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# Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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Chair: The Honourable Hedy Fry





## Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

Thursday, June 1, 2023

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to meeting No. 84 of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

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

[*English*]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of Thursday, June 23, 2022.

Now, while public health authorities no longer mandate masks, I'm going to ask you to think about the fact that COVID is not gone, and nor are other respiratory viruses. Wear a mask in a closed room if you feel you need to protect yourself and others.

At the bottom of your screen, for those of you who are virtual, you will see a little globe. If you press that globe, it will give you English or French so that you can get translation. I also want to take this opportunity to remind you not to take shots of the screen or to take any pictures of this meeting. It will be on the website, and you'll be able to see it there.

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.

Just so you know, keep your mikes on mute. Only unmute when the chair asks you to speak or recognizes you. All questions and everything should go through the chair. Those are just a couple of little House rules for those of you who have not done this before.

Let's begin our study on safe sport in Canada. We have two sets of witnesses. Representing the Canadian Fencing Federation, we have Yann Bernard, president; John French, vice-president, by video conference; and David Howes, executive director, by video conference. For the second group, representing the Canadian Olympic Committee, we have David Shoemaker, chief executive officer and secretary-general.

Welcome, witnesses. You will have five minutes to present. You can have as many speakers as you want, but you still have only five minutes to do your presentation.

I will begin with Yann Bernard.

You have five minutes, please, Mr. Bernard.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yann Bernard (President, Canadian Fencing Federation):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Members of the committee, my name is Yann Bernard. I have been president of the Canadian Fencing Federation since 2020 and a member of its board of directors since 2018. I am also vice-president of the Pan American Fencing Confederation and vice-president of the Alliance francophone d'escrime. I am accompanied, via videoconference, by John French, vice-president of our federation, and David Howes, our executive director.

I started fencing in 1984 at the age of 12 and have been Canadian champion and vice-champion on several occasions. I was selected as a member of the junior national team several times and have represented Canada internationally at the senior level. On numerous occasions, I have also acted as an athlete representative within the federation, on the Canadian Olympic Committee and at Athletes-CAN.

Fencing has always been a part of my life, bringing me joy, sadness, personal success and lasting friendships. It has also helped me through what I consider some of the hardest times an individual has to endure.

I am a lawyer by profession and, for the past 30 years, have essentially practised in the fields of education and amateur sport as a legal adviser, barrister and solicitor for private colleges and school boards. I specialize in labour law, particularly disciplinary and human rights and freedoms cases. I have also worked for many stakeholders in the world of amateur sport, particularly athletes, sport federations, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport and the World Anti-Doping Agency. Lastly, the Canadian Olympic Committee honoured me by appointing me to the Canadian team's ombudsman at two Pan American Games and three Olympic Games, in Vancouver, London and Sochi.

Protecting the rights of students, athletes and the people they associate with has thus been a central feature of my professional life. That's all by way of introduction.

I want to thank you for the opportunity you have given us to participate, to the best of our ability, in the important work you are doing for amateur sport. To begin with, I would simply and humbly say that the impression that emerges from the sometimes disturbing testimony that I have heard, and from current discussions in the world of sport, is that a review of the situation of amateur sport is necessary in order to build or rebuild adequate trust among the various stakeholders.

The ambient negativity and suspicion that currently prevail are untenable, and the truth must be restored. As to whether this review will have to be conducted by the courts, an expert panel or another structure, that will obviously be up to you to decide. However, it seems clear to me that it will have to focus on much broader matters than the current situation regarding safety in sport because all of these matters are related. The interpersonal relations issues and problems that follow therefrom, particularly misconduct and other, even worse behaviour, cannot be isolated from other fundamental issues such as financial resources, the availability and attractability of morally sound and competent human resources, competition culture and society's general expectations of young athletes and those around them.

We have long known that there is no point in addressing bad behaviour and crime in society without considering all contextual information regarding the economy, culture and education. Why then would matters be different for amateur sport? I therefore believe that the issues you are addressing here are crucially important but that this is only part of the equation and that we will resolve nothing in the long term unless the best possible individuals examine the situation as a whole and have the ability to get to the bottom of things.

Thank you. Before answering your questions, more specifically on the situation of fencing, I want to let my colleague John French say a few words that, I think, accurately reflect our federation's position.

• (1545)

[English]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. French.

**Mr. John French (Vice-President, Canadian Fencing Federation):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I apologize in advance to the committee and to my colleagues who are here with me today—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. I couldn't hear you very well.

Thank you. You finished with one minute and 20 seconds left. There you go. Very well done.

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Mr. French is going to finish.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Geneviève Desjardins):** I believe he has part of the statement, but his microphone doesn't appear to have been selected.

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** I've spoken, Madam Chair. I'm asking Mr. French to finish our introduction.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. That's what I thought you said, but I'm looking for Mr. French and—

**An hon. member:** We can't hear him. That's the problem.

**The Chair:** Mr. French, can you say something so that we can see whether we can hear you?

**Mr. John French:** Hello. Can you hear me?

**The Chair:** There you go.

**Mr. John French:** I apologize in advance to the committee and to my colleagues who are here with me today, but I am going to deviate from my prepared written statement and speak from my heart.

Earlier today, Marina Gantsevich, the wife of one of our national coaches, mother of a high-performance director and my dearest friend, passed away far too soon after suffering a sudden aneurysm. She was taken off life support less than an hour ago. While I'm not directly involved in the sport, anyone who knows the Gantsevich family will understand that Marina was the rock on which their life-long commitment to sport was built and a foundation for the countless people who benefited from their work, my family and me included. She will be sorely missed.

I would like to request that our discussion today recognize this and be conducted with the appropriate respect and consideration.

