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# Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio





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• (1100)

[*English*]

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

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the 51st meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on October 31, 2022, the committee will resume its study on women and girls in sport.

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

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

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike, and please mute it when you are not speaking.

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

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

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can, and we appreciate your patience and understanding in this regard.

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

I would now like to welcome our witnesses. Appearing for the first hour today is the Honourable Pascale St-Onge, member of Parliament, Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec. With her is Isabelle Mondou from the Department of Canadian Heritage, who is the deputy minister.

Pascale, I will be providing you five minutes for your opening comments. When you see me start to throw up my arms, squeeze it down.

The floor is yours, Minister, for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec):** Madam Chair, members of the committee, good morning.

First of all, I would like to thank you for this invitation to contribute to your committee's study. What has been your focus for several weeks has also been of concern to me since the beginning of my mandate. I am horrified by the stories we are privy to, and I salute the courage of those who dare to speak out.

I think of the teenage girls who are forced onto brutal diets or weight loss pills, which destroy both self-image and self-confidence. This has disastrous consequences for the rest of their lives. I am thinking of children who, under the guise of helping them achieve excellence, are exposed to abusive training, which causes irreparable injury. I think of children who are sexually abused by coaches who should be behind bars. It is absolutely appalling, and I share your outrage. There is simply no reason or justification as to why sport should equal abuse.

Over the past year, I have met with athletes, victims and survivors. I have also spoken to experts and researchers from all walks of life. All these people want to be part of the solution. I find this very encouraging, because it also means that the culture of silence is being broken.

Among the voices that are being raised, some are calling for investigations. To me, it is clear that it is not a question of whether something should be done, but more importantly how it should be done.

[*English*]

Just to be clear regarding calls for an inquiry, it's not a matter of if we need to do something, but how.

[Translation]

My goals are to do justice to survivors in a safe, trauma-focused way, and then to take stock of what has been accomplished and what remains to be done to ensure the safety of all participants in sport. We are currently assessing the best ways to achieve both of these goals, and the relevant recommendations of this committee could play a major role. In the meantime, there are some very concrete things that need to be done that cannot wait.

[English]

Since my appointment as Minister of Sport, I have used all the powers I have to accelerate change. Now is the time to tackle the power imbalance between athletes and the sport system by amplifying their voices and providing support to athlete organizations.

We also know that sport will only be made safe if we improve the governance, accountability, training, education and capacity to prevent abuse and maltreatment across the organizations in the sport system. We've all read the headlines. When governance and accountability fail, bad decisions are taken and our athletes pay the price. We can change that. I am changing that. I am reviewing how and under what requirements the federal government finances national sport organizations. Sport should not regulate itself. We must provide support and services to victims when it does happen.

In 2019, more than 1,000 athletes took part in a study to determine what could be done to make sport safer. One recommendation in particular came out loud and clear above all the others: It was that the federal government create an independent complaint mechanism where athletes could go with their experiences without fear of reprisal.

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, or OSIC, is that mechanism, and it is fully independent. It responds to the standards of independence set by scholars, experts and athletes alike. Like many federal agencies, OSIC is federally funded, but operates with an independent board of directors. It is independent of Sport Canada and of sport organizations.

A little more than six months since its creation, more than half of the national sport organizations have already signed to OSIC. I expect that all of them will be signatories in the next few months.

However, even if all national sport organizations sign on, there will still be a huge gap—one we cannot ignore. While the federal government and national sport organizations are responsible for about 3,700 athletes, the vast majority of cases of abuse and maltreatment happen outside the federal scope. They happen in local clubs, leagues and gyms, all of which are within the responsibility of provincial, territorial and local authorities.

This harsh reality was recently pointed out by an extensive investigative report from CBC. Canadians all over the country are asking us to fill that gap.

• (1105)

[Translation]

This is the next step, but I can't do it alone. There are many aspects to this issue, as well as demands for inquiries, that require us all to work together in the interests of the athletes. That is why next

week, when I meet with my provincial and territorial counterparts, I will reaffirm the urgency of working together to ensure better protection, better harmonization of the system, and the establishment of a reliable complaints mechanism.

There is no reason why children and young athletes should not have equal protection from coast to coast. All levels of government, including the provinces and territories, must do what it takes to ensure that abusers are excluded from our sports system.

I want to close by thanking this committee for its work. We have an opportunity to improve the face of sport. Together we can do it.

Thank you for your attention.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister. We really do appreciate your words and your being here today.

This is our final day of doing this study, so I know we have lots of questions for you.

I'm going to stick right to the time today, so your six minutes is six minutes. Please make sure that when you're doing your questions, you're providing time for the minister as well.

We're going to start our first round of six minutes with Anna Roberts.

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

Thank you, Minister, for joining us today. This committee feels along the same lines as what you stated earlier, which is that we need to protect our children. I feel that's the goal of every single member of this committee, so I'm proud to be part of it.

I have a few questions for you. Maybe you could help me.

When did you take over the portfolio of Minister of Sport?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** It was after the last election, when Parliament started, at the beginning of 2021.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Okay.

How many national sports organizations do you fund?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** There are about 70 NSOs, national sport organizations, but in total we fund close to 94 organizations.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** It's 94.

Minister, you set a deadline of April 1, 2023, for national sport organizations to sign agreements to work with the new Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, or OSIC.

Why was it April? How did you determine that month?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** That is when the new funding cycle starts. We allow a bit of time for organizations to adjust their internal policies, because to be signatories of OSIC, the universal code of conduct must be applied. There are several changes in policies with which organizations must comply.

They needed a period of time. However, it was made clear that starting from the next funding cycle, if organizations want to receive federal funding, they need to be signatories.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** What happens to NSOs that don't sign the agreement by April 1? Are they automatically eliminated from the funding?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** We will suspend their funding until they comply.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Okay.

When did Gymnastics Canada agree to become part of the sport integrity commission? Do you have any dates for us?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** I don't currently have the specific date.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Perhaps we can get back to that one.

• (1110)

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** Yes, we can provide you with the exact date they became signatories.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Gymnastics Canada specifically needed an extension. Can you advise why they needed the extension?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** Go ahead, Isabelle.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou (Deputy Minister, Department of Canadian Heritage):** When they sign, they have to—as the minister said—comply with certain policies.

They signed and asked for a certain time to comply and then needed an additional 10 days, I believe—I'm going from memory—to make sure they put everything in place that a signatory is required to put in place. It was a short extension. They asked in December.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Will they get one beyond April 1?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** No, absolutely not.

I don't remember the date. We can get that to you. I think they were supposed to be officially ready for full compliance with OSIC at the beginning of December. They asked for—if memory serves me right—a two-week extension. It's already passed and done.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Currently, 35 organizations are publicly listed on sportintegritycommissioner.ca as having signed an agreement with OSIC. Is this list up to date?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** We're up to 43, by my understanding. Before April, everyone should be signatories.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** You made a few comments about coaches being behind bars. I'm so happy to hear you say that.

My question is, how do we get them behind bars? We heard from Ian Moss, the CEO of Gymnastics Canada. It didn't leave me with a good feeling that he understood the importance of ensuring these coaches are held accountable. How are we going to do that?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** I think we have two challenges.

The first one is making sure those who perpetrate abuse or maltreatment in the sport system are out of the sport system. That can be done through an independent mechanism.

Of course, the criminal justice system also needs to do its job, because that's the way we send abusers to prison.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Six hundred athletes have come forward. Would you say that's enough of a situation to conduct a review of the coaches who have been accused of all these abuses?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** The first thing is that whenever a situation of abuse or maltreatment happens, the athletes need to have a safe mechanism—a safe place they can turn to, one that can investigate those cases and issue sanctions against the coaches, officials or other athletes who have been doing these things.

The other thing is that we need to review how organizations manage those cases. That's part of the problem we heard regarding Hockey Canada. In gymnastics and other cases, it's also how organizations deal with reports of abuse and maltreatment. We need to make sure there is accountability.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** One thing you said earlier that really struck me—we spoke about this in the last couple of meetings—is breaking the code of silence. We heard from witnesses who feel uncomfortable coming forward, and afraid for their families.

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

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** How do we protect witnesses and ensure this is a safe place for them?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** That's the challenge. When we're talking about investigations or inquiries, we need to make sure that it's a safe place, that it's trauma-informed and that victims are going to be well taken care of. It is part of the challenge to which we need to find solutions.

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

We're now going to move over to Emmanuella Lambropoulos for six minutes.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Minister, for being here to answer some of our questions today.

I was happy to hear you mention that only part of this is actually falling under federal jurisdiction. There are only 3,700 athletes who will be affected by what we put in place.

In the coming weeks, you'll be meeting with your provincial and territorial counterparts. Could you go a little deeper into what these discussions will entail?

You'll be mentioning, of course, that there's a bit of a crisis on our hands and that it needs to be taken seriously. Are there concrete actions you're going to be suggesting that they take? Can you let us know what those might be?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** Yes, absolutely.

