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Chair: The Honourable Hedy Fry



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• (1100)

[*Translation*]

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

Welcome to meeting number 78 of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

I want to acknowledge that the meeting is taking place on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

[*English*]

Obviously, this meeting is taking place in a hybrid fashion.

For those of you who are together in the committee room, you do not have to wear a mask. It's not compulsory, but it is something that you might want to think about doing. COVID is still around, and so are other respiratory diseases.

I want to take this opportunity to remind all participants that they cannot take photographs of this meeting or of their view on Zoom. The proceedings will be made available on the public website, so you'll be able to get anything you want off that website.

Also, when you speak, please make sure that you address everything through the chair.

There will be a question and answer period. During that time, again, you cannot speak unless the chair recognizes you.

The other thing I want to say is that it's important.... If you look at the bottom of your screen, you'll see that there's a little globe icon. When you press that, it will give you translations in English, French or the floor language—the original language, whichever you choose to use.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, September 20, 2022, the committee is meeting to continue its study on safe sport.

Today we have quite a few very important witnesses who, I gather, have expertise on this issue in different ways.

We have, as individuals, Shauna Bookal, manager of equity, diversity, inclusion and student experience at Ontario University Athletics; Whitney Bragagnolo, Ph.D. candidate and sport governance and anti-corruption consultant; Dr. Joëlle Carpentier, professor, school of management, Université du Québec à Montréal; and Richard McLaren, chief executive officer, McLaren Global Sport Solutions.

Also, we have, from Égale Action, Sylvie Béliveau, director, gender equity; and from Laboratoire de recherche pour la progression des femmes dans les sports au Québec, we have Dr. Guylaine Demers, professor and director.

Before we begin the meeting and I let the witnesses speak, I notice that Mr. Housefather has his hand up.

Mr. Housefather.

• (1105)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, there have been discussions amongst the parties over the weekend. I think we all were profoundly disturbed by the testimony of Mr. Steven Reed, the former president of Canada Soccer, who came before us last week. We recognize that we've heard from many former presidents of Canada Soccer, but we have not heard from the current president, Charmaine Crooks, who is now running for re-election. I think it is important that we do so as quickly as possible, given what occurred before the committee last week.

Madam Chair, I believe you'll have unanimous consent to the following motion:

That, in relation to the committee's study on safe sport and the testimony we have heard from previous witnesses, that Canada Soccer President, Charmaine Crooks, be summoned to appear before the committee for two hours on Thursday May 4th, to clarify her position on issues surrounding Canada Soccer including responses provided by previous witnesses.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Anthony.

Peter.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): I support this, Madam Chair. I think we all do. This is a very important summons.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lemire.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Chair, I appreciate Mr. Housefather's leadership on this. I will be supporting the motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there anyone else?

Go ahead, Marilyn.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

The Conservatives also support this motion, and we appreciate Mr. Housefather's bringing it forward.

The Chair: Thank you, all.

It would seem to me that we have unanimous consent for this motion, so it is passed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The clerk will duly note we are going to ask Ms. Crooks to be here next Thursday, which would be the 4th.

Thank you very much.

Go ahead, Rachael.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I thought I would add one more order of business, which is a motion put on the table on April 24 with regard to bringing the Auditor General forward. The motion reads:

That, considering the Auditor General report tabled on Monday, March 27, entitled "Progress on access to high-speed Internet and mobile cellular services lags behind for rural and remote communities and First Nations reserves", the committee invite Karen Hogan, Auditor General of Canada, to testify before committee as soon as possible for no fewer than two hours.

I would seek the support of the committee to move that quickly, and we can hear from witnesses.

The Chair: Does anyone wish to speak for or against this motion?

Go ahead, Chris.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Thank you so much.

I guess I'd like to hear from my other colleague as well. I don't know that this is in our bailiwick. I think this is more of a study for the industry committee, especially with the issues we have before us at the moment, and I don't see this study ending any time soon.

I'm wondering if it's a better option to table debate on this, hear the witnesses and have a business meeting in the near future so we can plan out what our committee's doing. Ultimately, I think this is probably something for our colleagues on the industry committee to handle.

The Chair: Thank you, Chris.

Sébastien, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Being on both committees, I feel compelled to jump in. I would be interested in hearing what Mrs. Thomas thinks of the idea. If she agrees, I would be glad to put forward the motion on the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology to see whether it would be considered in order there. I think the motion deals with a critical issue and warrants debate. I'm not opposed to the idea of having the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology deal with it.

Otherwise, I will support having this committee deal with it. It's essential to examine access to high-speed Internet and mobile cellular services in rural communities.

• (1110)

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there anybody else on the floor? I see no hands—

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael MacPherson): Mrs. Thomas has her hand up.

The Chair: Go ahead, Rachael.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Chair.

I would clarify that the Auditor General sent a letter both to this committee and to the industry committee, offering to come speak on this report, so, given the Auditor General's letter indicating she would like to come or she would be willing to come.... Further to that, we know that some of the funding comes from Industry and some of it comes from Heritage Canada, so it does fit nicely within this committee and its framework or its mandate.

The Chair: Thank you.

Does anyone else wish to comment on this?

I note that Monsieur Lemire decided we should debate this more fully. I think we have witnesses waiting, and I wonder if... I know we are trying to have a business meeting coming up soon to discuss the parameters for a lot of work we intend to do, that we are doing, etc.

Mrs. Thomas, how do you feel about putting this forward to a business meeting, or do you want to deal with it now?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Chair, I have no problem doing that, in the sense that I certainly want to get on with this meeting. I'm surprised that there wasn't unanimous consent. Again, the Auditor General wrote to this committee offering to come, and it's clearly within our purview. It's not meant to be a complicated motion or to cause trouble, so I am confused by that.

I would highlight that I have had this tabled since April 24 and there just hasn't been opportunity to bring it forward, so I wonder when that opportunity might present itself, then, Chair.

The Chair: If you're willing to put it forward to a business meeting, I think we could ask the clerk, given what our agenda is and what it looks like we're going to be doing for the next four meetings, if he believes we could have a business meeting very soon.

Mike, do you think there's room in terms of resources, etc.?

The Clerk: As far as resources are concerned, the committee would have to put in a deviation request, which has been done. If you're speaking specifically about adding time to Thursday's meeting, we would have to wait to hear back if resources are available. Otherwise, the committee does have a full schedule with the May 8 meeting, so it would most likely be Thursday, May 11.

The Chair: Thank you.

Pardon me? Did someone ask a question?

Mr. Chris Bittle: If I may, Chair, perhaps we could take just 10 minutes of committee business on this at a future meeting. We're not opposed to this. We have some amendments to it that we'd like to make, but we're not opposed to the Auditor General's appearing.

The Chair: Thank you.

It sounds like Thursday may be our best option, i.e., the next meeting of this committee, if we can get an extra half an hour or something like that to be able to do this.

Clerk, when will you know whether we can or cannot?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Chair, if I may, what I might suggest, then, is that for the next meeting on Thursday, given Mr. Housefather's motion, that is a minimum of two hours. That would take up the entire duration of Thursday's meeting. We'll respect that and hold that meeting for Charmaine Crooks. What I would ask is that perhaps we could have 30 minutes of committee business at the end of Monday's meeting, on May 8.

The Chair: I think that on May 8 we have asked Meta to come. That may be a two-hour meeting as well.

That's what the clerk was mentioning earlier on: if we could get an extra half an hour. He has submitted the request for that, and we will hear if on Thursday we can have an extra half an hour in our meeting. I know that everyone travels on a Thursday and that it's kind of a bad time to add half an hour, but I don't know.... Unless I hear anyone vociferously deciding that they don't want us to try for Thursday for an extra half an hour, then we can move on and suggest that we do this on Thursday.

Go ahead, Peter.

• (1115)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Chair, I think Ms. Thomas's suggestion is a good one if we can do that.

The Chair: Marilyn is next.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you, Chair.

The committee agreed that we weren't going to extend hours on Thursday, because people have flights. I think the Monday recommendation is the best, and I would support it. If we can get extra time, great, and if not, we can take the last 15 minutes of that meeting to do committee business.

The Chair: All right. That's where we're going to go.

Clerk, we can try to do this on Monday for an extra 15 minutes at the end of the meeting.

Thank you very much.

Obviously, we're going to postpone this to Monday, May 8, to discuss in a small business meeting of 15 minutes to get some things done. Hearing no one objecting to that, I would like to let the clerk know that I think we're going to look at having some time to do that on Monday.

Thank you very much.

Now I want to move to the witnesses.

Witnesses, you have five minutes each. I will shout out—literally—30 seconds before the end of your time so you can wrap up. I

know that saying “30 seconds” tends to butt in, but I've found in the past that people don't look up when they're reading, and they don't see me frantically waving that they have 30 seconds left. I will just shout out “30 seconds”, and you can wrap up. You will have time during the question and answer section to elaborate on something that you did not get to finish in your five-minute presentation.