I would also like to humbly suggest that it's possible to have difficult but necessary conversations in a respectful and collegial manner, and that it is seriously wished to further the clear need to improve our sport system for all who work, volunteer and participate in it. It is possible to do so in a manner that is just, open, follows due process, is respectful of different perspectives and, most of all, is done with kindness.

I would also like to request that the privacy of the Gantsevich family be respected at this very difficult time.

Thank you.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. French. Our condolences to you on the loss of your very close friend.

Now we're going to go to the second witness, Mr. David Shoemaker from the Canadian Olympic Committee.

You have five minutes, Mr. Shoemaker.

**Mr. David Shoemaker (Chief Executive Officer and Secretary General, Canadian Olympic Committee):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** I'll give you a shout when you have 30 seconds left.

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** That sounds good. Hopefully, I'll be done before then.

[Translation]

Madam Chair and distinguished members of the committee, I want to thank you for the important work this committee is doing and for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I also want to thank all those who have shown courage by speaking out to share what they have experienced. Although their stories are disturbing, they have shed a powerful light on the major changes that are necessary at all levels of sport in Canada.

[English]

The Canadian Olympic Committee is a non-governmental, non-profit corporation with a dual responsibility under the Olympic Charter to prepare and bring team Canada to the Olympic Games and to promote positive change based on the Olympic values and through a variety of programs. We are 99% funded by the private sector, and we invest tens of millions of dollars a year in Canadian sport.

As the second-largest funder of national sport in Canada, we are in many ways the federal government's partner in sport, and we depend on a healthy Canadian sport system in order to have success both at games and at home as we leverage sport for positive change.

Though I deeply believe that sport, when done right, is an incredible force for good, like you and many of the witnesses who have appeared here, I and my colleagues at the COC believe that an unsafe sport system is an unacceptable sport system.

During my four years working at the COC, I have seen two overarching issues that I believe are germane to this committee. One was the lack of a unified, centralized and independent complaint mechanism based on a universally agreed upon code of conduct. The second is a lack of alignment in the Canadian sport system, from the club level to provincial and national sport organizations.

With the completion of the universal code of conduct to prevent and address maltreatment in sport, which we call the UCCMS; the formation of Abuse-Free Sport and the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, known as OSIC; and the recent announcements on governance reform, I believe the system has made important strides in addressing the first issue. For us at the COC, this complements more than eight years and \$50 million of athlete-informed investment into athlete well-being, good governance, safe sport and inclusion.

I don't want to give the impression that I think our work as a system is done. I think that an inquiry that hears survivors and is trauma-informed should happen, and I'm glad Minister St-Onge has committed to one. I believe we also need a registry of people who have violated the UCCMS, to ensure that they can't simply move sports or jurisdictions.

I hope that when the remit of the inquiry is announced, part of it will be to examine the lack of alignment in Canadian sport. Based on my experience as a sport administrator, and as a parent of three children, I expect it will be found that there are hundreds of thousands of incredible volunteers, tens of thousands of amazing coaches and administrators, and millions of happy, healthy and safe participants, but also that there are gaps and that more alignment is needed to ensure that the tools we have in place at the national level are also available to participants at the club, provincial and territorial levels.

I don't think this change will be easy. I believe deeply that an under-resourced system is a safe sport risk, and it's going to require a high degree of co-operation between the federal and provincial and territorial governments. I will reiterate that change is happening. It has been too slow for the witnesses who shared their tragic stories before this committee. All of us in sport, especially those of us in

leadership positions, bear responsibility for that. We have to ensure that, going forward, it doesn't happen again.

I have been fortunate to spend nearly my entire career working in sport around the world, and though I have highlighted two major issues that I believe deserve this committee's full attention, in my four years at the COC, I have also seen the incredible impact sport has had on Canadian society. I believe the athletes who are proudly representing Canada on the world stage and inspiring Canadians every day deserve a gold medal system to support them every step of the way.

• (1555)

[Translation]

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** I am prepared to answer your questions in the language of your choice. However, given the sensitive nature of the subject of safe sport, I will be more comfortable answering you in English. Thank you for your understanding.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Shoemaker.

Now we go to the question and answer section of the meeting. The first round is a six-minute round. It means that everyone has six minutes in which to ask you a question and within which you must answer. I'd like everybody to be as crisp and as focused as possible, and I'm looking at Peter Julian here.

We will begin with the Conservatives, and Martin Shields.

Martin, start, please.

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the comment for Mr. Julian.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

Part of the motion we passed included Mr. Brian Ward, the CFF safe sport representative. Is there a reason Mr. Ward is not here today?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** That's a good question. Mr. Ward is actually our independent third party. Under Sport Canada's rules, we are required to have a third party that is completely independent of our federation.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** I understand that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Yes.

When we received your invitation, I obviously forwarded it to him. I know he has had discussions with the committee and that he was told that he didn't have to appear here since he wasn't part of the organization. That's all I know.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** That's absolutely not right. He volunteered to appear. We know that, so who told him not to come?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** I apologize. I had the list of federation people who had been invited to appear. I called him to ensure that he would be here. I didn't want to communicate anything in his stead, given his independent status. He told me that, after he had contacted Mr. MacPherson, the clerk, I assume, the decision was made not to invite him. I have no control over that. If that's the gist of your question, I can assure you that doesn't come from us.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** I appreciate that.

What is the status of a certain coach by the name of Kyle Foster?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** He's a currently active Ontario coach. Are you asking me what his status is?

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Yes, his status is that he's still a certified coach who is coaching currently.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** As far as I know, yes.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Has your organization ever imposed an NDA on individuals reporting abuse?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** No.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** There are no NDAs out there.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** People who are victims of abuse or who have complained about abuse to our federation are free to discuss it.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** How many cases of alleged abuse is your organization dealing with?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Pardon me, but would you please repeat the question?

