



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 066

Thursday, February 16, 2023

Chair: The Honourable Hedy Fry



Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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• (1535)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is taking place on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Welcome to meeting number 66 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

[*English*]

Today, as you all know, we are holding the meeting in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of Thursday, June 23, 2022.

While public health authorities and the Board of Internal Economy no longer mandate mask-wearing, I again would like to tell everyone that based on the fact that the World Health Organization still considers it to be a pandemic, for your own safety and that of others, I hope you will consider wearing a mask, specifically in rooms that aren't ventilated.

I now would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants of this meeting that you are not permitted to screenshots or photos of the screen. The proceedings will be made available on the House of Commons website.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, September 20, the committee is meeting to continue its study on safe sport in Canada.

All of you in the room here know how to access interpretation. For those of you who are attending virtually, there's a little globe at the bottom of your screen. Please press it to access interpretation via that method. Thank you.

Today, for the first hour of this meeting on safe sport in Canada, our witness will be from the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. We have Sarah-Ève Pelletier, the sport integrity commissioner, by video conference.

Ms. Pelletier, you have five minutes to present. When you have 30 seconds left, I will say "30 seconds", because sometimes if you're reading something you don't get to look up and see a little flash card showing that.

I'd like you to begin now, please. Welcome, Ms. Pelletier. You have five minutes.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier (Commissioner, Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Committee members, like all Canadians, I was horrified to hear so many stories of abuse in sport.

I sincerely thank you for your ongoing concern about this critical issue. I would also like to acknowledge the important work of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and its study on women and girls in sport.

[*English*]

What gives me hope is seeing the widespread commitment to doing better by our athletes and our youth, and ensuring that changes are made so that Canadians at all levels can experience sport in safe and welcoming environments.

I have no doubt that the work of these committees, thanks in large part to the many athletes who have shared their knowledge and their experiences, will result in valuable and concrete recommendations. I look forward to learning from these studies. My intention today is to provide as much information as possible in order to help in our shared effort to make sport safer.

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner began its role eight months ago to administer and uphold the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, or the UC-CMS. There are 53 federally funded sport organizations that have now signed up with our office, and 36 of these are effective today.

Athletes and others are now able to safely bring forward complaints of maltreatment and discrimination against participants under the authority of signatory organizations and to be heard by trauma-informed experts. Each matter being investigated is looked at by independent professionals with combined experience in human rights, sexual violence and working with children and minors.

We have admitted 100% of the cases that fall within our jurisdiction. Concretely, this means that 17 matters are currently progressing and being investigated by independent professionals. As an outcome of these cases, sanctions could and will be imposed against individual participants who have committed violations, and those sanctions are directly enforceable.

Also, recognizing from day one in this office the importance of addressing systemic issues and ensuring organizational accountability, we developed and launched an assessment process to look into sport organizations. This will lead to publicly available assessment reports. Also, to help foster meaningful implementation, a follow-up monitoring report will later be published to track the changes the organizations make after the assessment.

It is, of course, essential that organizations act on the recommendations they receive, but we hope these public reports will be tools that increase accountability and equip others, such as funding partners in sport, to take appropriate measures in response to the organization's actions.

As we continue building our foundations, we are conscious of current structural limitations of the OSIC. Let me provide a bit more context for those. Of course I'd be happy to answer any questions in more detail.

First, the UCCMS clearly identifies the need for a publicly searchable registry of sanctions so that people who are sanctioned can no longer move from one jurisdiction to another. The OSIC has the mandate, and it maintains a sanctions registry today, but due to current privacy law across various jurisdictions, there are challenges in making information publicly available. A possible solution to that could be for a public sanctions registry to become statutorily mandated.

Second, participation in an OSIC investigation cannot currently be compelled for those individuals and organizations that have not signed on to the UCCMS. As some groups have suggested, subpoena powers for independent investigators and assessors could make for a stronger and more robust complaint and assessment process.

Third, beyond the OSIC, to effect systemic and sustainable advancement of safe sport, it is paramount to have a harmonized system of rules that pertain to maltreatment and discrimination and a trustworthy means to address issues across all levels and through all structures of Canadian sport. There should simply be no gap preventing people from getting help or creating loopholes for those looking to cause harm. Similarly, prevention and education need to start from coaches, parents and youth at the grassroots level where they get their start in sport, so that they know their rights and know their responsibilities. Across the board, safe sport knowledge needs to be as fundamental as technical skills and the rules of the game.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner continues its mission to advance safe sport for all, and we are committed to implementing the recommendations of the current studies, which will define our role in continuing to advance this important priority.

I have been competing in sport for 17 years. I made lifelong friends and learned valuable lessons that still serve me today. It has become very obvious that I am privileged to have had the positive experience that I have had. It is tragic that so many young people in Canada have not been so lucky. We urgently need to eliminate abuse in sport with these people in mind. Sports, when done properly, have so many positive benefits to offer. That's why I think it's

so important that we listen to their stories and their collective voice and work to make sport safer for all Canadians.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much. Now we're going to go to the question and answer part of the meeting.

I would like, however, to ensure that the committee.... I know you know, but I want to remind you that we are dealing with very sensitive issues here. I would like to remind you that we shouldn't be naming names or trying to revictimize anyone whose name is out there. We need to be very sensitive to the nature of what we're doing here and very careful about how we deal with some of these issues. I know you know that, guys. I am not telling you that you don't; I just want to make a reminder here so that we know for sure that we're going to be sensitive.

Thank you very much.

I'll begin the first round, which is a six-minute round, with the Conservatives and Kevin Waugh. Kevin, you have six minutes, please.

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

Thank you, Madam Pelletier, and congratulations. You've been on the job now for about seven or eight months.

The term "harmonized safe sport" has been used lots by you. The problem in this country is that the provincial governments haven't signed on, so you're not representing everybody in this country through OSIC and the UCCMS.

In fact, the Minister of Sport had to go to the Canada Winter Games this weekend in the Maritimes to talk not only to athletes but to the provincial bodies because they haven't signed on to OSIC. This is an issue.

We've spent \$16 million over three years to form OSIC, and yet, to my knowledge, we don't have—other than Quebec, which started one in 2014—any provincial governments to date that have signed on, unless they have in the last 48 hours or so.

Can you comment on the issue of safe sport when the provinces and clubs have not signed on?

• (1545)

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: Thank you for your question and your comment.

We know that participants, youth and people in Canada enjoy sport at all levels of participation, but most enjoy sports in their communities, in their clubs. This is under the jurisdiction of the provincial or territorial bodies. To make sure that the issue is tackled, and to make sure that there is sustainable change....

I also want to say that there's an urgency to act on it, because one case of maltreatment is one too many. This simply has to stop. This simply has to go away from sport. For it to be true, it needs to impact all levels, all structures of sport. It doesn't matter how sport is organized; it cannot be used as an excuse not to address the matter. The matter needs to be addressed, and it needs to be addressed so that everyone who participates in sport has the same rights and responsibilities and also has access to the same ways—or at least, as you said, harmonized services and ways—to address their matters.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: My recollection would be that OSIC really looks after 3,700 or 4,000 athletes. You don't have control of the provincial governments.

I would think that the sports minister should have had this dialogue a year ago with every sport and territorial sport body in this country. We are in dying hours, and all of a sudden she's going to the Canada Winter Games to have this discussion when really eight months into the job.... This should have been done a year ago. I'm just floored.

I've talked to my people in my province. They're not signing on to this, and Saskatchewan is not the only province. We only have Quebec. They signed on their own, back in 2014. There is a huge gap with your organization, just a huge gap. Eighty per cent of the athletes in the country aren't covered, because you're only covering 3,700 to 4,000. You're talking about the NSOs; you're not talking about provincial or club sports, which is a huge gap in OSIC.

It needed to be corrected long ago, but here we are. You have 53 NSOs signed on. You're still short of a capacity, but we don't have any provincial dialogue, which is essential to make this sport safe in the country of Canada. If it's not going to be at the provincial level, this is a dud of a program, if you don't mind my saying so.

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: You're correct. Our jurisdiction and the contractual mandate we received from the federal government extends to federally funded sport organizations and, as I said today, we have 53 organizations signed on and we're adding new ones every day.

As you mentioned, there is urgency to ensure that there are harmonized rules and harmonized systems in place for victims to safely turn to at all levels of sport. The services of the OSIC are available for those provincial and territorial organizations or decision-makers if these are the services that respond to their respective needs.

As you have mentioned, Quebec and—as I also want to cite—New Brunswick have a system in place as of today, and I understand that other provincial and territorial authorities are also very actively looking into this situation. Of course, I cannot speak on their behalf and, from my perspective, from an OSIC perspective, there is urgency around it.

Our mandate will be most effectively fulfilled when there is a complete system and there are no gaps in the system, whether it be

through OSIC or through other harmonized places or forums that we can engage with and collaborate with towards the same mission to make sport safe.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Ms. Pelletier, I'm very disappointed in the Minister of Sport. It's been all talk and no action, and now, at the 24th hour, she decides that it needs to be addressed. Going to the Canada Winter Games and talking to the provincial bodies should have been done long ago.

