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# Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio





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• (1100)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the 44th meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on Monday, October 31, the committee will resume its study on women and girls in sport.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking.

For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your microphone and please mute yourself when you are not speaking.

For interpretation for those on Zoom, you have the choice at the bottom of the screen of “floor”, “English” or “French”. For those in the room, you can use your earpiece and select the desired channel.

I remind everyone that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the “raise hand” function.

The clerk and I will manage the speaking list as well as we can. We appreciate your patience.

In accordance with our routine motion, I am informing the committee that all witnesses have completed the required connection test in advance of the meeting.

Before we welcome our witnesses, I would like to provide this trigger warning. This will be a difficult study. We'll be discussing experiences related to abuse. This may be triggering to viewers, members or staff with similar experiences. If you feel distressed or if you need help, please advise the clerk.

I would like to welcome our first panel for today. We have Geneviève Jeanson, who is a public speaker and consultant and is appearing as an individual.

We have Dr. Jennifer Fraser, author and educational consultant.

As well, we have Wendy Glover, secondary schoolteacher and athlete development consultant.

We will be providing you each with five minutes for your opening comments. When you see me start swirling my hand, just start winding it down, and from there we will go on to questions and answers.

The first five minutes are for Geneviève. Geneviève, you have the floor.

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson (Public Speaker and Consultant, As an Individual):** Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

I'm a former professional road cyclist. I competed for Canada in the 2000 Olympic Games. I've won multiple world championships and world cups throughout my career.

I feel very fortunate to have been invited here today, because all of you have a part in the safeguarding of athletes and are in a position to influence the development of future generations of athletes.

Please understand that I will speak today about my own experiences. Everything I say here is my personal opinion. For the sake of expediency, I will go directly to the unedited version of my story—hence the blunt terminology.

For the purposes of this discussion, we can say that my story began at 14 years old. That's the age I was when my coach, who was 26 years older than me, hit me in the head for the first time in a training session. I was told that it was to make me a better, tougher athlete. He compared the world of competition to living in the jungle. In the jungle, only the strongest survive. I was taught to welcome assault and to trust that physical violence was a normal part of training, that it was actually good for me.

At 15 years old, the verbal and physical violence progressed to sexual assault and rape, which was immediately followed by threats like, “I'm in love with you. If you leave me, I'm going to kill you, and then I'm going to commit suicide.” I was never the same person after that first sexual assault.

Because I was living with constant violence, I actually believed that he could kill me and that he could commit suicide. It was so real that I couldn't leave. I did not want to live the rest of my life with the responsibility of someone's suicide on my shoulders. In my case, abuse also included performance-enhancing drugs, which I started taking at the age of 16.

I was winning a lot of races as a junior, including national championships against older girls, so my coach decided he would take more and more time off from work to focus exclusively on my athletic career and development. He eventually took leave without pay from his job as a phys. ed. teacher.

During that year, when I was 16, we discovered that I was anemic. I was told that I could not wait for the anemia to subside and get healthy naturally, because I was supposed to win, get sponsors and earn money for him to live. He brought me to a doctor and they decided to give me EPO, a performance-enhancing drug, so that I could keep training and performing regardless of my anemia. What was supposed to be a few injections to treat anemia turned into career-long doping.

In our society, when someone is engaged in illegal activities, he is considered a criminal, caught or not. To draw a parallel with society, in less than two years I became a victim of abuse, a cheater and, because doping is illegal in sports, a criminal in the world I lived in—all at 16.

I was a teenager without an escape route, with no one to talk to and no one to help me. There was rarely a training session without verbal, psychological and physical violence. My coach took control of everything—whom I was able to talk to, when I was able to go out, everything regarding finances, etc. I was desperately trying to find a way out of the sport to leave him. I could not just stop, because I was earning money for him to live. He made sure to remind me of that: He had left everything in his life, including divorcing his wife, to take care of my career, so I was the one responsible.

Because of his suicide threats, I could not go to another coach. I could not share my story with my national or international federation, because in revealing everything, I would have been accused of cheating. I would have lost my whole career, my life and my name. I was down to thinking that the only solution was to get into an accident—not an accident that would kill me, but something that was serious enough that I could finally make everything stop.

Instead of getting into an accident, I failed a drug test. I got a 10-year ban from all sports. I swear that failing that drug test was the best thing that ever happened to me. I was immediately relieved, because it meant that I could finally stop cycling and I could leave my coach. A positive drug test was just a small inconvenience compared with the hell I was living in. Having my name tarnished forever was a cheap price to pay to finally get rid of him.

You might ask yourself why I didn't just leave. Well, it's never as simple as just leaving an abusive relationship. Fleeing an abusive relationship is by far the most dangerous step, as the perpetrator fights to regain his control. Most fatalities happen in the act of leaving or just after the victim has left the relationship.

Until 2015 I was more comfortable having my name and identity associated with performance-enhancing drugs than associated with the abuse I had been a victim of. In 2015, when a good part of my healing had taken place, I finally felt ready to open up about the violence I had lived through and how I had been coerced into taking performance-enhancing drugs, but I was not yet ready to talk about the sexual assaults. To me, it was still too dirty and too shameful.

• (1105)

It was only in 2021, after reading numerous stories about abuse in sports, that I decided to share the full extent of my experience with abuse, the story I just told you today.

With that being said, please don't tell me you are sorry for what happened. Being sorry will not change the past. Be sorry that the culture of sport is still what it is today, and be angry that things are not moving fast enough in the safeguarding of athletes.

Because I believe I can be a part of the solution and influence the change of culture that must be imposed in sport, I got involved with Sport'Aide, and I'm extremely grateful to have a voice here today in front of this committee.

The literature confirms it: Female athletes are more at risk of experiencing situations of sexual violence; young athletes are more vulnerable; and female athletes are particularly at risk of experiencing violence when they have low self-confidence, eating disorders, and a very strong dependence on the coach. In addition, elite athletes are more at risk of experiencing psychological violence and young athletes of experiencing physical violence.

It is my wish that you help us make the following changes. Here are my recommendations.

First, we must educate our athletes, starting as early as possible, on what is an acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. Young athletes need to be equipped so they know how to react, know which services or resources to turn to, and understand there is no shame in asking for help. We must not assume that the winning coach is a good coach. Some coaches are just repeating the bad behaviour they witnessed and lived as athletes. Therefore, we must grow the education network to reach coaches, federation officials and parents. Education on matters of integrity should be mandatory.

Second, I would like to request the implementation of a system for receiving and processing complaints that is totally independent of the federations and that is not reserved only for our elite athletes. I would like to remind you that violence in sports crosses all ages, genres and skill levels. It happens at the recreational and the competitive levels.

Lastly, I'm also asking the Canadian sports system to rethink the funding of our federations so that it gives at least the same importance to the well-being of our athletes that they do to their performance. We cannot continue to give money to federations solely based on performance, because this "winning at all costs" mentality is enabling the culture of abuse.

I sincerely hope that the work you are currently carrying out will not be shelved. I, like many others you have heard in this room, will push for change. You have decisional power, and we are relying on you to give us the support we didn't have as young athletes.

Thank you again for having me among you today.

• (1110)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Geneviève.

I'm now going to pass it over for five minutes to Jennifer Fraser.

**Dr. Jennifer Fraser (Author and Educational Consultant, As an Individual):** Thank you spending time on this critically important and urgent issue.

In the 1980s, from 13 to 17 years old, I was abused by teachers in a Vancouver public school.

Today, in fact, sexual abuse by school personnel is on the rise. When I was abused, that was 40 years ago, and I cannot believe that nothing has changed to better protect children and all individuals from abuse.

According to the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, at least 750 school children were subject to sexual abuse by school personnel between 2017 and 2021, and that is the tip of the iceberg.

Forty years ago, in the Quest program, we were emotionally, physically and sexually abused by three teachers across the hall from the principal, vice-principal and school counsellors. While the damage from the teachers' abuse is obvious, neuroscience shows on brain scans the physical damage to the brain, not only from the teachers' abuse but also from the failure of school personnel to stop it.

I am here today to address that lack of action and the systems that work against those who report and those who speak up.

I was an award-winning teacher for 20 years, but when I reported in 2012 to school personnel and governing bodies the direct reports from student athletes who were being subjected to a toxic culture of fear, favouritism and humiliation, the students were revictimized and I was exiled from the teaching profession.

As the mother of one of the victims, I watched first-hand the devastating impact on my son, not only from the abuse but from the "army of enablers", to use Amos Guiora's phrase. While the abuse done to my son was sickening, he was clear that the enabling of the abuse and the cover-up by governing bodies were far worse.

I resigned in protest from that school that was covering up abuse, only to find myself in another school covering up abuse. This time, the abuse was sexual. Again, I heard it directly from a victim. I then watched first-hand as the school and governing bodies covered up the abuse and celebrated the perpetrator publicly in front of his victim. They did not tell the truth that he was fired after an extensive police investigation.

The commissioner for teacher regulation colluded by making his teaching certificate disappear from the registry of disciplined teachers. He had no restrictions on it when he sought out his victim at university and met with her again, further traumatizing her brain. She took her life several months later. She was 19.

Instead of being supported for trying to protect an abused student, I learned that being a whistle-blower put me at great risk, and there were no legal protections for me. The commissioner for teacher regulation did not try to protect the student victim or me. Instead, he put me under investigation for speaking up publicly about the teacher perpetrator and the risk he posed to other vulnerable students.

What is to be done?