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** How many cases of abuse is your organization dealing with?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** It's impossible for me to answer you fully and correctly because people complain directly to the independent third party. We encourage them to do that so that we have no control or influence over the potential result.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** The results of those investigations are reported to you.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** I've known of 10 or 12 situations since Mr. Howes and I have been in our positions. They may concern an altercation between two referees or a parent raising his or her voice to a referee, but also much more serious allegations, all of which have obviously been investigated. Penalties have of course been imposed where necessary.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Do you keep a record of the results for your organization that have gone to the third party? The report comes back to you. Do you keep a complete record of those reports that come back to you?

• (1600)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Yes, we keep that information.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Would you submit those records to us?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** We definitely won't do it publicly. If we're required by law to do so, we'll be pleased to provide them to you, but those records obviously contain highly confidential information.

We imposed a public sanction in 2020 for the first time in our history. It had never been done before. I don't know if that's done in many organizations, but, in 2020, we decided to publicize the sanction, and I believe we'll continue that practice in future. This raises essential and major right-to-privacy issues, but sometimes in a functioning disciplinary system you have to be able to access certain information. These exceptions should be provided for under the law to avoid raising civil liability issues.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** I understand that. Would you submit the redacted reports to us—whatever you can?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** We'll submit what we can submit. I don't have the records with me, but we would have to look at them first.

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** I understand that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Personally—

[English]

**Mr. Martin Shields:** You understand that we're dealing with witness statements that have alleged things in person. We need transparency from your organization.

If we're going to make recommendations and you're not transparent with respect to the witness statements we heard, then we have a problem.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** We definitely don't intend to lack transparency. I can assure you of that. We simply have to consider the legal aspects of the answers we provide.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bernard. Thank you, Martin. The time is up.

I would like to ask you to submit those documents to the clerk. If you have it in English and French, that would be great. If not, we'll have to send it off to be translated.

This committee, as a standing committee of the House of Commons, can deal with documents that are private. We have done it before and we are able to do that while ensuring that we do not publicize what you send us.

Please send it to the clerk if you can. Thank you.

Now I go to the second questioner in the first round. For the Liberals, I have Anthony Housefather.

You have six minutes, please.

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

[*Translation*]

Thanks to the witnesses.

Mr. Bernard, you answered a question from Mr. Shields, and I want to give you a chance to reconsider it. You said there have been no non-disclosure agreements. Are you really sure that, in the history of the Canadian Fencing Federation, there have been no non-disclosure agreements binding on, for example, employees who have been dismissed and that nothing was signed in connection with the settlements? Are you really sure of that?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Not to my knowledge. There may have been non-disclosure agreements binding on us, but we've never entered into any that were binding on athletes or victims. I would consider that unacceptable.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** All right. I wanted to give you a chance to say so because you're under oath.

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** What follows clearly isn't a non-disclosure agreement, but certain policies apply in the disciplinary process of handling a complaint. For example, when a victim receives the report—because we give the victims or complainant a copy of the report—that person has an obligation not to use it or make it public. However, regardless of the report, those individuals know their stories, and I know of no rule that could prevent them from discussing them, subject of course to the rights of the people they concern.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Absolutely.

[*English*]

Let me go to Mr. Shoemaker. I believe my colleagues will have some other questions for you, Mr. Bernard.

First of all, thank you to the Canadian Olympic Committee for the work that you do. I very much appreciate it. I know that you have people who work for the COC behind you. Whether it's Andrea Thomas, or whoever, I appreciate all the work that your office, which is based in Montreal, does.

You are a very good partner to the Government of Canada in terms of helping us look at the situations that this committee has heard about and trying to improve things.

I imagine you have heard much of the testimony that this committee has heard.

Have you been shocked by any of the testimony?

For example, were you shocked about Bob Birarda and the way that Canada Soccer dealt with him, or the way that Hockey Canada dealt with the settlement of a sexual assault allegation without minuting it?

What are the things that you've heard in testimony before the committee that shocked you the most, Mr. Shoemaker?

• (1605)

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** I tried to watch and listen to as much of the testimony as possible. I've found the stories to be tragic.

I also commend those athletes for sharing their stories. I think it's taken an immense amount of bravery to come forward. I believe it's our obligation as sports leaders to use those stories and to channel them to make this system a safer one.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Was there anything, for example, in terms of governance?

First off, let's establish that, as you've said, the COC doesn't oversee the national sporting bodies. You have no power to compel them to do anything. You have no power to enforce them to do things unless it relates to their participation in the Olympic Games and how they qualify athletes for the Olympic Games.

Is that correct?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** That's correct.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** COC can't discipline athletes just because it chooses to, unless, for example, it's a Ryan Lochte in Rio-type moment, when the conduct actually occurs in an Olympic Games. Is that correct?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** Generally speaking, that's correct as well.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Have you been aware, though, of the difficulties, for example, that many of the national federations had with respect to their governance in terms of...?

Were you surprised when you heard that Hockey Canada didn't minute things or that Canada Soccer had no record of when somebody was cast aside or fired for alleged sex assault complaints and they didn't track them and didn't tell anybody?

Was this a surprise to you, or did you know this already?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** No, this was a complete surprise to me and to my colleagues. We were not in a position to know this, so when we heard so many of these athletes come forward, their stories were shocking and horrific to us, yes.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** You talked a little about how we should deal with sexual misconduct going forward. That is certainly an issue that is of great importance. There's also the governance issue in terms of how a national federation should govern itself, ranging from athlete representation on boards to the question of having adequate policies and procedures in place—governance.

What recommendations would you give to this committee as we write our report? You were there when the minister announced some new actions. What recommendations would you give to our committee for when we write our report to the minister about better governance for national federations?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** Let me say that part was less shocking to us. Even before I arrived at the Canadian Olympic Committee, my colleagues had identified that there was a lack of uniformity among governance and standards for the over 60 sports organizations. We channelled thousands of hours of governance experts pro bono and created, with the help of these experts, a Canadian sport governance code.