I met my counterparts at the last Canada Games this summer in Niagara. All the provinces committed to either creating their own independent mechanisms.... Instead of creating their own, the federal government has also offered assistance to the provinces and territories. If they wish, they can sign up with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. It is open to them.

I know that some provinces are currently in discussions with OS-IC. At the end of this week, I'm going to ask my counterparts where they are at in doing this, because it should be a priority all across the country. As we've witnessed, there's a huge gap in the system. It needs to be closed as soon as possible.

• (1115)

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Many of the problems lie within the culture of sports teams, and, just in general, the culture of sport in Canada. We heard often from witnesses who were victims of the types of crimes that we're discussing. They never felt comfortable enough to come forward on their own. Other adults in the room could have been possibly aware of what was happening to them, but nobody spoke up. They were afraid of whistleblowing.

What are some of the concrete changes that your office has thought of, or come up with, that can encourage individuals who are witnessing such a thing to come forward if they are within the organization?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** The first thing was making sure that the reporting system was out of the hands of the organizations themselves. This is why having an independent mechanism is so important, so that adults, children, and athletes can report those situations. There can be proper investigations and proper sanctions, or recommendations can be made regarding the organization, but this is not enough. We need to make sure that in the end, those sanctions and recommendations are also applied. We need to make sure that the management and decision-making is appropriate.

This is why we're also working with Sport Canada. It's so we can better assess whether or not the organizations are achieving the criteria we set for them. This was lacking. We're currently working on having a new expertise and new tools to assess the organizations.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** In terms of training coaches, what is it that we can do or add? In what ways is the federal government able to do something about what exactly is being shown, or how they're being trained?

Even after the fact, is there a way of keeping track and making sure that people take an extra course down the road just to make sure they're keeping up with the times, because things might be very different from what they were, let's say, 20 years ago?

Can you comment on that?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** This is part of the discussions that need to be held and the work that needs to be done, particularly with the Coaching Association of Canada, which provides training to coaches. We need to make sure that accredited coaches take this training. However, this also needs to be done on an ongoing basis within the organizations.

The whole issue of the universal code of conduct also needs to be discussed; this needs to be taught to everyone involved, that is, not only coaches, but also officials and athletes, so that they know their rights, responsibilities and what behaviours are acceptable and which are not. Of course, all of this must be done in conjunction with the provinces, territories and all the authorities involved.

What's important is to have consistency within the system. At the moment it's very patchy. That's part of what we need to work on.

I look forward to reading the committee's recommendations in this regard.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** You talked briefly about the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, which was set up about six months ago.

Did the testimony you heard highlight some things that should be changed?

Has the testimony about how to improve the existing process been taken into account?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** As you said, the mechanism is quite new. It is always possible to do better. That is why I look forward to the committee's recommendations.

One of the things we are looking at right now is the possibility of creating a registry that will record the names of all athletic coaches who are sanctioned. There are issues with that, including privacy issues, but we're looking at what we can do to prevent coaches from moving from province to province or sport to sport after being found guilty of abuse or mistreatment.

• (1120)

[*English*]

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

We're now going to move over to Sébastien Lemire.

You have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

I thank the members of the committee for their welcome.

First, let me acknowledge the absence of my colleague Andréanne Larouche, who proposed this study, and thank her for her leadership in this regard. She is currently in New York, working for the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Please excuse her absence.

Madam Minister, thank you for being here today to participate in this important study. Indeed, I thank you for highlighting its importance in your opening remarks.

You said something that gave me food for thought, and I would just like us to take a few seconds to reflect together. In your view, the question is not whether we should do something—that's a weighty thing to say—but above all how we should do it. You have to examine it with a thought for the athletes who have been victims of this abuse and mistreatment, whether it is financial, psychological, physical or sexual.

To say how it should be done is a bit like trivializing it. It's like trying to put a band-aid on without making the proper diagnosis, a diagnosis of cancer rather than an apparent flesh wound, for example.

We need to think about children and all athletes who play sports in various disciplines. In my opinion, the real way to do this is through an independent inquiry, which will allow us to fully understand the mechanisms involved.

Let me refer to Mr. Martin Leclerc's article, published this morning, on the toxic culture in hockey. This is one example among many sports, and it happens more in a male than in a female context. Nevertheless, the gravity of the abuse could not have been foreseen, nor could we know that people in positions of authority glossed over these actions.

If we focus only on the “how”, I think we miss the “if”. We need to look at reality and what mechanisms we can put in place to get these people to stop protecting each other, within the apparatus. There's still time ahead of us, but time is running out.

Madam Minister, you have been in office for over a year, but I do not get the impression that our sporting community has become safer in the last year. You know how critical it is to look at what is wrong with our sports ecosystem, both at the amateur and professional level.

The sports community and the Canadian public have been calling on us for several months, if not years if you consider your predecessors, to hold a judicial inquiry into sport. It is necessary. They are not doing it to confirm that there was abuse and mistreatment, not to confirm the “if”, but to find concrete solutions to strengthen our ecosystem. We're going to have to do that. I've mentioned the linkages with other departments, including the Department of Industry, the Competition Bureau, the Canada Revenue Agency, the Department of Justice and Health Canada. We need to look at how we can take a truly comprehensive view.

To date, you have flatly refused appeals from more than 1,000 elite athletes related to 14 sports, which included being heard by the committee. You have also rejected the appeal of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, the Coaching Association of Canada, several national sports organizations, and two Canadian research

initiatives involving over 100 Canadian academics. All of these people are in favour of a national public inquiry to answer the “how”, how we are going to tackle the toxic culture in sport.

The “how” question has been addressed in the past and nothing has changed for years. I must acknowledge the leadership of one of your predecessors, Ms. Kirsty Duncan, who really tried to make a difference. I continue to feel every day that our children are still at risk. We still feel that your position is counterproductive to that struggle.

Concretely, will you be able to act, publicly and transparently, to ensure a change in culture? We want to know the outcome of the audits that may have been done and the nature of the athletes' experiences.

What we find is that things only move when they are made public and there is outrage, or when we realize that they are unacceptable. Otherwise, the machine constantly protects itself.

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** As I said in my opening remarks, it's not a question of whether we're going to do something, but how we're going to do it. I want to come back to how to do it, because it's important.

Victims have told me that they don't want to go through the traumatic experience they went through again. So it's very important to me that the mechanism we put in place is a safe and conducive way to have an investigation that is commensurate with the seriousness of what these people have gone through.

I have also made it clear that we are currently working to find the right way to do things to achieve two objectives, which I think address the concerns you have raised. The first objective is to shed light on the events and to give people a forum to express themselves on what they have experienced in the sports world. The second is to look at everything that has been done so far in the Canadian sports system, to take stock, and then to make recommendations on the next steps and what more needs to be done to ensure the safety of athletes.

I understand that this may not be moving fast enough for some, but my priority is to get things right. It's as important as doing them.

• (1125)

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Have you ever been pressured by colleagues or others to discourage you from supporting or launching an independent public inquiry?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** No.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. We're now going to move to Bonita Zarrillo for the next six minutes .

Bonita, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the minister for being at the committee today.

I want to follow up on what my colleague was saying about the diagnosis. I'm hearing a deflection of jurisdiction, a little bit of passing the buck happening here, and I'm very concerned about it. It's 2023, and I think about how many thousands of children are being hurt. This is a conversation that's happened for decades in sport, and here we are in 2023 with little change.

In thinking about abuse of kids and how it has forever changed their lives, it just doesn't seem good enough to have after-the-fact research alone. I think we need multiple prongs on this. I think we need to be able to filter out abusers before they get into the system.

Minister, how are you doing that? How are you ensuring that it's not just analysis after the fact, but that there is a filter and that no abusers will be getting into the system?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** Well, first of all, I want to make it clear that I'm not passing the buck to anyone. However, the reality is that the sport system touches multiple jurisdictions, and I can't fix it alone. We need to work collectively and together to make sure that all parts of the sport system are improved and that the appropriate actions are taken.

Some of the abuse we've heard about happens in schools, in local clubs, and some of it is also at the national level. We need to make sure that we're all committed to ensuring the safety of athletes at all levels. I'm taking my responsibility and I'm using all my leadership that I possibly can to have those conversations with my counterparts from the provinces and territories so that we can work together in improving the system.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Minister, I'm going to ask about the culture change, which was also talked about with some of my colleagues. I can hear in your voice that it's a challenge. I can hear that in your voice.

However, I'm looking at the Physical Activity and Sport Act, and there are two bullets that I'm looking at. One is,

to increase participation in the practice of sport and support the pursuit of excellence in sport;

and the second is,

to build capacity in the Canadian sport system.

I wonder how you would interpret the words "excellence in sport" as they're written in the Physical Activity and Sport Act.

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** I think it needs to be redefined, and it's part of the conversation. Work currently being done on the renewal of the Canadian sport policy involves not only the federal government but also the provinces, territories, municipalities and community groups.

The discussion is truly about how we define excellence. In previous mandates I would say that it was about medals and podiums; now we need to take into account the excellence of the organizations themselves and how they bring the well-being of athletes into a holistic approach.