Without further ado, we will begin with Shauna Bookal.

You have five minutes, please, Ms. Bookal.

Ms. Shauna Bookal (Manager, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Student Experience, Ontario University Athletics, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair, for this opportunity to speak in front of the standing committee.

I am not an Olympian. I am not a national team coach. I am not a researcher or scholar. I'm coming to you as a first-generation, proud Jamaican Canadian who grew up in Scarborough, Ontario, with a background in amateur sport spanning over 30 years. My experience and the thoughts I'm going to share with you come from a different lens. I'm a former grassroots athlete and coach turned amateur-sport administrator and educator.

Growing up in the sport system in the 1990s, I was identified as an emerging Black leader and was able to take NCCP and leaders-in-training programs at no cost. I went on to complete three degrees in sport management and have been involved in almost every major sporting event that has come to Toronto since 2012. I was also the executive director of a provincial sport organization. I was the only Black female across the country to hold this position for two years.

Sometime in the early 2000s, the sport system started to change. It went from a “sport for all” emphasis to a high-performance focus. The emerging leader programs for minorities started to disappear. The emphasis on mandatory training started to become optional. Less focus was given to amateur sport, and more emphasis was placed on national team athletes and podium finishes. Twenty years later, here we are asking, “What went wrong?” and “Where do we go from here?”

When looking at safe sport...the first place everyone looks is the coaching. Back in the day, I remember watching my dad, who was a volunteer coach, and my mom, a volunteer team manager, go through mandatory training. Part of that included the mandatory background check every year and staying current in their NCCP training. Courses back then were also affordable, and police background checks were free. Coaches would pay, then get a refund.

Nowadays, some coaches, particularly minorities, do not have NCCP certification, due to the high costs associated with the courses. For example, a volunteer coach could potentially pay anywhere between \$250 and \$4,000 to coach, depending on the level and age of their team. This will unfortunately lead to a lot of coaches with incomplete training, or good coaches not even getting a chance to coach at all, because they are unable to complete the training required for them to be a coach in amateur sports.

The Coaches Association of Ontario and the Coaching Association of Canada used to be very involved in attending community events to help educate the community on all the different programs they had to offer. Nowadays, grassroots organizations do not know the CAO or CAC exist, because information does not flow top-down. Some sport organizations do a great job communicating to the community, while others do not.

When people ask, “Where do we start for safe sport?”, in my opinion, True Sport and the Responsible Coaching Movement need to be mandatory in amateur sport, much like the High Five program is mandatory in recreational sport, especially for grassroots levels. Currently, in Ontario, when you walk into a municipal recreation facility, there is a High Five poster, banner or certification hanging there. If anybody wants to work with youth, they have to have High Five certification, and this is non-negotiable. Why isn't the same standard held for True Sport and RCM?

We also need to make the effective governance training offered by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports mandatory, since, in my experience, board members in amateur sport do not know the difference between a governing board and a working board. CCES offers many programs, but very few people know about them, because, just like me, many assume CCES works only in the area of anti-doping.

In 2020, the murder of George Floyd was a wake-up call on racism across many sectors. Countries like Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States responded by creating an equity, diversity and inclusion sport strategy that included safe sport. Three years later, I am still waiting to see a central national EDI sport strategy here in Canada.

For the past eight months, I have been working as the manager of EDI and student experience for Ontario University Athletics, where my main portfolio's focus is on EDI, women in sport and safe sport. My position was made possible by the “Making Progress Together” report, which describes how the OUA is advancing towards a safe, equitable and diverse culture. I have shared the report for your review.

Over the past eight months we've developed an anti-racism awareness week, revised our safe sport policy and started executing the “women in sport” plan. From June 23 to 25 of this year, thanks to the support of the Ontario MTCS, the OUA will be hosting a “diversity in sports” conference with a focus on the amateur sport sector. Emerging BIPOC leaders will have the opportunity to receive free NCCP training through this conference as well.

All of my friends and family know how much I love quotes, so I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to leave you with

one: “Just because the past didn't turn out like you wanted it to, doesn't mean the future can't be better than you ever imagined.”

Thank you for granting me the opportunity to share my experiences and thoughts with you today.

• (1120)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Bookal. I didn't have to stop you at all, so that's cool.

Next is Ms. Bragagnolo, who is in sport governance and anti-corruption.

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo (Ph.D. Candidate, Sport Governance and Anti-Corruption Consultant, As an Individual): Madam Chair and members of the committee, I express my gratitude for this invitation, for the commitment to addressing these critical concerns, and for your attention to the ethical evolution of Canadian sport.

I'm here independently. What I mean by that is I do not work for, consult with or get paid by any Canadian sport entity. I'm not affiliated with any Canadian academic institution or organization. I left Canada in 2016, and I reside in The Hague. This is of relevance. There are instances when increased objective scrutiny is necessary. Impartial viewpoints mitigate risks of undue influence and promote fact-based decision-making, free from conflict of interest. Independence helps ensure that opinions are unbiased, fair and just.

I come from the field of risk, investigations and sport integrity. I hold a master's degree in sport ethics and integrity, and I am a Ph.D. researcher in sport governance and anti-corruption.

Many have requested this inquiry—myself included. While some individuals may have valid reasons for opposing, it must also be understood that the existence of conflict of interest may be a reason some actors are in opposition, as certain findings might directly or indirectly impact them.

Moving forward, a lack of integrity and professional capacity may cause sport entities and individuals to reject interference from government or judicial authorities by appealing to sport's autonomy. The autonomy of sport, in many cases, can shield leadership from moral, social and judicial scrutiny, resulting in institutions that are not accountable to anyone.

Madam Chair, a fully independent inquiry is necessary. The government's failure to hold sport entities accountable to higher standards of governance has resulted in significant harm. This is despite numerous instances of the lack of capacity of these sport entities to evolve. The government has a responsibility to ensure public health and safe sport.

I offer three solutions to promote the ethical evolution of Canadian sport, where the integrity of sport governance is a vital pillar.

One, commence independent sport governance audits in the inquiry. Existing sport governance frameworks with global recognition and established history can be used to measure and define future requirements, setting the Canadian standard for expected practice. Accessible, transparent audits hold organizations accountable, measuring their capacity for ethical growth and advancement in the intended direction.

Two, incorporate anonymous athlete and employee feedback in all governance audits. Despite being long-ignored, athletes provide critical insight into vulnerabilities, risks and opportunity. Even if things look perfect on paper, anonymous feedback helps ensure that policy, procedures and people are fit for purpose.

Three, establish conceptual clarity on what independence actually means. Entities around safe sport require independence to be effective. For any entity, here are some things to consider. Is a sport organization funding the entity? Is a sport organization funding an entity involved in any ongoing cases? Does the entity have any obligation to disclose information to a sport organization? Does anyone within the entity have a personal connection? Does anyone within the entity have any history enabling abuse or corruption in sport at any level?

Non-disclosure of negative findings hinders the integrity of investigations, accountability and ethical growth. Independence is essential to prevent conflict of interest and enabling behaviour. Not one current sport entity in Canada can be tasked to oversee this inquiry. It must be outside sport.

It'll close with a research finding from me and colleague Yanci Lezama. Fewer than one in five survivors disclose their incident to a reporting mechanism. Ask me why. This helps conceptualize the institutional enablers that exist in our sport systems. It is poor governance that facilitates the continuation of the abuse of power. This underscores why independence is so important and how even seemingly functioning systems can be insufficient.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1125)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I go to the next witness, Dr. Joëlle Carpentier.

Ms. Carpentier, you have five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Joëlle Carpentier (Professor, School of Management, Université du Québec à Montréal, As an Individual): Good morning.

I would like to thank the committee for inviting me to share my experience, expertise and views on high-performance sport, generally, and the situation in Canada, specifically.

I'm a professor at the department of human resource management in the school of management at the Université du Québec à Montréal. I have a Ph.D. in social psychology, with a specialty in sport psychology. My research focuses on the coach-athlete relationship and the behaviours coaches must demonstrate to foster both athletic performance and the well-being of athletes.

I, myself, am a former national athlete and coach. I am still active in the world of high-performance sport, working as a performance psychology consultant, giving talks and training to coaches and sport organizations, serving as an official at the national level, and sitting on the board of a provincial federation.

The main thing I want to bring to the committee's attention today is the scientific research into how the social environment affects athletes' development. The science is clear: environments where the emphasis is strictly on performance are harmful to human beings. What's more, generally speaking, those environments lead to the worst outcomes in the long run. Individuals in those settings are willing to do anything for immediate results, even when their actions or decisions could be damaging to themselves, others or their organization.

The Canadian sport system, particularly its funding structure, is based primarily on the rapid achievement of results. When funding hinges on short-term performance and success, federations demand immediate results in order to keep their funding and ultimately ensure their survival. Consequently, they tolerate unacceptable behaviour on the part of certain coaches, administrators and athletes for the sake of short-term results. Under that type of system, it's always the same federations, the same sports, the same coaches and the same practices that benefit from funding, at the expense of innovation, modernization, diversity and well-being.