Just last month, the Minister of Sport announced that it would be mandatory for all of sport. Frankly, my hope is that it will eliminate the flow chart you might need to follow what rules apply to which sport. It leads to how boards are composed, how leaders are selected, how athletes must be represented on boards, and the financial transparency that must be evident in national sports organizations. These are very important things that are now best practices and mandated for national sports organizations.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** I agree.

I have one last question.

One thing that has always been apparent is that there are certain federations, like hockey and soccer, that have monies flowing in, so they have the ability to do a lot of these things, whereas, for example, an organization like fencing may not have those revenues and may need a lot more help.

What do you suggest we recommend in order to give the smaller federations that have fewer financial resources more help?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** I'd like to hope that the measures that athletes ask for, so there is a place to go to complain about abuse and harassment free from fear or retribution, have been put in place at the national level.

My real concern is the alignment. There are millions of participants in sport at the provincial and club levels who don't have those same sorts of systems in place yet, and that's where I'd recommend we focus.

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

Thank you, Mr. Shoemaker.

Now I go to the Bloc Québécois and Sébastien Lemire.

You have six minutes, please, Sébastien.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Shoemaker, I think it would be appropriate for Tricia Smith to be here too, since our committee wanted to have her and we're discussing the governance of the Canadian Olympic Committee in particular. However, I thank you for being here.

When the International Olympic Committee adopts a position that differs from that of Canadians or their way of thinking, what's your priority and whom do you defend first.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** Our absolute obligation is to Canadians and to Canadian athletes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Thank you for that answer.

At the committee's last meeting on this study, we heard from representatives of the Own the Podium program. They told us they wanted to review their mission and said they were in favour of holding an independent public inquiry, which you just did as well.

In light of everything that's been stated publicly this past year, does the Canadian Olympic Committee also intend to review its mission and its mode of governance in order to showcase the athletes and a commitment to safe practice in sport?

• (1610)

[*English*]

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** I believe that we've already put in place the governance measures of which you speak. We have an athlete voice. We have six Olympians on the Canadian Olympic Committee board, two of whom come directly from our Athletes' Commission, Rosie MacLennan and Inaki Gomez, and broad board diversity from among several intersectionalities. Lest someone say we ought to review it, we've taken those steps already, and they're in place.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** I'd like us to discuss Julie Payette, who was hired in 2016 after Marcel Aubut resigned in 2015 as a result of a sex scandal.

Ms. Payette left the Canadian Olympic Committee in 2017 following two internal inquiries into her treatment of staff, including verbal harassment in one instance and, in another, a reprimand that left a young employee in tears. Did you check Ms. Payette's work history with the Montreal Science Centre before you hired her?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** I wasn't with the Canadian Olympic Committee at that time, so I can't speak to what happened in 2016 and 2017.



[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** I see.

In 2018, the Own the Podium program was placed under the patronage of former Governor General Ms. Payette.

The Canadian Olympic Committee didn't immediately contact the Privy Council to inform it of its concerns regarding Ms. Payette's appointment as Governor General. It could have done so, and that might have prevented certain awkward situations for Canadians. In 2020, the Privy Council made an independent third party responsible for shedding light on the treatment of Rideau Hall employees who claimed that the Governor General had publicly demeaned, reprimanded or humiliated them.

After everything we've seen to date in more than 16 sports federations, how could we expect those federations to act differently if Canada's highest sports body, the Canadian Olympic Committee, didn't automatically sound the alarm when it was necessary, particularly as a result of its connection with the Own the Podium program? What message does that send to Canadians? Could the Canadian Olympic Committee find itself in that situation once again?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** It's difficult for me to speak with knowledge of facts from the time when I wasn't in this role or wasn't with the Canadian Olympic Committee, but let me say this. As it related to the situation with Marcel Aubut when he was president of the Canadian Olympic Committee, an independent investigation was conducted that led to widespread recommendations that the COC entertained, all of which were accepted and implemented.

The Canadian Olympic Committee is now a shining example, I believe, of how governance can be done and should be done across Canadian sport. To a certain extent, it should give confidence to us, as a committee, that those national sports organizations and other organizations within our system can achieve the kind of change we need to see.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** The review of the professional experience of the heads of the sports federations made us realize that the vast majority of them had been on the Canadian Olympic Committee at one time or another in their careers. How do you explain this bridge between the Canadian Olympic Committee and the sports federations, and could you provide us with a list of the candidates responsible for hiring the heads of the sports federations? Furthermore, can we establish a link between the Canadian Olympic Committee and the sports federations, or is there ultimately a conflict of interest among those organizations?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** The link is that we're associated in sport and that athletes and coaches from the national sports organizations who achieve the highest level are ultimately invited to participate at the Olympic Games. That's why you see some overlap.

The reality is that the Canadian Olympic Committee has no oversight over any of the national sports organizations, which is why we focused on investing in enhancements, sharing best practices, offer-

ing services and hoping that the national sports organizations take us up on them.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** When the representative of the Own the Podium program appeared, we learned that the high performance advisers are key witnesses of the athletes' environment and training. Why do you think they're inclined to resolve problem situations amicably or informally rather than formally or through a truly independent mechanism that would be satisfactory for the victims?

• (1615)

[*English*]

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** I'm sorry. I have done very well, so far, understanding all of your questions. I'm not sure I understand that one. I apologize.

**The Chair:** I think we're out of time, Sébastien. You can come back again in the second round.

Now, for the NDP, we have Peter Julian.

Peter, I singled you out because you were making a face at me when I said, "Be focused."

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):** I never make a face at you. I gaze at you in admiration, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

Thanks to the witnesses for being here today. We have questions, and we're very grateful that they are here to answer them.