[*Translation*]

The renewal of the Canadian Sport Policy also stems from the need to revisit the values that form the foundation of the sport system. What is most important, beyond medals and podiums, is ensuring the safety and well-being of athletes in all respects.

• (1130)

[*English*]

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you, Ms. St-Onge.

I'll now go to the second bullet, which was "to build capacity in the Canadian sport system."

If I'm hearing you correctly, this maybe needs to be redefined as well. It's about having physical activity wide rather than deep.

Could you give me your thoughts on "building capacity"? What does that mean to you?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** This means that sport must be accessible to as many people as possible, that we must democratize sport. We need to make sure that communities that have less access to sports get the investment and support that they need to promote access to physical activity in general, not just organized sport. We need to ensure, in fact, that everyone can benefit from physical activity.

We need to do more. In the penultimate budget, we launched the Community Sport for All initiative. We funded national organizations to improve programming for groups that are generally underserved by the sport system. That's \$80 million over two years. It is through initiatives like this that we can increase access to sports.

We talk about abuse and mistreatment, but we also need to talk about discrimination and bullying in sport. We need to open up sport, make it safe and inclusive for all.

[*English*]

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you.

Will expanding grants and expanding organizations be accompanied with extra protections and with what I was speaking about earlier—filtering out abusers and making sure abusers don't get into the system as it expands?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** The Red Deer Declaration, which was signed by all provinces and the federal government, provides mechanisms for protection. It is a commitment to athlete safety.



The Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Respond to Maltreatment in Sport, I repeat, should be applied in all sport settings, whether community, local, school or other, to ensure that we all have a clear and consistent understanding of what abuse and mistreatment is, and what everyone should do to prevent it.

[*English*]

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

We're now going to start the five-minute rounds—five minutes, five minutes, two and a half, and two and a half.

We'll start off with Dominique Vien for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Good morning to you all.

Good morning, Madam Minister. I welcome you to this meeting.

In this committee we work very hard, and we really hear horror stories.

All members of the committee have been touched by several witness testimonies. We are trying to find intelligent, reasonable solutions that will work. You raised a number of points earlier that left me a bit wanting, I confess.

I would like to start with the creation of a registry of coaches who do not have the profile to be coaches, or who are sanctioned and who, as you yourself pointed out, move from one province to another with a fair amount of impunity. You said that this registry was one of the solutions you would like to see put in place. Yet you seem to be saying that there is a discomfort with the idea of creating a registry like this, because of privacy concerns.

For me, I find that the protection of the personal data of a coach who should not be coaching anyone and who has done wrong pales in comparison to the interest of young people who are subjected to abuse and mistreatment.

What bothers you so much about this registry?

What could be put in place so that we are able to move forward and create this registry, which would be a tool to inform people on the boards of clubs and to ensure that they can retain reliable people?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** We are already working towards this, with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, among others.

The current commissioner would also like to see such a mechanism in place, to have one in each province, or for the provinces and territories to sign an agreement with the commissioner's office to do so.

This will improve the situation and provide clear sanctions for coaches. This mechanism does not currently exist in many areas of the sport system.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** But in order to impose sanctions on them, you need to have identified them.

Wouldn't you agree?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** Yes, we are working on this issue. The insights that the committee can give us on this will be welcome. There are legal frameworks to be respected.

On the other hand, we are looking at several ways to proceed. For example, there could be a registry of certified and recommended coaches from which coaches who have been sanctioned would be removed, making it easier to choose when hiring coaches. This remains to be determined.

The goal is to ensure that abusers are not part of the Canadian sport system. That's the goal and that's the discussion I'm going to have with the provinces and territories as well.

• (1135)

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** We will return to the discussions you are going to have with your provincial counterparts.

You've referred to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. There are a number of witnesses—my colleagues can correct me if I am wrong—who have expressed reservations, definite doubts about the trust they have in this office. In particular, there are people who belong to national associations or who sit on their boards of directors. There is a kind of mix of genres, and the athletes' trust in the office is somewhat diluted.

What do you have to say about that?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** Again, if the committee has recommendations for us to improve confidence in the Office of the Sports Integrity Commissioner, and if anything needs to be reviewed, we're open to that.

However, I'd like to remind you about independence. Even though all courts are funded by governments, the justice system is independent. The same is true of federal agencies, which are financially supported by the federal government. Barriers exist, but the office is new, it was created six months ago. It will evolve over time.

I'm prepared to improve the system to win people's confidence. That said, some complaints are currently being addressed. We will see how the office works in the real world and whether or not it works well. We can continue to improve the process.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** If I'm not mistaken, the office receives complaints or grievances from national level athletes.

Is that correct?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** Actually, it's athletes who belong to organizations that are signatories to the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** They are national level athletes, in any event.

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** No, not necessarily. I'll give you an example.

Volleyball Canada has decided to have all member associations sign a contract, and the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner is currently conducting an investigation into the culture of Ontario Volleyball. That's why it's important to close the gaps in the system so that everyone has a safe place to turn to.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Is my time up, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, it is.

[*English*]

Marc Serré, you have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here today, Madam Minister. Your testimony will be helpful to us. As you can see, the committee members are working very well together to find ways to make things better.

We've heard testimony about victims, children and athletes. We really need to look at what's currently being done and what needs to be done to make sure that children, girls and women have access to a safe place to lodge complaints and learn what to do.

This morning, we've heard about the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the process in place for athletes, but some gaps still exist. Some witnesses have said that the office's scope is limited. National level athletes are covered, but university, college and local athletes must also be considered.

Could you explain the process in a little more detail?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** First, not all national level athletes are currently covered. They should all be by April, as the federal government will suspend funding to any organization that has not become a signatory by that time.

On the other hand, you're right: Even when that's done, we will still have some gaps in the system. Quebec has a mechanism in place that's similar to the federal one, so that athletes at all levels have somewhere to turn when facing situations of abuse or maltreatment. If I'm not mistaken, New Brunswick also has a mechanism like this in place.

However, we need to have them across the country in all provinces and territories, because no matter what level, children entering the sport system should know where to go if they have an unacceptable experience. That seems to me to be the number one priority. I'm reassured that all provinces are committed to doing this, but we need to expedite the process and get this resolved as quickly as possible, because parents and Canadians can't tolerate the stories we're hearing.

• (1140)

**Mr. Marc Serré:** We've heard the same thing here at committee. A number of victims said we need to take action, and I think you said it too. We need to stop them from being re-traumatized. Regardless of the process used, it's important that an investigation be conducted by a third party.

We talked about areas of jurisdiction earlier, and I'd like to hear what you're doing right now, because it would be wrong to say that the provinces are not involved. What are you doing to take a leader-

ship role and encourage them? How can we work more closely with the provinces to take whatever steps are necessary to support victims and athletes?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** This has to be part of the discussions we want to have with the provinces and territories this week. It's not enough to have a bird's-eye view of the entire system, and we can't focus only on the national level either. That wouldn't address the issues raised by parents and all those who have come forward. Everyone in Canada must agree on the solution so that we can shine a light on this, make recommendations that will help us improve the system at all levels and then work together to improve the sport system. This will be part of the discussions this week. We know it's possible, because Quebec has done it and other provinces are working on it. Now we need to speed things up.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** I have 40 seconds left.

With respect to mental health, what support are victims getting? Can you talk about the agreements with provinces as well?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** In my discussions with athletes, I was told that psychological support was often performance-based, meaning it was more about helping them outdo themselves. We've made \$2.4 million available on an emergency basis so that teams are in place when associations are in crisis, as we saw with the national gymnastics team and Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton, to help athletes and give them the psychological support they need, not just as athletes but as people, as individuals.

[*English*]

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

We'll now move to Sébastien for two and a half minutes.

Go ahead, Sébastien.

[*Translation*]

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

Madam Minister, it's not necessarily the question of whether to act or why. I think the answer to those questions is obvious.

When are you going to table your sport policy?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** The Canadian sport policy is not just a federal government responsibility. We are working on it with the other levels of government. It's scheduled to be released in February or March, if I'm not mistaken

In terms of the work I'm doing, which is a review of sport system funding and the requirements to be imposed in the contribution agreements with sport organizations, that will be announced in March because the next funding cycle starts in April. The implementation of these new measures will also be announced.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** You preferred to create a mechanism, the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, within the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada. We've heard several witnesses say they were wary of this. You had the opportunity to make that structure a bit more independent, but you didn't.

So do you believe that sport should be self-regulating, despite the failures we've seen? Why did you create a quasi-sport organization, the office, under Sport Canada to monitor problems rather than an independent mechanism? We know that the office rejected two-thirds of the complaints filed with it.

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner is no longer under the Sport Canada umbrella and is independent of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC).

It was my predecessor who issued a call for tenders, and the mandate to create the office was given to the SDRCC in July 2021. Since I took office, I've been expediting the creation of the office and ensuring that it has the funding and resources to complete its work as quickly as possible.

