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Ms. Marlene Catterall

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Monday, December 13, 2004

• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.)): I'm calling to order this twelfth meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

I've been asked to move the motion by Bev Oda to the top of the agenda so we can deal with that first. I understand there have been some discussions, as the Speaker would say, among the parties.

Ms. Oda, do you wish to present an amended version?

Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I was wondering if I could ask for a friendly amendment to the motion submitted. The correction would be...if you look at the second paragraph of the original motion, you'll see it made mention of the end of this session. I would like to change that, if I could, so that the second paragraph of the motion would read that in response to the request by the artist and cultural communities across Canada and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for the renewal of Tomorrow Starts Today, the Minister of Canadian Heritage report in the House before the Christmas adjournment the intent of this government to renew or not renew this program and whether it will be renewed as an A-base program or not.

The Chair: There's only one problem with that. As I understand it, the House is adjourning tomorrow. Before the end of this week means by tomorrow, and I'm not sure that's possible.

Ms. Bev Oda: Can she not report to the House in writing?

The Chair: She could.

Ms. Bev Oda: I think that would be satisfactory to members of the committee.

The Chair: Okay, so it should read "report to the House".

Ms. Bulte.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): I'm just wondering, what if we were to ask the minister to make a public announcement before the end of the week? If the House isn't sitting on Tuesday, wouldn't that satisfy our requirements, as opposed to saying "to the House"?

You don't want to wait for the House to come back either.

Ms. Bev Oda: I guess I'll ask the question of the government representatives here. Is "reporting to the public" a firm commitment?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: No, I'm just saying that's one way we could phrase the motion.

Ms. Bev Oda: On behalf of the communities, I just want to make sure, whether it's a public announcement or an actual report to the House, that whatever commitments are made are firm commitments and that the cultural communities will know with some surety where they stand and where the programs stand.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Madam Chair, again through you, I agree with Ms. Oda on this. I would just like to have a little bit of flexibility there and still move this matter forward, if a public announcement would satisfy your requirement. I guess that's what I'm trying to say.

If we can't technically get into the House before the end of the week because the House isn't sitting, maybe we could ask the minister to respond by Friday.

Ms. Bev Oda: If I could then, I'd suggest we ask the Minister of Canadian Heritage to publicly announce before the end of this week and to formally report to the House upon the first week of the resumption of the House's sitting.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: That's fine.

The Chair: Is everybody prepared to accept that friendly amendment?

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Bev Oda: Thank you, everyone.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Madam Chair, if I may, I didn't put myself officially on the agenda, but just before the minister speaks, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank committee members for their work together, for their cooperation and their input into Bill C-18, which receives third reading today.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): I had no problems.

The Chair: In case a few members disappear before the end of the meeting—I understand some of us have been under the weather—I would just like to thank everybody on the committee for some really excellent and collaborative work in the last few months. Thank you all very much, and in case I don't get another chance to say it, I hope you all have a wonderful holiday.

Ms. Bev Oda: And the same to you.

The Chair: Okay, to the minister now.

I'm going to ask Mr. Schellenberger to chair the meeting for the next few minutes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)): Today I welcome you, Minister, in your appearance before us. I know there are a couple of us on this round table who are very interested in what you have to say today. So without further ado—I am one of those people who is a little bit under the weather, so I may be leaving early—I welcome you here today, and thank you for coming.

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of State (Sport)): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and members.

I have with me today Jacques Paquette, who is the assistant deputy minister, and Tom Scrimger, who is the director general for Sports Canada.

I would propose to make some opening remarks for however long you think is appropriate, and then I'm looking forward to answering your questions and hearing your comments.

The overall objectives of Canadian sport policy are clearly participation, which is something we all enjoyed in our youth, want for our children, and know contributes to a healthy population, and excellence and the pursuit of excellence.

Even though sometimes there is some disagreement among Canadians on the importance of medals in Olympic Games and other international competitions, I think we all share great pride as Canadians when our athletes perform at the highest levels in the world. We want to see a sport policy that promotes their development and assists them in getting to the podium. We need participation, excellence, and capacity in the sense of building skills in a developmental way. We know it takes anywhere from four to ten or twelve years for someone to become a world-class athlete, so the development phase is absolutely critical.