Tolerating—if not implicitly promoting—these kinds of destructive behaviours creates a sport culture where they are the norm. It is time to really educate all those involved in the Canadian sport system on what is acceptable behaviour and, conversely, what should be considered unacceptable in sport. For far too long, this results-driven system has allowed unacceptable behaviour to go unchecked in the name of athletic performance, so much so that the behaviour is now widely considered acceptable, even desirable.

In recent months, numerous coaches have been singled out, and rightfully so, for their inappropriate behaviour towards athletes. It is necessary, however, to examine how the current sport system influences and even encourages that behaviour. When a system prioritizes results—or worse, the rapid achievement of results—it puts pressure on coaches, who then transfer that pressure onto athletes.

Accordingly, it is time to not only point fingers at coaches, but also give them training, guidance and support. They need to education on what the building blocks of a healthy coach-athlete relationship are, on which behaviours to adopt and which ones to avoid in order to foster that healthy relationship, on issues affecting athletes' mental health and the list goes on. It is time to give them the right framework and to provide them with resources they can turn to when in doubt, resources that are co-developed, resources that support their own mental health. Giving coaches a framework and taking care of their needs will help bring about culture change and improve their ability to cope with the pressure on their shoulders.

In conclusion, a number of actions are necessary to create the conditions for healthy and safe sport in Canada. They include reviewing the funding system, educating the public and members of the sport community to change the norm and culture, training coaches and giving them resources, adopting an approach that puts the well-being of athletes and coaches first, listening to athletes, and empowering them to create their own optimal training conditions. The current funding model produces medals in the short term, but at a cost: athletes' long-term mental and physical health. The research shows that similar results can be obtained and just as many medals can be won without sacrificing athletes' health. The science tells us that building a healthy sport environment, one driven by the well-being of athletes rather than athletic performance, produces equally good—and in the long term, better—results. It's time to stop following our old instincts and doing things the traditional way. Instead, we need to embrace science and apply the knowledge we have.

We must resist the temptation to focus on what we can readily see—like performance—and start focusing on what we can't. We can achieve the same results when we make that switch. It's time to ask federations to bring visibility to factors that have generally been overlooked: athletes' well-being, the purpose behind involvement in sport, skill development and so forth. It's time to focus on the long-term development of athletes and to give sport stakeholders the time and space they need to do things right. Bear in mind that results are nothing more than a consequence of doing things well. They should never be the end goal.

• (1130)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Carpentier.

Now we go to Mr. McLaren for five minutes.

Mr. McLaren, go ahead.

Mr. Richard McLaren (Chief Executive Officer, McLaren Global Sport Solutions Inc., As an Individual): Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my observations pertaining to the critical issue of safe sport in Canada.

McLaren Global Sport Solutions, or MGSS as it is known, focuses on investigations and governance reviews of organizations in Canada and globally. Our work relates to a variety of integrity issues, including safe sport, the use of performance-enhancing drugs, competition manipulation, fraud, other forms of corruption and the overarching governance integrity issues arising therefrom.

I hold appointments as the independent integrity officer for the International Basketball Federation, FIBA, and the International Boxing Association, IBA, and as the chief anti-corruption officer for professional tennis worldwide. I also am the independent third party for Table Tennis Canada.

Over my career I have led complex investigations involving corruption in international boxing, weightlifting, and many other sports, including investigations for the World Anti-Doping Agency, which revealed state-sponsored doping of athletes by Russia at the Sochi Olympics and in a number of Russian sports, particularly athletics.

One recent example of my international work in safe sport involved a complex investigation of sexual allegations against basketball and state officials in Mali, following reports by Human Rights Watch that were published in the *New York Times*. My team conducted a comprehensive independent investigation focused on the systemic sexual abuse of young female basketball players. That report and all our other reports are public and are published on my company's website.

My international experience is important to share with you because, unfortunately, safe sport is an international issue, not simply a Canadian one. Consider, for example, that in the sport of gymnastics there have been no fewer than six major national reviews into the sport, including those in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, the Netherlands and, of course, the United States, with which most members of the committee, I'm sure, are familiar.

Let me turn to two examples of recent work in Canada by MGSS, namely our 2022 independent review of Canada Soccer, and our 2023 report on Gymnastics Canada. We also did a report in 2021 on how to establish a national independent safe sport agency in Canada.

With Canada Soccer we were tasked to review the institutional response to harassment allegations made in 2008 against former U-20 women's national team coach Bob Birarda. The members of this committee are familiar with this saga through the courageous testimony of Andrea Neil and others. We found that Canada Soccer had fairly robust policies and investigation procedures at the time. However, there was little attention paid to safe sport amongst the executive ranks and the CSA, which did not follow its own written policies.

The joint investigation of Birarda conducted in 2008 by Canada Soccer and Major League Soccer's Vancouver Whitecaps was severely flawed. For example, no written report was issued by the investigator and no minutes were created of any of the processes or decisions made by the CSA's board of directors. There was no transparency, a flaw we have found repeatedly in sport. Reasonable policies are not enforced.

On the recommendation of the investigator, the CSA executive committee voted to terminate Birarda in October 2008. However, rather than terminating him, there was a negotiated exit. Birarda was allowed to submit a resignation, which was characterized by the CSA as a mutual parting of ways. The real reasons for his sudden departure were couched as being personal in a press conference at which some of the female complainants were present and definitely knew otherwise. Exiting “for personal reasons” is a frequently used euphemism to hide improper conduct and to avoid follow-up actions.

• (1135)

Such an approach, regrettably, is common in sport. The record and the real reasons for termination are hidden, thanks to the negotiated exit by resignation. It also allows the perpetrator to inflict abuse in future positions.

The Chair: Can you wrap up, please, Mr. McLaren?

Mr. Richard McLaren: Yes, I can. Let me just go to my summary.

My observations are that sports organizations generally have reasonable policies and other tools to use in abuse and safe sport matters. However, the policies typically are not enforced. There is also limited accountability and a lack of courage to publicly state reasons for an individual's exit. Negotiated exits are the easy way out. They keep the dirty laundry hidden but have harmful ripple affects.

Athletes and parents, who know the truth, do not trust sports administrators. They fear retaliation and have little or no protection if they become a whistle-blower.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McLaren. You can elaborate during the question and answer period on some of the things you wanted to say.

I will now go to Ms. Béliveau, director of gender equity at Égale Action, for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Béliveau (Director, Gender Equity, Égale Action): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee. I have been Égale Action's director of gender equity for a year now.

I'd like to start by mentioning that Égale Action has been around for more 20 years. We work to ensure equity and equality for women and girls within Quebec's sport system and to help them develop their full potential.

When it comes to safe sport in Canada, the first thing I would say is that victim protection must continue to be the priority, and rightfully so. That means maintaining and strengthening mechanisms such as support hotlines and the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. Also needed are better tools to prevent abuse and violence of any kind in sport, at all levels and in all forms of participation.

The second thing I would say is that sport organizations have to put measures in place. That's what we, at Égale Action, focus on. I have no doubt that all of us would welcome a decreased demand for telephone hotlines. That means doing the groundwork to change the

unsafe culture. That work involves raising awareness, examining the individual sport communities by building organizational profiles, and introducing strategies that will lead to meaningful actions and the desired results.

The organization officials who reach out to us have good intentions but sometimes lack resources. They need guidance and jointly developed solutions. That's why organizations like Quebec's Égale Action are needed. They are neutral parties that provide support and guidance to sport federations and organizations.

Now I'd like to share some helpful measures. Much of the support we provide is in the form of mentorship. That includes not just support for issues analysis and strategy and plan deployment, but also the delivery of training workshops to foster greater awareness of the corporate culture and biases.

Of course, it's not all about a single member of an organization and their desire to take action. One of the barriers we run into involves an organization's capacity and resources, not to mention the time it invests in bringing about change. Keep in mind it still has to focus on day-to-day concerns and responsibilities.

We also believe that it's important to continue supporting and empowering women to increase their presence in sport organizations. In Quebec, women make up 33% of board members. Hopefully, that is thanks to the efforts made in recent years, and we want to see that progress continue. However, women account for a mere 19% of coaches in Quebec. Coaches are, after all, the people in a position of immediate authority in athletes' lives. Despite the introduction of programs to support coaches, the proportion of women coaches has not changed.

The services we provide to support and assist women are aimed at increasing the presence of women in sport, of course, but above all, at making sure their voices are heard. Establishing communities of practice is one way we hope to help women move past the doubt and gain the confidence they need to join organizations and assert their place in the sport system.

Finally, a range of policies are necessary to bring about lasting change. Putting an assessment mechanism in place is imperative in order to measure the actions and progress that will lead to culture change. It will then be possible to build a framework and parameters for organizations, and to steer them in a different direction as needed. This will ensure that they are accountable to their members and political institutions, and provide an accurate picture of their progress.