• (1145)

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Under the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Abuse in Sport, is the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner able to address complaints that involve organizations such as Own the Podium, Sport Canada and the Canadian Olympic Committee, among others?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Yes, absolutely. All national sport organizations will be required to sign an agreement. Some, like Own the Podium and the Canadian Paralympic Committee, have already done it. The rest should have all have done so by April 1st.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Thank you.

Is my time up, Madam Chair?

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry; you're done.

We're now going to move over to Bonita for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to reiterate about the wording in the act about excellence. Culture definitely flows down, so I am pleased, Minister, to hear you say that you're looking at reviewing that aspect. I would just say that doing that soon would also really be a very important aspect here.

In the past, Minister, you've stated that a national inquiry will not address maltreatment at community and regional levels, and it feels like perhaps that's already been decided. I'm concerned that today you're asking for other ideas and not taking this one as a leading idea. The reason I'm saying that is that the majority of survivors have recommended an independent judicial inquiry. I'm wondering

why that hasn't started and whether you will support this ask from victims and their supporters.

[Translation]

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** A number of considerations must be made. I'm open to all recommendations and we're going to look at them all seriously. We've articulated some goals and others have been passed on to us as well. For example, we need to be trauma-informed, create safe spaces and do it right. Also, I believe everyone shares the objective of having appropriate recommendations to improve the sport system at all levels. We're going to look at that to figure out the best way to do it.

I'm waiting for this committee's recommendations and those of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. We're working right now to find the right formula and the best way to do it.

[English]

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you.

Minister, we're talking about little girls here. A lot of time we're talking about little girls. We're talking about vulnerable athletes and young athletes who don't necessarily have a voice. Today you mentioned breaking the silence. I wonder if it is really breaking the silence. I will just close my comments today by saying that we just need to believe them.

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

We have five minutes and five minutes.

Warren Steinley, I'll throw it over to you for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Madam Minister, thank you for being here today.

I'm going to come at this a little bit from the aspect of a coach. I've coached my kids in all their hockey for five or six years. I'm a father of three: a six-year-old, a seven-year-old and a nine-year-old. I'm not sure how I as a parent would handle some of the things we've talked about.

You mentioned that there should be a national registry of certified coaches. I find that the government always looks at tackling people who follow the rules and not those who don't, so why couldn't we have a registry of coaches who have been charged with assault so that those coaches can never again coach kids? I think that's a good place to start.

I also want to know if there's anything that traces international coaches. In gymnastics, we hire coaches from other countries. How do we know, when they get to Canada, if our kids are in jeopardy?

[Translation]

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** Those are both good questions. I'll answer the first one telling you that we're looking for the best way to do things. I want to emphasize to you that our goal is to make sure that those who abuse and mistreat in support are no longer able to abuse. We need to get them out of the sport system. That's our goal.

Next, we need to have an international dialogue about abuse and maltreatment. Many countries are currently addressing this issue, but we also need international federations to do the same and change their approach.

Some sports take the athletes' physical appearance into consideration: They are evaluated on their appearance rather than their performance. We have work to do in that respect. If you want to make profound changes throughout the entire sport chain, we need to do it on an international scale. Countries will need to discuss this amongst themselves.

• (1150)

[English]

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** I have to jump in here.

Please consider those two options, because I don't think we have to penalize and make more red tape for people who are following the rules. It's the ones who break them.

I have an example. I grew up in southwest Saskatchewan in Swift Current. Graham James was one of the most embarrassing points in Swift Current's history, and after he got out of jail for abusing those boys, he was then coaching in Spain. There has to be a way to track these people, especially within our country but also internationally. Christine Sinclair stated that Canada Soccer flat out lied and that now the public is being lied to as well.

When you're looking at these organizations—and we had Mr. Moss here from the Gymnastics Canada—they seem to be part of the culture problem. I don't think sports are the problem. I think the people who run sports are the problem. How are you going to address some of those cultural changes? It starts at the top, with people who are trying to hide this more than trying to get to the bottom of it.

[Translation]

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** We need to look at the governance models in place within organizations and make sure that the highest standards of governance are being enforced. That's one thing we will bring about with funding reform in the sport system.

Then, the issue of economic transparency is extremely important to me, as I have accountability and evaluation mechanisms. That's why we're also working with Sport Canada to ensure that the right tools are in place to evaluate compliance.

[English]

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** I have one last question.

I believe there should be a national inquiry into Gymnastics Canada at the least. I think there's a huge problem, and our girls and boys who are doing gymnastics are in jeopardy. My daughter is seven, and I don't believe I would ever let her go into gymnastics.

Sometimes in gymnastics they actually tell you to drop your kid off and then leave, and you don't know what's happening.

If you had a little girl, would you let her join gymnastics with the state gymnastics is in right now, with that culture, and with what's going on with our girls and boys in Gymnastics Canada?

[Translation]

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** I want to be clear. What we've heard about gymnastics and what's happening in some clubs are unacceptable. I don't understand parents being prevented from being there during practice to make sure their minor children are safe. The fact that a club is preventing parents from being present during practice or competitions should set off alarm bells.

It's an unacceptable situation that has to change. I'm determined to shine a light on the situation.

[English]

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** I have 25 seconds left.

Please be aware of the seriousness of this committee. My colleagues are doing a great job. I've been here a couple of times. These are our children that we're talking about, and there needs to be a national coaches registry, as these people are doing terrible things to our kids. There needs to be accountability so that these clubs know who they can and cannot hire as coaches.

[Translation]

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** I can assure you that I'm determined to do everything I can to change the sports world using all the tools and powers at my disposal.

[English]

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

We'll move along to Anita for five minutes.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Minister, thank you so much for being here today. It is absolutely evident from your testimony that you care deeply about our athletes and about ending the abuse and mistreatment of athletes. I think we all appreciate that very much. It's obvious you've been listening to all the athletes, victims and survivors you've been speaking to. I appreciate that you've said a few times today in the committee that it's not about "if" but about "how" we move forward. I know you're looking forward to our committee report as a mechanism to show you some of the "how".

We have heard absolutely horrifying testimony in this committee, very difficult testimony, the testimony that we can't look away from.

One of the things that we've heard is that obviously, in an ideal world, prevention—stopping it from happening in the first place—is what we want, but when it does happen, athletes don't necessarily go directly to saying they want to report it and they want an official investigation. They need some mental health supports, they need an advocate, and they need to know what their options are before they're at a point where they're ready to actually file a complaint. Putting that in place and having a single entry point for athletes, particularly on the mental health component, is one of the things that we've heard.

Could you please comment a little bit on that?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** There are many things we need to look at. In my opinion, one of the things that could be extremely powerful is empowering athlete representation in the organizations that represent athletes. That could be an excellent entry point.

We've just announced funding to AthletesCAN so that athletes can have one hub they can refer to in order to find mental health support and to find resources when they're facing situations of abuse and maltreatment. There's a terrible power imbalance in sports, where the future of athletes—whether they are chosen or not for the next step—depends on their coaches and on their federation. To me it's very important that we empower athletes so that they are part of the decision-making process at every level. It's very important that they be considered and heard, and that the organizations that represent them are empowered and better structured to really represent them at their best.

• (1155)

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** I would note that we actually have a number of teenaged athletes here in the room. I know that all of us here share the wish that their journey in sport is going to be healthy, fun and positive. They are the reason that we are all here today.

Thank you, Minister.

I would like to share my last minute and a half with Ms. Sidhu.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Anita, for sharing your time. Thank you, Minister, for coming and joining us today.

Yes, absolutely we want to empower our athletes.

Minister, we have heard that a comprehensive and mandatory registry for sanctioned individuals should be developed. They should be ineligible to participate or compete within the Canadian sport system.

Do you believe this is a strong recommendation?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** Yes, we are looking at ways that we can achieve that.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you. We want to put the well-being of victims first, Minister.

You spoke about Quebec and New Brunswick having models that are responsive to athletes' concerns at all levels. We need models like this in every province and territory so that our athletes can feel safe.

Can you expand on that? How can we effectively have models like this?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** There are two ways. All provinces and territories committed to doing it. They can deal directly with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, which is already up and coming. The federal government invested \$16 million. It's already there. It's an easy fix. That's one way. The other way is that they can create their own independent mechanism, just like Quebec and New Brunswick did.

Either way, this needs to be done, because athletes need to know where to turn when they're facing situations of abuse or maltreatment.

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

I'm going to ask a couple more questions as we're finishing up, just some things as we're looking at closure.

Are the 12 members of the board of directors for the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre appointed by you, as the minister?

According to the—

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** Yes, they are appointed.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Did you personally appoint those, or were they appointed before you took on the role as minister?

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** Some of them were appointed by me. Others had been appointed before.

As I said, I'm open to reviewing how the appointments are made.

**The Chair:** I think one concern—and I think we've heard it from everybody—is that thread. It's that trust.

When I'm looking at the sports resolution and knowing that from there, they're choosing OSIC, is that correct?

What's the lineage? Who gets into OSIC? Who chooses the membership of OSIC or who hires OSIC? How are they affiliated with the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** I think what you're talking about is the integrity commissioner position. Is that what you're—

**The Chair:** No.

A segment of those at the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre becomes OSIC. Is that correct?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Yes, that's correct.