Mr. Bernard, as you know, we've heard some quite impactful testimony concerning actions and events that have occurred at the Canadian Fencing Federation.

I'm going to read some of the concerns that one of the newspapers made public.

[*English*]

This is from CTV on March 23, 2023.

More than 50 current and former Canadian fencers have joined a growing call for a Canadian judicial inquiry on maltreatment in sport, saying the fear of retribution has kept them silent for nearly 20 years on fencing's toxic culture and abusive practices.

The article cites the group:

"Over the past 20 years, we have experienced various forms of emotional, physical and sexual abuse and misconduct."

It goes on:

Many are still feeling the psychological and physical impact, including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide attempts, the fencers said in the letter [to the minister].

[Translation]

At that time, on March 23, there had been no response from the federation. What steps did you take from the moment that letter was sent to the minister?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** First of all, that hit us hard. I'd never seen anything like it. I've been involved in fencing for 40 years, and I wouldn't have suspected what you just read. When I learned that, my first reaction was to take it at face value and accept that the letter had been written in good faith. So it had to be accepted as true until proven otherwise.

The first thing we did was to write to all our members and ask them to file complaints if they had witnessed a situation of that kind and to tell them we were listening and that there was no reason to fear reprisals, since they would be impossible under the current management team. We encouraged people to use the complaint mechanism and reminded them that it was independent and anonymous. There was no mechanism 20 years ago, and people might not have trusted the mechanism 10 years ago. Today, however, we have a mechanism, and it produces results. That's the first step that we took.

We took several others, but the second most important one is the following. Since we're short of time, I'll go directly to what happened after Emily Mason appeared before you. We invited her to the next meeting of our board of directors.

We reached out to her because, to that point, we hadn't been able to put a name to even one of the 50 persons concerned, since their group was anonymous. Our athlete representative had tried to contact the group but hadn't received a reply. We also tried to contact them but didn't get a response either. When we saw Ms. Mason here, we were able to put a name and face on the group. So we invited her to an in camera meeting of our board of directors, and she accepted our invitation. She didn't want to provide any more information beyond what she had given your committee, saying that she was waiting for my testimony today to see if she or her organization would cooperate with us as part of the working group to get a clearer understanding of the situation.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** How many responses did you receive to the letter you sent to all your members?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** None.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** No one answered.

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** No. In addition, when our athlete representative convened a meeting of all the athletes, no one reported any problems.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you.

Mr. Shoemaker, you mentioned a list of sanctions against a currently active coach.

[English]

When one of the federations that is part of the Canadian Olympic Committee puts a coach, a trainer or an athlete on a sanctions list, is that something that the Canadian Olympic Committee is aware of?

• (1620)

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** I'm not aware of a sanctions list. It's one of the things that I believe are absolutely necessary to come from the committee's work here. There needs to be a national safe sport registry.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** At this point, whenever one of the federations sanctions somebody, it's not information that is passed on to the Canadian Olympic Committee.

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** It's not necessarily. It could well be that it's the case, and I think that's part of the gap we've identified in this work.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Okay.

I wanted to ask you what the budget of the Canadian Olympic Committee is.

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** Roughly speaking, the operating budget is \$50 million per year.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Okay.

How much of that is devoted to safe sport? As you mentioned, there is some reaching out for best practices, but we're in a crisis—I think you acknowledged that in your opening statement—and the Canadian Olympic Committee is one of the most powerful sports organizations in the country. How much of your budget is devoted to providing those supports for those federations that may not have any resources at all?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** In cash alone it's been \$50 million in safe sport-related activities over the last eight years, and then we could add a whole host of value in kind that we get from our partners. We partner with consultancies, law firms, mental health resources, Deloitte, Queen's University Smith School of Business, Fasken, LifeWorks and so on. Those partners provide a whole host of services that we often channel through a program we call "Game Plan", which is a world-leading athlete support and athlete transition service.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Do you support a public inquiry?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** I do.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Peter.

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

I'll begin with Richard Martel for the Conservatives.

You have five minutes, please, Richard.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us today.

Mr. Bernard, do you think that a federation that promotes safe sport should ensure that none of its members or staff has a dark past involving abuse allegations, for example.

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Yes.

**Mr. Richard Martel:** And yet I see that Igor Gantsevich appears as the high performance director on your federation's organization chart. Is that possible?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Yes, he's our high performance director, on a part-time basis because we don't have enough money to afford a full-time director. Mr. French was talking about him earlier, and he has just lost his mother.

**Mr. Richard Martel:** However, hasn't he previously been the subject of certain allegations?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Apart from here?

**Mr. Richard Martel:** Yes.

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** His name has been mentioned before you.

**Mr. Richard Martel:** Nothing to—

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** What are you referring to?

**Mr. Richard Martel:** Last December we heard at a committee meeting that complaints had been filed against him.

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Emily Mason mentioned his name at a committee meeting. However, the problem I have is that no allegation was made in her testimony. She said she wasn't there to discuss the matter, but she used the word "abuse".

I admit I would prefer to see a fact or two associated with any allegation made to our independent third party so he can recommend, for example, that, based on the alleged facts, the federation finds it appropriate to take certain interim measures. That could be done.

**Mr. Richard Martel:** Mr. Bernard, on your website, you have a "Safe Sport" section and a "Sanctions" subsection. When you click on "Sanctions", you see a list of names. There's one person on that list right now. Is that correct?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** I haven't checked.

**Mr. Richard Martel:** Was that registry in effect before Minister St-Onge made it mandatory as part of his reform a few weeks ago?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Yes, it started with the case your colleague discussed earlier. That was the first time we did it.