A judicial inquiry like the Dubin inquiry in 1988 is 40 years overdue. We've had the knowledge of rampant child abuse and the damage it does since the 1980s, with further confirmation each following decade.

The urgent question is, when are we going to halt abuse? The equally urgent question is how. The answer lies in the Dubin Inquiry.

Dubin stated that:

The failure of many sport-governing bodies to treat the drug problem more seriously and to take more effective means to detect and deter the use of such drugs has also contributed in large measure to the extensive use of drugs by athletes.

This insight also applies to abuse.

The failure of sport governing bodies to treat the problem of abuse more seriously to effectively detect and deter abuse has contributed to the extent of it. If perpetrators think they can get away with it, they will do more of it.

• (1115)

Governing bodies in Canada are not motivated to protect victims of abuse. That negligence will instantly change when committed parliamentarians amend legislation so that it holds governing bodies criminally accountable for being accomplices to abuse and for committing the abuse of revictimization.

Provisions in the Criminal Code would act as a deterrent to governing bodies that are negligent, conduct sham investigations, cover up abuse, protect perpetrators and thereby refuse to treat seriously the harm done by all forms of abuse.

Most importantly, a fully independent parliamentary body is needed to address, investigate and keep a proper track record of all forms of abuse in sport, in education and beyond. It must be independent from sport, independent from education, independent from all governing bodies with conflicts of interest. It needs to be empowered to act independently and fearlessly. It needs to have the capacity to issue corrective measures.

I look forward to any questions you may have.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Dr. Fraser.

I'm now going to pass it over to Wendy Glover for five minutes.

Wendy, you have the floor.

**Ms. Wendy Glover (Secondary School Teacher and Athlete Development Consultant, As an Individual):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Dear members of the committee, thank you for having me here. I've been watching, listening and learning from the committee and various witnesses. It means a lot to me to be here, as this topic is something I've been concerned about for many years.

I am a physical and health education teacher certified for kindergarten through grade 12. I've had the opportunity to teach elementary school for five years and secondary school for 20. Over the years, I've taken on various roles in community sports, such as coach, parent, administrator and board member. Most of these experiences have been in soccer and hockey.

Two years ago, I was encouraged to contribute to the hockey community through the Ontario Hockey League as an academic and personal development adviser with the London Knights, as my previous experience in supporting student athletes in their holistic development would be helpful to the players. Additionally, my children grew up in the hockey system and are now in their early twenties, so I knew the youth hockey system from which the OHL players graduated.

I've also presented at local, provincial, national and international conferences on Athleadership and holistic athlete development. Additionally, I've written courses and curricula taught in the Ontario school system. While immersed in teaching and coaching athletes, I continued to study child and adolescent development. I was determined to bring current evidence about healthy long-term athlete development to community sport. I couldn't understand why people in community sport didn't follow the National Sport Organization's guidelines to serving the children in the most appropriate ways. I've been learning about NSO sport development models over the years and listening to athletes' concerns. I have studied concepts such as the rights of children in sport and other countries' athlete development models. There is much to learn, share, adopt and apply.

Not all athletes have enjoyed their sport experiences. The longer I taught in high school, the more I heard from athletes and learned of their repeated concerns. I realized the adults were the ones harming the children through the system. By their teenage years, the teenagers knew it. They wanted to do something about it. I listened to them.

What if I educated and empowered the teens willing to do something positive in sport so that when they became adults, they could actually make a difference? I knew I needed to do something to address my concerns in sport, which I couldn't do as one individual.

At that time, about 15 years ago, I wrote an Athleadership program for teen athletes to become trained in coaching, sports administration, child development, safe sport, communication and more. Upon being trained, they would be immersed in the sport community in different roles and applying what they learned. After doing so, they would have opportunities to discuss and reflect and have guidance on what they were experiencing so they could better understand how to contribute effectively in sport.

There are over 500 graduates of this Athleadership program, and I've shared this model with other secondary schools and sport communities. They have adopted it.

One of the principles of the program is "Stop complaining—how do we address the concern?" It has proven successful, and many are now in sport leadership positions. The ripple effect is real. I've tested this concept and learned that if people have appropriate education, guidance and mentorship, they can make a positive difference in sport, regardless of age, if they are willing to learn, reflect and be led.

In community sport, it can be difficult to get adults willing to learn, reflect and be led. I thought that, if we educated the adults the same way the Athleadership program does teens, they would finally listen. I tried, and no, they don't. I witnessed more "I got this" attitudes than "How do we do better for children?" attitudes. This is part of the problem.

The problems are linked to governance. Adults in the system enjoy the status quo. If they do want to learn, the sport community won't allow what they've learned to be applied. People in youth sports do not have enough education, support and mentorship to effectively lead, or to follow or enforce the policies in appropriate ways. They often don't know what they don't know.

I do not blame them; I blame the system that has allowed this to happen. The ability to create change is virtually impossible within the current sport system. I've tried.

The system, as created, does not provide for children as it intended to. It was meant to offer safe, developmentally appropriate sport experiences. We have not been measuring the right examples of successful programming. As child development researcher Dr. Martin Toms suggests, "children are not mini-adults". We have allowed the lack of governance in sport to "adultify" youth sports and harm our children as a result.

● (1120)

I too echo what previous witnesses have mentioned, and that is to have an independent judicial inquiry to learn the extent of the issues that enable the abusive cultures to exist, or harm will continue.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, the three of you. That was fantastic.

We're going to start our rounds of questioning. We do six minutes for the first round.

We'll start off with Michelle Ferreri for the first six minutes.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today. It's very powerful and very emotional for everyone who is listening. I appreciate your candid testimony, your honesty and your vulnerability.

Geneviève, I really liked your candour and your bluntness, as you put it, because I think there's no beating around the bush, and I really appreciate that in this discussion.

I want to be really mindful of how delicate this is. I want to ask you something and I hope it's okay. What did you need when you were 14? What could you have said to your 16-year-old self?

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson:** Thank you for this question.

I would have loved to have the knowledge that an organization was there for me. It was the late 1990s and early 2000s and the #MeToo movement, which helped a lot in the sensitization of people, was not known at that time. I would have loved to know and to have that education that if you get hit or if a coach says that kind of thing to you, it's not right. I didn't have any other support and I didn't have any other role models, so I would have needed to know, one, what was acceptable or not and, two, that there was a place that was clearly and easily accessible and that I could have called to ask.

Just those two basic things would have made a huge difference. I'm not certain.... You know, a little further on, with all the abuse when it continued and progressed, I cannot know for sure if I would have called, but just knowing that it was there would have probably changed something—changed my future.

• (1125)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you for that.

I think Ms. Glover said it really well. You don't know what you don't know, especially when you're that young, right?

Can I ask about the process when you decided to speak up? Did your abuser...? What happened? Can you share that information?

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson:** I decided to speak up, and of course I did it in a very public fashion, with articles, interviews and everything else. They tried to reach him. He never answered. He lives in the United States. He's Canadian, but he lives in the United States, and he's still violent, because he was arrested by the police in 2017 for domestic violence.

For me, I had only that amount of energy, and I chose to spend it on getting better and to heal from that trauma, to be able to have a normal life and a normal partnership with someone who loves me and who I love, or kids, and all that stuff. I wanted to get better for my future, but sometimes I regret not having pursued criminal or civil laws to get him a sentence. When I think of it now, though, I mean, what is he going to get—two months in prison, or nothing? I'd rather spend my energy on myself, but yes, he didn't say anything.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** There's no point in regret. That's for sure. That's why we're here today: to go forward. I think that's why we're here.

Ms. Fraser, I really like your connection to neuroscience and how trauma changes the brain. I think that's very powerful when we look at this.

I would ask again if it's okay with you to share the process.

You spoke about something that jumped off the page for me, in that there was no legal protection for whistle-blowers. In this com-

mittee, I think that learning the process and where the gaps are in the process when somebody does come forward is really valuable for us in order to fix the system, so I'm curious about what you found were the biggest gaps in your process when you came forward.

**Dr. Jennifer Fraser:** I went to school administrators first and reported the abuse I was hearing directly. They asked me to take testimonies from students, which I did, at their request. I helped the students go and have interviews with them, and then they turned everything around. Very quickly, they went from acting like they were supportive of victims to actually trying to cover it up. It turns out they had been informed a year earlier, so they were in a negligent position if, in fact, abuse was identified.

When I realized they weren't going to fulfill their legal duty to report to the commissioner for teacher regulation, I had to step in and do it myself, as a teacher, which I did. I reported on four teachers, I reported on the headmaster and I reported on the chaplain for covering up, and then I just watched the whole system. It would take me a long time to tell you about the corruption, but I have lots of documentation of how completely corrupt the system was.

And I was a believer. My father's a lawyer. My grandfather's a judge. My uncle's a lawyer. I believed. I believed in school, I believed in government, I believed in education until this happened, so I went to the commissioner for teacher regulation. Then I took all the documentation and handed it over to the ombudsperson's office, because of course that's where you take things when in fact you are being basically destroyed by your own professional organization that's supposed to protect students. They are there to protect students, and it's supposed to be transparent.

Then it went to the ombudsperson's office, and three years later, when I was frantically alerting them that my student had suicidal ideation and she was still being pursued by the principal of the school even though she had gone to university, they still weren't doing anything. They were just dragging their feet.

I didn't know what to do at that point. I went to the representative for children and youth. I went to the Ministry of Education. I was frantic trying to save her. I knew she was very mentally ill and I knew he was pursuing her, and he met with her. I called the police, and they said they weren't able to charge him. The special victims police officer who dealt with all of it stepped down after that. She was just finished.