**The Chair:** I want to look at this line.

The minister appoints the people on that board. That board then chooses OSIC, because it's a wedge of that.

I think what I'm seeing—and I think it's the same for many on this committee—when I'm looking at the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada and at the membership that's been chosen—and Pascale, it's definitely not against you; please understand this—is that people in Gymnastics Canada are on this resolution centre board. Then we're also hearing from someone like Ian Moss, who is saying that it was an allegation, not a fact.

I think when we're looking at all of these things, part of the problem is those ties and those connections that seem to be in every single place.

How are the athletes supposed to support something when they know that the person in charge of sports resolution sits on the same board as a person who will not hear their allegations?

Pascale, maybe you can share your thoughts on that with me. Then I'll let you go.

• (1200)

**Hon. Pascale St-Onge:** Trust in the system is paramount. This is the only way that this new mechanism will be efficient and will work. If you or the committee have any recommendations on how we can improve the governance or the nomination process or anything, please give them to me. I'm really open to everything that is going to be recommended by the committee.

One thing we've noticed is that there's a lot of conflict of interest in the sport system in general, whether it's on boards of federations, with the provincial federations or with other affiliates. We need to make sure that conflicts of interest are taken out of the system.

This is also why the governance review and what we change in the governance structure and models that we're going to impose on organizations are so important.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

On behalf of the committee, thank you so much for coming here. I know that we will continue our next hour with officials from Canadian Heritage.

We will suspend for about a minute. I know there are people coming on.

Thank you so much, Minister.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1205)

**The Chair:** Welcome back, everybody.

We're going to continue with this meeting. I recognize that it's a busy time because we're doing a bit of a switchover and all of us are exiting and entering the room.

We're going to go back to the six-minute round. We will start off with Anna Roberts for the CPC, and then we will continue.

We have six minutes for you, Anna.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for joining us.

Thank you, Isabelle, for that response on Gymnastics Canada. Just to put it on the record, Karen, December 18 was when they joined.

How many national sports organizations are currently under investigation?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Do you mean by OSIC?

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** Yes.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** OSIC is an independent organization, so it doesn't necessarily tell us who it investigates, but we know it is investigating some. I think the minister mentioned one on Volleyball Ontario. There may be others in the pipeline that it is not quite ready to talk about that are being investigated. We won't know, necessarily, until it is ready to go public with those, because, as I said, it is an independent organization.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** When they are under investigation, does that mean the funding stops?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** No, not during the investigation. However, if it comes with recommendations, Sport Canada and the minister will consider it. In some cases, she can consider cutting the funding if they are not complying with the recommendations.

Let's take an example. If it says that the organization should take these 10 measures—it has 10 recommendations—and the organization doesn't follow them, we can include that in our contribution agreement. If the organization doesn't comply, we can cut the funding.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** I want to go back to something the minister said earlier about the universal code of conduct.

As we know, coaches come from other countries. The rules and regulations there are different from what they are in Canada, so the education part is very important. If we can't control that, then we are allowing these individuals to come and coach our children while not knowing our rules. I don't care what they do in their country—I'm sorry; I'm not trying to be rude—but in this country, we have rules and regulations to protect our children, and those must be adhered to.

How does the government ensure adherence to a code of conduct if we can't hold them accountable? Are we inspecting these facilities? Are we sending people in to see and research what these young athletes are going through? I have not heard that from any of the witnesses we had. There is no accountability. If we have no accountability, then there's no point in having a code of conduct or a universal code of conduct because we're not doing anything about it.

How can we change that system and how can we change that mentality?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** That's a very good question. The code of conduct didn't exist until a few years ago. I have to thank former minister Duncan, because she really is the one who worked with the community to have this code adopted.

Before, if an athlete wanted to say this was wrong, they had no place to point it out, because there was no written rule for the sport. Now the code of conduct exists.

Your question is about how we enforce it, right? That's why, as a condition to be a member of OSIC, you have to have the code as one of your policies. You have no choice. You have to have the code as your policy.

What will happen now is that OSIC will be able to hear a complaint about that but also do proactive environmental studies, so it doesn't have to wait for a complaint. It has another line of business. Now it can also say, "I think something is wrong there. We will do an environmental assessment of this particular sport." It can then look and make recommendations as to how the code is enforced.

If it found, for example, that nobody knows about the code, that nobody's checking about the code, then it can make recommendations. Then they will have to comply with it—

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** I'm sorry to interrupt, Isabelle.

Here's my concern. My concern is that these witnesses we have heard from are afraid to come forward. They are afraid for their families. They are afraid that their families are being harassed. If we don't hold the people at the top accountable—the top brass, even the CEO that we questioned—then how can we expect the witnesses to feel that they are in a safe spot? Right now, from what we have heard from all the witnesses, they do not feel safe.

• (1210)

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** For sure. I think that's an excellent question. I think that's why OSIC doesn't have to wait for a complaint. They can act and lead an investigation on their own volition. If they hear a rumour, if they think there is something wrong, they don't have to wait for somebody come to them; they can initiate the investigation and do basically the same thing they were able to do.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** What Ian Moss, the CEO, said earlier was that they were just allegations and there were no facts, but when you have 600—

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Yes, exactly.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** —gymnasts coming forward, how much more do you need to know?

I think the problem is at the top. I think the people at the top do not understand the concerns we have for our children, because when I asked him what he would do if it were one of his children, he immediately said he would lodge a complaint.

Don't hold me to that; I can't quote him verbatim. My concern is this: If he's that concerned about his children, why is he not concerned about the 600 who came forward? That's what really scared me.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** I think you're making an excellent point. I think that's why it's so important that the mechanism is independent. Earlier, it was within the control of organizations. They could decide to investigate; they could decide not to investigate. Now it's not going to be their choice. It's going to be based on either a complaint or a self-initiated investigation that OSIC can do. They won't have to wait for the CEO or whoever in the organization to pursue something if they think there is something wrong with the organization.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** But we still have to hold the people at the top, who are not acting on these.... Call them accusations or call them whatever you want, but we have to hold them responsible—

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Absolutely.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts:** —and as far as I'm concerned, they should be fired.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Thank you for that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** We'll now move over to Jenna Sudds.

Jenna, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Thank you very much to our officials for being here with us today.

[*Translation*]

The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner has been up and running for nearly eight months. Are you satisfied with its deployment?

What could we do to have as many people as possible make use of it?

[English]

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Since they appointed the integrity commissioner in June, they have done lots of things, including hiring staff. They are the ones who hired their first independent investigator, their team and all of that. They had to do that. They also have to set up policy. They want to have investigations that are trauma-informed and have the proper support and all of that. That's what they have been doing.

In parallel, obviously it was important to have every organization sign on so that they can start to do these investigations. Now, after eight months, they have started to do these investigations. Although they had refused more at the beginning, more people signing on means they are going to have fewer people who are not eligible. By April 1, all national organizations will have signed, so I think we recognize that they did a lot of work in a very short time.

**Ms. Jenna Sudds:** Are you happy with the steps or with the progress you've reached to this point?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** I think we are happy with the work they have done so far. Obviously, as the minister said, this is a new organization. We will be happy to consider any improvement or any suggestion this committee can make about this organization. We all want it to succeed. We all want it to succeed, not for us but for the athletes and for the sports system.

[Translation]

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

How do you feel the Government of Canada can contribute to changing sport culture?

[English]

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** The minister talked about a couple of things that we are doing, but I think one very important transformation that we're trying to accomplish is to ensure better governance of organizations.

The member just mentioned accountability. I think it's extremely important. I think that's why we will see in the contribution agreement that will be adopted that the minister will announce some changes to really reinforce accountability and the ability of Sport Canada to monitor and to enforce the expectations with regard to safe sport. That's one way.

[Translation]

**Ms. Jenna Sudds:** Thank you.

Do you find that enough women sit on the boards of national sport organizations, or NSOs?

If not, could the Government Canada use its influence to encourage more women to sit on these bodies?

• (1215)

[English]

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** It's a good question. Frankly, it's related to safe sport, because when you have a more diverse sport, you also are likely to have better results in terms of safe sport.

In 2019 the government invested \$30 million on gender equity, because the numbers were not good. The numbers were not good at

the coaching level, at the board level, etc., etc. With that amount, there was activity that involved about 17,000 people in the sports system to try to change that culture. We have seen the numbers increase. They are not yet where we are, but we're now seeing board after board and coach after coach all through the sports system starting to change, and we see the tendency going up.

Is it fast enough? No. That's why the government has renewed this funding recently and has put forward another \$25.3 million to continue that work. We are not yet where we should be, but we'll continue to work on that. This is very important.

**Ms. Jenna Sudds:** I agree. Thank you for that.

I think we see that more and more as we've heard victims come forward. Certainly at this committee and in our discussions, it's become apparent that we need more female voices, more females in leadership within these organizations, to help with that culture change that we all know needs to happen within sport.