In Quebec, a recently created research lab is now part of the support ecosystem, Lab PROFEMS, and we are fortunate to have the director with us today.

Thank you.

• (1140)

[English]

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

I'll now go to Dr. Demers for five minutes, please.

[Translation]

Dr. Guylaine Demers (Professor and Director, Laboratoire de recherche pour la progression des femmes dans les sports au Québec): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for inviting me. This is my third appearance before a parliamentary committee. I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the process aimed at improving the sport system.

As Ms. Béliveau mentioned, I'm here in my capacity as director of Laboratoire de recherche pour la progression des femmes dans les sports au Québec, a new research lab focused on advancing women in sport in Quebec. Accordingly, my remarks will focus on the importance of research, which can help bring more equality and equity to the sport system, and above all, make it safer for everyone.

I want to draw something to the committee's attention. Canada was fortunate to have the first gender equity in sport research hub from 2020 to 2022, but unfortunately, it received only two years' worth of funding. I had the pleasure of co-directing the hub with Gretchen Kerr, whom you've no doubt heard from on the issue of safe sport. It's really a shame that the research hub was funded for such a short time. We had started building the mechanisms to support the sport system and help you, as politicians, make informed, evidenced-based decisions.

Research should be the cornerstone of any initiative. Whenever a measure is introduced, or a mechanism or solution deployed, the ability to carry out an evaluation and determine the impact is key.

Ms. Bookal, the first witness you heard from today, shared a quote with the committee. I, too, have a quote for you. It comes from an eminent researcher by the name of Einstein. He said that the definition of insanity was doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. I think that's often been the case in Canada. People think they have good ideas, so they implement them. My first message to the committee is this: go by the research. When you introduce a measure, you have to be able to evaluate it.

My colleague Ms. Carpentier talked about what we've learned from the research. It's been shown that, when more women are in leadership positions, violence and harassment rates drop rapidly, not only in sport, but also in a number of areas. That is true of the workplace, the prison system and elsewhere in Canada. In fact, the increased number of female prison guards has almost led to the elimination of physical violence in federal prisons.

The literature shows that the more women there are in a given setting, the better the conditions in that setting. Ms. Béliveau mentioned the percentage of women coaches in Canada. It's a similar

situation globally. Athletes are trained predominantly by men, who account for nearly 80% of coaches, more in some sports.

I cannot stress enough that, first and foremost, research is key.

Second, we need to pay close attention to accountability. Some of my fellow witnesses spoke about that. Funding has to be tied to accountability. That requires an organization to support data collection. Again, this ties in with research. If the government decided to invest anew in the Gender Equity in Sport Research Hub, as I hope it will, the hub could oversee that accountability, as an impartial and independent organization, helping to inform funding policies and decisions.

I quite appreciated what my colleague Ms. Carpentier said. As she pointed out, when funding is tied solely to performance and when the winning of medals is all that matters, athletes will continue to experience abuse. Make no mistake.

The last point I want to make was also raised by Ms. Béliveau.

• (1145)

[English]

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

[Translation]

Dr. Guylaine Demers: Victims should absolutely be at the heart of all decision-making. Keep in mind that many people put their hearts and souls into the sport system, from administrators to those in other roles, and those people need support to implement a safe sport system.

Thank you.

[English]

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

Now we're going to the question and answer component of the meeting. The first round is a six-minute round. We will begin with the Conservative Party, with Marilyn Gladu.

Ms. Gladu, you have the floor for six minutes, please.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to all of the witnesses for your appearance today.

I'm going to start with Mr. McLaren. You have a lot of experience, looking into organizations of sport both within Canada and internationally, so could you talk about common themes that you see between sports organizations that need to be addressed and key recommendations that you would have for the federal government to act on?

Mr. Richard McLaren: I agree with the last speaker's point. Accountability is a significant problem. Many sports have reasonably robust policies, but they don't use them. They remain unenforced. I have seen that repeatedly in work I have done in Canada and overseas. Accountability is a major problem.

Another problem, which nobody has mentioned this morning, is whistle-blowing. In order to conduct many investigations, as I've done, you need to have whistle-blowers, and whistle-blowers have big issues about retaliation in many different forms. This country has, in both the corporate world and also in the sports world, very limited whistle-blower protection legislation of any kind. We're way behind Europe and other countries in the world in that area, so that is an important area to look at as well, and it ties back to accountability.

Another thing I was speaking about in my remarks is the exit negotiation excuse called "personal reasons" for somebody who has really committed improper conduct. Hiding the real reasons inhibits people who perhaps want to have this person do something in the future, because they don't ever find public information about the real reasons for departure. The worst part of that negotiated exit is the ability of the individual to go to a different sport or a different country—but particularly a different sport—and carry on the same abuse that has already been identified in other situations.

• (1150)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you, Mr. McLaren. Yes, we heard good testimony about whistle-blower protection against retaliation, as well as interesting testimony about the use of NDAs to silence victims and allow perpetrators to continue.

You talked about accountability, especially with respect to funding. I thought that was what OSEC was supposed to, and that it was put in place to make sure there was accountability. Is it not working? What would your opinion be there?

Mr. Richard McLaren: Accountability is a very difficult topic to address effectively. It really requires the board of a sporting organization to have an understanding of what their role is—one of the speakers was speaking about that—but they also need to actually determine what it is they should be checking on.

They shouldn't just rely on the sports administrators and the advice or the information they get from them as being sufficient to really ensure that policies are being applied and guidelines are being followed, whatever the requirements are. Of course, finance is part of that, but there are many other aspects of that requirement in order to have proper governance.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Thank you very much.

Now, I'll go to Ms. Bragagnolo.

You're an expert in governance. What would your recommendations be in terms of sports governance audits to prevent abuse of power? What should we be putting in place?

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo: As I mentioned, there are existing global sport governance frameworks, such as the sports governance observer. These are benchmarking tools that enable organizations to improve governance by scoring on specific dimensions. You have transparency, democratic processes, societal responsibility, and in-

ternal accountability and control. These have been implemented as far back as 2011 in some European countries.

They work. These assessments ensure that organizations are advancing in the intended direction, and they also serve as a supportive process to support the objective of fostering ethical growth. With these audits, entities can be held to a higher standard of accountability, because you are requiring them to maintain and hopefully improve their capacity in a way that can be measured, in a way that can be assessed. Transparency, including the aforementioned athlete's anonymous feedback and employee feedback, also allows the public, including Canadian taxpayers, parents, athletes and media, to determine if the leadership is effectively doing its job.

Just to corroborate what Ms. Demers said, I would like to add that in some nations, public funding is conditional on compliance with good governance principles, and, for all audits, sport organizations have absolutely no say in who is doing their audit.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: That's excellent.

Could you provide some examples of those other European countries that are doing it well? Could you send them to the committee clerk?

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo: Yes.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: I think that's the end of my time.

Thank you.

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo: Wales, the U.K., Australia, the Netherlands and Belgium—the list is quite extensive. We are very behind in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Marilyn.

I'm going to go to the Liberals, with Mr. Coteau, for six minutes, please.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Thank you so much. I want to thank the witnesses for joining us today. I found all of the testimony very valuable. Thank you for making time to be here.

I want to start with Ms. Bookal with regard to the statements she made.

Ms. Bookal, thank you for bringing forward the issues you addressed, from accessibility to racism. These are issues we've heard a bit during our deliberations, but we haven't heard enough specifically on racism. Thank you for bringing it to this committee. Thank you for the work you're doing to advocate for more accessibility and anti-racism.

You said we've moved from sports for all over the last couple of decades to elite sport. Can you talk about that specific movement? Why do you think we went from access for everyone to more of an elite approach to the sporting sector in Ontario and across the country?

• (1155)

Ms. Shauna Bookal: I'm not sure what happened in the shift. As I said, in the 1990s, many things were accessible. Costs were down, so coaching courses were affordable for people to take. It was also all mandatory.

When it came down to competition, everybody wanted that gold. Everybody wanted to be number one in the world. What we would hear from the grassroots level was, "Being a first world country, why aren't we in the top five? Why aren't we in the top three? How come other countries that don't have as many resources as us are beating us?"

We just started seeing the shift of a lot of funding going towards high performance. Less and less was happening on the amateur sports side. When people look at the sporting funnel system, you have to get your athletes from somewhere. That somewhere is amateur sports. That funnel is now getting smaller and smaller. Many people can't afford sports.

To get these high-profile coaches, or to help pay athletes, some of these sporting organizations put that cost in the coach certification programs. To take one class, it's \$300. Many people can't afford that.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'm going to jump in. I have six minutes. It's not to be disrespectful.

I want to ask you a few more questions specifically about racism and the anti-racism work you're doing. We see in the media, constantly, overt cases of racism. There's also the hidden face of racism in many different sectors.

From your experience, have you witnessed, either directly or indirectly, forms of racism that may be more covert than overt?

