, leadership, multisectoral partnerships, workforce capabilities, advocacy, information systems and financing mechanisms across all relevant sectors. This work directly connects to the UN sustainable development goals.

Nationally, to address the inactivity crisis, Canada has developed a policy document titled "A Common Vision for Increasing Physical Activity and Reducing Sedentary Living in Canada: Let's Get Moving", which serves to complement and align with other relevant policies, strategies and frameworks. In that document, specific emphasis is placed on the importance of physical literacy in increasing physical activity. The common vision has six areas of focus and eight areas of convergence.

A Canadian strategy needs to build on the very good current global and national policies with a wide range of strategies to get people active, with physical literacy a central area of convergence. This needs to be done right down to the local level.

We know that change happens at the local level.

● (0935)

Mr. Richard Way: There are policies and plans. We must act. This is where we need more communities to take a multisectoral community approach. As the old saying goes, it takes a village.

What does a village need to do to activate the global and national strategies? We need to implement strategies that take this multisectoral community approach.

While promoting being active is important, investing in promotion only will not achieve our desired outcomes.

While schools are really important, strategies cannot depend solely on schools. That has been done in the past, and the result is that physical education specialists are being cut out of the education system, which leads to an erosion of quality opportunities to develop movement skills and have quality physical activity during school hours.

While parents are super important, they cannot carry the burden alone as they try to juggle work and family life amidst a bubble-wrap culture and are now needing to figure out how to ensure their child gets the adequate movement time in the limited hours they have together.

While municipal recreation and community organizations are important, currently quality programming and accessibility vary greatly.

Although sport has many participants, the local clubs vary greatly in the quality of the programming, the training and competition, that they deliver.

The health sector is increasingly recognizing the benefits; however, it is not well-connected to physical activity in the community to highlight its value.

All of these groups need to collaborate. They're doing great work, but generally in silos. There are great organizations in the room today, but we need to do it in a collaborative manner that brings together physical activity promoters, parents, schools, and the recreation and sport and health sectors to effect the system change we need.

A Canadian strategy needs multisectoral community tables to collaboratively develop physical literacy. The result will be increased physical activity and fitness.

Ms. Andrea Carey: In terms of how we structure those programs and opportunities, we all have a responsibility to look at how we develop physical literacy. Just as we do for learning to read, write and do math, we need to teach our children to be physically literate so they will value being physically active and be able to engage in a range of fitness and physical activity experiences throughout their lifespans, from sport and exercise to dance and gymnastics and martial arts, as well as in activities of daily living. The earlier we do this, the better. It needs to start in early childhood and carry on through adulthood.

Physical literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for being physically active throughout life. There are five core principles that underline the definition of "physical literacy". It is an inclusive concept to all. It represents a unique journey for each individual. It can be cultivated and enjoyed through a range of experiences in different environments and contexts. It needs to be valued and nurtured throughout life, and it contributes to the development of the whole person.

In the past, unstructured and risky play was common, and that helped develop physical literacy and prepared children for a lifetime of active pursuits ranging from sport and recreation, to vocational activities such as firefighting and carpentry.

However, we are now in a situation where we've engineered movement opportunities and experiences out of our environment. Youth are on their phones, gaming or watching Netflix. They're not moving. We need to support the development of physical literacy as a countermeasure to a sedentary lifestyle. Physical literacy needs to be actively developed, as it cannot be assumed it will occur naturally.

While part of the solution is to provide greater opportunities for unstructured play—

• (0940)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Could you slow down slightly? The translator is having trouble keeping up. Thank you.

You have one and a half minutes left.

Ms. Andrea Carey: Okay.

It's important to remember that people of all ages do not innately develop physical literacy. It must be nurtured, supported and encouraged. We need to look at how we support every person's unique journey. It's not about one single activity, but about finding what children love to do and nurturing their development to lead to a lifelong pursuit of an active, healthy lifestyle.

Mr. Richard Way: I would close by saying that with regard to bullying, poor programming institutionalizes bullying. Without well-trained coaches, instructors and physical education teachers, poor programming is delivered, which institutionalizes bullying.

I'll give a quick example. Dodge ball is a very popular activity within our PE classes across Canada, delivered by generalist teachers. In dodge ball, two sides throw the ball at each other to try to hit one another to try to put them out of the game. It's a game of exclusion. The fast, quick kids hit the slower, less athletic kids, and those less-fit kids are then told to sit down and they can't continue playing.

From a physical literacy perspective, this popular PE activity reduces confidence and motivation and the fun for the exact children we want to be physically active.

If we had well-trained PE teachers, they wouldn't do this. That's where PHE Canada is trying to promote messages to try to improve the quality of programming so that we try to have those teachers who aren't well trained not do these kinds of activities, which really institutionalize a game of bullying. We're doing these kinds of institutionalized activities, this poor programming, while we're promoting anti-bullying practices.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): I would ask you to wrap up, as you're at the end of your time.

Thank you.

Mr. Richard Way: The key message is that we need quality programs, quality people and quality places to develop physical literacy in a multisectoral approach.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Thanks so much.

We're going to start our first round of questions.

We're going to Mr. Kyle Peterson, for seven minutes.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of the witnesses for being here today and for taking part in this important study.

There is so much to go through, but I'll try to get through as much of it as I can.