With that, I know I have 10 seconds left, Chair, so I'll just say—

**The Chair:** You have a minute and 15 seconds.

**Ms. Jenna Sudds:** Oh, I have six minutes. That's fantastic. I do have another question.

We heard the minister talk earlier about the conflict of interest that's inherent within sport.

My question is, how can you, the government... What mechanisms do we have at our disposal to resolve that, to help take that conflict of interest out of the sport system?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** I think part of it is creating a mechanism, as we have done with the complaints with an independent mechanism. It's hard to be a judge and a party too. When organizations were judging their own performance, they were judge and party, even if they were hiring their own third party. We have seen that it was not working. That is definitely one conflict that is gone.

I think the other one is governance. It's the importance of the board. If you have a board that doesn't really understand their role and they think their role is to just sign on to what the CEO says, you don't have the robust governance that you want. Among the things we are thinking about is whether we need training for board members so that when they sit on that board, they know they are there for the athletes. They're not there because it's fun to go to the party at the end of the year, or whatever it is that they think they get out of that work.

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

We're now going to move over to Sébastien Lemire.

Sébastien, you have six minutes.

[Translation]

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



I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today to help us clarify certain things.

My first question is somewhat related to what the minister was saying earlier. She mentioned wanting to meet with agencies, particularly provincial governments.

Why hasn't that already been done, given that in the next few weeks, by the end of March, you will be launching a new Canadian sport policy?

Why were the groups not consulted before this?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** First, in terms of creating an independent mechanism, we already met with those groups at the Canada Games in Niagara and the discussion has already happened. A commitment has already been made to create a mechanism of that kind. This week's discussion is to take stock of what's been done so far and see how we can move faster.

In terms of the policy, I will turn to my colleague, because a lot of consultation has already been done, including with the provinces.

**Ms. Jaimie Earley (Deputy Director General, Sport Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage):** Thank you for the question.

As you know,

[English]

the Canadian sport policy is a policy that is co-developed and co-led and will be co-endorsed by all ministers of the provinces and territories. The policy work is under way. Consultations started to take place this past April. Each jurisdiction across the country was responsible for choosing which people would be consulted on their policy.

There were 14 consultations that took place by the provinces and the territories. An additional 10 consultations took place with targeted stakeholders from coast to coast to coast that represented groups such as coaches, officials, athletes, Black and racialized sport participants and new Canadians. I'm happy to provide the list of who was consulted in that consultation. There was also an extensive online consultation aspect that took place as well. We have, I would say, around 5,000 people who participated in the Canadian sport policy consultations from coast to coast to coast.

There's a really comprehensive "What We Heard" report that was published. It's available on the Sport Information Resource Centre of Canada's website for anybody who would like to have a look at it.

Later this week, ministers will be looking at the foundational aspects of the Canadian sport policy. I think we can all anticipate that it will be strongly grounded in values that we want to see as the road map for the next 10 years for where we want the sport system to be going.

Further, this year we can anticipate that federal-provincial-territorial ministers will be endorsing the sport policy. There will be action plans developed by each jurisdiction for their own jurisdictional authority and responsibility about their priorities for where they want to go with sport over the next 10 years.

• (1220)

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Thank you for your response.

You sort of beat me to my second question, but I would ask you to forward us the list of people who have been consulted, if possible. Several organizations tell us that they were never asked to participate in the consultation or validation process. Responses were repeatedly delayed. The discussions sometimes got quite heated. Some felt they were placed before a series of faits accomplis.

What was the spirit in which these consultations took place?

I am particularly interested in the athletes and the representatives of athlete groups. People from federations have interests, and I feel we need to shine a light on what they are doing and how the machine is protecting itself.

What do the athletes have to say?

In your opinion, have we heard enough from them?

**Ms. Jaimie Earley:** Thank you for the question.

[English]

As I previously mentioned, we did one specific consultation focused on athletes. However, given that athletes represent part of the general public, I think we can make the assumption that some athletes likely would have participated in other sessions within their provinces or territories, as well as by filling in the general information.

In addition to that, I would say that Sport Canada... I cannot speak on behalf of the other provinces and territories, but we've done significant engagement with athletes over the past year. Minister St-Onge announced last June that one thing Sport Canada was going to do was create a healthier and safer sport environment that would be more athlete-centred. There was going to be the creation of a Sport Canada athlete advisory committee. We've met with that committee four or five times now. We just sent out, last week, a call for applications for general members to join that committee. It is a work in progress, but it's definitely a measure we put in place to make sure we're hearing the athletes' perspectives on all of our policy and program decision-making.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Can I add something very quickly?

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Yes, of course.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Thematic consultations have also been held, on safety in sport, for instance. The minister held a session with athletes present. But if you know people who feel they have not been heard, we would like to have their names so we can consult them. The policy has not been finalized so it is not too late.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Thank you for your openness.

I would like to know which committee members are involved and whether you will be tabling a new funding structure in connection with the new version of the Canadian sport policy.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** I'm sorry, but I'm not sure if I understand the question.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** I am talking about the committee established to update the Canadian sport policy.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Okay.

This includes all the provinces. Four provinces in particular have been designated as leads, but all the provinces are consulted. So all the provinces are represented on the committee. It is a federal-provincial committee.

What was your second question?

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Will you be tabling a new funding structure in connection with the Canadian sport policy?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** There will in fact already be a new funding structure in April, but as my colleague noted, once the new policy is adopted, there will be an action plan linked to it.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Thank you.

We have a very strict chairperson, so I will stop there.

[English]

**The Chair:** That's excellent, Sébastien. That's right to the minute, even right to the second.

Bonita, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you so much.

When we spoke earlier, the minister introduced the Red Deer declaration. I want to ask a bit about that.

First, however, I would ask the officials what age groups the department believes or understands we are covering in this study.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** The Red Deer declaration was a declaration adopted in 2019, when then-Minister Duncan was there. It followed a group of experts she put together—athletes and academics—to recommend what should be done on safe sport in particular, but also on gender in general. When ministers met in 2019 at a federal-provincial meeting, they agreed to put in place all the recommendations from that committee, and also to commit to having that discussion at every single one of their committees. They've all undertaken the responsibility to advance that file. That was the Red Deer declaration.

I hope that answers your question.

As for the children's ages, there are no specific ages, because in some sports, even at the national level.... I think about gymnastics. Some are pretty young, so we're not limiting ourselves by age. Any athletes in our sports should be receiving our support. In some cases—the Canada Games, for example—the younger athletes are in gymnastics. They can be as young as 12 or 13.

• (1225)

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you.

You mentioned MP Duncan, the past minister who dug in and had some recommendations. Were all of the previously suggested recommendations implemented from when MP Duncan was the minister?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** I would say that a large number of those recommendations were implemented. Others are being tracked regularly at the federal-provincial table, so the work is continuing on

those. We are happy to provide you with a summary of that, if it would be helpful.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** That would be great.

I'm looking at the Red Deer declaration. There were some under “immediate actions”. Three were establishing a standing item on safety and integrity”, “implementing a collaborative intergovernmental approach” and “investigating a mechanism to report and monitor incidents”.

Are all three of those happening?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** The mechanism is actually OSIC's. That's one of the outcomes of that meeting. The FPT table is now active on that front. They have a working group active all the time.

I missed the first one. I'm sorry. I don't have it in front of me.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Okay.

This is of interest because we've talked a lot today about wanting to have culture change, about culture flowing down and about the need for a change in governance, but if the people who are still implementing that governance are the same, we don't really get very far.

Have you seen any changes? Have there been any metrics? How are we measuring them?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** All of those recommendations are being measured. I think you're absolutely right. They are measuring how they are being accomplished. We can provide you with exactly what has been done and exactly what is being done about it.

Some of it is for the federal government. Some of it is for the provincial government. We're tracking it as a collective. We are happy to provide that to you.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Is this cross-jurisdictional collaborative approach new, or has that been ongoing?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** I will say that because sport has federal and provincial components, it's not new. I will say the focus of the table on sport is probably.... I cannot talk about events that happened before that. I was not there. I was there at the time when it was minister Duncan. I know that since then, it's a regular item on the agenda.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Okay.

Which ministry will this fall into? Will this fall into the sport ministry or will it fall into Canadian Heritage? If there is monitoring that's going on and if there are actions that need to be completed, which ministry is going to take accountability for them?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** It's the sport ministry. Sport is within Canadian Heritage, but it's the sport ministry that's doing the follow-up when it's at the federal level.

Our colleagues in the provinces—they all have sports ministries too—are doing it for their own jurisdictions.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** As you were speaking about it, it's all ages. It can be very young kids. Everyone around this table and all Canadians want this fixed. What is the immediate "must" to be done right away? We've had testimony from victims and survivors who are saying they want a judicial inquiry. Is this the must?

What is the number one action that we can tell Canadians came out of these conversations, even before a report comes?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** I think there is more than one must. The minister has definitely talked about the work she is doing on thinking about what the appropriate inquiry would be. In the meantime, and I think she said it in her opening remarks, other things need to take place. We all have to do it in parallel, because it's too important and too urgent.

She's doing a reform of her funding because she can. That's a tool she can use to change the culture. She won't wait. She will do it.