Ms. Shauna Bookal: I have definitely witnessed it and experienced it. Unfortunately, everybody can say they want to be more diverse. In hiring, people are saying they want to put in place anti-racism, or have more minorities in certain positions to represent our country. People's actions are not matching their words.

For example, we have 63 NSO leaders right now, and three of them are from a minority group. That's out of 63. People keep saying there aren't many minorities to hire in certain positions, but when minorities do apply for positions, they say, "Well, you don't have enough experience in the sports sector." They're saying one thing and doing another. It hasn't been matching.

The only reason I keep doing what I'm doing is to really help bring a voice to it. I'm that voice for people who can't sit at that table right now. I'm hoping we can definitely see change by bringing back some of the programs that worked in the 1990s. That's when sport was for all, and everybody felt included.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'm going to jump back in.

I've done a bit of research. I've seen British Columbia, Manitoba and other provinces put in anti-racism strategies through their PlaySafe strategies. Manitoba, I think, just announced a couple of weeks ago an investment into an anti-racism strategy.

You talked about your organization's anti-racism strategy. I also noticed anti-racism in sport and Sport for Life. Based on a bit of re-

search I've done, there has been a federal commitment to invest into programs to combat systemic racism.

From your perspective, are provincial and federal governments doing enough, or is there a lot more work to do when it comes to investing in organizations and looking for ways to combat systemic racism?

Ms. Shauna Bookal: There is a lot more to do. Not enough is being done. To be honest, giving money to NSOs is like a band-aid solution, because a lot of those NSOs are turning around and using that money for something else, not for what it was meant for. They'll combine another program with it, instead of it being just for an anti-racism or a BIPOC program. They will somehow collaborate with another program to help fund another position.

Organizations like Canadian Tire Jumpstart and KidSport are the organizations that governments should be working with, because they see things through a broader lens. When you want to look at organizations that believe in anti-racism and look at diversity, it is through Jumpstart and KidSport Ontario, ParticipACTION or YM-CA, in those programs that they have, and not necessarily keeping on and giving more money to the NSOs.

• (1200)

Mr. Michael Coteau: This is my last question. You put forward an anti-racism strategy for your organization. What are a couple of the big strategies that you think organizations can put in place now in order to combat systemic racism?

Ms. Shauna Bookal: Number one, don't put an anti-racism strategy in the same month as "Stop Asian Hate" or Black History Month. They should be separate, because these are things that shouldn't be done for just the 28 or 30 days a year. They should be done 365 days a year.

Also, let your employees feel like it's not a check box. Let them feel like you are invested in them and their stories, and what they can bring to the table.

What we do with our anti-racism strategy is we want to make sure we're hearing people's stories, not just writing their stories so we can put them on the poster or put them out there. We're letting them be involved in the process at the same time. That's where we have an apprentice program in which we have emerging BIPOC leaders working with me this summer to help us make sure we're sharing their stories, sharing their journey and understanding things from their perspective, not just from what we see in the media.

Mr. Michael Coteau: The chair's about to jump in, but I wanted to say thank you for being here today, and thank you for sharing your insight.

Ms. Shauna Bookal: You're welcome.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coteau.

Now I go to the Bloc Québécois, with Sébastien Lemire for six minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to start with you Ms. Bragagnolo.

Thank you very much for your opening remarks. Thank you, as well, for everything you're doing and the model you represent.

First, I'd like to know where you stand on an independent public inquiry into abuse in sport? What elements should such an inquiry focus on?

By the way, do you see a difference between an inquiry and an investigation? In French, we use the same word—*enquête*—for both, but there's a difference in English. I'm curious to hear your thoughts on that.

[English]

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo: For the inquiry, as per my recommendations, I strongly believe we need to begin with commencing independent sport governance audits. I believe the government made a commitment or said in the past that it would audit our NSOs and sport entities, but it has not done so. I believe that is a priority and an immediate must.

Again, this cannot be done by any current sport entity in Canada right now. It must be done by an entity outside of sport. I believe that we should be using the existing sport governance frameworks that are proven and effective and have been tested globally.

I believe that these governance audits must include anonymous athlete and employee feedback. Athletes have long been ignored, and they provide very important feedback and insight into the current existing vulnerabilities, risks and opportunities.

Again, things can look perfect on paper, as Mr. McLaren said. The policies look good, but anonymous feedback helps us ensure that these policies, procedures and people are fit for purpose and that they actually work. It shows us where we need to evolve them.

With transparent audits, we are able to hold people and organizations accountable in a way that can be measured and assessed. I think in the inquiry we can finally commence that. That's something that we should have been doing for 10 years. As I mentioned, this has been going on in Europe for over a decade.

We are grossly behind, and I believe that the inquiry would be a great place to start that.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: You recommended that for-profit safe sport entities be subject to independent audits.

Under Sport Canada's guidelines, sport federations have to appoint an independent third party, but increasingly, we are seeing this turn into a business opportunity, with private firms fulfilling that role. We obviously have to go on blind faith when it comes to the implementation of the recommendations. The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner is an example, to some extent.

What is your take on the organizations that are being set up? Do they have the independence they need to really bring about the cultural change we want to see in sport?

● (1205)

[English]

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo: I think that independent governance audits should be required for Canada's sport, for the reporting mechanisms and for these for-profit safe sport entities. Basically, any entity seeking to work within sport in this capacity has to be held to greater accountability.

Even with good intention, a lack of professional capacity, a conflict of interest or a lack of independence will hinder the ethical evolution of Canadian safe sport and appropriate athlete care. Alleged wrongdoing, investigations, inquiries and support systems need to be handled impartially by accountable professionals who have the required competence and necessary training, and who do not have any history surrounding the enabling of abuse or corruption at any level in sport.

There are, as Mr. McLaren said, individuals in sport who have seemingly credible reputations on paper, but who have been involved in the enabling of abuse, have been abusive or are not fit for purpose and are currently trying to profit off integrity and rebrand as "safe sport experts". They are working right now within sport entities or consulting firms in the realm of safe sport.

To mitigate these entities, any group seeking to work within safe sport ought to be held to greater accountability by audit.

This is not just a Canadian problem. My colleagues in Brazil, Colombia, Australia and the U.S. corroborate that we have to prepare for this risk.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: I have one last question.

What do you think of the leadership Sport Canada has shown in recent years, generally, and in the past year, specifically? Do you think it's doing enough?

Do trust and transparency even exist in Sport Canada right now?

[English]

Ms. Whitney Bragnolo: I am concerned about conflicts of interest in Canadian sport right now. This is in situations in which, for example, legal professionals, academics or consulting firms are hired by sport organizations to advise or to provide guidance on evolving their operations. The same entity might be involved with investigations for misconduct. This can lead to pressure—and I think has led to pressure—in minimizing issues. I think this compromises the credibility and impartiality of the organizations and of investigations.

These scenarios should not even be possible. Even if people are acting in good faith, this should not be possible. It's no surprise to me that some entities do not want an inquiry. This is what governance audits help avoid.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would like to ask witnesses, when they are answering questions, to please try not to hit the table as they're emphasizing something. It leads to a banging noise that bothers the interpreters a little bit. Thank you very much.

We'll now go to the New Democratic Party and Mr. Julian.

Peter, you have six minutes, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for their extremely important input.

As everyone knows, national sport organizations are in crisis—Hockey Canada, Soccer Canada and the list goes on.

I have some questions for Ms. Béliveau, Ms. Carpentier and Dr. Demers, and I would appreciate it if they could keep their answers as short as possible.

First, are you in favour of a national public inquiry to take a deep dive into issues affecting safe sport in Canada?

Second, do you think Sport Canada should continue to fund organizations like Hockey Canada even when they don't necessarily meet all of the objectives required to keep the public and athletes safe?

Third, Hockey Canada continues to sign non-disclosure agreements with victims. Do you think that's right, or do you think victims should not be forced to sign such agreements?

• (1210)

Dr. Guylaine Demers: I can answer the first question, about a national inquiry.

I definitely think it's necessary to look not just at high-profile sports such as hockey and soccer. We need a very clear understanding of the big picture.

It's also important to make sure that any recommendations that come from the inquiry are implemented. We've seen enough reports wind up on the shelf.

I don't think we are anywhere close to understanding the full extent of the problem. As my colleagues mentioned, it's just the tip of the iceberg. In that context, I think a national inquiry is warranted.

Mr. Peter Julian: How do you respond to the other two questions? Where do you stand on the non-disclosure agreements?

Dr. Guylaine Demers: I wanted to leave my fellow witnesses time to answer as well.

I definitely see a problem with the non-disclosure agreements. I think victims should be protected first and foremost. I also think they are in the best position to know how they would be affected if the abuse came out or didn't. The requirement to sign non-disclosure agreements raises a lot of red flags for me. It's imperative to keep in mind the potential impact on the victim.

Mr. Peter Julian: Ms. Béliveau, is there anything else you would like to add?

Ms. Sylvie Béliveau: I, too, agree that a national public inquiry should be held.