To our friends from the Boys and Girls Clubs, that was a great presentation. Thank you very much for that. It was nice to learn about some of the programming you're doing.

I want to learn a little more about the Bounce Back League. I think you said it's in three areas now. Are there plans to scale it up? What is the plan on that; what was the impetus, and how does someone become involved in it?

Mr. Adam Joiner: Right now we're in three clubs across Canada. It's going to be positioned to go into 10 clubs this year, including one club here in Ottawa.

Essentially, at Boys and Girls Clubs, anyone is welcome. Most club members range in age from six to 18, and the focus is on giving them an opportunity. Here in Ottawa there are no fees attached at all to be a member, so if you want to become a club member, you just show up and we give you a registration form and you're good to go.

Obviously, our focus is going to be strategically on those kids who are dealing with trauma at home, and who have gone through situations that might have been very challenging, and to support them through those through physical activity.

I witnessed one program at the Okanagan Boys and Girls Club. I saw young people who, frankly, didn't take part in activities before because of trauma and being part of those activities really made an impact on them.

When we think of sport, we think it's just recreation, that it's just for fun, but it's so much more than that. It teaches life skills and competencies. It teaches people how to have resilience and perseverance. That's what the Bounce Back League is all about.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Yes, it's great to hear that. Part of the impetus for my bringing the motion to the floor was to make the connection between mental health and physical activity, and I think that program has highlighted that brilliantly. Keep up the good work with that. It's great to hear that those success stories are happening, so thank you for that.

The Canadian School Boards Association and Physical and Health Education Canada will intertwine on these questions.

It's clear that without a robust school program as one of the systems to ensure physical activity in youth, we're not going to get anywhere country-wide.

I'm not alarmed, because I was already aware of the numbers, but it's a bit disheartening to hear about the percentage of children who are getting the recommended 60 minutes a day.

I know that in Ontario, which is where I happen to be from, there are schools that don't teach phys. ed. every day, for sure. I think that's almost the norm rather than the exception, especially for the younger ones, as far as I am aware.

I'm wondering whether Physical and Health Education Canada has a position on what the appropriate implementation should be in the

schools. Does the Canadian School Boards Association have a similar position? If it's different, what is the difference? What would be the recommendation for daily activity?

• (0945)

Ms. Tricia Zakaria (Director, Programs and Education, Physical and Health Education Canada): We have a position on what we call quality daily physical education. We recommend 30 minutes of daily physical education. We know that is not happening in the majority of schools across the country.

In Ontario for example, their guidelines are 150 minutes per week, but they are not mandated. It's up to schools and school boards to decide how they are implemented throughout. If there is a Christmas concert or something, then there is no PE that month or whatnot. Sometimes that happens throughout the year.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Do you have a recommended guideline for what should be mandated?

Mr. Josh Watt: We don't have a recommended guideline. The responsibility for the establishment of curricular frameworks and physical education requirements is determined by the provincial ministries of education. We believe that the consultations they undertake every time that the curriculum is renewed are likely informed by their colleagues and ministries of health. The curriculum and the compulsory credits versus the optional credits are determined at that level.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: We are scoring well in science, reading and math, as was indicated. We're not scoring as well as we should in physical activity. If it was the other way around, I think it would generate more activity to fix the problem than it is now. I think we have to continue to highlight the urgency of addressing the shortcomings of all systems—I'm not just going to blame the education system—in this regard.

My friends out there at Sport for Life, thank you also for your contribution.

There's the concept, of course, of physical literacy, which I think is generally accepted now by all the stakeholders. Obviously, Physical and Health Education Canada agrees with it, I think.

I look back to my days in phys. ed., and I was lucky to have some good phys. ed. teachers throughout. We would spend the first few minutes learning a new skill, such as, basketball, volleyball or badminton, if we were lucky to have that equipment. We would spend at least 15 or 20 minutes learning the basics, such as how to swing the racket or how to dribble or bounce pass. If you've never done the basic stuff before, you don't know what it is.

Is that missing today in the system? That's just a basic component of physical literacy, but kids need to know how to move to compete in the sports. Are our kids not being well served by how they are being taught now?

Mr. Richard Way: It's really hit and miss. It depends on whether or not there's a qualified physical education teacher within a school. In many jurisdictions across Canada, the majority don't have qualified physical education teachers delivering quality daily physical education. As you just mentioned, if you have a good PE teacher, then you're fortunate in Canada today. That's why we're advocating.

Obviously, it's critically important for the schools to have qualified PE teachers, but it really takes a village. It really needs that multisectoral approach. One of the projects that we're doing out here with the Ministry of Health in B.C. is called physical literacy for communities. Over two years, we're going into 27 different communities and creating partnership tables to collectively try to increase the physical activity and fitness through developing physical literacy across multiple organizations within communities.

It's that multisectoral approach and not having that dependence on one particular sector to achieve those goals.

• (0950)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Wonderful.

That's your time.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Now we'll go to Mr. Webber for seven minutes.

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for being here today.

Madam Chair, I truly believe that we need to lead by example. For our witnesses here, you need to practise what you preach.

I believe that we need a body break. Everyone stand up, please. We're going to do 25 jumping jacks.

All right. Thank you, everyone.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Ben wasn't given the instructions on how to do it.