Here you are, and you have \$16 million over three years to act under OSIC. That's fine for the NSOs, but nobody is worrying about the clubs. Nobody is worrying about provincial bodies in this country.

Okay, you have New Brunswick signed on. That's a new one. Congratulations, but where are the rest? This is the gap that people in my country, my province and my city are talking about. This is where it starts, and we're so far behind in this.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you, Kevin. That's it. You've just reached your six minutes.

I'm now going to go to the Liberals and Tim Louis.

You have six minutes, Tim.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

As you mentioned off the top, there may be people listening to this public testimony on this study who could be affected, and I understand the need not to retraumatize them. In my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, if there's someone who needs support, there are two organizations in my region. We have the Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region and the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region. Help is out there.

Ms. Pelletier, thank you so much for being here. It's very appreciated.

I understand that the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner is the central hub for Canada's new independent safe sport program, and I'm pleased to hear that the mandate is to independently receive and investigate allegations of abuse and code of conduct violations.

For those listening, some of the mandate is to provide safe spaces for athletes to have their voices heard in a non-traumatic way; to launch independent investigations; to recommend sanctions against individuals—which you mentioned off the top—who are found to have committed violations; to receive reports about violations through a confidential online platform, which is very important; and to offer education and prevention tools and resources, including mental health and legal aid referrals.

You know personally how great sport can be. It gives kids confidence, helps them achieve goals and learn life skills. As parents, that's why we're encouraging our children to get involved in sports. Every parent should be able to feel confident that their kids are safe.

Given the concerns in sport that we're hearing about in studies like this, what message would you like to give to those parents? What needs to change at all levels of government? How can that system be strengthened so that every child can have the same positive experience that you've had?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: Thank you very much, and I want to say that as a young parent myself, I share the same concern as all of the other parents in Canada.

My advice would be—for anyone, regardless of the hat we're wearing in the Canadian sport system right now—that there is an opportunity to make sure that we focus at all levels and, right now, on prevention and education.

Knowing our rights and knowing our responsibilities in whichever capacity we play is not a guarantee, for sure, but it is one thing that I believe every parent can start doing by asking questions, being curious and trying to understand, so that they can be there to support their child in their journey in sport and to make sure that their journey is as positive as it should be.

In terms of the things that need to happen, I did mention education and prevention. We can have all of the means to address issues of maltreatment once they have occurred, but what we really need to face together and what we really need to tackle is to make sure that those incidents or instances don't happen in the first place. There are a lot of things that can be done and should be done to achieve that, but prevention and education need to be one of them. That needs to be at the core.

Prevention and education cannot be something theoretical. It needs to be concrete. It needs to be something that is living and breathing in every training venue, in every sport and in every club, in every place where sport is coming to life, because this is truly how that transformation will happen and will be sustained.

Mr. Tim Louis: You mentioned in your opening statement about safe sport knowledge and that we need this grassroots-level support. What resources and tools, prevention tools and resources, including mental health and legal aid services, do the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner need help with right now?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: We talked about the complaint management services of the OSIC being restricted or somehow limited in their jurisdiction. I want to use the opportunity to clarify that any work being done in terms of prevention, education, sharing of re-

sources, sharing of best practices and policies is for the benefit of the entire Canadian sport community.

We're working with research programs. There's a research grant program. There's an education accreditation program. Above and beyond what the OSIC itself is doing, there is tremendous knowledge through academics. There is tremendous knowledge through those who provide education to really leverage that collective effort and engagement toward prevention and education.

I want to make sure that this is a place where there's an opportunity for the OSIC to disseminate...to propose education and resources in an area where we strongly believe that there should be some investment. We've invested ourselves, but there's so much more that needs to happen there from us and, we believe, from all levels of sport.

You mentioned mental health and legal aid programs. These are services that are provided for people who engage in our processes. I was pleased to hear you mention other resources at the beginning of your remarks. We also want to make sure that we provide access to resources that may exist outside of the OSIC. We facilitate access to those resources, whether they are in the community or elsewhere, for people who need them when they engage in a process with us.

• (1555)

Mr. Tim Louis: Finally, with the half-minute I have, only 4,000 athletes fall under federal jurisdiction. The signatories for the national sport organizations are there, but the provinces have yet to step up. Are they saying they don't want to step up? What is their hesitation, provincially? At the end of the day, we're trying to protect our children.

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: I want to say that everyone shares the same desire to make sports safe for everyone, but I cannot speak on behalf of the ministers and the authorities at the provincial and territorial level. There are some who have engaged with us and would be interested in using OSIC's services; there are others who have existing systems in place or are looking for the best way to address the situation. I just want to say that there's urgency to act, from our perspective.

Mr. Tim Louis: Thank you for your time. I appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Louis.

Now we go to the Bloc Québécois and Sébastien Lemire.

Sébastien, you have six minutes, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank all the members of the committee for welcoming me and allowing me to participate in this important study.

Ms. Pelletier, thank you for being here, and thank you for highlighting the work of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. In fact, you participated in their important study.

Everyone agrees that your organization meets a need. That said, I feel a bit like you're building an airplane in mid-air, without necessarily having made a diagnosis.

You spoke about the limits of your mandate with commendable humility. When it comes to sports, wouldn't it be appropriate that there be an independent public inquiry, to make a real diagnosis and to have recommendations on how to improve the situation?

I feel that the sports world is downright sick. Martin Leclerc's article this week, and previous articles by Rick Westhead and the media as a whole, tell us that things only move forward when the media raises cases that have taken place in the sports world.

I want us to give you the best means to succeed, but I feel that a real diagnosis should be made if we want to change things. The world of sport is sick, but putting a band-aid on it is not the way to cure a cancer and fix the situation. We need to know the situation in depth to be able to propose real measures.

Don't you think an independent public inquiry would help you have a solid foundation and take real action to transform the world of sport?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: Thank you for your question and comments.

In a sense, by recognizing the urgent need to act, the commissioner's office has, over the last eight months, built a foundation on a very solid footing. However, given the sense of urgency, it is true that we have started to fly the plane while we are still building it.

Our office was established following a number of consultations, spanning several years, which highlighted existing problems. We therefore have the task of responding to an already known need.

That said, our office welcomes any opportunity and any initiative to make the world of sport safer and to provide much-needed support to athletes. You mentioned a public inquiry. For our part, we are interested in the recommendations of the various committees, in order to find the right way forward in this regard.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you.

May I reiterate my confidence in your work and in you personally for the position you hold.

In a way, the questions are about understanding the limits of your mandate so that we, as legislators, can help to improve them.

First, do all sports organizations that manage high performance athletes have to register with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, or OSIC?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: At the federal level, all sports organizations that receive funding from the federal government are required to register with OSIC. As I understand the warnings from the minister, national sports organizations have until April 1 to register, or their funding may be cut.

• (1600)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: An offending organization with greater financial means could decide to bypass the OSIC.

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: I am not sure that it is necessarily a good avenue for any organization not to offer an independent com-

plaints handling mechanism to its members; nor is it a good idea not to offer its members and the public it has a duty to protect a robust system that will allow their sport to be played in safe and favourable conditions.

As for the consequences that go beyond the boundaries of our office, it would be better if these questions were posed directly to the federal government.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Are you confident that 100% of the organizations will register by April 1?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: In our opinion, it is important to have the most complete system possible, and as quickly as possible. I very much want that, because it will increase our effectiveness in dealing with the problem.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Are you aware of Justice Perell's ruling on torture and other types of abuse, in the Canadian Hockey League, of high performance athletes in Canada's major junior hockey? These are despicable acts of unacceptable violence that have occurred in 38 of the 60 teams in the Canadian Hockey League.

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: I read this report, and I had the same reaction that all Canadians have had to the violence and abuse that has been reported in the media.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: What actions did you take immediately, as the commissioner responsible for the implementation of the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, the UCCMS?

What actions can you take to reassure young people, and parents too?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: The incidents referred to are absolutely prohibited behaviour. They are forms of violence that are absolutely subject to sanctions under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport. When we talk about sanctions, these are sanctions that can go so far as a lifetime ban from participating in the world of sport, in some cases.

I just want to make a nuance. When a particular example is cited, it does not mean that the participants in question necessarily fall under the authority of Hockey Canada or the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner.

It is true that I agree in every way with all Canadians that these situations are absolutely appalling. Furthermore, these behaviours are absolutely prohibited and there is a way to impose sanctions directly on individuals, but in order to do that, the sanctions have to come directly from the commissioner's office. Under our procedures, what happened should be within our jurisdiction.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will now go to the New Democratic Party. Peter Julian, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Pelletier, for being here and for your work, and congratulations on your appointment.