What I found was that every single governing body I went to, whose job is to protect young people and children and to protect whistle-blowers and to support you when these kinds of things happen and you're being manipulated, actually was deeply engaged in enabling the abuse.

• (1130)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

I'm now going to pass it online. We have Emmanuella Lambropoulos, who is online, for six minutes.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to begin by thanking our witnesses for being here and coming forward with this testimony that I think is going to be very helpful to our study. I want you to know that I appreciate each one of you for being here with us today.

I heard a lot of points in the testimony of all three witnesses that resonated a lot with either my own experiences or what I believe needs to happen going forward in this process, so thank you.

I was a high school teacher. I started teaching when I was 23. I was actually in a pretty dangerous position myself, and the school did whatever it could to cover it up, so I completely understand where you're coming from when you say they cover up. I know it has a lot to do with ruining the school's reputation. That's what they really care about and what they want to protect.

Unfortunately, I can't go much further into that today because we are the federal government, and there's not very much we could do at the provincial level, but what I heard today from all three witnesses was about education and the importance of educating our young people who are going to play sports, as well as coaches and everyone else who plays a part in a child's experience with sports.

Dr. Fraser, you spoke about teaching our kids within the education system.

Geneviève, you spoke about the importance of making sure kids are aware of what's appropriate and what's not appropriate. Is there a formal way? Can you give our committee a recommendation on the way you think this education should happen within our national sports organizations?

Also, any of the other witnesses can comment on the approach you think the national sports organizations can take in order to better educate the kids who are playing sports professionally.

**The Chair:** I'll send it to Wendy Glover first, and then we'll add comment.

**Ms. Wendy Glover:** The program that I created that the students take is two additional credits in high school. They are willing to do that. As you mentioned, creating programs for kids would be through the provincial governments. I also think you could put it in the sport systems as well, but you need to hire people to deliver it.

I said earlier that they don't know what they don't know. I found that when you're trained as a coach or as an administrator, you get the training, and then you're kind of left on your own for many years. There is little circle-back of professional education or constant upgrading of information. They may be one year into coaching and then coach the same way for 20 years, so there isn't a system of improvement and checks and balances.

You need people who are trained in the sport systems, in long-term athlete development, and in child and adolescent development to be in the sport system to oversee it. It's just not happening.

People continue to be in these high positions at high levels in sport, as you're hearing, and it's still happening there. It's mind-boggling that these people who are leading the youth of today and the elite athletes of tomorrow just don't know enough or have systems in place that circle back to update them on what they're doing in these positions, to be fair.

**Dr. Jennifer Fraser:** I would add that I actually think that all of this is a federal issue, whether it's education or sport or anything beyond, because it's actually about health, mental health, substance abuse and self-harm, including suicide. It's far larger. It's really a public health crisis and a safety crisis at the highest level across the entire country. I don't think provinces are in any kind of position to be managing it. I see it as something that belongs to the highest leadership in the land.

I would say that children, as early as they start in kindergarten.... Instead of teaching them to obey adults, all adults, and respect all adults, especially teachers and coaches, we need to teach them—the brain learns from repetition at timed intervals—about safety and their own holistic safety from five years old all the way through to 18, getting more sophisticated with every step of the way, the same as with all other subjects, such as how to kick a soccer ball or how to solve a math problem.

• (1135)

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson:** I agree 100% with my colleagues.

To add quickly, the national federations.... In cycling, you get to the national team when you're much older—like 16, 17, 18—but in many sports, such as gymnastics or swimming, it starts at a very young age. They can do projects with the national team when they are young.

Maybe a good place to start, at least at the federal level, would be to have that mandatory education on matters of integrity the minute they're part of the national team. Then, yes, it has to be the provinces, and the provinces have their own jurisdictions, but somewhere leadership has to come from up high. Then at the national level—national federations—you get that established, and then it trickles down.

**The Chair:** You have 10 seconds left.

Thanks, Emmanuella.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Thanks very much.

I appreciate everyone's being here and adding to this testimony. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Awesome.

We're now going to turn it over to Andréanne Larouche.

Andréanne, you have six minutes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Glover, thank you for your testimony and for appearing before our committee today.

Ms. Fraser, having heard the testimony you've just given, I empathize with you.

Ms. Jeanson, you said in your opening remarks that you wanted to be involved in the change. I wish that for you. That's the reason why you're here.



I'd like to go back to a letter that you sent to the International Cycling Union, in which you discussed the defects of the process for filing complaints. You said that, in society, sexual assault is a crime punishable by imprisonment, that suspensions must be consistent with the seriousness of the actions and that filing a formal complaint of abuse, such as physical assault or sexual abuse, should result in an immediate provisional suspension during the investigation. You also said that, if there's time to measure sock length and dictate how riders may ride their bikes, there's time to investigate an email saying that a coach is overly temperamental or giving unwanted and inappropriate attention to his athletes, and let him or her know that someone is watching and investigating.

Your remarks are quite consistent with those of many athletes who have previously spoken out on this subject and who think that the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, the SDRCC, isn't a mechanism that appropriately and adequately protects athletes.

Are you surprised to learn that the organization that the government has established to handle complaints doesn't understand what you've requested? You alluded to it earlier in response to a question from my colleague and when you spoke out on the case of cyclists who had been victims of sexual assault committed by Patrick Van Gansen.

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson:** For starters, there has to be an independent committee that's capable of handling complaints. It must be a safe place for everyone, particularly for athletes. Athletes must be assured that it isn't a "boys' club" that's always connected in some way with another federation and that seeks to protect its federation and so on.

My experience is in cycling. What inspired me to write that letter was that, at the international level, the case had been handled in a completely inadequate way. It was hilarious how badly the case had been mishandled.

The federal government should establish an independent committee, but it should be consistent in all sports. There should be a body to which any athlete can turn, whether in soccer, cycling or bobsleigh, for example. There should also be the same consequences and sanctions for all sports.

• (1140)

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Many stakeholders and victims in sport are requesting that the government hold an independent commission of inquiry to shed light on the current situation, which is toxic. You also mentioned the fact that this situation affects the entire sporting world, in all sports across the country.

Do you support the call of athletes and other organizations, such as the Coaching Association of Canada, and the call of women in sport to establish an independent and public judicial inquiry? Are you with them on that?

**Ms. Genevi ve Jeanson:** Yes, I'm with them on that.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** There's talk of independent inquiries, but sometimes there's also the issue of the independence of authorities and organizations. I'd like to hear what you have to say on the subject.

Are you concerned that the SDRCC and the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner don't ensure that the professionals assigned to inquiries recuse themselves where there's an appearance of a conflict of interest in which, for example, they represent the interests of a national sport body at the centre of the complaint?

Are you concerned about the appearance of a conflict of interest?

**Ms. Genevi ve Jeanson:** You definitely want to be as independent as possible in cases as sensitive as these. Is it troubling? Yes, in a way, because they're all unique and sensitive situations.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** In responding to a question from one of my colleagues, you said that Quebec and the provinces also had a role to play. You briefly mentioned Sport'Aide. I'd like to make a brief comment on that organization, which is a Quebec initiative. We've been working together with established organizations, particularly in Quebec. Throughout this investigation that we're conducting, for example, we're working with Sport'Aide, whose spokesperson you now are.

**Ms. Genevi ve Jeanson:** Would you please repeat your question?

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Earlier you said that the provinces and Quebec had a role to play. Cooperation also has to be established in an investigation that's conducted to review what's happening in sport. The federal government is responsible for certain things that it can do, but you also have to take into account what's already being done in the provinces and in Quebec.

Among other things, you are the spokesperson for Sport'Aide, an organization that's under the Quebec government's authority.

**Ms. Genevi ve Jeanson:** Some very good initiatives are under way in all provinces, and we have some very good examples in Quebec.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Very well. Thank you.

Ms. Fraser and Ms. Glover, I'd like to hear your comments on the independent inquiry.

We can come back to my question during my next turn if you don't have enough time to answer it now.

How you perceive this independent inquiry?

**Dr. Jennifer Fraser:** May I answer in English?

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Yes, you can start answering the question, and we can come back to it during my next turn, if necessary.

[English]

**Dr. Jennifer Fraser:** I have lived experience in British Columbia and I research all other areas. In British Columbia in particular, I find that there's talk about the old boys' club. I'm staggered by the corruption.

**The Chair:** We'll get back to you, Wendy, if that's okay.

I'm going to pass it now to Leah Gazan. Leah, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Thank you. I just want to thank everybody for coming here today and sharing your testimony.

We've heard horrific testimony, but I think, as I said before, we've known about this for a long time. It's been out in public. People just refuse to act. I don't think this is anything new. I'm glad we're doing this study. I want to acknowledge that there have been documentaries for years on this. People have just turned a blind eye and allowed abuse to happen.

I'm really taken by your testimony. You said something, Madame Fraser, about how we teach kids to respect adults, to listen to adults without question, particularly in schools—adults in positions of authority. I agree with you. I think that makes children vulnerable, because they're not even allowed to question how they are feeling in a situation. Can you expand on how that kind of teaching about listening to your elders—all of it—can be dangerous, particularly without education?

I also want to follow that up with you, Madame Glover.