Mr. Len Webber: Now he has some wind to ask questions, I'm going to pass it on to Ben.

Ben, it's all yours.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Thanks, Len. The defibrillator is out in the hallway.

I want to thank each and everyone for appearing today, and especially our witnesses on the west coast, who are up awfully early this morning to contribute.

I'm not saying this is the way I absolutely think, but I'm going to play the devil's advocate. Why should we depend so much on schools for physical education? Why should we depend so much on different groups for physical education? I'm not saying we shouldn't, but to play the devil's advocate, why can we not just rely on the parents? What's the parents' ownership in this?

I hear from public health nurses in my own community who say that more of the onus should be on parents getting their kids out. If you're a little kid, you can only do what your parents let you do, and if your parents don't send you outside, or they don't play, you have no chance.

I don't think I heard anybody talk about the parents. What role do the parents have in this?

Ms. Melanie Davis: The parents have a critical role. From a comprehensive school health perspective, it includes all stake-

holders, including parents and students. They are at the table in those models. However, if we go back to the question of equity, not all parents have the means to provide physical activity opportunities for their kids.

If the parents are sporty or active, there's a high likelihood that the children will be active as well. For those parents who aren't physically active, that role model is there for their children. There's a legacy that gets carried forward.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Could I just interrupt?

I've done quite a bit of fundraising for the YMCA Strong Kids campaign. Part of the idea with the YMCA is to get those kids who are maybe marginalized by economics, but you still have to get the parents out of the house and to that program. That's really one of the points I'm trying to make here.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): I see that Mr. Berman has a comment.

Mr. Josh Berman: Thanks very much for that comment. It's an incredibly important one.

I agree with the equity point, because we have multiple clubs around the country serving parents who have multiple jobs, are working odd shifts and can't get their kids to after-school programming. That's why many clubs, including here in Ottawa, bus kids in. We have walking buses that pick up kids at school and take them to clubs. We believe that we have an important role to play involving schools, after-school programs and parents.

We also run programs around the country that bring parents in to see what their kids are doing and to model that behaviour so we don't run into that intergenerational physical activity limit.

• (0955)

Mr. Ben Lobb: I was going to mention one other thing. I played a lot of sports when I was younger. I played varsity sports in the United States. The thing is, though, some of the sports we're teaching our kids—football, basketball, hockey, soccer, baseball—you don't play into your forties and fifties. You can play beer league hockey and what have you, but some of the other sports, cycling, yoga, hiking and different things like that.... Should we be more focused on sports and activities that will last your whole life, instead of learning how to play football and hockey?

I don't know. What do you think?

Ms. Tricia Zakaria: With physical literacy, one of the components is the ability to do multiple activities in multiple environments, so if you are playing football, soccer and some of those sports when you're younger, your motivation, confidence and competence in trying some of those other sports as you get older are better aligned, and you're more likely to do it. If you're not exposed to anything when you're younger, you will not try anything when you're older. That's one piece with physical literacy.

With sports in PE, we're now just working on e-learning around something called the models-based practice approach, so it's not just sports. There is sport education, but then there is teaching games for understanding, which is another concept that you can do. There's co-operative learning. There's teaching personal and social responsibility.

Those are models you can use to instruct, and then allow students, or kids, to experience different types of activities and build on those social and cognitive skills at the same time, and to encourage them to try multiple activities, as they grow older.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Okay, that's your time.
[Translation]

It is now Ms. Quach's turn for seven minutes.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for their very informative presentations. The witnesses we heard from yesterday also brought up federal funding given that the federal government is currently studying the matter to see how the Public Health Agency of Canada can help.

What do you think the current needs are? The Public Health Agency of Canada officials who were here yesterday told us that the agency had invested \$25 million in physical activity programming for people of all ages, not just youth. Nothing, however, had been set aside for rural communities, or vulnerable or underprivileged populations.

What would you recommend in terms of funding? How much do you think is necessary? We've heard some say that the cost of inactivity is as high as \$6 billion and that, when it comes to physical activity, Canada gets a D- or C+. In fact, Canada ranks 17 out of 29. That's terrible considering what we know about how the lack of physical activity affects physical and mental health, not to mention the cost to productivity and the economy.

Given that inactivity costs the health care system an estimated \$6 billion, what should the initial investment in programming and prevention be? What do you suggest we put in place? My questions are for all of you.

[English]

Mr. Richard Way: We're happy to answer that.

As presented, I think the two key things we would recommend are, one, creating that multi-sector approach at the community level so that we have everyone around the table, including parents, schools, recreation, sports and health services, and, two, developing physical literacy.

In Canada, we are global leaders in the work around physical literacy. Organizations like ours and PHE Canada have been promoting it. However, there hasn't been a significant investment in developing physical literacy, and now we see other jurisdictions, like Australia, New Zealand and Sweden, that are investing more and getting the change that they want and that we want.

So, developing physical literacy... To invest in messaging around physical literacy and then to modify programs at the community level that deliver on developing physical literacy and our quality are really the two significant approaches that we would recommend.

● (1000)

Mr. Josh Berman: Just to build on that, it's our stance that the federal government can play an important role in caring for those children and youth who are most vulnerable. I spoke to that earlier.