**Mr. Richard Martel:** Posting this kind of list seems vague. What are your reasons for posting a name to that page? Is it because there has been a complaint or potentially unacceptable behaviour? How do you determine whether someone should be put on that list?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** There has to be something that merits it. In other words, a complaint has to have been filed, an investigation has to have been conducted in response to that complaint and the investigation has to have revealed enough facts for the complaint to be considered valid. Then it's up to the independent third party to decide whether it should be made public because that may not be the case.

• (1625)

**Mr. Richard Martel:** Is the coach then informed? It may be that the coach isn't informed and that everything is done without the coach knowing.

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** What do you mean?

**Mr. Richard Martel:** If allegations of unacceptable behaviour or psychological abuse are made against the coach, is the coach advised of the fact? The coach may be unaware of certain accusations because, in many cases, he or she strives for absolute performance.

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Absolutely.

What typically happens is that the investigator does nothing before getting the coach's version. So that's when the coach is informed.

In the past, we may have taken preventive action if we felt that the nature of the problem called for mediation or dialogue between the parties. That would happen in less serious cases. We take no risks if the athlete has the slightest chance of being harmed.

**Mr. Richard Martel:** Mr. Shoemaker, on December 1 last, the Canadian Olympic Committee adopted the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sport, which is part of the Abuse-Free Sport system. I have a concern about this reform and that of Minister St-Onge. How will we go about verifying it? You mentioned resources earlier. How will we be able to implement, verify, measure and observe these elements in order to begin taking action?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** The most important way to verify is to continue to listen to athletes' voices. Athletes' voices got us to that place, including those within our board, making it known that they needed a place independent of sport where athletes across this country could go to make complaints of abuse and maltreatment free from fear of retribution, and that's in place. Now that it's in place....

You're right; as one of the first signatories and adoptees of the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, we need to verify and listen to athletes to make sure that it's meeting those needs and, in fact, that athletes' voices and complaints are being made and investigated, and that they'll be properly adjudicated.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Shoemaker.

I think we are over the time at the moment.

We're going to go to the Liberals with Chris Bittle.

Chris, you have five minutes, please.

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

I would like to address the opening comments from Mr. French.

It reminded me of Andrea Skinner's comments when she was here, when they came to the committee blaming us more than their own organization. It's truly shocking that when there are allegations before us like this, where children's lives have been impacted to the point that it continues to impact them in adulthood, you come here and demand that we be nice.

The organizations that we may not have been nice to, Mr. Bernard and Mr. French, have been Hockey Canada and other organizations that have harmed children. This is who we're here to protect. It appears, even through your testimony here today, that you don't have an interest in making any changes. It's like, "They can come to us; we haven't heard anything from them."

I'll ask you this, because we've heard from Mr. Shoemaker and we've listened to the athletes' voices. You had 50 athletes who said that there is a fundamental problem, that your entire sport is rotten to the core and that your organization is rotten.

What actions have you taken, Mr. Bernard?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** I think we've had a misunderstanding. The idea wasn't to tell you we'll be doing nothing. I also notice that the time limits for giving answers make it impossible to give all the answers requested.

Mr. Julian, I was only able to mention two measures earlier. I would need more time to give you an overview of the situation and to outline all the actions we've taken. What we're going to do—

[English]

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** Let me stop you there.

We'll make the questions shorter if time is an issue.

Do you believe that there are structural problems with your organization, yes or no?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** I don't think the structures are currently a problem, and I think the right people are in place. What has to be done now—

[English]

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** Let me stop you there.

Do you disagree with Mr. Shoemaker and think you shouldn't listen to the athletes' voices? Your athletes are telling you there is a structural problem. You said with regard to the coach that Mr. Martel mentioned that there was a mention of abuse.

Don't you believe you have a positive obligation as guardians of children, looking out for children, to conduct an investigation to find out if your organization has a problem?

• (1630)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** The answer is yes, absolutely, and that's what we're doing.

As I said, we invited Fencing for Change to meet with us, now that we have an interlocutor. The next step will come after my appearance today because Ms. Mason has told us she would probably be prepared to cooperate on establishing a working, exchange and dialogue committee. Our purpose is to get a clearer understanding of what has prevented these people from filing complaints, to understand the fear they've experienced and to make changes that will ensure, starting now, that more people are unafraid to file complaints.

[English]

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** It's clear that people are afraid to come forward.

Isn't that a sign to you that the leadership of the organization is to blame for this? Has there been a review of the leadership of your organization?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** I would humbly submit to you that this is what the dialogue with them will reveal to us. We'll be able to identify where the system shut down and when that happened. Was it recently, in the past 4 years, or 20 years ago? That can change everything.

We also contacted all the members of the national team. They included people who had previously filed complaints and were involved in certain complaint and sanction processes and who told us they trusted the current management team. I was of course entirely prepared for the contrary.

For the moment, however, what we're moving toward is dialogue with these anonymous people. They may not remain anonymous, but they may do so if they wish. We have to get a clearer understanding of what has prevented them from filing complaints and what we can do to ensure this never happens again.

[English]

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** I still have some concerns. I know Mr. Housefather and Mr. Shields brought it up with respect to NDAs.

My question will go out to anyone who is listening: You can reach out safely to me or to any of the members of this committee. I'm a lawyer, and I'll treat it as solicitor-client privilege if you reach out in respect to NDAs. I find it hard to believe that is the case, but if there is anyone out there who has experienced that and is feeling silenced by Hockey Canada, you can turn to the members of this committee.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** We'll go to the Bloc and Sébastien Lemire for two and a half minutes, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Bernard, you were on the board when the two complaints were filed against Kyle Foster. The Canadian Fencing Federation retained the services of lawyer Annie Bourgeois to represent its interests in the matter involving Mr. Foster. Can you confirm that that lawyer is associated with the office of Langlois Avocats in Montreal?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Yes, I can confirm that.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Is that also the office where you work?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** I don't work there anymore, but I was working there at the time.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Why were the services of a lawyer from your firm retained to represent the federation's interests in the matter?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** It was to save on costs. We discussed budget earlier, and, as we've seen, the federation's budget is limited. The federation was also going through a financial crisis at the time.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Why not send the complainant the report on the investigation or the exhaustive sanctions that were imposed on Kyle Foster, as the dispute settlement policy provided at the time?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** That was done.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** I see.