We all share the feeling that the sports community in Canada is in crisis. We hear about it every day. Since we began our investigation, we have seen how unsafe it is for children, for youth and for adults.

There is no doubt that we have a lot of work to do to have a sport environment in this country where athletes can perform at their best without any violence or abuse, either among athletes or in the public eye.

Earlier, you mentioned 17 cases that are under investigation.

Can you tell us which categories these 17 potential or alleged cases of violence or abuse fall into?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: Thank you for your question.

The mandate of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner deals exclusively with issues of abuse and discrimination, or other forms of behaviour that may have led to forms of aggression. It is exclusively these types of cases that we are talking about.

Of course, abuse, as defined by the UCCMS, can take many forms, whether it is sexual, psychological or physical abuse. All of these forms are absolutely unacceptable and constitute behaviour that we consider to be prohibited.

I want to emphasize, because sometimes it is forgotten, that the behaviour that has allowed these assaults to continue is also prohibited.

• (1605)

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you for your response.

I find it very worrying that we already have 17 cases under investigation. You are investigating cases of abuse, sexual assault or violence. This is very resource intensive and shows the importance of your organization.

I would like to talk now about sanctioning powers.

How far can you go? Can you report these cases to the police? Can you ban athletes, coaches for life? What are the limits of your sanctions, currently?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: Thank you for your question.

The sanctions that can be imposed are described in the UCCMS. The sanctions relate to participation in sport. As you mentioned, in the most serious cases, this can mean a lifetime ban from sport.

You are correct that while some behaviours are violations of the UCCMS, they can also be criminal. Our office and our mandate are not a substitute for the criminal law. We do not replace the criminal law; we create a system to protect sport participation in addition to the criminal system.

Obviously, if there are criminal acts, they must be treated as such.

Mr. Peter Julian: Do you have the power to report criminal investigations to the authorities?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: In some cases, one not only can, but must.

We have a legal duty to report; we do not ignore it. There is also the additional duty to report that is built into the UCCMS.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you.

You mentioned earlier a publicly accessible sanctions list. My understanding is that you do not have subpoena powers. Have you been speaking with the Minister of Sport or with the federal government about acquiring the ability to put in place a publicly accessible sanctions list and the subpoena powers?

Of course, in so many cases part of the problem, as we've heard, is particularly with coaches moving. They are accused of the most horrendous abuses and then transfer somewhere else. Because there's no publicly accessible sanctions list, that person continues to work in sports, even though they've committed the most cruel violation of trust towards athletes.

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: Absolutely, the UCCMS does contemplate a publicly available sanctions registry, and our office has been pushing and continues to really push for that. As you mentioned, there cannot be any gaps for anyone looking to perpetrate harm or cause harm or any loopholes or gaps that can be used to navigate through jurisdictions.

This is absolutely the reason we are very strongly in favour of, and actually demand, a public registry.

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, and has the federal government responded? Has the federal government said yes?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: We have had discussions to bring forward the position. We've been told that they are working on this study.

Mr. Peter Julian: This is my last question.

Have you received a complaint about the discrimination against and treatment of the women's national soccer team by Canada Soccer?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: While Canada Soccer has signed an agreement—

The Chair: You have six seconds.

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: —to use the services of OSIC, this agreement will be in effect starting on March 1. I cannot say at this stage that we have received matters that relate to Canada Soccer.

The Chair: Thank you, Peter.

Now the committee moves into the second round for this hour. It's a five-minute round.

I will begin the round with the Conservative Party and Rachael Thomas. Go ahead, Ms. Thomas.

• (1610)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Actually, Chair, I think it's me. Thanks so much.

Thank you, Madame Pelletier, for being here today.

The committee is very interested in looking at the governance of sport and how these incidents that are reported are followed up on.

Where does the \$16 million of funding come from?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: It comes from the federal government. It's the Government of Canada. It is administered by the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, or the SDRCC, for purposes of the abuse-free sport program.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you.

I have a concern that it's not independent. We've heard from a lot of the survivors of abuse that, in many cases, the fox is watching the henhouse. Those who are at the top are not taking action. We know that the minister has been in the role for several years, and still we see a constant flow of these events.

I thought the tracking of sanctions was a very good idea. You mentioned a database to keep track of them. Does this database exist already, or is it something that you're planning to do and then make public?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: We have the mandate and we maintain a registry of sanctions as of today.

The limitation that I outlined is as it relates to making the information contained in the sanctions registry publicly available, which is what we are saying is needed.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Even if it's not public... I have a situation in my riding. There was a gymnastics coach who was sanctioned to not be able to go to any tournaments or to coach again, but he has moved on to other provinces. It has been reported up through Gymnastics Canada, which has done nothing about it.

If Gymnastics Canada becomes part of OSIC and signs on to that, will it then be able to complain and have actions taken by OSIC to either bring it forward or somehow bring consequences?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: The factors to determine whether OSIC can look into a particular matter are, first, that it needs to be a matter related to maltreatment, discrimination or another prohibited behaviour.

Second, as you mentioned, the organization needs to be signed on to the OSIC.

The third point—which is one that is sometimes a little more tricky and speaks to the gaps in the system currently in how we need to move forward—is around the status of the participant. The person who is alleged to have committed the violation is truly, for lack of a better word, the anchor point of that jurisdiction. The status of the alleged victims, survivors and the people impacted is not

determinative. The respondent—the person who is alleged to have committed the violation—needs to be under the authority of the signatory organization for OSIC at least to have the ability to look into the matter.

If we don't have the ability, we at least need to know that there is another place that can help the person who came forward, and we can accompany them and empower them to be in a place where they can get the help needed.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: I think this is very good.

Let's say you have 17 incidents and you investigate them. Who sees that? Does Sport Canada get to know about it? Does the minister get to know about it? What's the escalation chain?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: Thank you. That's a great question.

This is one small thing for clarity. I know you mentioned independence. It is so important to the athletes in building that trust and that confidence. I want to clarify that investigations are not performed by our office; they are performed independently by independent investigators. The parties—the people who come forward—have an opportunity to raise a concern if they are not comfortable for reasons of conflict, let's say. That's a small clarification.

In terms of the information shared, of the people who come to OSIC, the one thing we hear over and over from athletes is that they want a safe place. They want a place where they don't have a fear of reprisal. For that, we need to ensure that whenever they come to us, we're able to address their matter with confidentiality.

Confidentiality doesn't mean that they cannot speak about what has happened to them. That's completely different. We're not sharing information about specific cases with anybody outside of the OSIC. We're not sharing with anybody at the SDRCC and not with anybody at Sport Canada.

However, we're committed to transparency in our operation, which is why you will have seen our quarterly reports, for example. We're trying to provide a balance of data that is helpful and advance the conversation on safe sport, yet we cannot compromise the commitment we've made to those who come to us to have their matter heard safely. That means protecting their confidentiality as well.

• (1615)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Very good. Thank you.

I think that's the end of my time.

The Chair: Yes, you're right. That was very well done, Ms. Gladu.

We'll now go to the Liberals and Chris Bittle for five minutes.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'll start with a bit of a comment, because I'm a bit disappointed.

We've engaged in this study for a while now, and it has been non-partisan, but here have been some worrying comments from the Conservative Party blaming, oddly enough, the federal Minister of Sport for the inaction by the provinces. There's now this suggestion of a lack of independence, so I'll start my questions there.

How do you respond to the notion that you're not independent or that your independence is questioned?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: I understand the athletes' perspective, or the importance that's been placed on independence. That was the very reason that our office was created: It was because there were so many issues in the past. We talk about the culture of silence. We talk about issues being dealt with within sport organizations themselves and how that has not been the proper way to address matters, so I can completely understand the perspective and the need for independence.

In my role, I report only to the athletes and to the people of the sport community that we're meant to serve. My office and I are only reporting to the athletes and the people of the sport community. We put every safeguard in place to make sure we protect that functional independence, because it is so important.

I know trust is not something you have but something you earn, and I'm hoping we'll earn the trust of the athletes through our actions.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much.

Just to be clear, even though funding does come from the federal government, you receive no direction from federal government officials, the minister's office, or anything like that. Could we maybe compare it to the fact that the federal government pays the salaries of judges or RCMP officers, and they remain independent in their actions?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: I'm less familiar with the judiciary and how the funding model goes, but that is.... As you said, there is absolutely no visibility, direction or interference whatsoever with anyone outside of the OSIC, near or far, in funding or otherwise. We are making those decisions and operating at all possible levels of independence.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much.

You mentioned the suggestion for subpoena power. Have you received reports of a lack of co-operation from potential people under investigation?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: That's a very good question, and one that's helpful to clarify, because when organizations and their participants are under the OSIC, they have to co-operate, and we have the means to enforce that co-operation vis-à-vis the sport organizations and their participants.

This issue of limitations has been brought forward by groups of athletes. Our ability to require co-operation in our processes from organizations and individuals who may not currently be under the authority of the OSIC was indeed an important limitation. In cases in which it would be important for witnesses to appear and for documents to be provided so that we could get the best clarity possible in terms of what's going on, those additional measures would make for a stronger process.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much.