Many of the 200,000 kids that we serve annually come from low socio-economic backgrounds and/or are newcomers to Canada. The federal government can play an increasingly important role there.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is supporting the Bounce Back League program that we spoke about earlier. We believe that those types of evidence-informed, multidisciplinary programs that are not just tackling physical activity levels but also are improving mental health outcomes can play an increasingly important role for those vulnerable children and youth in Canada.

Ms. Melanie Davis: I have two linking points.

The first is to rally behind the common vision, a framework that's already in place and that was accepted last year about this time. It focuses on equity, and it focuses on bringing people together. It has a lot of jumping-off points that we can activate. That would be my first recommendation.

The second is about ensuring that there is, say, a parliamentary secretary for physical activity under the ministry of health. We need one point where we can connect to all systems within government, and with that, there can be informed decision on how to fund different projects. Right now, things are getting lost in the shuffle. By having that one point of connection to the government, we can help make the right decisions around funding.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Would you like to see that in a policy? On May 3, Canada's youth policy was unveiled, but it didn't include an action plan. First, I'd like to know whether those of you around the table were consulted. Second, someone suggested yesterday that a parliamentary secretary play a role in Canada's youth policy. What are your thoughts on that?

[English]

Ms. Melanie Davis: I'm sorry but my speaker wasn't working properly for the majority of that. Could you repeat the question very quickly?

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Would you like to see a parliamentary secretary play a role, or a single point of contact, if you will, for physical activity in Canada's youth policy? Is that something that could be part of a future action plan, something that doesn't exist currently?

[English]

Ms. Melanie Davis: I see it as part of or under the ministry of health but absolutely connected to children and youth. When we're talking about physical activity, it's all ages and all stages, but what we're doing here today is talking about children and youth. I think there is, as I said before, a health crisis that's looming and so attention needs to be focused on this specific audience.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Do I have time left for a quick question?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): You have a minute left.
Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Very good.

Yesterday, a Public Health Agency of Canada official told the committee that a considerable amount of research had been done involving the negative impact of screen time and the potential link with youth inactivity. He said no recommendations had been issued with respect to screen time.

We know that schools and school boards make significant investments in technology. I'd like to hear what the Canadian School Boards Association representative, joining us from Winnipeg, has to say. Should screen time and screen-related learning in schools be replaced by outdoor-based programming, for example, at least on a pilot basis?

Mr. Josh Watt: I think so, yes.

Replacing technology-based programming with a physical education vision is important.

On our end, we make decisions after considering the priorities set by each province's education ministry. When we introduce technology-based education supports for such subjects as math, languages and science, we do so to help young people build the skills they need to succeed before and after they graduate.

Therefore, it is important, in our view, to encourage dialogue and establish a plan that ensures an appropriate amount of time is spent on each area, be it physical skills or physical literacy.

• (1005)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Thank you very much.
 [English]

Now we go to Ms. Damoff for seven minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): It's nice seeing you back in the chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Yes, it's great.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you to all our witnesses for being here today.

In Halton region there's a program called ActiveChefs. It's a program that Aman and Kapil Jaspal started for elementary school kids to learn about healthy eating, learn how to cook and make food and also be active. It's an amazing program, which has been going for a number of years.

We talked a fair bit about the importance of healthy eating and physical activity here today. I don't know if any of you have been reading this over the last week. It's not new, but some of my Ontario colleagues have been pushing for a tax on sugary beverages. I know the Conservatives are completely opposed to it, but it would generate \$1.2 billion a year. The proposal right now is for a national healthy eating strategy. University of Waterloo research shows that these sugary drinks are going to cost us over \$50 billion over the next 20 years. Between the revenue and the health care savings, it would be \$37 billion that we would have.

I'm just wondering your thoughts on expanding that beyond just healthy eating in the schools to do something like ActiveChefs does. It's active living and healthy eating combined, which gives those

kids the tools they need for a lifetime, quite frankly, to eat well and to be active as part of their everyday life.

Maybe we'll start with the Boys and Girls Clubs. We don't have one in my community, do we?

Mr. Josh Berman: Not yet.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay.

Mr. Josh Berman: I'll pass it to other colleagues quickly to speak on the school programs, but we do see a huge need for nutrition programs linking closely with physical activity. Our east Scarborough club doesn't start any programming until kids are fed. Otherwise you can't learn STEM. You can't do physical activity. There's nothing you can do with a hungry child. Our programs are increasingly growing around not just healthy snacks but meals and often dinner programs.

Ms. Pam Damoff: [Inaudible—Editor] do some really good stuff too, but they don't incorporate the active living part of it as much as they do the nutrition part.

Mr. Josh Berman: Through our Kid Food Nation program, which is running across the country, we are teaching kids how to cook nutritious meals, how to source ingredients, how to prepare them and then how to share a meal with friends and family.

Ms. Pam Damoff: What are your thoughts on funding it through a tax? Do you have a policy on that?

Mr. Josh Berman: We're a proponent of these programs being increased, and we're looking for more opportunities for vulnerable children and youth around the country to participate in this type of programming. We believe that the federal government, along with municipal governments and provincial governments, has opportunities to engage with us and others in this programming. I can't speak to how that revenue is generated inside the government, but I do believe there are opportunities to expand these programs. Many children and youth across the country are missing out on active programs and active nutrition programs like these.