• (1145)

**Dr. Jennifer Fraser:** I think the perfect word is “dangerous”.

Because we teach children to obey blindly, you get this situation as we saw with Geneviève, in which she was being physically and sexually brutalized and she didn't even know. It was the same thing for me. When I was 13 years old, I had never heard the word “grooming”. I had never heard the words “child luring”. I had no idea that middle-aged men would want to have sex with teenaged girls or that they would do it very slowly, that they would start with you at 13 and they would slowly pull you in and alienate you from friends, talk to you about boyfriends and act like they were so caring that you would believe in them more and more. They create a loyalty bind, and once they've created the loyalty bind, you find it very hard to report on them. It's like reporting on a family member, plus you oftentimes are dependent on them.

Children need to be taught from a very early age. I'm an educator, and I had to educate myself. I looked at the science. I looked at the psychiatry and the psychology and the brain scans because nobody else was doing it. What I found was nothing short of shocking. I believe that all children.... We have 20 years of research into how the human brain works. We need to start teaching our kids from five years old all the way through the school system so that they become experts in the ways in which abusers manipulate their vulnerable brains.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Adding on to that, I want to ask a question of you.

You spoke about the importance of education. I'm a teacher, actually, as well. I was a teacher, and there was this constant debate about what's appropriate to talk about in schools, things like healthy touching or unhealthy touching. I was an early childhood educator, and we actually used picture books to teach the kids about healthy touching and unhealthy touching by adults. There are things that we can put in place so that kids know what their rights are at a very young age. Why do you as an educator think that's not happening?

**Ms. Wendy Glover:** That would be because each province decides how they're going to deliver the education system, so some provinces have courses or requirements that other provinces do not.

As Jennifer mentioned earlier, it's health and mental health. It's greater than what we're talking about, and sports is just one way.

There are plenty of children who don't play sports, so how are they getting this education?

When we teach kids as adolescents, we try to teach them how to appropriately have conversations with adults and how to challenge adults when they feel the need to, but I don't think it can be forced onto the children and parents to advocate for themselves. It has to be systemic. We're asking some people to do something that they're not comfortable with and that they feel apprehensive about for all the reasons that the other witnesses have mentioned.

As all the witnesses have echoed, this has to come from the top down. There has to be funding. There have to be programs in place.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** That brings me to my next question.

You can teach about healthy touching. I think that's all very important and I don't want to minimize kids' understanding what their rights are, and it's critical, but it seems to me, from the testimony we've heard, that even with all of that knowledge, when people come forward, they're met with no response.

Madame Jeanson, how do you think the sport system itself contributed to keeping you silent, even if you knew all of this stuff? We just finished a study on gender-based violence. Clearly you were in a cycle of tremendous abuse.

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson:** When I came forward with my story and little by little I started talking with friends who knew me back then and officials and people involved in cycling, they all told me they knew something was wrong. They could see it. I was not the same person I was before. They knew something was wrong, but I was winning and they were afraid that if they said something or helped me to get away from him, I wouldn't win anymore. They didn't want to be responsible for my not winning. In my opinion, on my story, I think there were some people who were highly placed who knew that, but I was winning and I was bringing funding to the program, so they didn't want to say anything, or they knew but they looked away so I could keep winning.

• (1150)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We're now going to go on to our second round. Due to time constraints, I'm reducing it to four minutes, four minutes, one minute and one minute.

We'll start. Online, we have Dominique Vien for four minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here, ladies. Your testimony is very relevant to our study.

Ms. Jeanson, I'm going to piggyback on Ms. Gazan's idea, since it's exactly what I wanted to discuss. However, please let me know if you aren't comfortable and I'll address another topic.

What you're ultimately saying is that the people around you, both your colleagues in sport and staff members, particularly coaches, and perhaps even your family, have all remained silent or haven't answered any questions in order to spare you any further harm. That's what I understand from your testimony. This isn't the first time I've heard you speak about what you've experienced, since you've also discussed it on the major networks. You were completely abandoned and isolated. It's appalling to hear this today.

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson:** What I've experienced must not happen again; that's for sure. If I become the example of what you shouldn't do, I think that's just as good as being an example of what to do.

Yes, I was abandoned, and it's true that many people around me didn't want me to cause any more harm. Your words were well chosen. However, those people also have no idea of what they can do. They aren't equipped to take action. Actually, even the federation officials didn't know what to do.

Whether it's an anonymous system or something else, it would be extremely important to have a structure so that athletes who are victims of violence and people who have witnessed that violence can report it. That way, athletes wouldn't be left to their own devices. Athletes definitely must have support.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** We should have watchdogs, people who keep an eye out and watch how things develop.

Ms. Jeanson, I see my time is passing quickly, and that's very frustrating.

We're realizing that all is not well in the world of sport. Last week I asked some witnesses if this was just the tip of the iceberg.

What do you think, Ms. Jeanson? You've been in sport for such a long time and have been assaulted since you were a teenager. Do you think the situation is bad in all sports? Is it rotten to the core? Has anyone else confided in you and told you these things happen in their sport too? Are we facing a situation far more widespread than we might believe?

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson:** I think so. Athletes in other sports, even at the international level, have definitely come to me and discussed their experiences.

I don't think more assaults are being committed now than previously, 20 years ago, but we talk about it more today. The more we talk about it, the more we increase people's awareness, and the more progress we can make.

Is the problem bigger than we think? I'd say that's probably the case.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Can you tell me, in a few key words, what a good coach is?

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson:** A good coach is someone who can bring out the best in an athlete and make sure that athlete grows as a human being. Gold medals and podium finishes aren't the only

things that count; what also counts is being an athlete who develops into an excellent human being.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

We're now going to pass it over to Jenna Sudds. You have four minutes.

**Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you, all three of you, for being here today and for supporting us as we move forward with the work we have in front of us on this study.

The first question that I'll pose is for you, Ms. Jeanson. It's probably an easy one, but I think it's important to get it on the record.

You mentioned in your testimony your belief that athletes at any age, as soon as they become involved with a national organization, should get some training and education about their rights and what to expect. That's a great start, I think.

My question is this: Do you believe that this should extend beyond just the athletes to the coaches who are involved, the trainers, the nutritionists and everyone who's in the system?

● (1155)

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson:** Thank you for the question.

Yes, definitely; it has to reach everybody who's around sport and is in the environment of sport. However, why is it so important for the athletes? It's because as an athlete you are extremely vulnerable. Your self-worth most of the time is based on your performance. The relationship you have with your coach is not a normal relationship. It's not a parent. It's not a teacher. It's not a friend. It's really something that's super-special. We rely on that coach a lot.

In my case, I had no idea; when my coach told me that he was going to make me the toughest athlete, that when I got to the world championships I was going to win because I was so tough. I believed him. It's important to educate athletes, yes, but definitely we have to go to the high levels and include federation officials and everybody else.

**Ms. Jenna Sudds:** Excellent. Thank you very much.

Other testimony that was quite striking to me was your recommendation to “rethink” the funding so that it's tied not just to performance but also to the well-being of the athlete. I would love for you to tell me what would that look like to you. I think it's a really insightful recommendation. I would love to dig a bit deeper on what we could do to support that idea.

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson:** The way I personally see it is that performance, as I've said, is way more than having a medal or finishing in the top five or the top three. If funding stays at the national level only with performance, *veut, veut pas*, people will choose a coach who's a winning coach. It doesn't mean they're a good coach, because we still have.... The mentality was different 30 and 40 years ago. We still have these coaches around. Yes, they're going to produce little machines or little warriors, and they're going to win medals. However, the destruction that sometimes happens with that will follow the athlete, or the whole team of athletes, for a very long time.

If it's only based on funding, some decisions will be made that are not necessarily the right ones for the well-being of athletes. I don't know how to get it going, but it would be great if we could have funding based on the best performances possible. That could be 20th place. When you go to school and get 80% or 83% on an exam, it's really good. It's the same in sport. It would be great if we could spend a bit more time developing the human being as well.

So, yes, the athlete, but what about the human?

**The Chair:** Thanks so much.

Andréanne, you have one minute.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. Glover, in your testimony, you asked that there be an independent judicial inquiry.

Ms. Fraser, you discussed the importance of establishing corrective measures in the world of sport, and you offered some proposals to that end.

Ms. Jeanson, you told us about your experience and you're proposing that there be an entirely independent complaint system.

In short, ladies, given your backgrounds and everything you've proposed to us today, I'd like to know if you were consulted by Sport Canada, which is currently reviewing the Canadian policy on sport, which is to be renewed in February 2023.

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson:** No.

[English]

**Dr. Jennifer Fraser:** No.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Ms. Glover, I saw you raise your hand. If you want to add something, I'll leave you the last few seconds of my time.

[English]

**Ms. Wendy Glover:** In terms of what we were discussing earlier about teaching athletes, we already have a Coaching Association of Canada national coach certification program. You have to register and take courses. You have a locker number. All 500 kids who go through our program do that. They just completed this week "support through sport: understanding teen dating violence". There are a number of education programs within that.

That is just a starting point. The certifications are there and the structure is in place, but some of those courses cost money. We try to do as much as possible for free and limit how much we're asking parents to pay out of pocket.

In regard to finding out what's wrong in all of the systems, that's why you need a committee to review it. You don't know what's wrong in all of the systems until you go in there and you investigate the hockey, the soccer, the cycling, the swimming, the gymnastics, etc. There's more to it than the terrible abuse cases we're hearing about. For example, it's not even following the structure that has been set out with, say, 45 games a year and 45 practices. They'll do 80 games and 120 practices and take over a child's life.

It's way deeper than what we're discussing here. As you said, this is the tip of the iceberg. I have never understood how they're even insured when they constantly break the guidelines that were set for them. It's the tip of the iceberg. There's a lot more work to do. I can't have school on Saturdays just because I care extra.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Awesome. Thank you so much.