Could you expand on the privacy issues you mentioned in relation to the sanctions registry?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: It relates to privacy law across our various jurisdictions in the country, both federally and provincially

and territorially. The model that we currently would like to adopt is the one that the U.S. Center for SafeSport has in terms of maintaining a publicly searchable registry of individuals who are under sanctions.

The U.S. Center for SafeSport has that currently, and our understanding is that it was made possible because the creation of that registry was mandated statutorily.

• (1620)

Mr. Chris Bittle: Very quickly, don't these privacy issues still come up, even though NSOs signed up and agreed to participate?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: That's correct. Making the information publicly available to a large public goes beyond what is currently possible.

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

We'll now go to the Bloc Québécois.

Sébastien, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Pelletier, are the Canadian Hockey League or its affiliated leagues, that is, the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, the Ontario Hockey League, the Western Hockey League, as well as Hockey Canada, members of the OSIC at this time?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: Hockey Canada is a member of OSIC, but none of the other organizations you mentioned are.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Yet they had committed to it before this committee, at a meeting in July. I want to point that out to you. To that end, we could look at the minutes of the committee.

Does this mean that players playing in these leagues are covered by OSIC?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: I don't know about the individual players. Today, in order for a player or any other participant to access OSIC services, in hockey—as that's the sport you mention—they have to be under the authority of Hockey Canada. So it's difficult to answer. On the other hand, if the player or the participant is under the authority of another organization or structure, he or she will not be covered by OSIC.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: If I understand correctly, it is the nature of their organization that determines whether they are covered or not. So they are not.

OSIC is also under the umbrella of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, the SDRCC, some of whose members are appointed by the minister and come from the sports federations. I'm thinking of Nick Lenahan, who is also on the board of Gymnastics Canada. I find it a bit peculiar that an athlete from Gymnastics Canada has to go to your organization.

Would athletes have more confidence if your organization were completely independent, much like the Office of the Auditor General or, of course, judges, to give my colleague a nod?

The fact that you were given the power to force federations to provide access to all of their data for your investigations makes me see your office as an athlete's ombudsperson.

Could your mandate be expanded, in your opinion?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: I want to reiterate how important it is to ensure independence. The structure of the SDRCC and its governance is prescribed under the Physical Activity and Sport Act. So it is difficult for me to comment on that.

On the other hand, if recommendations were to emerge from the work of the various committees and serve to increase confidence as well as measures regarding independence, the OSIC would absolutely listen.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. Your two minutes and 30 seconds are up.

I'm now going to the New Democrats and Peter Julian. Peter, you have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madame Pelletier, what started our inquiry were the absolutely horrendous allegations coming out of London in 2018, and how Hockey Canada tried to sweep those horrendous allegations under the carpet.

If you received a complaint like that today, how would your office deal with it? You're aware of some of the horrendous details. How would your office respond in a way that respects the victim and ensures justice is obtained?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: You mentioned respecting the victim and the trauma someone may have gone through—survivors, victims or witnesses. This is at the core of what we're meant to do. I want to emphasize this point: No matter what we do or how we do it, it has to be with a trauma-informed approach and an ethic of care that appreciates that experiences of harm are diverse. There needs to be very careful attention put on that, in every corner.

I cannot speculate about a hypothetical scenario, but Hockey Canada is indeed a signatory organization. The UCCMS contemplates a wide range of contexts in which the code is in effect and the obligations apply. I'll cite section 4.3 in particular. I'm sure I won't have time to explain, but I want to cite section 4.3 at least, because it speaks to the breadth of the context in which jurisdiction can be asserted vis-à-vis the program signatory organization and the participants under the authority of that organization.

• (1625)

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you for that answer. If you could provide further information to the committee, I'm sure it would be helpful.

I have two short questions to finish.

First off, Volleyball Canada is the only organization that has signed on at the national, provincial and club level, as I understand it. What has Volleyball Canada done that other sports organizations aren't doing?

Second, how many Canadians have you reached out to and contacted in terms of your prevention and education program?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: In terms of Volleyball Canada, we definitely applaud the proactive approach they have taken to engage with their member organizations and participants at all levels to make sure that from their perspective, there is no gap. That is one possible avenue, recognizing that each sport organization has a different constituency and things in place, but regardless of whether it's through OSIC or otherwise, the important thing is that any member, at all levels of participation, is under harmonized rules and has a safe place to go.

I'm sorry, but I missed the second part of your question. My apologies.

The Chair: I'm sorry, but I think the time is up. Maybe Peter can get to that question a little later on, or maybe someone else might want to pick it up.

I will go to the Conservatives for five minutes. Martin Shields, please go ahead.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. It's good to see you here. Thank you.

Ms. Pelletier, it's great to have you here. You have a wealth of knowledge and a very short term.

You have 53 funded Canadian organizations in Canada. You have 36 signed up. There are still 17 sport organizations missing. In the registration process, is there a cost to these organizations? How do they get registered?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: Yes, there is a basic cost, and then there's a cost that applies for every organization. This is information around the financials that was provided for the study on women and girls, and it can also be provided to this committee, as it could be helpful for you to have this information.

I just want to clarify that this information would be provided by the SDRCC, which manages these aspects. It's managed independently from the OSIC. Once an agreement is in place and in effect, organizations and their participants can have access to the services of the OSIC, which is the part that I can speak about.

Mr. Martin Shields: Okay, I got that.

However, you have 17 that are missing. If money is a possible issue, could that be a barrier to their joining?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: Oh, when you say 17 are missing, we have those 53 organizations signed, and 33 are effective. The 33 effective means it's a population of the 53 that have services in effect today. Organizations have the choice, basically, to use what we call the transition period before the services become effective. It's not because they haven't signed and it's not that they haven't committed to the financials; it's more that they are using that transition period to put the policies in place that are required.

Mr. Martin Shields: That's not clear in the information you have. It looks like there's a gap of 17 that are missing. I'm just suggesting that....

In the funding piece, when you say funding may, there's the word "may". They may not be funded. "May" is not "shall".

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: For funding questions, because those are measures that pertain to the Government of Canada, I think it would be better to get that clarity on exactly what happens with the funding on April 1 through the federal government directly.

Mr. Martin Shields: Okay.

The word "voluntary" has come up a lot of times. When we're talking about a registry, is it going to take national legislation to get a registry in place that really makes a difference?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: We are open to avenues that will get us there as quickly as possible.

Again, we understand that the model that has been adopted in the United States with the U.S. Center for SafeSport was made possible because it was statutorily mandated. Of course, we would love to get the help of this committee through its recommendations to see what possible avenues there are, whether it be through the Physical Activity and Sport Act or otherwise. From what we have observed, this has been an effective avenue for the United States.

• (1630)

Mr. Martin Shields: Are you recommending that we would suggest that as a recommendation?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: We want to recommend that there be a sanctions registry that is publicly available as soon as possible.

Mr. Martin Shields: Statutorily...?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: I'm not sure it's my position to say how that can be achieved, but I look forward to hearing the recommendations from the committee.

Mr. Martin Shields: I think you've danced around that, but I think you pretty well have said that.

You were talking about the number of provincial organizations. From what we've heard, the minister is out there doing a sales job. Are you doing a similar sales job in trying to convince provinces to join?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: What I'm aware of is that in terms of providing an explanation or information about the abuse-free sport program, those at the SDRCC have been active and engaged with provinces and territories for many months now. I understand that some of these conversations are also progressing on our side, because we manage the services once they are in place. We have been vocal, I believe, in speaking about the gaps right now and the urgency to fill those gaps.

Mr. Martin Shields: I'm guessing that's why you're taking a proactive approach. They're missing. It's a gap.

The other one is the clubs. How are you going to get the clubs involved?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: Our perspective is that there is an ability through the provincial-territorial systems to reach the clubs directly. In terms of the system in place in Quebec, as one example,

one system that encompasses all clubs and all participants in the province has been created. Of course, I believe they would be better positioned to speak about their own model, but I understand that it covers all clubs. It covers all provincial organizations in a harmonized and unified manner.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Martin. That's it.

I will now go to the Liberals and Lisa Hepfner. Lisa, you have five minutes, please.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to Ms. Pelletier for being here to answer our questions today.

I think we've covered a lot of these issues already. A lot of my questions have already been covered by my colleagues.

First, I'm wondering if you could go into more detail about this database and how it would work. If we were to have a mandate, what exactly would that look like? I know that you didn't really want to opine on that, but from your perspective and in your experience, ideally how would this work?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: Thank you for the question and the opportunity to provide a little bit of what that would entail.

From our perspective, a database or a registry of individuals who are under sanctions is a means for administrators in clubs who are looking to make hiring decisions. It's a means for parents who are looking to sign their kids to a club. Sport is practised through the federated system, but it also touches even the school system. There is sport participation in schools and things like that.