Interaction is the fourth principle of Canadian sport policy, which speaks to the necessity of the federal government, the largest funder of sport in Canada, to work with provincial colleagues, interprovincially and territorially, with the market, business, and communities, and also with international partners for many of the things we do when competing internationally.

I thought I might take a moment, Mr. Chair, to say a little about each of the interactions in relation to capacity-building, excellence, and participation.

Certainly, across Canada and across the Government of Canada, I think I'm carrying on, but I hope taking further forward, my ambition for a policy of interdepartmental attention to sport. It's hard for me to think of any department of the federal government that doesn't have some relevance to the sport file.

The obvious one is certainly Health Canada, and I'm working with the Minister of Public Health on active living and on policies to promote health through activity. I'm working with the seniors minister, Tony Ianno, with respect to lifelong participation. I'm working with Ken Dryden in his role for early childhood development in education. As it goes forward, that policy is fully accepting of the fact that this also means early childhood physical education and development. I'm working with, and will work further with, Indian and Northern Affairs. Clearly, in our remote aboriginal communities, where often there is despair, sport can be extremely

helpful, as it is in inner cities. The urban aboriginal strategy will be linking to sport initiatives.

When we think of things like the Olympics, obviously, immigration and security issues are critical, but so is the justice department, in terms of community justice. After school and evening sports activities can often help kids straighten out their lives or not get off track, if they are busy and healthy.

We have a whole range of federal departments and initiatives that are critical. We work with provincial and territorial partners. I've had a chance so far, in the last two months, to meet with about half of the ministers responsible for sport from the province. I look forward to completing that. They are fully supportive of the Canadian sport policy. They are also doing some interesting things with the federal government.

We're having a data collection exercise at the moment to try to situate all of the major sport facilities across the country so that we can identify regional gaps and make sure, in our hosting policy, as we go forward with Canada Games and other games we bid for, that the impetus for facilities and the funding for facilities that comes out of those opportunities are spread across the country.

We're looking for other ways. It has been suggested that we look at an infrastructure program specifically for athletic sport facilities. That will be something that we will be looking at very specifically in our 2005 federal-provincial-territorial meeting.

● (1535)

I'll mention a couple of things with respect to provinces.

One thing that is immensely important is that the Province of Quebec has adopted for its three junior hockey levels the World Anti-Doping Agency standards code, which is I think extremely important leadership in the country. I will be writing, jointly with the minister responsible for sport in Quebec, to all other ministers across the country, suggesting that all jurisdictions take on that responsibility.

In terms of the business and other interactions, clearly business and community are critical. We have companies like Canadian Tire that fund community-based sport across the country. We have companies like Bell Canada and Telus that have each recently donated—\$18 million in the case of Bell and \$4 million in the case of Telus—and will over the next few years, to the developmental side of athletes who will become high-performance athletes, who have the skill but may not have sufficient funding in all parts of the country. So we have links there.

Internationally, let me return to WADA, the World Anti-Doping Agency. We're all aware that the world headquarters for WADA is in Montreal and that Dick Pound, its president, provided the leadership from the International Olympic Committee to set up this anti-doping association. It's with great pride I think in Canada that our Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport is seen as the pre-eminent anti-doping and ethical body in the world, supporting the work of WADA in Montreal.

Internationally, of course, the Olympics in 2010 is a major focus for us as a federal government. We're working closely with our partners, Vancouver and Whistler, and the provincial government, but we're seeing this as our responsibility as a federal government to make sure that this is a national celebration of sport and excellence and not something that's restricted to one corner of the country. It's a great opportunity for all Canadians to take the inspiration from these games and to also enjoy activities related to them across the country.