We'd be interested if you could forward that information to us.

I'd like to continue with my colleague Mr. Martel's questions concerning Igor Gantsevich. Do you intend to conduct a preventive investigation in this matter? We don't get the sense that the federation has acknowledged the scope of the allegations.

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** The scope of the allegations is recognized and mechanisms have been triggered. I can't say anything more about that because we're in a public setting and the case is being processed. However, I can assure you that the appropriate authorities are considering the matter. I don't know exactly what they're doing, however, because that's the way things are. I'm not entitled to know the details.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** As I understand it, an internal investigation is under way, but Mr. Gantsevich is still employed as the high performance director and isn't necessarily subject to interim sanctions. Apparently he was even publicly congratulated for his work at a recent wine and cheese event. We wonder what message that sends to the athletes, particularly to the more than 50 members of the Fencing for Change group.

• (1635)

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** You said an internal investigation was under way, but that's not what I said. So I didn't say that; you did.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** That's what I concluded from what you said. So how would you describe what's going on?

[English]

**The Chair:** Give a quick answer please, Mr. Bernard, because your time is up.

Can you give a quick answer?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** I can't answer your question, Mr. Lemire, because the process is confidential.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We now go to Peter Julian for two and a half minutes.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Mr. Bernard, what is the total budget of the Canadian Fencing Federation?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** I think David Howes is in a better position than I am to answer that question.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I'd like to know the annual budget.

[English]

**Mr. David Howes (Executive Director, Canadian Fencing Federation):** Our budget for the last fiscal year was \$1.4 million.

[Translation]

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I see. Thank you very much. Your annual budget was \$1.4 million, compared to those of organizations such as Hockey Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee and Soccer Canada, which, as we know, often have enormous budgets totalling tens of millions of dollars.

The federal government is responsible for all the measures taken by the country's sports federations. When this affair broke in March, did it approach you to determine what the problem was and what resources you needed in order to establish a safe climate?

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** Since Mr. Howes was in touch with our Sport Canada representative, I think he'll be able to give you a more accurate answer.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Howes.

**Mr. David Howes:** No, we have not been given any direction from Sport Canada.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Did you request support from the government?

These are allegations that are serious. We're talking about safe sport for athletes. Sport Canada didn't reach out to you. Did you reach out to them and say, "We need support; we're a small federation, we don't have a lot of resources and we need to take immediate action"?

**Mr. David Howes:** My understanding is that the safe sport pocket of funding will be coming later. I don't have any information on what will be provided at this time.

My Sport Canada program analyst is well aware of our situation and what's been going on.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Thank you.

I'm going to go to Mr. Shoemaker.

Have complaints been filed with the Canadian Olympic Committee? Have concerns been raised by athletes? Do you track complaints?

Has the federal government requested, given the resources the Canadian Olympic Committee has, that more support be provided to ensure a safe sports environment, given the crisis in safe sports that we're experiencing in the country?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** By the very nature of our transition to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and Abuse-Free Sport, I'd be unaware of complaints that are made by athletes. That's so that they can do so without fear of retribution.

In connection with the May 11 reforms that were announced, the federal government announced a \$1-million contribution to education and awareness. The Canadian Olympic Committee matched that contribution of \$1 million.

We believe that among the things that need to be done is that young athletes and all participants in the sports system need to understand their rights. What are the rights and wrongs in sport? Where do you go when somebody's done something wrong to you? That's not very well known.

I think we've made progress at the national level, but there are millions of participants in sport. My three children are among the examples of those who wouldn't know what to do.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I think we are over time here.

Now I'm just going to seek the indulgence of the committee. We can go to the last two five-minute rounds on this round or we can end this meeting and go to committee business. Shall we finish the round or go to the business meeting?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Let's go to the business meeting.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Then I would like to suggest...I am sorry to the Conservative and Liberal members who are waiting with bated breath to ask questions.

I want to thank everyone—Mr. Bernard and Mr. Shoemaker—for being here and for answering questions.

We're going to suspend this meeting while we go in camera. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Chair, I don't think there's a consensus for ending the meeting. The Conservatives want to have their five minutes. If that's not the case of the Liberals, we could reach a compromise by allowing the Conservatives five minutes.

• (1640)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I didn't hear the Conservatives saying that. They were nodding when Peter said what he was saying.

Marilyn, do you want five minutes?

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Chair, we would like to have another round, if it's possible.

**The Chair:** It won't be another round. It will be just a Conservative and a Liberal.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** It's just to finish the round, yes.

**The Chair:** It will be 10 minutes. Okay, fine.

We started at 3:40, so we can go an extra 10 minutes.

I think we have Kevin for five minutes.

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

Mr. Shoemaker, who paid the \$10 million out of your organization to get into safe sport last June? I see you've committed \$10 million to safe sport.

Where did that money come from?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** A hundred per cent of it comes from our marketing partnerships—the private sector we do business with.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Have you talked to your private sector—companies like Canadian Tire and others—that sponsor Canadian Olympic athletes and Own the Podium?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** How do they feel about this?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** They're very much committed to the effort to make the Canadian sport system as safe as it possibly can be.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** You've heard me numerous times, I'm sure, if you've checked in with us. There's club, provincial and national, and then we have the Olympics.

Listen, Ben Johnson raced for Scarborough for many years. He was on PEDs long before the Seoul Olympics. We just found out in September 1988 on the 100 metres, when he ran 9.79, that in fact he was the problem. Then we had the Dubin inquiry.