For the final round, we have Leah Gazan for one minute.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

You spoke, Geneviève, about the importance of independence in reporting. In Manitoba, we have the children's advocate office that oversees the overall care of children, whether it be in the justice system or the child welfare system. It's just an independent advocate for children that's funded through the government.

Do you think that kind of oversight—completely independent, funded, away from the sports organizations—would be helpful?

**Ms. Geneviève Jeanson:** Yes, I think so.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you.

Are there any other comments? That was succinct.

**Dr. Jennifer Fraser:** I would just add that Manitoba, in its throne speech, said that it's going to change the way that education complaints come through for children because the system is so dismal and children are so unprotected in school, and there's a certain parallel.

What I found today in listening to "How can we fix the problem?" is that we have to remember that the vast majority of coaches, teachers and people in governing bodies are really trustworthy and fabulous.

We're dealing, though, with extremely dangerous people, extremely destructive people. They're a minority, and we do everything in our power to cover up for them, protect them and never hold them accountable. That's where the breakdown is happening, I think, on a significant level. They will present as Dr. Jekyll in front of all of us, and as soon as they close the door, they're Mr. Hyde, and that's a big problem.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'd really like to thank Geneviève, Jennifer and Wendy for being here today. Thank you so much for bringing your testimonies and providing your stories.

I will just remind you that if there's anything that you need, there are resources available through the House of Commons. Please reach out to the clerk or to me for whatever we can do.

We're going to suspend for a couple of seconds to switch over to our next panel.

We'll suspend for about a minute.

• (1200) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1205)

**The Chair:** Welcome to our second panel and our second hour for today.

I am going to welcome our next panellists. From ITP Sport & Recreation Inc., we have Allison Forsyth, chief operating officer. As an individual, we have Guylaine Demers, professor, department of physical education, Université Laval. Guylaine, you are online there.

Finally, from the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, we have Marie-Claude Asselin, chief executive officer. Marie-Claude, thank you very much for being here.

We are going to provide you each with five minutes for opening statements. When you see me start twirling my pen... I try to be flexible, especially if it's on things that are quite sensitive, but if you see me, try to start wrapping it up.

We'll start with our first five minutes.

Allison, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Ms. Allison Forsyth (Chief Operating Officer, ITP Sport and Recreation Inc.):** Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for having me.

I am a two-time Olympian, a mother of three young hockey players and a victim of egregious sexual abuse within our Canadian sport system.

I also work in this space. I made that choice to work on the front line of this crisis, and have for over four years. I have worked alongside sport organizations, athletes and government agencies helping them seek out solutions and providing education at all levels, of all ages and all roles within these organizations.

The impacts of my sexual abuse experience cannot be summed up in a few minutes. Extreme grooming, horrific sexual assaults, mental coercion and psychological abuse are some of the immense physical and mental burdens I still live with each day.

I know always what trauma feels like when it's associated with being the whistle-blower and the effects of being silenced for 17 years before my perpetrator was caught. For years I lived with anger, depression, shame, self-blame and chronic PTSD.

Yes, I made the Olympics, and yes, I became an eight-time Canadian champion. Success does not automatically translate to happiness or health. I can tell you that first-hand. In fact, in many ways

our focus on success above all else is a shield for victims. I would give back every medal I ever won to have prevented what happened to me from happening to me.

I know why it is critical to remove an abuser immediately from the environment. After I was taken into the woods for six hours and coerced through threats of suicide, I only had him reappear the next day, standing in the woods in camouflage, to watch me during the biggest race of my life.

I know what it's like to retell my story hundreds of times and be traumatized each and every time I tell it, including today and throughout a two-and-half-year criminal trial and investigation that resulted in a 12-year prison sentence. I know what it feels like to have to testify in court 36 hours after giving birth to my baby and bringing her in the room with me so I could take breaks to breast-feed during cross-examination. I will never get back my daughter's first week of life. That is why I have an unparalleled commitment to create a different sport future for her and her two older brothers.

I also know what it takes to have a publication ban lifted on my own name so that I could put my name behind this movement over four years ago and share openly many times a month my abuse all in an effort to educate and shift the system. Each time I do this, I relive those memories, those experiences and those traumas. I do all this because change happens in the real conversation. If people don't know clearly what happened to me, how are we going to know how to help others?

I've been committed to this work and have worked with your previous sports minister, Kirsty Duncan, dating right back to 2018.

I'd like to introduce you to another term: victim shaming. To have people actually insinuate or even directly allege that since that I choose to lean into this crisis and go into organizations to help them find solutions, identify systemic risks and environmental challenges, that in some way, shape or form I could ever be accused of helping them cover up abuse. To those who say that, I say you're not worth my energy or my defence. I live in this space every day. It is my life purpose, and I choose to believe that at the end of the day we all want the same outcome, which is real progress. That is where I put my focus. I ignore the noise and let the work be the priority. My company and I do this better than anyone else in this industry.

I'm all cried out for today, apparently, for myself, but I am not cried out for my children. First, foremost and forever, I am an athlete advocate and one of the first who ever came forward in this country. I know many of you have spoken from that perspective. Let me give you a little bit of an enlightened perspective of safe sport in our country.

The crisis is much more than coach-athlete abuse. With fewer than 5% of cases we see being sexual in nature, it is much more than sexual abuse. I speak to more athletes on this issue on the front lines than anyone else in our country. I say that to contextualize my experience and perspective. There is intentional harm. That is certain. What we also know to be true is that we have deep, cultural conditioning and normalization of behaviours in sport, and we need to end this systemic acceptance of maltreatment.

Here are some examples. I educate hockey coaches on the perils of bag skating and football coaches on the trauma of running suicides. Both these ingrained practices are now considered exercises as forms of punishment, and many coaches still believe in their validity.

• (1210)

This isn't about judgment. It is about education. Much like concussions, once we know better, we do better.

These coaches will almost always respond to me with, "Well, I was bag-skated, so it can't be that bad", to which I respond, "Well, yes, 25 years ago after an athlete was knocked unconscious we, also gave him, her or them sniffing salts and sent them back on the ice."

We need to change. I provide education to young athletes being sanctioned for hazing. When I ask them how they don't think what they did is harmful, they say, "Because, Allison, this happened to me four years ago."

I talk to referees who are quitting alongside 70% of their peers in this province alone because, in addition to the 900 complaints they filed for discrimination in hockey alone last year, they are tired of being chased home by angry parents. I am even on the bench of my own son's hockey game watching parents in a fist fight in the stands and parents yelling profanities at the refs. Just last week, as a parent was ejected from a game for ref abuse, this parent left and, in front of dozens of 11-year-old athletes, called out, "Hey, ref, why don't you just go kill yourself?"

Yes, I talk to athletes who are actively in the grooming process. I work with them to help them understand what that is and why being their coach's favourite and best friend is not healthy, why feeling that if they aren't their coach's favourite they won't make the team is a clear sign of grooming and why, if they feel they are playing out of fear, they may also be playing under psychological abuse.

We are overly focused on the problem or, at best, polishing the problem, when we need to lean into the solutions that are already evident. We need to deprogram the cult—yes, the cult—out of the culture of sport. This requires patience and grace as people wake up to the system that they have been normalized to over so many years. This has led us to think that everything is okay because it's something we've seen or experienced since early childhood: kids in bathrooms and on buses naked; coaches berating athletes; racial slurs being thrown around like common language; and administrators failing to focus on the victim and instead protecting the institution's reputation.

All of this needs to change through concerted proactive prevention and educational tactics. We need to train on grooming. There are only four stages: favouritism, personal bond, isolation and complicity. I learned these stages of grooming when I was 30 years old when I was speaking on a stage. How much do you think I would have wanted to know about those stages of grooming when I was a young athlete?

Last but not least, I will just share that I challenge all of us to move forward, not backward. We are a system, and sport is in crisis. We need to invest more in our organizations that are supportive

of and working to fund the shift in sport. We need to swiftly and severely sanction individual offenders, but every time we look in the rear-view mirror we take away from the gas pedal that we must push down on.

In the last four years, I have seen progress and I have seen mistakes, including a very poor implementation of the mandatory changes at the NSO level. Most of all, I have seen us put more focus on what to do once we catch someone instead of what to do collectively so that abuse doesn't happen in the first place. When we place success on sanctioning an offender and ignore the system around them, we have allowed another person to be villainized and victimized.

I challenge all of us with this because I truly believe that sport can still be a beautiful place to raise my children. I will not give up on that reality, and I ask that you don't either.

Thank you.

• (1215)

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Allison.

I'm now going to go online to Guylaine.

You have the floor for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Dr. Guylaine Demers (Professor, Department of Physical Education, Université Laval, As an Individual):** Thank you for the invitation to take part in your study.

I apologize for not being in tiptop shape. I have the flu and have been in bed for two days, but, since the cause is greater than me, I've forced myself to be with you.

Thank you for your testimony, Ms. Forsyth. It's overwhelming every time.

Your committee invited me to testify on the same subject in 2016, when it was conducting a study on women and girls in sport. I've reread the 16 recommendations in the report that resulted from the study, and I frankly think that many of them can be included word for word in the report that will be prepared this year.

I agree with Ms. Forsyth and the previous speakers that progress has been made, and Ms. Asselin's presence here is proof of that. I acknowledge all the work she has done. However, I think many problems remain unsolved. In 2016, I pointed out two major levers, to which I would now like to return. Ms. Forsyth discussed the change of culture, among other things. This type of change takes time, but six years have already elapsed since the first report was submitted. Action has been taken as a result of it, and I thank former Minister Duncan for what she has done. However, the following two problems still persist in sport in Canada.