**The Chair:** Fantastic.

We're going to move to Dominique Vien for five minutes.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hello, ladies. Hello again, Ms. Mondou.

With all the horror stories we have heard, to your knowledge, are there any parents who said they want to take their children out of team sports? If not, have you seen a drop in registrations?

• (1230)

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** That is a very good question. We should probably try to find the answer to that. I have heard of some cases, but I do not have any hard data.

In hockey, for instance, some parents have publicly stated in newspapers that they were seriously considering withdrawing their children from their team or, in some cases, not signing them up for a team.

**Ms. Emmanuelle Sajous (Assistant Deputy Minister, Sport, Major Events and Commemorations, Department of Canadian Heritage):** I would like to add that there has indeed been a drop in registrations in sports, but that was during the COVID-19 pandemic. So it is hard to say whether that was due to COVID-19 or the current situation. That is something we are looking at now.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** My colleagues pointed out that you are in the process of developing a new policy. The topic of training has been raised, for instance. I think it should be a red flag if a trainer asks parents not to be in the room where children are training.

Could you not send directives to sport organizations now to say that things are unacceptable, that they will no longer be accepted, and that they will have to take certain steps from now on, such as no longer preventing parents from being in training rooms?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** We will examine all the committee's recommendations. As the minister said, some of these things are local matters...

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** So I understand that this has not been done so far.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** No, that has not been done to date.

It should also be noted that the clubs in question are sometimes local clubs, and, in theory, we have no power, unlike the federations. Still, that doesn't stop us from sending messages at the national level, which can then be forwarded to the provinces.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** I am really having a hard time figuring out the responsibilities of each party, provincial or federal.

Ms. Mondou, will you be accompanying the minister next week?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Yes, absolutely.

If you'd like, Madam Chair, I can try to untangle the responsibilities of the federal and provincial governments.

At the federal level, we financially support athletes who compete at the Olympics or Paralympics, or the Canada Games.

The provinces, on the other hand, handle sports played at the local club and at the provincial level.

So it's important, as the minister was saying, for all levels to work together, because sports as a whole are not just the top of the pyramid, they are the entire pyramid.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** I can tell you that I know what an important role deputy ministers play in the lives of ministers.

As a deputy minister, what roles have you played with your fellow provincial and territorial deputy ministers?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** That's a very good question.

I had an opportunity to work with Ms. Duncan in 2019. It was at that time that we began to push very hard for our provincial colleagues to comply with the Red Deer declaration, working with expert committees and athlete committees. In doing so, we wanted to ensure that the provinces were also doing their part.

It is understood that coaches who do unacceptable things end up going to the least regulated province or region. So we need good rules everywhere. That's why the minister is still working hard, with my support and that of other deputy ministers.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** Do you call them constantly? Do you ensure a close follow-up?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Yes, we call them constantly. I spoke to them about two weeks ago, and we will be meeting again soon in Prince Edward Island. We are talking regularly to keep the file moving forward.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** You can also act as a catalyst to get things moving.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Absolutely.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** So I assume that you strongly and unequivocally recommend that a registry of coaches be implemented.

• (1235)

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Everyone agrees that this information must be available. What we are working on is a way to do it as effectively and quickly as possible.

**Mrs. Dominique Vien:** In closing, the clubs you were telling us about that are not your responsibility seem to be in a desert where young people and their parents have no leverage to file complaints.

People know they can go to the police station, but what are you saying to your provincial counterparts about putting in place a mechanism that would make it possible to file complaints?

[English]

**The Chair:** Your time is up, Dominique. We will now be switching over to Sonia, who is online.

Sonia, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the officials.

I just want to make a comment. Yesterday I met Olympic champion and six-time world champion Cassie Campbell. She reminded me that yes, there are systemic issues. In order to get positive impact from supports, we need to build ourselves safer places so that all experiences can have those benefits.

We heard our minister. My first question is to the officials.

Can you explain to us what powers Sport Canada has and what exactly can be done when there are wrongdoings?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** There are different measures that the minister talked about. One of them is obviously the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner and the importance of having a place for athletes to go and be able to be heard. Another is for concrete action and sanctions to be taken against the coaches and against the organization. It's whatever needs to be done. I think that's really important.

To follow up with regard to the provinces, it's important that these mechanisms exist across the country, because the reality otherwise is that they will come at federal level and that OSIC will not be able to provide the support the athlete needs. We don't want that. We don't want any athlete to be turned around.

That's why it's so important to have the provinces either join OSIC or operate their own mechanism, as did Quebec and New Brunswick. There can be no gap across the country that leaves even one athlete without a place to make a complaint and feel that they can be safe and be supported both from a mental health point of view and from a trauma-informed point of view.

I hope that addresses your question.

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

As a follow-up question, we know it will be mandatory for a nationally funded organization to sign up with the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner. Can you expand on the impact that will have in terms of transparency?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** The first thing is that now we won't need to ask what an organization has or what kind of code they apply or what the rules are that they should abide by, because now the rules will be the same for all national organizations. They will have to abide by the same set of rules and they will be judged and held accountable under the same set of rules. That's point number one.

Point number two is that the minister said that if they don't sign with OSIC, the funding from Sport Canada will be cut.

Point number three is that when OSIC makes recommendations, the organization will implement these recommendations. If they don't, that will be reflected in the funding that they receive. Their funding could be cut if they are not implementing the recommendations that are needed to improve the organization.

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

We heard the heartbreaking stories. Some athletes have said that they are at the breaking point. What mental health support is being provided to athletes who are survivors of violence or abuse? How are these services being strengthened and improved?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** OSIC is going to have some mental health support and some trauma support for athletes, but obviously not everybody wants to go to seek them, and not everybody should. Some people just want the support they need at the moment they need it, and that's why the minister announced, just before Christmas, \$2.4 million in mental health support. That's going to be provided to any athlete who feels they need it—not to improve in their competition or their sport, but just to improve their well-being. It's not for a person's better performance; it's focused on the wellness of athletes.

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

We need better training across all levels. Can you expand on how the government is promoting education and training for coaches, officials and the sporting community on abuse and harassment in sports, especially for women and girls?

• (1240)

**The Chair:** You have 20 seconds to respond.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** I will say just a couple of things. Obviously the Coaching Association has a huge role to play, and we are working on them to make sure that every coach is properly trained, but the point about education goes well beyond coaches. That's why the minister also announced support for AthletesCAN on Friday. It is an organization of athletes that will be a wonderful place that can provide some of that education.

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

We're now going for rounds of two and a half minutes, and Sébastien, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

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

Why is it that, in Canadian sport, male athletes get more than female athletes, both financially and in terms of access to services?

The services available to male teams are clearly often light years ahead of those available to female teams in a number of sports. Just look at the structures related to hockey, especially in the university environment: women's hockey is grossly underfunded compared with men's hockey. In the soccer world, questions have also been raised in recent months about the cuts to the funding for the women's soccer team.

Where is the equality?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** I think that is an excellent question.

Sport Canada financially supports women's teams. That said, if the money has not been going to women's teams, the minister is going to have to look into the situation, as that would be unacceptable. Generally, women's sports should be funded the same as men's sports.

Of course, Hockey Canada receives a lot of money from the private sector. As we can see, the money is spent more on meeting the needs of men's teams. That's where the governance of Hockey Canada is important, to make sure we bring equality back to the system.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Would you or the minister be able to do an audit on the Soccer Canada issue? I would invite you to think about it, based on the information we have received.

How could we better support female athletes, now that we know that private funding structures, among others, benefit men?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** There are different ways of doing that, but I'll give you an example related to accessibility.

We knew that our Olympic athletes received bursaries, but not our Paralympic athletes, because of unequal funding from the private sector. We are currently looking at how we can use public funding to address that gap, until private funding catches up. That's one way of evening things out.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** I urge you to keep those efforts up.

Do national sport organizations still have to report abuse and maltreatment to Sport Canada, or does that information go only to OSIC now?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** That's a very good question.

We still receive complaints, but as organizations sign on to the abuse-free sport program, the complaints will go to OSIC.

[*English*]

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

We'll go over to Bonita for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is around the Canadian Heritage sport support program.

Each national sport organization funded by Canadian Heritage's sport support program must have a policy on harassment, abuse and discrimination. My question is really around the sanctions. It was a word that was used earlier. What sanctions are in place for national sports organizations that fail to comply with that policy? Have any sanctions been exercised that you could share with us?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** It's a very good question.

In 2019, former minister Duncan required all organizations to have a policy in exchange for funding. Based on that, Sport Canada developed what we call a report card, which didn't exist before. It was a pilot. On that basis, we started to monitor what organizations were doing. They had to report to us, and we assessed the reports.

We found through the pilot that although the tool was very good, what was not sufficient was that we were only receiving information from the organizations themselves. We wanted to receive information from different sources to make sure that what we were assessing was informed not only by the organization itself but by others.

That's part of the work that the minister is going to announce shortly for the new round of funding.