On the second question, which was about funding, I think we need to revisit the funding structure to encourage wellness rather than just performance. I think Ms. Carpentier alluded to that as well.

I hope that answers your question well.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you.

Ms. Carpentier, did you have anything to add?

Dr. Joëlle Carpentier: I will join my colleagues in calling for a national public inquiry. With field hockey being our national sport, the Hockey Canada case has received a lot of attention and has stirred up passions. However, the same situation exists in many other federations, which receive less attention because they are sometimes smaller. It is important to understand the whole phenomenon, as the problems are everywhere and are similar in all sports in Canada.

When it comes to funding organizations like Hockey Canada, what is important is to question the goals that are set to receive that funding. Generally speaking, if you don't meet the objectives, the funding should not be given, in my opinion. The reflection really needs to be on the goals that are set, and those goals need to be the scorecard for the health of the organization that is receiving the grant. Health is not just about outcomes; it includes other things as well. There needs to be a much more focused approach to athletes' well-being.

Finally—

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you. I'm sorry to interrupt, but I'd like to hear the responses from the other witnesses as well.

[English]

I would like to ask the same questions to Madam Bragnolo, Ms. Bookal and Mr. McLaren.

Is it appropriate for Sport Canada to restore financing when a national sport organization is not meeting obligations? How do you feel about Hockey Canada's insistence on obliging a victim to sign a non-disclosure agreement? This is something that has been raised continuously as a problem. It's not the victim's choice in this case. Many people in sport believe the victim should have some say in the matter.

I will start with you, Madam Bragagnolo.

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo: As I mentioned, some countries already require compliance with good governance standards as a condition for funding. I absolutely think that is something that needs to be considered.

Regarding non-reporting, the research I did with my colleague Yaneí Lezama was on sextortion around sport. We asked questions about non-reporting. We wanted to know why people were not reporting.

Just for clarity, sextortion is the abuse of power for sexual benefit. If people abuse their position and ask for money, we look at that as corruption, but if they abuse their position and ask for sex or sexual favours, it's not always recognized as corruption. Charges or sanctions aren't brought forward.

With that known, as I mentioned, fewer than one in five survivors report their incident to a reporting mechanism. We wanted to know why. In terms of the top reasons that survivors did not disclose, 60% said they did not trust that anything would be done by their organization to help them; 59% said they did not trust that their perpetrator would be punished; and 52% said they were concerned that reporting would negatively impact their career. This highlights the overall lack of trust in our sport institutions. That trust must be earned.

Just to follow up on what Ms. Bookal said, at the grassroots level we found that with sextortion specifically, the risk is much higher. In Canada this is a significantly underserved area, as current attention and resources have gone to and are primarily focused on the elite level. For indigenous respondents, community-based sport was the most-reported level for survivor victims, nearly doubling the risk of their white counterparts.

• (1215)

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

Now we go to the second round. This is a five-minute round.

We begin with the Conservatives and Rachael Thomas.

Rachael, you have five minutes. Go ahead, please.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for taking the time to be here with us today.

My first question is for Mr. McLaren.

You said in your opening remarks, I believe it was, that we should attach funding to accountability. Here in Canada, I believe that's in part what OSIC is supposed to be all about, with regard to national sport organizations receiving funding from Sport Canada. I'm curious as to why this isn't working.

Mr. Richard McLaren: I think part of the reason it's not working is the limited jurisdiction Sport Canada has. The jurisdiction in sport really lies with the provinces, and the spending power of the federal government is used to influence sport through different programs they have at the top of the system. A national sports body is under the influence of the spending power of the federal government, but many of those organizations don't have much control or, in my experience, even good communication with their provincial counterparts. Even the provincial counterparts don't necessarily connect with the clubs at, let's call it, the grassroots level, so it's very hard, through the funding power of the federal government, which is really their only jurisdiction in this field, to influence what's happening, particularly down at the grassroots level. That's a structural problem we have, which ties into the division of powers between the federal and provincial governments.

I think you can get around that, but you need to develop the relationship, from the grassroots and the club to the provincial sporting organization and then to the national sporting organization, and many of those are very fractious relationships. That's, I think, part of why the system doesn't work.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I'm just curious, then, as to how that can be better tied together? How do we bring about that greater accountability you're talking about with regard to provincial bodies?

Mr. Richard McLaren: I think that's very difficult to do within the structure we have. It definitely has to focus on the quality of the people you have at the national board level, and they have to have an understanding that, while they can't demand what the provincial organization or lower down at the grassroots level do, they can attempt to communicate the policies in a way that encourages their implementation at those levels. I think that's one way of curing it. I'm sure there are others.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: This is what I'm curious about, though. The federal minister of sport urged her provincial and territorial counterparts to establish independent mechanisms in this regard, but there doesn't seem to be follow-through or adequate actions being taken. What do you make of that in terms of the changes that are needed there?

• (1220)

Mr. Richard McLaren: Again I go back to the dysfunction of the whole system. The different provincial bodies don't necessarily co-operate with each other particularly, or have useful interchange. Then the provincial sport organization doesn't implement what is being done in the next province. There's a lack of overall co-operation. With that, how do you achieve accountability with respect to what they're doing? All the federal minister can do is encourage better discussions and more co-operation, but they don't really have an effective tool to go beyond that. The provinces have all of those legislative powers.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Ms. Bragagnolo, I'm curious as to your take.

You've also talked about the need for accountability. We know that Hockey Canada, for example, had its funding suspended and then recently restored. In my estimation and in the estimation of many other critics, there wasn't sufficient evidence to restore that funding.

What type of message does that send, in terms of the establishment of sport culture in a country, when that happens?

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo: Again, as I mentioned, I think we're so behind by not having these governance audits across the country. We need, as Mr. McLaren said, appropriate professionals who have the appropriate capacity. Audits will ensure that organizations are capable and doing what they say they are going to do.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That's it, Rachael.

We're now going to the Liberals, with Tim Louis.

We have Tim for five minutes, please.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to all of our witnesses for being here for such an important study.

Ms. Bragagnolo, I'd like to start where we left off when I heard you speaking last about the power imbalance. Because of that power imbalance, sexual abuse charges are not being brought forward.

Those are staggering numbers. You said that 60% of people didn't think anything would be done to help them. Again, another 60% of people didn't think anything would happen to the person who was being accused. Can you expand on that and come up with some sort of solution? You didn't have time last time.

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo: Yes, I think it emphasizes the importance of independence in our reporting mechanisms. As some of my other colleagues have mentioned, it's the importance of whistleblowing protection as well.

The leading research in sexual harassment in sport highlights that harassment and abuse appear to be higher at the elite level. When referring to sextortion specifically, our results show that it's happening to the same degree in grassroots sport. This is an area in which we are significantly underserved here in Canada. Our current reporting mechanism is not able and does not have the capacity to help this group of people. The resources are completely in another direction.

For BIPOC respondents specifically, they were two times more concerned about career repercussions if they reported, so they did not report. Eighty-one per cent of our BIPOC respondents listed it as their number one reason for not reporting. That's compared to 34% of those who identified as white. Not only are we not seeing a lot of trust in our system, but we're also seeing that the most vulnerable people in our community are suffering immensely.

Again, independence is of crucial importance here.

Mr. Tim Louis: Would you be able to submit some of those studies here for our report? That would be very helpful.

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo: Yes.

Mr. Tim Louis: Since you have experience here and internationally, is there a desire for other countries to work on safe sport—possibly together? You mentioned Wales, the U.K., the Netherlands and Belgium. Can we learn from these other countries, or do they have a slightly different system?

As we heard from Mr. McLaren, there's a lot of fragmentation between provincial and national. What studies can we learn from?

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo: Absolutely, we can learn from our European counterparts. As I mentioned, Wales is doing a fantastic job right now, and UK Sport as well. There are some others—the Netherlands.

I'd like to say something just in regard to some opposition to the inquiry, concerning the amount of time that it would take to do an inquiry. For governance audits, they don't typically exceed a period of two months. They can be done simultaneously. Many could be done at the same time. My seasoned colleagues who work specifically in sport governance have been doing this since 2011 and 2014. They generally only bill for five business days, which is generally independent of the scale of the organization. This is something that we really seriously need to consider. It needs to start now. It's not just auditing NSOs. It's Sport Canada, all of the safe sport, for-profit entities, and our reporting mechanisms as well.

Thank you.

● (1225)

Mr. Tim Louis: Thank you.

I'll turn to Dr. Carpentier.

In this cultural change, we know the provinces and territories have that key role. I believe you said that you serve on a provincial sports organization board. Most of our athletes are local. They're in our communities. That's under provincial jurisdiction. We see the challenges. How can the federal government work to ensure that those provinces and territories handle abuses and help with safe sport practices?

[Translation]

Dr. Joëlle Carpentier: The answer is complex. At the provincial level, the implementation of mechanisms for athletes to make whistleblowing reports is fairly recent, and we see their limitations as they are used.