Ms. Pam Damoff: You were nodding your head as well. Do you have any thoughts on this?

Ms. Melanie Davis: I certainly do. We talked about physical literacy today, but there's also nutritional literacy. Ensuring that young people gain those skills throughout their younger, formative years is really important. PHE Canada does link physical activity and nutrition very strongly and tries to ensure the literacy is developed in both domains.

We're also, like you said about the news from last week, well aware of that and also well aware of conversations around having food programs like lunch programs at school across the country. There are benefits to that in regard to the equity piece. You don't have to come forward to say you don't have food. It's there, it's provided, and so there's a balancing that happens.

• (1010)

We know that physically active kids learn better and fed kids learn better. There are strong links between those two pieces.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have another question that I want to ask, so maybe I'll stop you there because I only have a few minutes left.

When I was on Oakville council, a young man named Andrei Adam, a grade 5 student, came forward and wanted council to devote money to build a basketball court in his neighbourhood. When we asked him why, he said there was no school planned for his neighbourhood and that it was not the same to play at the end of their driveways with a basketball net. This grade 5 student convinced council to dedicate the funding. I still tell kids that story, that you can have an impact as a young person.

What he wanted wasn't a structured program. He wanted a place where he and his friends could just go and shoot hoops. They could walk to the basketball court. They didn't have to driven to a school.

How important is unstructured play in ensuring that kids are physically active? The scheduled programming is great, but Andrei is a great example of recognizing in grade 5 the importance of being able to just grab your friends to walk to where they want to do the activity, as opposed to being driven, and just being able to shoot some hoops.

Adam.

Mr. Adam Joiner: It's vitally important to have a mixture of structured and unstructured activities, but underlying all of that is that safe and supportive environment. You want to have the ability for young people to access a sport that they're confident and comfortable in. Sometimes that means trying something alone so that you have an experience, but when you have a program—Boys and Girls Clubs are an example—or a safe space that a young person can go to and learn these skills, that is just an extra insulator to that young person. Having a caring leader or adult close by who can support them in the other avenues of their life, especially if they're coming from a marginalized community, is definitely an add-on to that advantage as well.

We recognize the importance of having unstructured activities and having free play, but we underlie that with support and make sure that young people have that caring person beside them to support them through those activities.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Andrea has a comment, as well.

Ms. Andrea Carey: Thank you.

Yes, we wanted to reiterate that we did speak about the mix between structured and unstructured play being really important to the development of physical literacy. Over the last two generations, we've gone from children being able to be kind of free-range and go out and explore their environment and interactive activities that allowed them to develop movement skills, confidence and motivation on their own, to, as we said, bubble-wrapping them so they have a really short leash in terms of how they can explore their environment and learn and develop their skills.

We would highly encourage a mix of those opportunities between structured and unstructured, and we echo the comments around those caring, supportive leaders being really important and kids engaging in activities that really inspire and motivate them to engage with their environment and build their confidence and movement skills.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Now we're going into our second round of questioning.

We'll start with Mr. Lobb for five minutes.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Thank you, Ms. Gladu.

Ms. Damoff brought up something that I've been thinking about for quite a while. That goes around the planning with cities and smaller communities, and with the massive growth in the suburbs I think you would want to say that's the way they're planning. You would certainly know from your communities, just in the way they've exploded, that oftentimes you're left in a bit of a gap.

The education system is slow to react to the growth in the population to have schools the right size. You see a lot of trailers, or portables, or whatever they want to call them. In addition to that, there are parks and in some cases rec centres and so forth. They pay development fees; every developer around pays development fees. Of course, once the homes are built there's a ton of tax revenue coming in.

This is a federal committee. This isn't a provincial planning committee, but is there anything in this report or motion that should speak to that as the development process? Is there anything you think we should include in that?

• (1015)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Josh, go ahead.

Mr. Josh Watt: I believe, if you look at the brief that CSBA submitted, there was a recommendation that the federal government continue to invest in local recreational facilities. Here we're talking about capital infrastructure, because that has been done in the past. Through federal commitments especially, we have been able to realize important expansions or renovations as well as retrofits to community-based recreational infrastructure, so that certainly is important.

To the other point about the response time of school boards to building capital, what you would find in most provinces is that indeed it is a provincial responsibility. In Manitoba as an example, the provincial government is uniquely responsible for capital construction and infrastructure, so that does mirror the situation in other provinces as well. It is a matter of multisectoral and multi-jurisdictional conversation about how best to meet need.

Mr. Ben Lobb: I do agree specifically around the federal funding component for recreational facilities. I think back years ago to the rink program. There were a number of communities in the area I represent that were able to build new facilities, or retrofit facilities, etc. I can think of one community in Clinton, my hometown. They built a new arena, and they have a walking track that's free for everybody to walk on. It's things like that.

In infrastructure, a lot of times you go community to community and there's a different community centre set up for each different place. I'm wondering if we shouldn't provide a standard. For example, for a community of 10,000 people, the rink could look like the following three displays, and there's a level of excellence, walking track, gymnasium. I know even from going county to county, there are different set-ups. Is that something we should look at too?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): I think Ms. Davis has a comment.