First, there's a lack of accountability. Funding isn't always associated with accountability. If public money is invested in national sport organizations, they should be accountable. That's a necessary condition in ensuring that athletes are protected and women can advance. Some studies show that less violence is observed in those organizations when more women are in leadership positions. So accountability is a major lever. It is public money after all.

The other important problem is that funding is often, if not always, provided on an ad hoc basis. The former minister announced \$30 million in 2018, and the present minister, Ms. St-Onge, has just granted an additional \$26 million, but that funding is often associated with ad hoc measures. In recent years, national federations could request funding for projects related to gender equality and equity, but they were ad hoc projects. Once the projects got under way, no further funding was released and no more projects could not be proposed. Consequently, it's hard to establish a long-term vision and planning.

Here's an example that breaks my heart. Thanks to a \$1.65 million investment announced by Minister Duncan, a research hub for gender equity in sport, called E-Alliance, was established in 2020, a first in Canada. It was a three-year project, but—you know how it works—we received the money two weeks before the end of the first year. Consequently, in reality, we had two years in which to operate. I was co-director of the hub, together with Gretchen Kerr and Ann Pegoraro. I'm no longer the director there because I now have the good fortune to direct a Quebec research laboratory for gender equity in sport. Funding for the Canadian hub terminated in March of this year, and we've received no new funding since then. So we essentially threw \$1.65 million out the window, and all our efforts over two years to establish that important research hub to collect longitudinal data, ensure follow-up and expand knowledge were in vain. We don't even know what will become of the research hub, whereas it was the subject of a critical recommendation in the 2018 report of the Work Group on Women and Girls in Sport.

I have 30 seconds left. I had my stopwatch in front of me. I'm a sports girl, so I'm used to keeping track of time.

Simply put, there are two points to bear in mind. First, accountability is mandatory. Second, long-term funding is essential to better planning and to ensuring that initiatives don't fall by the wayside after a year or two without being followed up. Otherwise, we're just treading water and wasting time.

• (1220)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll turn it over for the next five minutes to Marie-Claude Asselin. Marie-Claude, you have the floor.

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin (Chief Executive Officer, Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada):** Madame Chair, members of the committee, thank you sincerely for inviting me to speak on such an important topic.

[Translation]

My name is Marie-Claude Asselin. I am, for close to 16 years now, the Chief Executive Officer of the Sport Dispute Resolution

Centre of Canada, the SDRCC, home of the new Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, the OSIC.

Many witnesses before me spoke eloquently about the issues of concern to all of us. Victims and survivors especially, with stories profoundly disturbing, but necessary to hear.

At this time, please allow me to shift the conversation to solutions.

[English]

In 2000 a working group of the secretary of state for amateur sport concluded that due to a lack of fair and consistent policies or to the improper administration of those policies, athletes and other participants in sport are being disciplined, harassed and denied opportunities without a proper recourse to a hearing or appeal. The SDRCC was created to remedy this.

You heard witnesses refer to the Dubin inquiry as having brought to light the fact that sport organizations could not be trusted with applying anti-doping rules against their own members. They testified that Canada now has a strong and independent anti-doping program. I agree with them.

On November 21 in particular, one witness spoke highly of this truly independent anti-doping system. Something they failed to mention is that the SDRCC is, in fact, Canada's anti-doping tribunal, yet in the same breath they insisted that the SDRCC is not independent.

The SDRCC is neutral and independent by definition. Its arbitrators, not its board members, are tasked with making sure that national sport organizations' policies, and their decisions rendered pursuant to those policies, are not arbitrary, discriminatory or illegal. Since its creation in 2004, the SDRCC has handled more than 600 disputes pertaining to team selection, funding of athletes, eligibility matters and discipline, all in order to remedy discrimination, unfairness, corruption and maltreatment.

In providing access to justice that is adapted to the reality of sport, the SDRCC serves as an alternative to long and expensive court proceedings offered in civil courts and human rights tribunals. Delays encountered in these fora will not serve athletes, whose careers cannot be put on hold for two to four years while they await their day in court. SDRCC cases are resolved, on average, within 54 days for doping cases and 44 days for other sports-related disputes.

All witnesses who spoke before you on their negative experience in reporting abuse came forward prior to June 2022, before the date of creation of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. Consequently, they had to follow their own organization's processes, which, admittedly, were grossly inadequate, but at the SDRCC, victims and survivors have access to mental health and legal aid services even prior to filing a complaint. The specialized safeguarding tribunal rules strike a very careful balance between the right to due process and the need to offer protection to vulnerable parties and witnesses, like no other statutory tribunal in Canada and possibly around the world.

The SDRCC's safeguarding mediators and arbitrators and the OSIC investigators are experts trained in trauma-informed practices, with experience in human rights, in child protection and in residential school adjudication. Their biographies are published on the websites of the SDRCC and the OSIC. I can assure you also that we do have the voice of victims and survivors at the SDRCC, both in advisory and decision-making capacities. The fact that a victim or survivor does not post their private life on social media does not make them less of a victim. We are respectful of their choice, which is 100% theirs to make.

At the SDRCC we also agree with victims and survivors who claim that the program has its limitations. With less than six months since its opening, it is indeed in its infancy, yet it is unfair not to give it a chance. It is built on solid ground, and it would be certainly beneficial for it to have greater powers, such as the power of subpoena, the right to maintain a public registry of sanctions and immunity for its professionals. No one is denying that horrific abuses took place, and still do.

Given the right powers and proper resources, Madam Chair, I assure you that the SDRCC and the OSIC can absolutely achieve their safe sport mandate.

• (1225)

Thank you for listening.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that.

We are now going into our rounds of questioning. Our first rounds will be for six minutes.

We'll start off with Anna Roberts for six minutes.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My questions are going to be for Marie-Claude.

You stated that you've been involved with the SDRCC for 16 years. Excuse me for being blunt, but I don't believe the SDRCC is working for our children. They have failed at all levels.

This dispute organization has been involved for 16 years. You mentioned human rights in your comments. Where are the children's human rights? Why are these perpetrators allowed to coach and abuse our children, then move on to other clubs, provinces or countries and continue their same practices?

Would you agree with me that we need to educate? Previously, Dr. Fraser stated that she doesn't trust the lawyers. She thought she trusted the lawyers and judges. Obviously, we need to educate them

on the importance of protecting our children. I'll be quite blunt: I don't think we're doing a good job. For improvement, words are not enough. We have to take action.

Would you agree with me that we need to make sure these perpetrators are charged with a criminal offence so they do not continue to abuse our children?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** First, I agree with you that if the behaviour is criminal, yes, the criminal system should be able to help them. The criminal system has failed to help the children.

At the SDRCC, we've been working on this for many years now, trying to get a space to help with the abuse and harassment. Yes, we've been doing this for a number of years now. However, the focus was on team selection, funding of athletes and other issues. With the help of Allison, we pushed other people and Minister Duncan to give the centre a mandate to play in this realm. We did not have that until June 2022. We've only been in this area for six months. That is why you haven't seen us in action, yet.

• (1230)

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** For 16 years, we've been listening to complaints, our children have been abused, and we've continued with the same jargon, expecting a different result. I don't understand. I'm sorry. Perhaps I'm naive, but how can we protect our children if we're not acting? Words are just not enough. We should not allow individuals who had the opportunity to abuse our children to continue to do that. The only way we're going to stop it is if we charge them criminally. A registration is obviously not working, because they get a slap on the wrist and continue.

We need to educate our judges and lawyers to the fact that our children are our future. If this behaviour continues, we won't have any children to proceed.

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** I completely agree with you.

I believe we are limited in our jurisdiction right now. If the government wanted to expand that, we'd welcome it. What happens in school and community sport is something we do not currently have jurisdiction over. Our jurisdiction is contractual. We need the provinces and territories to step up and offer a service similar to what we're offering now in all the jurisdictions in Canada. If they want our help, we will help them. Otherwise, they'll have to be like Quebec, perhaps, and have their own system to deal with it.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** How can we work together with our provinces and territories to avoid any future abuse?

What you're saying is that provinces are under different jurisdictions. Do you know what? We have children to take care of. That, to me, is an excuse. That's enough of this. We need to make sure we get the provinces and territories involved, and the lawyers, educators and judges. This must stop, at all levels. It has to stop.



What do you have in your plan to work with the provinces and territories in order to ensure these abuses stop?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** We're currently speaking to all of them. We're hopeful that we're going to collaborate in the creation of their own systems within their jurisdictions, or that some of them are prepared to sign an agreement with us. Then we would have jurisdiction in their provincial sports and at the grassroots in their provinces.

There remains a little difficulty: A lot of sport is played in schools, and schools are not under the sport ministry; they fall under the education ministry. There are a lot of jurisdictions to involve in that if we want to be efficient.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Are you telling me that the process currently is not working, but you're working on a process? I'm sorry, but I'm confused.

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** Our process right now is working at the national level.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** So we're not involving the provinces or territories.

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** We are talking to them and we're moving forward on this.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Do you agree that maybe we should mandate that?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** It would be wonderful.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** If we don't mandate that and the perpetrator has an issue in one province, they can move to the next province and you will not even be aware of it.

Do you see where I'm going with this? It's a serious thing. It's like having someone abuse your child today in Ontario and go to B.C. and do the same thing in B.C., but nobody knows about it.

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** This is why the registry would be a part of the solution.