[English]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Joëlle Carpentier: For example, we look at what happens once whistleblowing is done and what the implications are for confidentiality and anonymity. We also see what measures are put in place with respect to coaches, administrators, or organizations that are the subject of these whistleblowers.

It's hard to answer you in just 30 seconds. In summary, I would say that there are some limitations in that these mechanisms are still new. So we need to continue to test and improve them.

[*English*]

Mr. Tim Louis: Thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Tim.

We'll now go to Sébastien Lemire for two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. McLaren, I first want to express my appreciation for your testimony today. I must say that your appearance before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women had raised a question in my mind. On the issue of non-disclosure and confidentiality agreements, I was under the impression that your reports leaned more towards protecting organizations.

What can we do to minimize the cover-ups and avoidance by executives, and particularly those at Soccer Canada? People like Mr. Montagliani, Mr. Montopoli, Mr. Reed, or Mr. Bontis may have used elements of your report to buy time and a better public image, rather than to change things in their organization. It may be that while a report is in progress, public opinion has time to move on. When it comes to real action, however, we're still waiting.

What do you think about this situation?

[*English*]

Mr. Richard McLaren: Well, I'm not quite sure how to answer your question, sir.

There's no doubt that sports administrators often try to protect themselves rather than have a greater objective of what the sport administration and the sporting body are absolutely there to do and are trying to do.

However, when it comes to work that I do, like investigative work... I had this conversation with the board of Canada Soccer. I was unwilling to do any work with them unless any work that I did was totally put into the public domain after it was completed. I had to actually appear before the board to persuade them that this was the right way to go, and eventually they agreed with that, so my report is totally in the public domain. I wouldn't have done the work if it was not. I think, when you're doing independent work, that's an important feature to remember: Make sure it has to be made public.

However, even so, yes, sports administrators can take the report. If they give you a long enough period of time, people may lose interest in the particular issues that you're looking at. I don't think that's true of some of the topics we're talking about today with re-

spect to safe sport; I don't think people lose interest. With some other forms of corruption—fraud, etc.—yes, that happens.

I think that the best way for that to not happen... I've forgotten which of our witnesses said this, but education about governance and the role of being on one of these boards is a very important thing. It is generally not provided to members of sporting boards, and it should be, so that they learn their obligations, including bringing their own integrity to the process and not using the process to hide and protect themselves.

That's the best I can do for an answer, sir.

● (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: No, Madam Chair, I'm going to be honest: my time is up.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Peter Julian.

Peter, you have two and a half minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: I would take Mr. Lemire's remaining 30 seconds, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: It doesn't work that way.

Go ahead, Peter.

Mr. Peter Julian: Ms. Bookal and Mr. McLaren, I'd like to come back to both of you.

Ms. Bookal, we know that organizations like Hockey Canada made commitments to combat racism within their national sports organization. It did not meet those obligations, yet funding is streaming to Hockey Canada as we speak.

These are the kinds of issues that I think are very frustrating. If we know that racialized victims are less comfortable reporting crimes that occur, this is something that, as a society, we need to combat. However, we have a very porous financing structure, and Sport Canada basically gives money out even if organizations aren't meeting their obligations.

I'll come back to... Do you feel that national sports organizations should be meeting their obligations before they receive public funding? Do you feel, as well, that a public inquiry is warranted, so that we can get to the bottom of all these issues that have permeated sports and created a sporting crisis in this country over the last few years?

Ms. Shauna Bookal: Yes, I believe that a public inquiry or a report card, if you want to call it that....

We've said it a couple of times. When you look at countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand and Australia, they all do report cards on their NSOs or their respective organizations. They post them publicly. It's not like they're held in private where people cannot see them. They give a report card. It's posted so they can see exactly where the sport organization stands. It's not just with anti-racism, but we're talking about across the whole EDI sector, including where they stand with equality, inclusion and everything from that end.

Also, in one country—I can't remember off the top of my head—they have to set yearly goals. They have to attain those yearly goals. If they don't attain the yearly goals, they have to explain publicly why it was not done.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. McLaren, go ahead on the same questions.

Mr. Richard McLaren: I think we need to have audits. I agree with that. We need to do 360-degree reviews of individuals who are on boards—which can be part of an audit—so you can assess the proper functioning of the governance process of that organization.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I now go to Kevin Waugh for five minutes, please.

Kevin.

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

This is interesting.

Do we blow up Sport Canada? They're part of the problem here. They know first-hand. They were told by Gymnastics Canada that they had an issue. They were told by Hockey Canada that they had an issue, and they did nothing. The funding should have been pulled from Hockey Canada in 2018, and it wasn't.

What do we do with Sport Canada? It's almost like, what do we do with OSIC?

Mr. McLaren, I'll go to you. You've hit it right on. The grassroots couldn't care less about the provincial bodies, and the provincial bodies couldn't care less about the national bodies.

Here you have OSIC gobbling up lots of money. Realistically, all they have to worry about would be the national bodies, because I know the provincial authorities couldn't care less about OSIC or grassroots either. You've mentioned it, and I've talked about it for a long time here.

This is the problem we have in sports in the country, where grassroots couldn't care less about provincial authorities and vice versa. That's a problem we have in this country right now. It's a deep problem.

Mr. McLaren, comment on that.

• (1235)

Mr. Richard McLaren: I agree with you. It's a major problem that's been part of all the work that I've done in Canada and have observed.

The funding that OSIC has, for example, can go only to the elite, high-performance athletes who are under the governorship and control authority of the national sporting organization. They don't have the authority to go any further.

There are some mechanisms by which you could develop a grassroots, club, provincial and federal national body structure and buy into a much better system than what we have, but that would have to come from the bottom up. It can't come from the top down. That's the problem. The top down doesn't have the authority or the jurisdiction. Many of our sporting bodies nationally don't get along well with their provincial.... That problem carries on all the way down the chain from there.

We should look for good examples of clubs, provincial organizations and national—there are a couple—that operate well and effectively, and try to encourage that. That's the way out of that problem, I think.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you.

Ms. Bragagnolo, I saw your head bobbing there. What are your thoughts on what I just said?

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo: Yes. I think something that's worth mentioning is the need for, again, accountability but also the appropriate capacity of those in boards and those running NSOs. At any level, to eliminate and address this, there's a need for interdisciplinary teams who should be undertaking these safe sport investigations, audits, inquiries and reporting mechanisms.

By interdisciplinary teams, I mean those that include independent sport governance experts; certified, registered mental health professionals; and human rights legal professionals. These kinds of people are crucial, but it is not common practice here. Advanced specific expertise is required to help with these kinds of assessments, but having a law degree or having extensive experience in governance or being an athlete does not necessarily equate to appropriate expertise in handling abuse and allegations in a trauma-informed, survivor-centric manner, especially if your governance experience is solely in a system that has been broken.

I think these governance audits will help determine the capacity and also help these organizations to evolve and realize where some of their holes are—for example, the lack of registered certified mental health professionals, the lack of ethicists on ethics committees, and the lack of sports governance and independent professionals; or, if entities are hired, they're not considering gender mainstreaming or intersectionality and don't represent that in their practice.

These are all current problems in the Canadian sport landscape. We can use interdisciplinary experts to help us assess these types of governance audits to make sure people who are running our sport are able to do so—

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Okay. I want to go to Dr. Carpentier.

You mentioned result-based systems, yet in Canada it's all high performance. How do you tell the public the difference, that everything shouldn't be on the table for high performance, but in fact it should be just for participation and building up to high performance, which could take decades in this country?

[Translation]

Dr. Joëlle Carpentier: Currently, the funding system in Canada is based very much on medal potential, especially short-term medal potential.

In other countries, there are funding systems that are based on potential within a 12-year time horizon, for example, or on an athlete's development plan for the next 12 to 15 years.

When you're in an Olympic cycle, you're looking at medal potential at the next Olympics. So we're in a very high performance system. That doesn't leave time for people at lower levels to put everything in place to ultimately get to sustainable results over time. That's what I'm referring to mostly when I say the funding system is problematic.

• (1240)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Carpentier. We've gone well over time on that one.

We'll go to the Liberals and Mr. Bittle.

Chris, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to start with Mr. McLaren.

First, I'd like to say that your desk looks eerily similar to my desk when I was a lawyer.

You were mentioning the different structures and about their being from the bottom up. In the absence of that, do you think there is any federal or provincial legislation that can be brought into effect to make the system better in terms of the protections that you would like to see?

Mr. Richard McLaren: Maybe it's not legislation that makes a system better but convening the forums and discussions and trying to act as the party that brings together the national governing body with the provincial and lower echelons of the sport. It's probably a more effective way to go than trying to simply influence everything at the top level and hope that it has a filter-down effect from there.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much.

I'm wondering if I can ask a question about international sports organizations. We haven't really discussed it too much in this committee—a little bit in terms of Canada Soccer and other organizations. Is there a problem for Canadian sports organizations, when many of these international sports organizations are opaque and non-transparent, with maybe suggestions of corruption within them?