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** I have a follow-up question on that point. Are parents going to be involved as a regular input point?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Some things that are being considered are athletes' voices, but other voices could be heard through, for example, an audit—not a financial audit, but one that includes people who look at the application of those policies. The auditor could consult evaluative people, including whoever they feel would be a good voice to check.

Those are some of the things being looked at.

● (1245)

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo:** With so many testimonies and so many stories—and I think we're just on the tip of the iceberg of things that have happened over the decades—have there been sanctions? Have sanctions ever been exercised for coaches, staff or organizations?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Over the years, some people have found themselves in front of the court and some have been found guilty. For others, there have been complaints and they have not been found guilty, but they have been sanctioned within the organization. I will say these haven't been done in a way that is sufficient. That's why we see the crisis we have now.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Bonita. Thank you so much.

We're going to finish up our round. We'll go to Warren Steinley for five minutes and then over to Marc Serré for five.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

I wanted to dig down a little bit on this. You're in charge of the national bodies, and that really has nothing to do with the provincial organizations, which I find a bit interesting.

I have a bit of hockey background. Whenever you go to Hockey Saskatchewan about why these rules or principles have come down, the answer is that they come down from Hockey Canada.

I'm assuming many other provincial bodies and sports organizations are like that, in that they take their lead from the national body for guiding principles for what would happen if there is an indiscretion.

I think you do have a bit more responsibility for some of those provincial bodies than you're letting on. I would like to get some comments on the fact that most of the time these provincial entities are taking their lead from the federal bodies that govern sports.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** I wouldn't say they have nothing to do with them; I will say they have other players involved. Your example is a good example.

Some national federations are actually very close to the provincial bodies. In some other cases, they don't speak to each other.

There are other groups of sports that are not even affiliated with any provincial and national sport organization. They are affiliated with U.S. groupings. The sport system is unfortunately very complex, and—

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** That's what I figured.

My question was leading into that. How tightly affiliated is the national gymnastics body with provincial and local clubs? How much of a lead do they take from that? Would the situation be similar to hockey or to some of the organizations in that, as you say, there isn't much of a connection between the national, provincial and local clubs?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** With your permission, I will turn to my colleague.

**Ms. Jaimie Earley:** Certainly.

As my colleague said, each national sport organization does have a different structure. One of the things, I think, that—

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** It's just gymnastics. I don't have time for this.

**Ms. Jaimie Earley:** I'm sorry.

On gymnastics specifically, I think that's one thing that a light was shone on through the McLaren report that was recently commissioned. Richard McLaren appeared in front of the committee, and I understand that he's also submitted a brief. One thing that has been identified is that there does seem to be a significant disconnect between what goes on within the national organization and what goes on within the provinces and then right down to the local club.

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** What I'm getting at, then, is that I would really strongly recommend that the national gymnastics body take the position of allowing parents to be at practices anywhere. They can do that. I've seen it with Hockey Canada. Their rules trickle down, so Gymnastics Canada needs to put a rule in place that provincial and local clubs cannot disallow parents from being at practice.

Would you agree with that?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** I think what the minister has said is that she's going to use all of the tools and all of her power, and that includes using the national sport organization to change the sport system. I take your comment, and I think that the committee could certainly make that recommendation.

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** Thank you very much.

Please take that back, because I've seen a little bit of “We're national; we're not provincial”, but there are ties that bind very closely, so we can't just slough off some of the things that might be tougher and say that it's a provincial jurisdiction or a local jurisdiction. This is why we're in national politics. We're there to lead and we're there to be good examples in making sure that those good principles are going down to the provincial and the local clubs.

I have a couple of more seconds left.

My colleague talked about OSIC. The Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada has a board, and some of those board members go to OSIC, and then they pick.... They work with.... Can you tell me how that tie works? Is there a very loose connection with the SDRCC, or is it a closer connection with OSIC than we might think?

• (1250)

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** There is one board for the organization. This organization does not recruit the people who are there and the commissioner was not recruited by the board, but they are the oversight body for the whole organization. You are correct about that.

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** Is the board for the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada chosen through OSIC, through the minister? Is there an application process, or are they generally chosen as CEOs and people who have had a substantial role in some of these sports organizations?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** It's not a GIC appointment or an order in council; it's on the recommendation of the minister. Typically, they have represented a variety of groups, not just an NSO. There have been experts, there have been athletes and there have been evaluative people. That's the idea of a diversified board.

**Mr. Warren Steinley:** I'd even make a recommendation that some of these people shouldn't even be involved with sports. They should be on other career paths where they might not have that tight connection so that maybe they'd see things differently from some of these people who have been involved in those sports for their whole lives.

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

I'm passing it over to Marc Serré.

Marc, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for appearing today.

Obviously, in looking at the victims, we talked about action and results. You referenced the Red Deer declaration earlier, the athletes who met with Minister Duncan and all of the good work that Minister Duncan has done in the past.

Can you briefly explain how OSIC came about? OSIC has been in place since June 2022. It's been eight months. Also, if OSIC had been in place in 2019, let's say, how would that have impacted the girls at Gymnastics Canada? We've received a lot of testimony, but OSIC wasn't in place and we were looking at the past. Moving forward, how do you incorporate that with OSIC and the challenges we've had with organizations?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Thank you.

OSIC started when the minister at the time, Minister Duncan, consulted with her expert committee and also with athletes, and they all came up with two things they absolutely wanted. One was to have a code of conduct, because that didn't exist, and the other one was to have an independent mechanism.

The work started at that moment, but it was pursued by the minister responsible for sport at the time, Minister Guilbeault. What happened is that an organization named McLaren came here and looked at what the best model would be and how we could make it work in a more efficient way. The people who worked with them were athletes and organizations from a variety of backgrounds, and they came up with the criteria for an organization that would make it successful in achieving the result that athletes had asked for.

That's what led to a call for proposals. It was based on those very criteria that had been developed by all these people involved, not just by one group. Various organizations applied, and the proposal that best met the criteria was the one that got it, which was SDR-CC, creating OSIC separately. That's when Minister Guilbeault, the minister for sport at the time, announced that they had been chosen, and then they started the work to implement the work.

On your question about what would have been better, it's hard to say, because it's hypothetical, but I think it's fair to say that this mechanism was not in place at the time, and if there had been a mechanism for athletes to go to for help and for sanctions to be taken, I really do hope that it would have made a difference.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** I don't know if we heard enough testimony about what we can do to increase powers to OSIC or increase their mandate, because they said two-thirds of the complaints they have received so far in the last eight months were out of their scope.

I know you and the minister mentioned your meeting with the provinces and your meeting this week. Are there any conversations or suggestions that you could provide to this committee for our recommendations on how we can increase the powers and the mandate of OSIC to make sure that we target and support every single athlete in this country?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** There are really three reasons that things were out of scope and that OSIC couldn't look at them.

The first one is it sometimes has nothing to do with the code of conduct. For example, if I was not selected by a team because they didn't consider my performance good enough, that's not the right mechanism. There is a mechanism for that, but it's not OSIC.

The second one is that some organizations at the national level have not signed on yet. After April 1, that won't happen anymore, because they will all have signed.

The third one is that some cases were provincial or local cases, and that's why it's so important that the province sign on to either this mechanism or another mechanism so that we don't have that gap.

I will say it will be really great if they sign on to the national mechanism, because in the case of a registry, it's way easier to track people down across the country if you have just one body rather than 12 bodies, so we hope they will sign on. At this point, many provinces are in discussion with OSIC, and some, we hope, are close to signing on.

• (1255)

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you.

Madam Chair, the committee is finalizing the report, and now the provinces are meeting this week. Is there any way the committee could get any of that data that's being discussed this week before we do recommendations?

**The Chair:** Perhaps we can ask the deputy minister.

Is there anything we can receive following these meetings to assist us with our report? Is there anything?

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** We will be pleased to do so.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. I really appreciate that.

As we're doing this, I know there were a few requests. I know that there was a list requested by Sébastien on the consultations.

Also, in our discussions we were also talking about the board. Can we get the list of the board of directors for both OSIC—if there is a board—and for the SDRCC?

Sébastien, you have your hand up there for a quick second.

[*Translation*]

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

I'm unclear on something, so I'd like some additional material.

I'd like to know how much sport organizations have to pay in order to receive services from OSIC. The service isn't provided automatically. Organizations have to pay to obtain the service and receive funding—which is a bit ironic. I'd like to know whether everyone pays the same amount, and I'd like a list of the organizations.

**Ms. Isabelle Mondou:** Madam Chair, we would be happy to oblige, but we don't have that information, so the committee would have to ask OSIC directly. I'm sure OSIC would gladly work with the committee on that.

*[English]*

**The Chair:** To the clerk, if you could follow that one up with OSIC, that would be fantastic. If we can we get a list of the board

of directors for those organizations that we were speaking of today, that would be great.

I see no other questions.

I'd really like to thank you for coming today and providing us with content for the rest of our study. It was very much appreciated.

To our members, I have a reminder. On Thursday, we'll be doing some reports and we'll be back in camera.

Thank you very much, everybody. The meeting is adjourned.

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