People who are participants in Canadian sport, in the absence of something like a public registry, could navigate through gaps in the system. Whether they move within the strict lines of sport or to where they can use their skills and perpetuate harm, the goal of a public registry would be to avoid that. It would be a tool that empowers Canadian society as a whole. We think it's a matter of public interest to ensure the safety of our youth and the safety of our children. The best way to achieve that—with rigorous standards, of course, in terms of the information that finds its way there—is to make sure that once individuals are under sanctions, according to a fair process, there is a way for people to know about it.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Would you also mandate that sports organizations have to consult this registry before bringing new people in, or would it simply be for people who have been through a process of sanctions to be added to the registry without any onus on the organizations that are hiring or bringing on volunteers?

• (1635)

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: I think organizational accountability is essential, as it also is for people in positions of authority. I think a variety of measures could accompany and help support the objective of a public registry. In my view, some would include requirements as well as potentially best practices and standards to make sure that the information is used for its intended purposes.

Ms. Lisa Hefner: What about people who face allegations? There hasn't been a formal sanction process. Maybe they leave the organization and move on to another organization or move to another province. Would those incidents be covered under a database like the one you envision?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: The one we envision and the one we currently have in place—even though the information is not shared—is a registry of individuals whose participation in sport has been impacted. This means it can also be information about what we call in our world “provisional measures”. While a matter may be ongoing, if a coach is being suspended because the allegations against him or her are so severe, we also don't want these individuals to cause harm or, to your point, resign and go elsewhere.

I think we have to be careful about the type of information in those cases when a matter hasn't been looked at fully with fair and due process and the principles of natural justice, but there is a possibility.... The U.S. Center for SafeSport, once again, has that model in place whereby they share that information, but the level or categorization of the information may be impacted as a result of it not being a final sanction.

Ms. Lisa Hefner: In my last few moments here, I'm wondering if you can reflect on whether athletes in this system or athletes who are playing sports today understand your office and the options available to them.

Do athletes know right now where to go and how to access this system if they have a complaint of abuse?

Ms. Sarah-Ève Pelletier: At the national level, the athletes have increased and better awareness. Still, it's an important priority of ours to make sure athletes who are eligible to use our services know how to engage. In terms of athletes at all levels of the sport systems, I have mentioned the urgency around the gaps to make sure everyone has a place to turn to.

I do want to mention, however, that the Canadian Sport Helpline is available for all Canadians and all athletes at all levels of participation. Even if athletes may not be admissible to OSIC—if they are at the local level or something like that—they can get the services of the helpline today. There are services and resources that they can access as of today.

We need to make sure everyone has a safe place to go.

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Lisa.

We're going to go to the next round.

Thank you very much, Ms. Pelletier, for your testimony and for being so patient with us.

We now need to ask the clerk if we need to suspend so we can bring in everyone else.

Yes, we're going to suspend for a short period of time to allow for the next round of witnesses, please.

● (1635) _____ (Pause) _____
● (1645)

The Chair: We are going to begin the next round. As you know, we're studying safe sport.

We have three individuals present. They are Jennifer Fraser, author and educational consultant; Allison Sandmeyer-Graves, chief executive officer, from Canadian Women and Sport, who is here by video conference; and Rob Koehler, the director general at Global Athlete.

We have three witnesses. I will begin by letting the witnesses know they have, as a group, five minutes each.

I will give you a 30-second voice warning so you can round it up, because we don't have as much time as we would like in this round. We would like to get around to hearing from you.

I will begin with Ms. Fraser for five minutes. Please go ahead.

Dr. Jennifer Fraser (Author and Educational Consultant, As an Individual): Our son started skating at two years of age and playing hockey at five. As he got older, he also played competitive soccer, basketball and rugby, and he rowed in a quad that won several gold medals. At 12, diagnosed as an auditory learner, he found the frenetic yelling by his coaches a cause of anxiety, but he still loved sports. By the time he was 13, he'd tried out for and been selected to play on a hockey rep team.

It wasn't until age 16 that he was exposed to coaches who regularly used misogynist and homophobic slurs. Players reported being told to “grow some balls”. They were yelled at in games as “fucking soft” by an irate, threatening coach with a finger jabbing up in their face. One coach said to our son that another player “looked like a faggot”. Players said coaches called them “fucking pussies”, “fucking retards”, “embarrassments”, “pathetic” and so on.

The Chair: Excuse me, but I think you may need to temper the language. I know you're being factual, but—

Dr. Jennifer Fraser: I'm being factual. If it can be spoken to my son and other children in Canada, I think we can all handle it. It's not being directed at us. It's just being spoken.

Is that okay?

The Chair: It's a public hearing. That's just not parliamentary. I'm sorry. It's a parliamentary committee you are speaking to, but thank you anyway.

Dr. Jennifer Fraser: It could be abuse by administrators too. We learned from other parents that for at least a year they'd been raising alarms about abuse on two teams that had the same coach who, in front of the director and parents, had admitted that he should go on probation. Instead, the administrators engaged teen athletes in multiple sham investigations. They breached confidentiality and positioned the 14 athletes who had reported abuse as liars. This defamatory insinuation was published widely by them.

Despite their clear duty to protect children from abuse, administrators acted with wanton or reckless disregard for the lives and safety of those children. They not only failed to protect: They added betrayal trauma to the abuse, which is documented in research as being very destructive.

In this context, let us review Canada's criminal negligence law, which states:

- Every one is criminally negligent who
- (a) in doing anything, or
 - (b) in omitting to do anything that it is his duty to do,
- shows wanton or reckless disregard for the lives or safety of other persons.

Negligence is exponentially more serious when one has fiduciary duty for children, youth and young adults. It is well documented in medical, psychological, psychiatric, neuroscientific and neurobiological research that exposing children to repeat homophobia and misogyny, yelling in the face, belittling, shaming, humiliating, assaulting and threatening, and punishing for speaking up do significant, long-lasting, life-threatening damage to the brain and body.

All forms of child abuse and neglect—and even abuse in adulthood—are extensively documented to damage brain architecture and leave neurological scars visible on brain scans, and to lead to mid-life chronic illness and push some victims onto the path of criminality or suicide.

Let us note: Suicide is the second leading cause of death in our youth populations and is on the rise.

A judicial inquiry is not needed to hear reports of abuse from athletes. They have already reported in great numbers across all sports. A judicial inquiry is needed to figure out why administrators and all others with oversight whose wanton or reckless disregard for the lives and safety of athletes, as well as their alleged victims, are not being charged with negligence.

Our son chose not to play on the hockey rep team at 13. Hockey was one of many sports he gave up in order to give his full attention to basketball. The abuse done to our son, as described earlier, took place on a high school basketball team, and the coaches were certified teachers. The commissioner for teacher regulation and the ombudsperson's office covered up the abuse.

The abusive teacher said that our son was one of the best players the school had ever seen in a 100-year history and that he'd be sought after on college teams. Along with five other athletes, our son—an award-winning athlete—refused to play his final year for

the abusive teacher, and he thereby sacrificed his dream of playing at university.

In protest, I resigned as a teacher at that school and began teaching at another one. Within three years at the new school, I witnessed first-hand the commissioner for teacher regulation covering up more abuse. Two educators were exposed as sexually grooming students. One was an administrator, formerly an English teacher. The other was the school principal.

The English teacher now lives with his victim in England as, after he taught at another province in Canada, he was barred from teaching in British Columbia. The commissioner's public discipline report whitewashes his grooming and sexual abuse with the vague statement that he wrote "inappropriate text messages". He works in a development capacity with teachers.

The principal's victim, even though she had attempted suicide, was asked to participate in a restorative justice process so that the principal would not be charged. The commissioner did not publicly discipline the principal or put any restrictive measures on his teaching certificate—

● (1650)

The Chair: Ms. Fraser, I would ask you to wrap up. We can get some of your testimony in questions. Your time is up.

Dr. Jennifer Fraser: —to ensure he did not reach out to his victim ever again. The principal reached out again to his victim. He met with her while she was at university. Half a year later, she killed herself at the age of 19.

These are my final statements: Research conducted by former federal deputy minister Anne-Marie Robinson and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection documents that student sexual abuse in Canadian schools is on the rise. School administrators are ill equipped and suffer, like sport organizations, from conflict of interest. Too often, they neglect to keep children safe.

A new, fully independent body that receives and acts on abuse reports needs to be established to eliminate the conflict of interest and/or political interference that results in a wanton or reckless disregard for the safety of the—

The Chair: Ms. Fraser, some of your testimony will come out in the question and answer segment. Thank you very much.

Now I go to Ms. Sandmeyer-Graves for five minutes, please.

Ms. Allison Sandmeyer-Graves (Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Women and Sport): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and distinguished members of the committee. My name is Allison Sandmeyer-Graves, and I am the chief executive officer of Canadian Women and Sport. My pronouns are she and her.