Ms. Melanie Davis: I was just going to talk about roads, quickly, in regard to active transportation, the role of the federal government and the role of the provincial and municipal partnerships.

It's very important that those standards need to be set to ensure that active transportation routes are safe for our youngest citizens. It's not good enough to have them on the side of the lane with no barrier for a three-year-old to learn to bike or to get to school. Only one in three is walking to their destinations, whether it's school or their clubs. It's really important that there be some leadership in regard to those active transportation routes.

Mr. Josh Berman: I appreciate your bringing up infrastructure, because we believe that the federal government can play an important role.

There is variability across organizations like Boys and Girls Clubs and after-school programs in terms of the infrastructure that we utilize. Here in Ottawa they have dedicated large centres. Across the country, it's the same. But in some more rural locations we're in church basements, or other basements, and looking for opportunities to grow.

One of the biggest barriers to expansion within the Boys and Girls Clubs movement is locations and infrastructure. I believe that the federal government can play an important role in helping us set that stage and getting some infrastructure set. We've shown the ability over more than 100 years to work with partners municipally, locally and provincially to build sustainable business models and keep these types of programs moving.

To go back to your question, it's always nice to have the federal government provide some guidance in terms of what communities need based on size, but I do believe that communities have a very good sense of what they need, and look for opportunities to grow that as they continue to move forward.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): I think Richard also has a response.

Mr. Richard Way: I concur with my colleagues in the messages they have shared.

I want to go back to our opening message around the definition of insanity being doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. We see infrastructure programs going into renovating rinks and facilities.

However, I think we have to remember that grade 5 student in Oakville who wanted a small space near him so he can be active. We tend to have federal infrastructure programs that renovate and rebuild facilities that we have to drive to, while we don't invest in small spaces near the kids who want to play.

I think we have to look at things a little differently and not just reinvent what exists, if we want to change those numbers that are so startlingly poor. Just consider that in terms of infrastructure programs, please.

•(1020)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Now we go to Mr. Peterson for five minutes.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Adam, I want to follow up with you. You're in a unique situation, and I thank you for sharing your good, positive story with us.

Then, maybe Josh your colleague can answer my research specific question.

What research have you been able to see that shows the mental health benefits of physical activity in youth? Is it fair to say that's a growing field of research?

Mr. Adam Joiner: I can talk anecdotally to the impact I've seen with our 4,500 members in Ottawa.

Starting at age six with kids who are engaged in physical activity, their self-esteem and their ability to participate in different activities and programs is exponentially higher than a young person who never develops those physical literacy skills. It's that confidence piece that is so hard to attain if you don't have the space to get those skills and to have a role model to give you those opportunities.

The mental health piece could be as simple as resiliency. It's as simple as learning that it's okay to lose an activity. It's sportsmanship and all of those things we take for granted, but they're all things we use in our day-to-day lives for our work. Anecdotally, that's the piece, and I think a longitudinal study on that would be important at some point. As service providers, we can see the impact and difference it makes.

Mr. Josh Berman: To add to that, we're building off the multidisciplinary research of academics and practitioners around the country and the world. We monitor and evaluate each one of our programs.

As Adam mentioned earlier, the Bounce Back League is being piloted in three locations across the country. Through those early evaluations, we'll improve the program, fix what hasn't worked perfectly and look to do more training with staff so that, as we expand those programs, they can be even more evidence-based and even more impactful.

We're increasingly focusing on monitoring and evaluation, not just of our outputs but of our outcomes, and I think there are lots of opportunities to continue to build that in partnerships around the country.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Richard, I think, also has a comment.

Mr. Richard Way: Just quickly, I would direct you to a research article, "Physical literacy of children with behavioural and emotional mental health disorders" by Catherine Fortnum and a number of other researchers. In that case, the conclusion was that, broadly, children with mental health diseases have lower physical literacy than children without. So research is being done connecting mental health with developing physical literacy.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Thank you for pointing that out to us, Richard.

I have a question for everybody.

When I was drafting this motion last fall, almost a year ago, and reaching out to a lot of stakeholders, I heard a lot of common themes. One of them among others was that so many organizations are doing a lot of good work. They're not necessarily aware of each other, or they're not necessarily collaborating.

Part of it, as some of the stakeholders pointed out, is that we have created almost a competitive environment where there are limited resources, so the organizations that have the same goals and the same modus operandi are competing with each other to get the available federal resources. Do you see that as an obstacle to achieving what we need to achieve?

Melanie.

Ms. Melanie Davis: PHE Canada, along with five other organizations, started the Canadian Alliance for Healthy School Communities two years ago. Healthy school communities are the ones with students who are physically active, with nutrition programs, where the environment is conducive to health and so on.

When we first came together as a group, we did this test to measure the level of collaboration between individuals. On the one end, you have turf and competition, and on the other end, you have integration and collaboration. When we first charted where we were, we were in that competitive turf space. Two years later, we are now moving toward this collaboration model.

The people around this table are in education, recreation, health and are at the municipal, community, federal and provincial levels.

It is possible to change that, but it has absolutely—you're right—defined the past 10 years of how we've been working. There is change afoot in regard to that. Going back to the common vision, it's very much linked to ensuring that we no longer work in a place of turf or competition but that we're working to collaborate.

• (1025)

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Now to Mr. Lobb, for five minutes.