Right now, with the legislative framework of privacy laws in Canada, we're very limited in what we can do with a public registry. We have so many examples of coaches who move from one province or level or move from being on a national team to going to a sports school. There are so many examples. That should be a sign that we need a public registry.

**The Chair:** That's wonderful. Thank you so much.

We're now going to pass it over to Sonia Sidhu.

Sonia, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for being with us.

My first question is for Ms. Asselin.

We have heard there is a need for greater focus on collecting data around participation, leadership, officials and coaches, for example. You talked about a registry. Can you expand on that? What kind of model could we use? If any other countries are adopting that model, we can educate our coaches.

Any of the witnesses can comment on that. We can start with Ms. Asselin.

• (1235)

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** I'll say a little bit about the registry and then about education.

For the registry, the only one we know that is national is the one in the United States. It is consultable online. This is something we're looking at as a model. In other countries they are also struggling with their privacy laws, especially in Europe right now. There are a lot of people. We talk to a lot of jurisdictions, such as Australia, New Zealand and Japan. Everybody is facing similar issues with their public registry, so they're looking for help for that.

In terms of education, some people have mentioned the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. They have amazing training. They have amazing resources. They're all age-appropriate. From kindergarten and even day care to adult age, they have resources. I think we need to use the good things that are being done out there. We need to integrate them into the sports system. The Canadian Centre for Child Protection also has resources for parents and for coaches, and I would look to them for that.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you.

Ms. Forsyth, do you want to add to that?

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** Yes. I'll just share that—and I say this with all the respect in the world, as someone who has created online training for our country—it is baseline and generalized. I just want to stress that if we think we're going to prevent abuse through clicking like this and doing online training—and I am guilty of that as well, being a mother and having to go through a lot of volunteer training—we need to respect that it is going to take much, much more.

Then, just to speak on age-appropriate education, I have an 11-year-old, an eight-year-old and a five-year-old, and no one has ever trained them on what grooming looks like and on why their coach can't be alone with them in a dressing room. We need to empower our children. At least—trust me—I know that my own children are seeing it on TikTok anyway. We need to trust that age can handle it. We have to have the real education brought to our children, and it's not going to happen only online.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you.

I think we heard clearly that prevention needs to be prioritized; the victim must be supported and listened to, and perpetrators must be held accountable. There should be zero tolerance.

I know it's a big question, but what are your recommendations with respect to how we can make this a reality?

I want to ask you, Ms. Guylaine Demers, if you can expand on that.

**Dr. Guylaine Demers:** Thank you.

I think Marie-Claude and Allison pointed out the fact that it is a multifactor problem and we have to make sure that we....

I think we need to coordinate all of our efforts around that issue, because as Marie-Claude said, one of our biggest challenges in Canada is the jurisdiction aspect. Education is provincial; something can be done at a national level, but then each province has to deal with what they want to do. For example, in Quebec we have an organization, Sport'Aide, and Marie-Claude is working closely with them, but again, who's doing what? In Quebec we still have coaches within our own province and within the same sport who switch schools and keep coaching, even if... Again, the organization, the college or the school doesn't want to say or cannot say why it released that coach, because of that privacy policy, which makes me sick. I agree with Marie-Claude that we need a way to put those coaches on a blacklist somewhere—that registry—so that they won't go on and keep coaching.

I guess that the challenge is how and who. Maybe Marie-Claude is the answer with her organization, but we need strong leadership. I think one organization that should be involved in that is our FPTSC—the federal-provincial/territorial sport committee—which at least tries to make sure that we have some sort of collaboration among the federal, provincial and territorial levels and that we coordinate our efforts. Maybe that committee should be more involved in that issue.

Again, for me, one of the biggest priorities would definitely be to have that registry, because right now, we see coaches and we know those coaches and we keep seeing them coach. What can we do? That would be my first priority.

I guess Marie-Claude and her team are probably the best ones to make that happen sooner, rather than later.

• (1240)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you.

I also want to ask you what recommendation you want to give to the committee to ensure that OSIC is an effective organization before moving forward.

Anybody can....

Yes, go ahead.

**Dr. Guylaine Demers:** I'm sorry. I thought the question....

Can you repeat the question? I'm sorry.

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** I can add in. I'll share one thing, Guylaine.

Around OSIC and the reality of OSIC, I think we need to look at the Center for SafeSport out of the U.S. as an example. What I will share and what I know from people who work there and who have tried to file complaints there, is that it is going to be critical for OSIC—and I believe this is 100% possible—to have the funding to hold the capacity.

I say this from an athlete level, because what I am extremely fearful of is that if we ever get to a place where athletes are trying to file complaints of abuse and they are told, as some athletes have been told across the border, “Well, we'll get back to you in about two years”, that is a massive problem. I believe it's human nature that as soon as you don't think that something's going to work or it's not going to be done in a timely way, you're going to be right back

where you started, which is “I don't trust the system and I don't trust that I need to file a complaint”.

I believe that OSIC is the place for this. I believe that it is going to be strong enough for us. I believe that we need to fund it and provide it more resources to be able to hold what I can only tell you is going to be an unfortunate onslaught of complaints that come through that organization.

**The Chair:** Awesome. Thank you.

I have a quick question before I send it off. Do you work with OSIC? Do you...? No, so—

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** We're aligned with OSIC.

**The Chair:** You're aligned.

Do you do webinars or anything with them? You're just aligned.

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** Yes. I do webinars supporting Sarah-Ève Pelletier as functional support, but no, I don't work within OSIC at all.

**The Chair:** Okay. I wanted to get everything in line.

Andréanne Larouche, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I get the impression we're just as disconnected from reality today as the Hockey Canada representatives who appeared before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage were in the summer, at a meeting I also attended. You'd think no one's responsible. There's no accountability. And yet, as Ms. Demers said, there were 16 recommendations in 2016. We're still hearing horror stories today in 2020.

Ms. Asselin, can you provide us with some clarification on the present system for monitoring assault cases in sport in Canada?

Does the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner report to you, the head of the SDRCC?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** Yes, operationally, the commissioner reports to me, since I make sure she has the necessary resources, employees and expertise in her office to do her work. Functionally, however, she's independent of me. I'm unaware, for example, of the files that she and her staff handle. She does that independently of me. That's how the administrative structure is.

I could also tell you about the board of directors because people talk about it. Under the enabling act of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, the federal Minister of Sport appoints the 12 board members. When the SDRCC was established, the sport community determined that three of the seats on its board would be reserved for athletes and that there would also be a coach, a representative of a national sport organization and a representative of a multisport games organization. The other six members come from the legal community and the dispute resolution field.

So it's a committee that has the strategic role of adopting policies. We ensure that the team has the necessary resources, expertise, personnel and funding to carry out that mandate.

• (1245)

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** That's great, Ms. Asselin. Pardon me for rushing you, but time is passing and I have more questions for you.

Who appoints the people who investigate complaints? Have you established a due diligence process that must be followed within the SDRCC, before assigning a complaint case to a professional, to assure the victims that the professionals assigned to their case have no conflicts of interest, history or connections with the predators and national sport organizations at the centre of the dispute?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** Yes. Investigators, mediators and arbitrators are required to sign a declaration of independence after examining the case file, and all are required to comply with a rigorous code of conduct. They're also subject to the SDRCC's conflict of interest policy.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Are any of SDRCC's sport arbitrators trained or used to investigate reported abuse cases?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** No. The arbitrators and investigators form two separate groups. The investigators gather information and conduct interviews of victims and witnesses, whereas the arbitrators intervene later on in the process if investigation findings are challenged by the participants.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Does the SDRCC have any investigators, mediators or arbitrators who perform multiple roles in the sport communities? I'm thinking, for example, of an arbitrator who might also be hired by national sport organizations for contract work.

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** At the moment, there are none in the safe sport component, that is to say on the Safeguarding Tribunal.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Does Ms. Pelletier, at the OSIC, report to you, the head of the SDRCC?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** As I explained earlier, she reports to me solely from an operational, not functional, standpoint.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** In that case, wouldn't it have been a good idea for her to accompany you today to provide her point of view as well?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** The SDRCC was invited as an organization, and I was designated to represent it. No specific request was made to have the commissioner attend.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** I'm also troubled by the SDRCC's confidentiality policy. Survivors who engage in the OSIC process are subject to an effective gag order and are reduced to silence. Why have you decided to silence athletes when they complain to the OSIC?

As I said earlier, I feel like we're disconnected from reality here. I hear everything you've said since earlier, but what I see and what I hear is the unanimous opinion of athletes and victims: these people don't trust your office.

I'm troubled by this confidentiality policy. What do you have to say about that?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** I can talk about that, absolutely.

First, the athletes' personal experiences are their own, and they have a right to discuss them. Where we pay attention to confidentiality in the context of proceedings is where we also have to protect other athletes, witnesses or vulnerable individuals who might participate in the investigation.

Consequently, there are definitely confidentiality rules, but an athlete who has experienced abuse is absolutely not muzzled and may absolutely discuss it.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Ms. Asselin, why have so few sport organizations signed on to the program? I've counted seven out of the total number of sport federations. Once again, I sense that we're disconnected from reality here. In addition to the lack of trust that I perceive in the victims, this lack of participation in the program is another significant factor.

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** As I said earlier, our jurisdiction is contractual. Since we aren't a statutory tribunal, we don't have universal authority over everyone who's involved in sport in Canada. That authority must be acquired through service agreements with the federations.