Canadian Women and Sport is a national non-profit with a 42-year history of work as the leading voice and authority on women and sport. We believe in the power of sport as a platform for advancing equity for women across all areas of society. As such, we are committed to creating a more equitable and inclusive sports system that empowers women and girls as participants and leaders within sport and also through sport.

As our mission implies, our focus is on systems change, working with organizations and leaders on solutions that will permanently improve the sport system. Through our research, advocacy and programs, we empower sport organizations and leaders to bring gender equity to life in their work.

In doing this work, we work extensively across all levels of the sport system and all provinces and territories. In 2021-22 alone, we engaged and impacted 2,700 sport leaders and more than 750 sport organization. I share this as evidence of our unique and extensive insight into the process of systems change across the sport system.

On the subject of safe sport, and specifically on how to create a truly safe, welcoming and inclusive sport system, I wish to share the following insights and observations.

The Chair: Ms. Sandmeyer-Graves, there was a bit of an interruption in the sound system.

Is it fixed? Yes, it's good.

Please continue.

Ms. Allison Sandmeyer-Graves: Thank you.

I wish to share the following insight and observations. As I shared in my remarks to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in November, the movements for gender equity and for safety in sport are inextricably linked. One cannot be achieved without the other.

Gender inequity and unsafe sport are both structural and systemic issues that share many characteristics. They are rooted in a sport system built in another era, based on societal values and norms that are out of step with contemporary Canadian society. They are deeply embedded in policies, practices, budgets and cultures, making them highly normalized and very difficult to disrupt.

Unfortunately, the burden of advocating and leading systems change typically falls to those being oppressed. These are people working from a place of relatively limited power, and doing this work puts them in an even more precarious position. It is emotional, exhausting and endless work that comes at a high personal cost.

While Hockey Canada is a significant example of these structural issues at play, there is clear evidence of these issues throughout the sport system. This indicates that while the circumstances of a given incident may be unique, the conditions giving rise to these incidences are not. To prevent maltreatment and gender inequity, we

must look at these structural issues systemically, effectively looking at the root causes versus the symptoms.

I offer the following lessons from the fight for gender equity over the past 42 years in hopes that they will help to accelerate progress for safe sport.

To date, when dealing with gender inequity, the scale and scope of the solutions have not matched the scope of the problem. The result within the gender equity movement is change that is exceptionally slow, piecemeal, quick to regress and ultimately voluntary, with organizations and leaders opting out entirely as they wish. Without persistent consequential accountability and incentive structures, we have had to rely only on the innate desires of organizations and leaders to change, with the prospect of natural consequences for those who do not.

If we want safe sport to have a different trajectory, we need to be prepared to think and act bigger. The goal must be systemic transformation. Tweaks and one-off programs that leave the current operating system intact are inadequate. Transformation means a comprehensive values-based overhaul of how we design, implement, and measure sport in Canada with government policy and investment that is aligned and supportive.

We need more than a rejection of the status quo. We need a new vision for sport, with a right-sized strategy to get us there, grounded in a clear-eyed understanding of the current system from the grassroots to high performance.

As such, I repeat our call for a national inquiry or another appropriate mechanism that will help us realize this outcome for the entire sport system. We believe this effort will have powerful positive impacts across multiple structural issues and contribute directly to creating a truly inclusive sport system that produces the highest value in the lives of all Canadians.

As ever, Canadian Women and Sport is committed to working with Sport Canada and the national sport community to help realize this potential.

Thank you.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I now go to the third witness for five minutes, please. Global Athlete is represented by Rob Koehler.

You have five minutes, Mr. Koehler.

Mr. Rob Koehler (Director General, Global Athlete): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

Today I am not going to detail the stories of abuse from survivors from 15 sports and the thousands of athletes who have come forward with the experience of physical, sexual, financial, and emotional abuse, and a lack of equality. They have been met with little remedy.

We have already heard it acknowledged from the Minister of Sport and the Prime Minister of Canada on several occasions that sport is in a crisis in Canada. It's time to act now for a judicial inquiry.

Today I want to focus on the complex, tangled web of sport dysfunction that has enabled abuse and corruption, along with the lack of transparency and accountability that perpetuate it. All of these are bred by the inherent power imbalance between sport administrators and athletes.

The global sport model set by the International Olympic Committee for the world of sport is replicated in almost every country. By design, this model relies on an intricate network of people and practices veiled under the accepted strategy of sport autonomy. For example, just last week, an email publicly shown by the International Olympic Committee asked all of the national Olympic committees to influence their governments to allow Russia and Belarus to compete at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

In Canada, over the past year, we have seen the tangled web come to light. We have seen Hockey Canada with hidden financial accounts used to hide abuse issues and, more recently, athletes questioning the transparency of Canada Soccer and Canadian Soccer Business.

These organizations hold a non-profit status with separate entities to raise and distribute money with little to no oversight. How many other sports in Canada have similar entities?

This inquiry is needed to look at the tangled web of how sport operates in Canada. It needs to take a deep dive into the real and perceived conflicts of interest that exist.

Let me give you some examples.

Own the Podium receives over \$2.9 million from the Canadian government and is also funded by the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Canadian Olympic Foundation and the Canadian Paralympic Committee. Who has oversight of Own the Podium? Why does this organization exist? Is it another offshoot organization, similar to what we have seen from Hockey Canada and Canadian Soccer Business?

I'd like to look at the legal community. A lawyer in Canada is required to carry out due diligence before taking on a client, but for some reason, sport allows them to circumvent this practice.

For researchers, we need to ask how independent researchers are finding them in positions of power within Canadian sport organizations and influencing Canadian sport policy-makers.

For investigations, we have to take a deep dive into so-called "independent investigations" that not only have existing relationships with sport but are also being paid to protect the brand of the sport that is paying them to do the investigation. Who is representing the athletes?

In all of these scenarios, it is akin to the fox guarding the henhouse.

We need to understand why so many staff and board members who have been trying to be agents of change find themselves silenced by non-disclosure agreements. Why it is acceptable that Canadian athletes are forced into silence when they become part of a national team?

We need to understand the relationships between national sport organizations and provincial sport organizations. National sport organizations mandate that provincial sport organizations filter registration fees to them, but use convenient arguments that they have no oversight and accountability to the provincial sport organizations. They are all part of the convenient tangled arguments that avoid accountability and oversight.

Over the past year, parliamentary committees have heard from the Minister of Sport, Sport Canada and heads of sport, all either defending the current system or agreeing to take on recommendations that are put forward to improve the system with no mandatory implementation. They have all admitted that the system is not working and needs to be improved.

We have heard directly from this committee that Sport Canada is not fit for purpose. They have all proven that they don't have the tools and the systems in place to demand accountability. Freezing funding and resignations are all band-aid solutions that don't get to the root of the problem.

• (1700)

The office of the integrity commissioner was created by the very same people who have been part of the problem. Let's stop relying on anecdotal evidence from people who are entrenched in the system and who have inherent conflicts of interest.

Please don't take my word for it. That would be anecdotal as well. Launching a judicial investigation is the only way to truly understand the Canadian sport system.

This government has an opportunity—

The Chair: Please wrap up. You have gone over time, Mr. Koehler.

Mr. Rob Koehler: This government has an opportunity to reform sport in Canada and globally. You did it with the Dubin inquiry. Now it's time to launch a nationwide inquiry to be agents of change.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to the questions and answers. Because of our time limits, this is going to be only one six-minute round for everyone. I'm going to begin with the Conservatives.

Ms. Thomas, you have six minutes, please.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you.

Mr. Koehler, you just stated that there are band-aid solutions at work. If those are the band-aid solutions, then what would it take to create real change?

Mr. Rob Koehler: We hear a lot of people asking and indicating what they think should change. That's what we've seen time and time again. That's why a judicial inquiry is so important, because instead of people giving anecdotal evidence, we need to get to the root and the rot of the problem, where conflicts of interest exist. Creating a really robust system, whether by empowering OSIC or by having OSIC independent of sport, is what's needed.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: In the event that a national inquiry doesn't take place, right now you have a mike. What would the recommendations be that you would give to this committee? Give us your top two.

• (1705)

Mr. Rob Koehler: My top two would be, first, that SafeSport in Canada be independent of Sport Canada and not linked with them and be managed by human rights experts.

The second would be that athletes in this country have independent collective representation to look after their interests when they come forward or when they have disputes. Right now there's a power imbalance. Sport Canada wields all the powers and athletes have none.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Right now you're representing about 600 individuals who are under your advocacy, your voice. Is that correct?

Mr. Rob Koehler: We don't represent them; we advocate for them. That's correct.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Am I correct in saying there are about 600 or so?

Mr. Rob Koehler: There are more than 600.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Okay. How did those individuals come to Global Athlete for support? How did they even find out that it existed?