Mr. Richard McLaren: There certainly is. If you start with the Olympic world, they have the IOC. They then recognize an international federation as being the worldwide body for a particular sport,

which then, in turn, recognizes the national body as being, within that nation, in charge of the sport.

I've done some investigations of international federations that demonstrate the very poor quality of leadership that international federations have on the whole. One of the biggest problems is that there's far too much concentration of power in one or two senior members, usually a president and a maybe an executive director or chief operating officer.

I notice the same impact when I look at some of the national sports organizations in Canada. Of course, that's because they take their whole model from the international sphere, and the international federations take their model from the IOC. In part, it's flawed from the top right down.

Mr. Chris Bittle: That's fair enough.

I see, Madam Chair, that the bells are ringing. I don't know if there's will amongst the members to just keep going for the remaining 15 minutes.

I see that Mrs. Thomas has her hand up.

The Chair: Rachael.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Chair, I believe that Mrs. Thomas has a suggestion that, after I'm done, we have two minutes for each party.

There is consent, I think, on the floor for that, Madam Chair.

A voice: That's a good idea.

The Chair: All right.

Go ahead, Chris. Continue with your line of questioning.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much.

Madam Carpentier, it's almost in popular culture that we see this vision of the angry coach demanding that his or her team win that championship. We've talked about quotes and the old line, "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." Is winning at all costs so baked into sports, or can we extract that to a more positive model?

[Translation]

Dr. Joëlle Carpentier: You're quite right: it's really caught up in the sports culture. So it's the whole culture that needs to change, looking at what we idealize and who we set up as role models.

That's why, in my talk, I talked a lot about the importance of scientific knowledge. The science shows us that, contrary to what you might think, it's not the coaches or the behaviours we're seeing now that are most successful in the long run. So we need to make the science available and get it out to people to train and inform them. That's how a culture change can happen.

• (1245)

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle: You discussed Canada's transitioning away from its short-term model. There's been, from yourself and other witnesses, the discussion of other countries' doing it better. Has there been another country like Canada that was focused this way on short-term goals and that has transitioned away to better outcomes, in your mind?

[Translation]

Dr. Joëlle Carpentier: England and Norway are the two most popular examples right now. England made the transition a few years ago from a short-term to a longer-term funding system. Norway also has a similar system in place, which is more focused on long-term potential.

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Thank you so much.

I believe I have only a few seconds left, Madam Chair.

Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Chris.

Now we're going to go to the other round. As was suggested, and I didn't hear or see anyone object to the suggestion, we'll do two minutes each.

I cannot hear the bells, so I don't know how long we have. If we give everyone the chance in another round, then we should go to 15 minutes—if that gives us enough time, because we should leave 15 minutes before the actual vote.

We'll start with the Conservatives.

Mr. Shields.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think in 15 minutes we're already into halfway through the voting time, but I'll go quickly.

Mr. McLaren, if I read the media, it's sort of a national disaster if the Toronto Maple Leafs don't win their first round, having not won since 2004.

Having watched the last one in 1967, I will ask this: When you say to change the culture here—and we've heard that said—how do we change it? To me, when you see the headlines about how the Toronto Maple Leafs live and die, and that the city is done for if they don't win the first round, this is huge in the sense of culture and pressure.

Mr. Richard McLaren: I think you have to understand what the foundations of all those attitudes are, so you have to do an assessment of attitudes. That comes from survey work. We did this with Gymnastics Canada.

Then you have to establish a multidisciplinary group that covers all of the requirements. We're talking about psychology, medicine and psychiatry, along with marketing, finance and all the other traditional areas of sports governance.

You have to put them all together and get working on what are the foundational problems that you have in hockey or gymnastics or any other sport, and then, from that, work on the changes that need to be undertaken to change the attitudes, to change the culture.

Mr. Martin Shields: FIFA, when it becomes money in the sense of what we've seen in FIFA over the last 50 years.... When money shows up as part of Canadian soccer, all of a sudden we now have a whole lot of problems in Canadian soccer at the professional level. Is money at the root of this?

Mr. Richard McLaren: Money can be and in some cases is a corrupting factor, for sure.

Mr. Martin Shields: How do we solve that one?

Mr. Richard McLaren: I'm not sure that I have a good answer for that, sir.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shields.

I now go to Mr. Housefather for the Liberals.

Anthony, you have two minutes, please.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you, Madam Chair. Excuse me for one second. I apologize. I didn't think you were getting to me.

My question is for Mr. McLaren.

Mr. McLaren, you did your very good report on the Bob Birarda case at Canada Soccer. I have a question for you. We have Charmaine Crooks, the president of Canada Soccer, coming to us on Thursday. What are the questions you would like to ask Ms. Crooks about the way Canada Soccer handled the Birarda case?

Mr. Richard McLaren: Well, of course, she wasn't involved in that at all. She wasn't part of the executive board or any of those decisions, because that was 2008 and her role is much more recent than that, but I think the questions are these.

Why was it necessary to have this “negotiated exit”, as I described it in my remarks, which allows somebody to leave an organization and for which the real reasons are not revealed and never enter the public domain?

Then, why did they fail to keep records? There was no investigation report. There were no board minutes. There was no transparency in the governance process.

Also, what have you done now to change how those things would be handled were you required to do some other investigation in 2023?

• (1250)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. McLaren, she was part of the board more recently, when your report was done. She has been part of the board for the last many years. It took until after your report and Mr. Birarda being convicted for the board to make any announcement about Mr. Birarda being suspended from soccer. Do you believe that Canada Soccer is now being more diligent, based on all of the facts you've seen?

The Chair: Please give us a very concise reply, Mr. McLaren.

Mr. Richard McLaren: I think they need to be more open and forthright in their replies, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thank you, Anthony.

I will go very quickly to Sébastien Lemire.

Sébastien, you have two minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. McLaren, by naming the whistleblowers, your report will also have directed attention to the victims. Now, the experts have spoken about the importance of preserving the anonymity of victims, given the trauma that can be caused to them. They also talked about the importance of treating victims fairly and offering them certain services.

Given the advice of these experts, do you have any regrets about confidentiality?

What recommendations would you make to preserve the anonymity of victims and protect them, while ensuring that you get their testimony and participation in the various reporting or investigative processes to shed light on the events?

[*English*]

Mr. Richard McLaren: If you think I suggested that it wasn't important, either I misspoke or you misunderstood, because I think confidentiality's extremely important.

In fact, the only way you can really work with a whistle-blower is if they have sufficient trust that confidentiality will be maintained, because their biggest fear is retaliation, either by other athletes or by other coaches or members of the sport. I think that fundamental to whistle-blowing is the need for confidentiality and protection. When you conduct an investigation—

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Actually, Ms. Bragagnolo seems to want to respond as well, so I would like to give her the last 30 seconds.

[*English*]

Ms. Whitney Bragagnolo: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think it's important that we have, as I mentioned, certified registered mental health professionals involved.

As well, I think the number of sports lawyers in the Canadian system is overlooked. I would argue that human rights lawyers would be better equipped to handle abuse cases, due to their specialized knowledge in areas such as gender-based violence, discrimination and human rights violations.

Additionally, they may approach cases from a broader perspective that takes into account gender mainstreaming and intersectionality and also looks at the root causes—

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: *Meegwetch*, thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have a vote call.

I'm sorry, but we really need to let Peter Julian have his two minutes.

Thank you very much. I'm so sorry to cut you guys off.

Peter, go ahead for two minutes.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. McLaren, you probably saw the testimony by Steven Reed a few days ago at committee. I was shocked—I think all members of the committee were shocked—to hear that he felt completely powerless to stop, in any way, a convicted sexual offender, Bob Birarda, from accessing more victims.

Do you believe that is true, that people in positions of responsibility are powerless to stop these perpetrators, these offenders, from accessing victims? What would you suggest that we might ask Canada Soccer president Charmaine Crooks, when she comes, as she has been summoned to, this Thursday?

Mr. Richard McLaren: I'm sorry, but I did not see Mr. Reed's testimony in front of the committee, so I don't really have a comment on that.

I think it's not the case that you're powerless to do anything. For example, a coach has to have a coaching licence and report to the coaching association as to what's gone on, but then you can't have a negative explanation for why the termination has occurred, so they don't make those reports. That then allows the perpetrator to hide behind a “personal reasons” exit and allows the sport body to really justify in its own mind that it has no basis on which to take any further action. There is a basis on which it can take further action. It would be by way of reporting to other organizations and influencing whether or not the person could continue to coach, for example, in the illustration you're using.

• (1255)

Mr. Peter Julian: What would you ask Charmaine Crooks on Thursday? What would you suggest we ask her about?

Mr. Richard McLaren: I'm sorry, but I don't know what I could add quickly to what's already been discussed there.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The time is up, Peter, because the members have to vote.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming and being able to answer some complex questions. Thank you very much on behalf of the committee.

This meeting is now adjourned. Thank you.

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