You see where I'm going here. I'm not sure about any inquiry, because it depends on the ultimate, which is the Olympics. This is where the Ben Johnson story came from. It was the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

I don't hear it from anyone in my province, Saskatchewan. I don't hear from any of the clubs that they want an inquiry. It would start at the top, which is the Olympics. Would you agree or not?

That's where the Dubin inquiry started. Johnson ran for years with Scarborough. I covered him. Nobody gave a shit about whether he was taking PEDs at the time. It wasn't until Seoul, Korea.

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** As I said in my opening statement, we support an inquiry. I think it's very important that it hear from survivors and that it be trauma-informed. I hope the remit includes the very alignment to which you refer.

I believe we've made substantial progress for the 3,000 to 5,000 national-level athletes. They have a place where they can go to register a complaint and have it investigated without fear of retribution.

There are millions of young people in this country participating in sport who don't have that yet. We need, I think, to focus on that as a critical safe sport area of focus.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I agree on the registry, but how does the Canadian Olympic Committee, which hires outside of this country, deal with a registry when it's hiring coaches from other countries to come to our programs here?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** Among our employees, we don't hire a single coach. The coaches who support the national sports programs are all hired by the national sports organizations.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Do you do a check on them before the Olympics?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** We do indeed. We do criminal background checks, and we have a selection committee that evaluates that.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** You had “equal prize money” in world tennis on your resume. What's your thought about equal prize money for Olympians?

We had four young women sit there a couple of months ago representing the Canadian women's soccer association, team Canada, and that was their biggest beef at the time.

What would you say? I looked at your resume, and you were about equal pay. Here we are in 2023, far from equal pay, if you don't mind my saying it.

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** I was one of the very few who were privileged to watch those four participate in the Tokyo games. Because of COVID, there were probably six Canadians and eight Swedes who watched them win the Olympic gold medal in a stadium with 80,000 seats.

Their performance for Canada made us all proud and incredibly inspired. We need a gold medal system to support them here in Canada as well.

I'm biased. My mother was a professional athlete. I believe strongly in gender equity. I think we need to work very hard to make sure we have that here in this country, in sport and across all sectors.

• (1645)

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Do you see it with the current Canadian... I mean, we're getting set for Paris 2024 now. Are there any athletes—male and female—you're going to promote to make sure it's equal?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** First of all, probably more than 60% of our Olympic team at the Tokyo 2020 games and at the Beijing winter games were female. More women won medals than men won medals. Therefore, more investment is made in women's sport by the Olympic Committee than is made in men's sport.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Can you give me an example on money, then, where there's more money into women's sport than men's, as you just said?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** Well, I'm making a per capita assumption based on how we fund the national sports organizations. We could try to provide that after the fact.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Good, thank you.

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

Now I go to the Liberals and Lisa Hefner for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wanted to ask Mr. Bernard if he had anything further to say following his exchange with my colleague Mr. Bittle on the need to make a change in the federation's management.

**Mr. Yann Bernard:** You always have to wonder about the members of the board of directors. I don't sense any need to make changes because I see the current board members' serious commitment to safe sport. I personally don't get the impression that the problem is there since this board has a zero-tolerance policy regarding misconduct. So that would be my response at this time.

I think we need a system that gives us a much clearer idea of what's going on in the small clubs. It's quite easy to solve the problems of the national teams, but there are also teams in the municipalities and schools, as well as sports clubs. I deal with 200 clubs—that's 5,000 fencers—but I only have one and a half full-time employees.

We need to find mechanisms like a workers compensation program associated with workplace safety, or a youth protection program. We have to introduce a serious protection system for our athletes that doesn't rely on people who might be subject to conflicts of interest.

**Ms. Lisa Hefner:** All right. Thank you.

[*English*]

I will turn to Mr. Shoemaker.

Thank you for your attendance here today.

You mentioned something at some point—it may have been in your opening statement—about there being a need for more alignment with the provinces and territories, and that this should be the next priority.

Would you expand upon that thought for us, please?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** Thank you.

We've made progress. I don't want that to be misinterpreted; there's still lots more work to do. An area I would draw our attention to is the important need for a registry as it relates to safe sport.

We've made important progress for the roughly 3,000 athletes who participate in sport at the national level. They now have a place where they can go and register a complaint about abuse, harassment or maltreatment in sport and not be fearful of retribution. I think that's an important step.

But there are millions of young participants in sport at the provincial level and at the local level—at the club level—who don't have those protections. To me, that is an enormous gap.

I know that this committee is focused on what some of the recommendations are that can be made. I would encourage you to think about how we address that gap.

I think it's going to take a lot of co-operation with the provincial and territorial governments in order to do that, but it's a very important step for us to ensure that the truly young people who are participating in sport, and their parents, can do so with real confidence that they're in a system that protects them.

**Ms. Lisa Hefner:** Thank you.

Would you have other recommendations that you would like to see come out of this committee in order to help inform the minister with an inquiry?

**Mr. David Shoemaker:** Thank you.

Education and awareness is something we've put our own investment behind.

I'll draw from my example with my three children who participate in sport. They participate with the benefit of fabulous volunteers and fabulous coaches. In part because of the role that I'm in, I know the questions to ask and the things to look for before I enrol them.

I can think of perhaps only one of the dozens of sports that they're involved in where there are materials either on the website or in hard copy that relate to safe sport and that provide parents the primer they need to understand such basic things as what is right and wrong, and where to go if they want to make a complaint.

Education and awareness are very important.

● (1650)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Shoemaker.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today—the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Fencing Federation. Thank you very much for being here, giving us your time and answering some not-so-very-easy questions.

I'm now going to suspend the meeting so that we can go in camera for our business meeting.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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