Mr. Rob Koehler: Global Athlete has been working internationally for the past several years. The athletes were let down by the Canadian system and had nowhere to turn, and as a result they turned to us. I think that this inherently is the problem. It speaks volumes that these athletes had to come to an international organization for assistance in Canada.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: How many of those athletes are Canadian or would have been involved in Canadian sport?

Mr. Rob Koehler: Of the 600-plus.... We've worked with over 1,000 in Canada.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Okay, it's specific to Canada.

Mr. Rob Koehler: That's correct.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Okay, perfect. Thank you.

In an article that you were interviewed for by ESPN, you said that you're not linked with sport, you are not linked with government and you are not linked with the anti-doping organization, and therefore that makes Global Athlete trustworthy. Why is it important that these links don't exist?

Mr. Rob Koehler: We're not pressured by anyone other than the athletes. We get our narrative and our directive from athletes from a grassroots level. They sign off on everything. My statement today was shown to the athletes before coming here and was approved by

the athletes. We advocate for them. We have no undue influence from external sources.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Koehler, you offered your resignation from WADA, the World Anti-Doping Agency. What was the reason for that?

Mr. Rob Koehler: That's a complex question. I was standing up strong towards Russia. I was principled in not letting Russia back, and my organization and I came to a head. We didn't agree, and it was time for me to leave. I was pressured, I was bullied and I was intimidated. I continue to have that to this day in my role, because I'm representing athletes in fighting the system.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I realize this is a bit of an awkward question, and it's one that unfortunately will come up at this committee probably several times over. I think one of the things that we're realizing, based on the FEWO study, and even with the witnesses who have appeared here, is that things are more complex than they seem. No one seems 100% innocent, to be very honest. I'm curious to know if there are any complaints against you.

Mr. Rob Koehler: Are there complaints against me? No.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Perfect.

I believe I have a minute and a half left.

Dr. Fraser, thank you for joining us here today. You spoke a lot about your son's—I believe it was—experience. Is that correct?

I'm curious as to your observations as a mother with a son in sports who was significantly bullied. I'm very sorry to hear that. I imagine you're also privy to the stories of many others.

I'd be curious to know what you would identify as the gaps in the system that prevent athletes from being protected or feeling safe to come forward.

Dr. Jennifer Fraser: I think it's a question of all children in Canada. I think it's athletes, it's kids in church and it's kids in school, as I tried to make clear today. I think children in Canada aren't safe. I think youth aren't safe and young adults aren't safe, regardless of what they're doing.

I think it's a real failure in laws. That's why I felt thankful that you are caring so much about this and gave me a chance to speak. I research abuse and I research what it does to the brain specifically. That's what I write about.

I was a teacher at the same time as I was a mother in that school system. I went to a different school and was appalled to find out it was the same situation.

I'm just one story, but I took student athlete testimonies. What they were expected to endure at the hands of certified teachers was horrifying.

• (1710)

The Chair: You have 15 seconds.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: What is the number one thing you notice in terms of the impact it has on a child's brain throughout adult life?

Dr. Jennifer Fraser: It damages it. You can see it on a brain scan. It physically damages the brain.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I go to the Liberals and Michael Coteau for six minutes.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): I want to thank all of the witnesses for being here today and for your testimonies.

I want to start with a quick question for Dr. Fraser.

Thank you so much for sharing your family's story. It is a tragic story to listen to—the amount of damage that can be applied to a young child and carried throughout his or her lifetime. I think you referred to it as long-lasting, life-threatening damage. I just want to say that it's completely unacceptable. Thank you for being here to advocate for all children in this country.

I've always noticed that with the education system and the private, national and provincial sport systems, there are systems within systems. Do you have any advice on how we could better coordinate those systems? Some jurisdictions fall under school boards, some are under the province and some are national.

Is there any advice on how we can bring the accountability together under a single system, or at least coordinate it so that best practices and strategies are presented? Do you have any advice for us?

Dr. Jennifer Fraser: You've just described it perfectly yourself.

We need a separate parliamentary body that—as many people have said—can't have any influence. It can't have political influence, school influence, education influence or sport influence. It just needs to be about abuse.

It starts in kindergarten by teaching children, their parents and everyone that when they have an abuse issue, this is the exact body they go to. It's only about child abuse. It handles it and addresses it and has no conflict of interest. This is being looked at as a model.

I'm not the one who came up with this brilliant idea; others did. I will share it in the 10 pages that I'm going to submit. There is research that shows that this would be exactly the answer to make significant change.

I also believe—as I tried to say in my presentation—that we've gotten to a terrible place where we hold children and youth very stringently accountable by our laws, but the laws do not apply to people who are in positions of power over children. That's a great problem. I think we need to change that dynamic.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Yes, the system has to be built for children, not for adults. Is that right? I think that's what you're saying.

• (1715)

Dr. Jennifer Fraser: Yes.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I agree with you. There's a lot of need for change.

Thank you so much.

I want to move to Ms. Sandmeyer-Graves.

I am a former minister of sport for Ontario. Back in 2016, the Ontario government put together a provincial strategy for sport. I was astonished by some of the statistics that came out of that. In fact, I went back to the publication that was presented six or seven years ago. I was just astonished that at the NCCP, for level five, 89% of coaches in our province of Ontario were male and 11% were female. I remember someone telling us about the statistics for women athletes and the coaches they had at the winter Olympics. The numbers were similar to that. There were something like 10% female coaches and 90% male coaches, even for the female athletes.

I don't think anyone would question the fact that the more female coaches there are in the system, the more empowering and role modelling there would be and the stronger the overall system would become.

Do you have any advice for this committee on what the federal government should be doing to encourage young women to remain in sport longer? I know their retention rate is much lower than that for males. Also, on how to develop even further leadership for female role models and female coaches within the system, do you have any advice for us?

Ms. Allison Sandmeyer-Graves: I really appreciate your shining a light on that 2016 report and the strategy and the data that informed it. Unfortunately, I would say that coaching is one area that seems very resistant to improvement when it comes to numbers, despite many interventions.

I think what's really important to consider is that girls and women love sport. They want to participate. They want opportunities to lead. We see that time and time again. What they come up against are structural gender-based barriers to accessing those opportunities—everything from accessing ice time as a player, as a girls team, to being considered seriously in a candidate pool for coaching opportunities at the highest level. There is still a lot of gender bias in the way sport is led and in the decisions that are made and also in the ways that policies are structured and so on, which really do still privilege men over women at this point.

The Chair: You have 15 seconds.

Thank you.

Ms. Allison Sandmeyer-Graves: I'll leave it there.

The Chair: No, you can wrap up. You have 15 seconds to wrap up. Go ahead. Do you have anything else you want to add?

Ms. Allison Sandmeyer-Graves: Yes, thank you.

I think that really addressing those systemic barriers so that girls and women can thrive is the responsibility of those organizations that are responsible for designing and delivering sport.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you so much for being here.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now go to the Bloc Québécois and Sébastien Lemire. You have six minutes. Go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, I thank all the witnesses for coming to testify in support of an independent public inquiry across all sports.

Ms. Fraser, thank you for your moving testimony. I am glad that this study we are doing gives us the opportunity to hear that kind of testimony.

You contributed to a podcast recently in which you sounded the alarm, as it were, about restorative justice.

According to your research and knowledge of child abuse, children almost never get their lives back to normal, because they are scarred for life.

What do you say to researchers like Dr. Kerr, Dr. Donnelly, and Dr. Kidd, who came to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women recently to propose this approach?

[English]

Dr. Jennifer Fraser: Is it okay that I answer in English?

The reason I think restorative justice is so dangerous is that I've seen it put in process at both of those schools.

The first school tried to use restorative justice in order to.... They had put the athletes into the position of saying publicly that they were liars when they reported abuse. They were now supposed to do restorative justice to clear their names, I guess, or get forgiven by the coaches who had abused them. It was psychotic, essentially. Parents refused in scathing terms to have their children put through yet another manipulation.

In the second school that I was at, as I said in my statement very quickly, they offered restorative justice because they were trying to get the principal off so he wouldn't get sex abuse charges. Then they decided that the girl was so mentally ill that she wouldn't be able to handle it. This is what happened to her brain. She basically couldn't tell if she was the victim or the perpetrator, just like they tried to do with the other students by the time they were done.

Restorative justice was developed by Katy Hutchison. Her husband had been beaten to death by drunken young people at a random party. They didn't even know who he was. They went to jail. She decided that this teenager, this young 20-something, should be saved and that he shouldn't spend the rest of his life in jail with a criminal record. She set out to restore justice between him and her. It had been random drunken activity.

That is not the same thing as an adult in a position of trust and authority who abuses children. You can't compare those two scenarios. There's no place for restorative justice in this sport situation we're dealing with. It's manipulative and destructive.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I understand the importance of having a truly independent complaints mechanism so that victims can trust it. Obviously, the solution proposed by the school in question, as is the case for many sports federations, does not have that independence. Thus, victims will tend to not make complaints, or they will have traumatic experiences.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Koehler, first of all, I believe you received a letter from President Zelenskyy following your contribution. Can you tell us a little bit about it?