Mr. Ben Lobb: We've talked a bit about the diet that Canadians have. I'm guessing that in the last 20 years the diet has slightly changed, and I guess that's evolution.

Again, I'm going to go back to the parents. I'm not picking on the parents, but I'm going to go back to the parents again. I'll go to McDonald's for coffee. I'll either go in or I'll use the drive-through. I am amazed at the lineups, both in the double drive-through and the little kiosks that they have to order from, and the bags and bags of food that are going out of there all the time. I'm not just picking on McDonald's, because there are a lot of other fast food places around, and I know it's not all healthy food that they serve.

What do we do to try to curb that a bit? I'm not guessing that everybody eats McDonald's every night for supper, but what do we do? Parents know that a Big Mac is not a healthy option, but still, it is ordered. They know that chocolate milk is not necessarily healthy. It's good, but it has a lot of sugar in it—or a pop.

What do we do? That's as much of the problem as the lack of physical activity.

Do you have any thoughts?

Ms. Melanie Davis: I can speak to that.

With McDonald's particularly, around the world, there are examples of healthy menu options at McDonald's. One, at the federal level, we can say to organizations like this that they need to start providing more healthy options.

Mr. Ben Lobb: But we know that you don't go to McDonald's to order a salad. We know that.

Ms. Melanie Davis: Yes, so that's one part of it.

The second part of it is education, so ensuring that young people know what is healthy and not healthy. They have a tremendous impact on their parents. If we know that 95% of the kids are attending school and we teach those lessons there, that's what they take home.

My daughter, for example, learned something about sugar, and for weeks, she was “zero sugar, no sugar”, and that's what came home. Targeting the young people to educate their families to show them what is healthy and what isn't healthy is a really great strategy for changing those habits.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): I think Andrea has a comment.

Ms. Andrea Carey: Yes. Thanks for the question.

We are very supportive of the tax on sugar and sugary consumables in general, so we think that's one approach. We also—

Mr. Ben Lobb: Sorry, can I interrupt you there?

When you say “sugary consumables”, are you saying everything that has added sugar you would put a tax on? Is that what you're saying?

Ms. Andrea Carey: I think if you were to look across our food system, everything that's inside of the outside aisles of our supermarkets is pretty much laden with sugar. Obviously, there needs to be an investigation into what the balance is within that. We're supportive of a sugar tax and looking at how we can leverage that to create healthier outcomes across Canada.

We also want to highlight a program that we've been working on in B.C. called Appetite to Play. It's an early childhood education program that works with leaders of early childhood programs around healthy eating, and physical literacy development and physical activity. That program gives parents a number of resources, as well as the leaders of those programs, around healthy choices, recipes. It's trying to instill at those really early ages what healthy foods look like, how to create them, how to be engaged in the process of healthy eating.

• (1030)

Mr. Ben Lobb: Does anybody else have a comment on that? Do I have time left?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): You have one minute.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Way was saying you can fix up the arenas, and so on, but also make sure of the small spaces. I think that is what we're talking about with the integration in a development model with municipalities and cities. I agree that it's great to renovate an arena or soccer field, but it's also important to have a fully functioning park that's safe for kids to go to, or a little community centre along the way.

I thank Kyle for bringing this forward. There's no one answer to this situation, that's for darn sure. It will take everybody pulling in the right direction to get it going the right way.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Ms. Quach, you may go ahead for three minutes.

Pardon me, I made a mistake.

[English]

Kyle, it's you again, for five minutes, and then we'll go to Madam Quach.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks, everyone. We're just about wrapping up here, but because we have four witness groups here, I want to ask everybody, what would be your one recommendation if you could give one?

Please be as brief as possible. We probably have about a minute and 10 seconds each.

I'll start with Mr. Watt in Winnipeg.

Mr. Josh Watt: For your consideration, if there's one recommendation that doesn't appear in our brief, it would be that you continue to have a permanent dialogue on the subject by way of focusing effort and energy on it.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Perfect. Thank you.

We'll go to the Sport for Life Society.

Mr. Richard Way: We would recommend multi-sector partnership tables at the community level to develop physical literacy for all.

Mr. Josh Berman: Others will talk about the schools, and I believe it's important to talk about the whole child and youth and the way they spend their time, but from the Boys and Girls Clubs perspective, they spend so much time out of school, whether that's for months in the summer, for PA days, for school breaks or on the weekends, that we believe the out-of-school programming can play an important role in tackling lack of physical activity and also addressing mental health and other concerns.

Ms. Melanie Davis: Our recommendation, tying all of that together, is a parliamentary secretary for physical activity, who uses the common vision as a way to bring everybody together.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: I think that was a good approach, too, bringing every provincial minister together with the federal ministers and all the stakeholders.

I have a bit of time left, but a lot of this has to do with culture and just the way our society functions, the way we look at daily life, daily routine. Changing a culture of a whole nation, of course, is a Herculean task, to say the least. We can have the infrastructure in

place, we can have the systems in place, we can have the impetus to do it, but without a cultural shift we're not going to get there.

What role do you think the federal government can play in influencing that necessary cultural shift?

I'll start with Melanie.

Ms. Melanie Davis: Years ago, I worked with the United Nations in regard to building child-friendly cities, and those child-friendly cities had 10 building blocks. One of those building blocks identified that there needed to be a line in every single budget that was produced asking, what is the impact of this on children and youth in those communities?