Even though only six of them are officially active, federations sign agreements with us every day and every week. We already have 27 agreements, or 28, I believe, since yesterday. You have to understand that these federations are in transition because they have a lot of obligations to meet under our agreement. We have to assist them to ensure that policies are properly adopted and to establish a relationship of consent with their members so we can investigate them in the event a complaint is filed.

So there are steps that must be followed. It's a lot of work for the federations, which weren't necessarily set up to welcome us. We're working with them now, and I know that many of them are still preparing to sign their agreement.

• (1250)

[English]

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** I understand, Ms. Asselin, but I repeat: six still isn't enough.

Furthermore, the Canadian policy on sport is currently under review. The witnesses that we've heard in committee say not only that they don't trust the system, but also that they aren't being listened to regarding this new policy that Sport Canada is supposed to adopt in February. There's also a lack of trust in your office. I'm trying to make sense of this, but I really get the impression there's an obvious hitch in the present system.

I repeat that recommendations have been in place since 2016, and it's striking to see how few of them have been implemented.

Furthermore, Ms. Demers, in my next turn, I'd like to speak with you and find out how many of those recommendations have been implemented.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We are getting very tight, so I'll give six minutes to Leah, and then we'll look at round two as we're getting to it.

Leah, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much.

Because I have such a limited amount of time, I want to thank everybody for coming today.

My first question is a yes-or-no question. I apologize. I don't like doing those, but it is very clear for both of you, Madame Forsyth and Madame Asselin.

We've heard from a lot of witnesses about their desire to call for a federal judicial inquiry. Do you agree, yes or no?

I'll start with you, Ms. Forsyth. Yes or no?

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** I can't give you a yes or no, because it depends. We have limited funds, and I want that to go first and foremost towards prevention.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** You're uncertain.

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** I'm uncertain at this point. I don't know enough about it.

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** I would say my only condition is... The commission is going to take several years, several months—the Dubin commission took more than a year and a half—and in the meantime, victims need to have a place to go.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I'll tell you why I'm concerned.

You spoke about how your organization, the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre, is an alternative dispute resolution, and as such allows for cases to be heard quickly, not being tied up in courts and human rights tribunals, but it's clear that it's not working. We hear time and time again that athletes do not feel they are getting justice.

Would you agree with me that the system is currently flawed?

I ask that because you're also in the midst of all of these allegations coming out, and they're quite serious allegations. Your organization is asking for broader jurisdictional powers and funding. It's not working, but you want broader jurisdictional powers and funding. Is that clear?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** I disagree that it's not working. It just started six months ago. It hasn't been tested yet. In design, there are flaws, and they've been highlighted here. I spoke to them in my five minutes. We need help to make sure—

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** One of the flaws that's very clear to me, and I say this with all respect... We're here. We're trying to figure out how to protect kids and athletes from abuse. Something that's becoming very clear to me is the lack of distance among all the people involved in the final decision-making.

I have a question for you, Madame Forsyth, on things that have been brought up that I'd like to give you an opportunity to speak to. I want to be really clear that I acknowledge your own personal lived experience. I'm just trying to understand what's going on.

Does your organization advise the national sport organizations on their safe sport policy?

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** Yes. We have two separate divisions to our organization. One is prevention and one is complaint management. I work on the prevention side.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Okay, you advise the NSOs on safe sport. Do you also conduct investigation on the report of abuse?

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** No. We don't do investigations.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** You don't do any sort of investigation.

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** No.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Okay.

Do you work both with athletes and the organizations?

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** Yes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Okay.

Then this is a concern, right? What many athletes are saying is this: They need their own independent resources and an independent body. What I'm noticing is that many people who are involved in this system, which is clearly broken, work for both. Everybody's kind of working together. There's no separation. There's not enough separation.

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** I don't want to get this too nuanced, so please stop me if I get too nuanced.

There's complaint management and then there's what I do, which is prevention and education. Yes, I go into an organization. Yes, I go into Canada Soccer. I work with them to make them better and stronger and identify structural, environmental and behavioural risks for abuse, but we—

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Then you do work for Sport Canada and advise them—

• (1255)

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** No.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** —and you also work with—

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** I don't work for Sport Canada.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** But you go into—

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** I go into national sporting organizations.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Yes. You say how they can do things better.

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** Do things better—yes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I don't want to question your intent. I believe you have lived experience. You want to see a better system, so I want to be really clear here.

You go into Sport Canada and you tell them how to do things better, but at the same time—

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** Well, let me clarify—

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** —you are also working with victims, or do you not work with victims at all?

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** I don't work on complaints. I think that's very important to know. The reason that—

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** But you work with victims.

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** I work with alleged victims, yes. I'll go in and I'll support victims—

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I would say that this would be, for example, a conflict of interest.

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** —but I don't work on complaints.

As a company, we took on national sporting organization complaints when there was no OSIC.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** But you work with Sport Canada—

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** I don't work with Sport Canada.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** —or Soccer Canada—

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** I'll work with an organization, yes, that wants me to come in and help them.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** You'll work with Soccer Canada and say “This is how you need to do things better”—

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** Yes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** —and then you'll work with victims at the same time. That would be a conflict of interest. That's a clear conflict of interest, no?

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** I don't understand why. In every organization there are victims. I don't take phone calls from victims, because I don't work in complaints. I've never called or taken a phone call or gotten any private information from any victim that has anything to do with a complaint.

I go into every organization that would want me and I work to make them better. That always involves talking to victims, because there are victims in every organization.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Okay. Thanks for clarifying.

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.

The first round is done. We are so close to the finish line. I will give a minute to Michelle, a minute to Anita—sorry, Anita—a minute to Andréanne and a minute to Leah.

Just try your best, everybody.

Michelle, you have one minute.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today. This is very important.

You know, 99 answers to a hundred questions: The old saying is to follow the money.

Marie-Claude, when I look at the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, it says this:

...SSDRCC offers world-class resolution facilitation, mediation, [mediation/arbitration] and arbitration services. Avoiding a court battle means a quicker resolution at less cost and, in most cases, a better result for everyone involved.

The SDRCC is constituted by a federal act and is funded by the Government of Canada....

We've heard from countless victims that this process isn't working. Navigating the system isn't working. You're a little on the fence of calling for a national judicial inquiry, but the money is coming from the people who are paying your paycheque.

I don't understand why you wouldn't want a national inquiry. It just seems like a very big conflict of interest here that you don't have a vested interest to help the victims and that you want to solve it out of court.

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** Everything you've referred to is funded by taxpayers' money, whether it's an inquiry or the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada or the national sport organizations. It comes from federal funding.

For me, SDRCC could be funded by Health Canada. It could be funded by Justice Canada. It's now funded by Sport Canada. It's all federal funding.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.

I'm going to pass it over to Anita for one minute.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you. One minute is so short.

I first want to say that I'll start with you, Ms. Forsyth, and say that given everything you've experienced, we all applaud and appreciate the fact that you're taking your trauma and turning it into finding solutions.

I have a quick question for both of you. We've seen over and over again that this is an intergenerational thing. This is something that has existed for a very long time and has become normalized. My question is, how do we break the cycle?

Given that OSIC has only been in existence for six months, do you see that as part of the solution? In, like, 30 seconds, how would you improve it? You can also send a brief if you need to.

• (1300)

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** I'm confident that we will succeed. I put my faith in the next generation, like Ms. Bailey, who was here last week. It was so refreshing and inspirational to hear about what she's doing. This generation will not put up with maltreatment, because speaking up has become mainstream thanks to the victims and survivors who paved the way for them.

**Ms. Allison Forsyth:** I'll share that there is so much work to be done in this space that OSIC.... I'll say on behalf of my own company that we need to put a regulatory body on top of us. Do whatever or audit our services, but this is a need in our country that will not be solved with one organization.

I completely 100% agree with independent management of abuse cases. Mine was covered up for 17 years, so I should hope that you'd know that I'd totally agree with that, but I need hundreds more people on the front lines, to be honest, working with me on education and prevention.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.

Andréanne, you have one minute.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

After hearing your testimony and the demands of the athletes, and especially those of the victims, I'm concerned. As you know, abuse survivors often take years to come forward. Will the SDRCC and the OSIC investigate previous abuse reports? If not, why not?

If they don't, who will? Who can identify the assailants, who may still be working in the sport, and hold them accountable for their actions against the athletes? How can we shed light on these cases without an independent inquiry?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** Previous abuse cases aren't excluded from the ambit of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. There will be an analysis, and if current participants in the sport are still at risk, complaints concerning previous cases will definitely be considered.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Ms. Forsyth...

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thanks, Andréanne—

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** ... while the representatives of 15 sport disciplines are seeking an independent investigation, why aren't you calling for one? You've also cited a problem of culture.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay. It's an audible question, but I do have to get on to Leah as well.

Leah, you have the floor.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Building on what Andréanne mentioned, it often takes people years to disclose, and it's difficult, right? One of the things we've heard that is concerning is the practice of having athletes sign non-disclosure agreements. Does your organization have athletes sign non-disclosure agreements?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** No.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Okay. There's no.... I want to understand this. When you were talking about confidentiality, none of it involves non-disclosure agreements. Is that right?

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** No. The confidentiality is to protect the information they receive through the investigation process, but their story is theirs and they have the right to talk about it.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Okay. No athlete in that process is obliged to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

**Ms. Marie-Claude Asselin:** No.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

I would really like to thank Allison, Marie-Claude and Guylaine for joining us today.

I have a reminder for our committee members. We'll be meeting once again on Thursday afternoon. We'll be going through lots of committee business as we're going forward from 3:30 to 5:30.

Now we're adjourning for today.









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