• (1720)

[English]

Mr. Rob Koehler: I'm sorry. I didn't get the question.

Dr. Jennifer Fraser: President Zelenskyy wrote you a note. Can you talk about that?

Mr. Rob Koehler: Oh, I'm not sure how that relates to this, but Global Athlete has been standing side by side with Ukrainian athletes to ask that Russia and Belarus be suspended from the Paralympic Games. As a result of our advocacy work with the Ukrainian athletes on Friday, I received a letter directly from the president, which I don't take as a letter to me; I take it as a letter to all the athletes who are standing in support of Ukraine.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I think it is worth mentioning, especially in the current context.

I believe you have been following with interest the testimony that has been given at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and here at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Can you describe to us what you think could be included in an independent judicial inquiry that would now involve all sports?

[English]

Mr. Rob Koehler: I've been asked that question before, Madam Chair.

One of the answers I always give is that if there's going to be a judicial inquiry, it's not for Rob Koehler or Jennifer Fraser to determine what the scope is. The judicial inquiry should be given to a justice to give him or her free scope of what the inquiry should look like so it's not influenced by others.

The topic is there. The issues are there. A broad, sweeping mandate should be provided. It's not really my position to offer that expertise.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: There is one question that has still not been answered: what form should this independent public inquiry take? We, as politicians, may have to take a stand on this.

[English]

Mr. Rob Koehler: The public inquiry should be a judicial inquiry that has the power of subpoena and the ability to attach every part of the sport in Canada, whether it's provincial or national or Sport Canada. Every aspect needs to....

The reason for the judicial inquiry is not to bring down the system; it's to get a deep understanding of how the system works to improve it for the future of every child and every athlete in this country. We do not want to hurt sport. We want to see it succeed, flourish and thrive. In doing that, I think we could be models not only for Canada but also for the rest of the world by creating this new sport environment that is unique and different and can be embraced, and every parent in the country will want to put their children in sport.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Sébastien. You were five seconds under. That's very kind of you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: You have my respect, Madam Chair, and I know that you were generous in the previous round. I thank you for that.

[*English*]

The Chair: Next, for the New Democrats, Peter Julian will have six minutes.

Before we go on, we have an extra eight minutes beyond 5:30 for the committee to stay here and finish our work.

Mr. Peter Julian: That may be true, Madam Chair, but I am hoping to finally get home after three weeks and several failed attempts to get through to Vancouver. My flight leaves—

The Chair: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes. I'd prefer that we not extend the time, if possible.

I'd like to thank our witnesses. Thank you for your very compelling testimony.

I have time for just two very brief questions and then I will be moving a motion. It is just because we have run out of time that I will have to do that during this questioning session.

Madam Fraser, my first brief question is to you. What would you advise the federal government to be doing now? We're talking about a national inquiry. A judicial inquiry is very important, but what things could the federal government be doing right away?

Dr. Jennifer Fraser: Right now they need to look at why nobody is being held negligent when they're obviously breaking Canadian criminal law. I don't understand why that's not happening. That needs to be number one. That needs to be looked at very intensely.

Why are these individuals whom we all read about in the media every day...? You've heard many, many talks about it. It's the same thing with a priest in a church: He gets excommunicated. Really? Why is he not in jail? It's the same thing here. These people are committing negligence. They are not protecting the safety and lives of children. Why are they not being held criminally accountable?

I'd like to see a lot more of that and a lot less of our young people acting in such shocking, appalling, violent, sickening ways. That's at the hands of adults. You do not become an unnaturally abusive person like that unless you've been in a toxic masculinity environment. That's not natural. Why do we keep blaming the kids downstream and not the adults? That's number one.

Second, I know that a judicial inquiry takes time, but there is no reason we can't start right now in creating a body—independent from sport, school, church or whatever—that takes in complaints and addresses them and is made up of experts. They're experts in child abuse. That's all we need.

• (1725)

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much for those answers.

Madam Sandmeyer-Graves, I thought you made the link between gender equity and safety in sport very eloquently. The reality is that we are currently seeing an example of the lack of gender equity in sport. It's around the issue of the national women's soccer team and their treatment by Canada Soccer.

Do you see that as an example of why we need to ensure that safety in sport and gender equity are twin priorities to ensure overall safety in sports?

Ms. Allison Sandmeyer-Graves: Absolutely. I don't know if they're two sides of the same coin or how you might phrase it, but I think they're very much interlinked. In fact, gender-based discrimination is prohibited under the UCCMS, as are forms of racism and other forms of discrimination and harm that are directed at athletes and others within the sport system.

I think there is a risk of always conflating safe sport or unsafe sport with abuse, or with sexual abuse specifically, but really what we are talking about is creating environments in which people can show up as their full, authentic selves and feel psychologically and physically safe to be vulnerable, to put themselves out there, to try hard and to go for it in whatever way best suits them. When women are continuously devalued and told that they are worth less than men in many different ways, that does not create psychological safety. It opens the door to many other forms of abuse.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much.

On that note, Madam Chair, I will now move my motion. It has already been distributed to committee members.

I move the following:

That, in relation to the study on Safe Sport in Canada, the committee schedule a meeting in March 2023 to study allegations of unequal treatment of the Canadian Women's National Soccer Team and allegations of sexual abuse within soccer programs and to invite the current president and CEO of Soccer Canada to testify.

On that note, I think we all stand with Christine Sinclair and the national team.

I put forward the motion. If any member of this committee would prefer that it be a subpoena rather than an invitation, I am perfectly willing to entertain that as a friendly amendment.

The Chair: We are able to do so if we do not get a positive response from Soccer Canada.

Is anyone objecting to this motion or wanting to discuss it further? Is there unanimous consent?

Chris, you wanted to say something.

Mr. Chris Bittle: We might want to add the subpoena to keep things moving along: Issue an invitation, and if it's not accepted, then subpoena.

To put a fine point on this.... I know Mr. Julian and I discussed it. There is an element of discrimination that goes into what we just talked about, in terms of the value. If we deal with an issue of labour versus a labour dispute—though discrimination is at the heart of it—are we taking away from what we're discussing everywhere else?

It's something we support. In order to expedite things, we should invite, and if that's not accepted, subpoena—and make sure that's right in the motion.

The Chair: Are you suggesting an amendment, Chris?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Yes.

The Chair: Would you like to quickly suggest where it would go?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I move the amendment, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: For clarification, the term wouldn't be “subpoena”. The committee would be issuing a summons.

Mr. Peter Julian: Perhaps it's just easier to invite, or, as needed, issue a summons to the current president.

The Chair: Are there any objections to that particular amendment?

Some hon. members: No.

(Amendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Can we vote on the amended motion?

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: That is unanimously passed.

Thank you very much, Peter, for bringing this up, and to everyone for being so collegial about it.

• (1730)

Mr. Chris Bittle: Very quickly, I have a point of order, Madam Chair, on your ruling with respect to parliamentary language.

I think it's something we might want to discuss further. We are going to be hearing a lot of things that are unparliamentary. My preference would be that we treat this like a court. If it's a quote or something heard, it goes into the record. Perhaps that's something we can discuss with the clerk later. If language is referring to an honourable member, it may not be parliamentary, but if we're trying to come up with recommendations and evidence, it may be something we need to hear and put on the record.

I understand we're running low on time, but it's something to discuss, going forward.

The Chair: One thing we need to talk about is.... It's not about whether it's unparliamentary; it's a public session. There may be children or others looking at this, because they play sports.

I don't know. That's something we can discuss in some form later on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I know that we made a request to receive the Minister of Sport and Sport Canada officials soon. They have postponed their appearance. I would just like to invite them to come to testify for at least two hours, and as soon as possible, so that we can talk about the preliminary directions and measures that they are going to put in place as part of the new Canadian policy to ensure safe practice in sport; we also want to hear about how the new policy will take into account the measures and practices that the provinces have put in place to do so.

It is important that this happen sooner rather than later, as once the policy is in place, it will be much more difficult to contribute to it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Obviously, the minister and officials were invited, as a group, for two hours. It will have to depend on their availability. I hear you, Sébastien.

Go ahead, Marilyn.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Absolutely, it depends on availability.

I'd rather see the minister and department staff before they put their framework in place. Otherwise, every time we ask a question, we'll just get, “Well, that's the reason we put this framework in place.”

The Chair: Thank you, Marilyn.

If there is no further discussion—

Go ahead, Rachael.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: For further certainty, there was an email sent by the clerk indicating the sport minister asked to appear later on. I think what you're hearing from us and the Bloc is that we would like to hear from the sport minister sooner rather than later. If we feel the need to bring her back later, once the framework is in place, then we can hear from her twice.

We would like to have it towards the beginning of the study, because we believe it would allow us to establish a bit of a starting point or a foundation.

The Chair: We'll obviously convey that message to the minister and the department, but, once again, it will boil down to the availability issue.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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