It's the same type of consideration so that every decision we make references back to how we're influencing the lives of children and youth. That will start to become entrenched in our systems and in our decision-making and lead the way in regard to culture change.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Thank you.

I have two minutes, so I can get to everybody.

Adam.

Mr. Adam Joiner: I agree with Melanie. The biggest piece for us is having the ability to continue to serve children and youth and to provide more resources and support for them. A lot of our programs, not just Boys and Girls Clubs, but community partners across the country, are overprescribed with young people looking for activities. The federal government and all levels of government play an important and key role in helping to develop that and to continue to resource organizations to do work to help young people in Canada.

● (1035)

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Okay.

Mr. Watt.

Mr. Josh Watt: In keeping with the agents-of-socialization theory, I would have to say, and this is somewhat self-serving, that education, education, education is the key to changing an entire culture for the better and for the positive. By having this focus within our schools, not to discount any of the other programming that's available, because we all have to work in collaboration with each other, we do see that this is a shared responsibility and that education can help further that change.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Thank you.

The Sport for Life Society.

Ms. Andrea Carey: We would call on you to invest and deliver on the common vision.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Thank you.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Ms. Quach, you may go ahead for three or four minutes.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Thank you.

The witnesses all talked about the importance of healthy eating and healthy living.

My question is for all of you.

Do you think the federal government should bring forward legislation to limit junk food advertising aimed at children? A number of Quebec-based groups have made that their mission, in fact. It's too bad no groups from Quebec were invited to participate in the committee's study. We were talking about parents earlier, and Quebec has integrated health and social services centres, which provide parents with support to help them make smart choices.

[English]

Ms. Melanie Davis: In the past year we've been working a lot with former senator Nancy Greene Raine who particularly took this on to put something in motion. Within the school systems, absolutely, that has been put in place. I will leave it to our community colleagues to share whether or not the same is true.

Mr. Adam Joiner: We definitely see it as a priority to support young people making good choices. A lot of that is the education piece of proper nutrition and offering options that are tasty, but also are nutritious and showing that food has a direct impact on how you feel.

There is a direct correlation between those pieces and we invest quite a bit of time and effort in showing children and youth that access to good food is important and eating good food is important. Again, that goes beyond Boys and Girls Clubs. Many social agencies spend a lot of time trying to teach that lesson.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: The reason I ask is that there is a bill at the federal level that does exactly that, Bill S-228. It's currently stalled in the Senate, unfortunately, even though it passed in the House of Commons. If you were to press the senators holding up the bill, everyone would benefit.

Along the same lines, prevention is another dimension that comes into play.

A lot of focus has been on the benefits of physical activity outside the school environment, but shouldn't we promote prevention much earlier on? I've been pregnant twice, so prenatal classes come to mind. Why not take advantage of those classes to support prevention efforts, promoting healthy eating and explaining the importance of being active with your child to expecting parents?

I mentioned the support available to parents in Quebec. From a public health standpoint, shouldn't the federal government, on its end, invest in prevention activities aimed at parents, using prenatal classes or some other means? The government could launch a TV and radio campaign to give parents helpful tips they could use to convince their children to be more active, for instance.

My sister is a doctor. When she recommends 30 minutes of physical activity a day to parents, they tell her they don't have time. Even if she reduces it to 15 minutes a day, parents tell her they still don't have time. Finally, when she recommends at least five minutes a day, they don't dare say they don't have time, but they don't follow her recommendation.

Wouldn't it help to have the federal government launch an education campaign to give parents tips to increase their children's level of physical activity?

Mr. Josh Watt: In our view, Ms. Quach, programming at every level is important, prenatal, perinatal and postnatal.

In Manitoba, we have early childhood and family centres. All French-speaking parents receive dairy vouchers for free, regardless of household income. Promoting community-based education programs is essential, especially to make sure children receive proper nutrition.

• (1040)

[English]

Mr. Richard Way: The answer is yes. We need bold strategies to make change. Yes to prenatal education. Yes to banning advertising. Yes to taxes on sugary consumables. We work closely with a self-funded organization that has a website called activeforlife.com that is targeting parents, but it's a self-funded initiative.

All of these need to be invested in so that we can change these dramatically poor statistics that were presented throughout the morning. It's like yes, yes, yes, let's take action on these things.

Ms. Melanie Davis: I had a final point about how we need to move forward. At the forefront of our efforts, we need to recognize the disproportionality in regard to either the overrepresentation of certain groups or the under-representation. Prenatal classes, for example, are they really reaching those that are disproportionately affected?

It's not okay to do more of the same thing. We have to do something different. Prenatal classes are a fantastic suggestion, but my recommendation would be to evaluate if we're reaching those that absolutely need that support. It requires different people at the table to answer those questions, different actors. I would urge to do it differently.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): I want to thank all of our witnesses today. You've done an excellent job. Unfortunately, we're at the end of our time.

Madam Quach.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: May I introduce a motion calling on the government—

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu): Unfortunately, because the committee has a reduced quorum, it is not allowed to have any motions or votes.

I want to inform the committee members, though, that we will be doing drafting instructions for this topic this afternoon at the end of our meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.

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