Finally, in terms of our international relationship, I'd like to mention an area that I am very keen on expanding our role in, and that is the role of sport in peace and development. The Right to Play foundation that Johann Koss runs in Toronto is providing world leadership in the inspiration of sport, and then just the opportunities to take part in sports for kids who are amputees in war zones, kids who are being rehabilitated from being child soldiers, kids who are AIDS orphans. The Commonwealth Games Association of Canada as well is a leader in this and is one of the organizations we fund with CIDA in some of these initiatives in other countries. Having seen some of the documentaries and material on what is achieved around the world, I think there is perhaps no other greater pride we can take in Canadians than in such initiatives that bring joy through sport to kids in impoverished or brutal situations.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, if I could just promote the idea of sport, I would observe that it's not very expensive, it's healthy, it's inspiring, it's value-based, it's collaborative, it's winning and losing. I think we're inspired tremendously across a whole set of values by our Olympians, our Paralympians, and other Canadians who perform at the highest levels in sport, but we're also thrilled ourselves for our own opportunities to be active, to have fun, and to stay healthy.

Those are my opening remarks. I look forward to your comments and questions.

•(1540)

The Chair: Mr. Schellenberger.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Thank you. Now I get a second chance.

I've listened to your words. In the last session I did sit on the sports committee for a short time and I found it a little bit confusing in terms of how the numbers are used. Again, I know government uses sunseting quite a bit. I remember sitting at a meeting and being told that there was \$90 million in the budget for sport and the minister went out and got \$30 million and we ended up with \$100 million. That didn't quite work out, but I found out that \$20 million was going to sunset, so he saved that.

My big thing is that there should be clarity. Now I hear that there is a request for \$59.6 million to go in and that's going to bring us up to \$120 million. I don't know how you come to all of these figures, but my thing, and it's in so many things we hear, is sustainable funding for things. If you put sunset clauses in...if the program is good, I think it should carry on; if the program isn't good, then it should be revisited and changed or taken out. How do you explain some of the idiosyncrasies here in the funding that we hear of? Right now, even if we had \$100 million, yes, at \$59.6 million we should just about have \$159.6 million, but we're going to have \$120 million. How does this work?

•(1545)

Hon. Stephen Owen: Thank you.

In terms of the \$50 million, I'm not sure when \$59 million came in.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: All right.

Hon. Stephen Owen: My record was that \$20 million was sunseting out of a \$90 million budget, and we were able to maintain what would have sunsetted, the \$20 million, and add another \$30 million. If it had sunsetted it would have gone from \$90 million to \$70 million, so we needed \$50 million more to get up to the \$120 million.

I agree with you, numbers are confusing to me as well. Some of the difficulty in accounting at Sport Canada that I've experienced—and it's no fault of officials, it's just the circumstances—is that in many of the programs we fund, the exact amounts aren't known and they bounce around a bit. The hosting policy is the most obvious one of those, where we may not host as many one year as the next, or the cost may be more expensive in planning for Whitehorse for the summer games than for Regina, for instance. So it does bounce around a bit.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I have a second question. I know we're very proud of our elite athletes, and we're very proud when we do well in the Olympics and internationally. But all of those elite athletes come from a base of young athletes and coaches who end up spending their weekends and nights out selling chocolate bars and potato chips to try to raise enough money so they can keep their program going in their communities. I know it's always easy to say we go to the...the province has the jurisdiction to run these things. But is there a way whereby there can be a little more designation of funding to some of the amateur sports and some of the grassroots people to help them keep their programs going at the lower end?

Hon. Stephen Owen: I think that's a good point. I would like to see us, the federal government, able to do more. We do at the moment have bilateral agreements with the territories and provinces, which provide a range of \$400,000 to \$600,000 a year to the province, which they match, for community-based programming. But you're right, jurisdictionally it's not a direct responsibility of the federal government. Through the bilaterals we try to contribute to that. I think we have to look to and never forget the parents and, by the way, you're right, the coaches and the trainers. I'm sure all of us who are parents have had the experience of driving 50 miles to take our kids to skating or whatever, getting up early in the morning.

I think we have to work together. I think corporate Canada has a lot to contribute. We see companies like Canadian Tire that are real leaders in community sport support. It's all very well for corporations to bid for the right to broadcast the Olympics or other major events or to endorse world champions who already have medals, but it's at the developmental stage and the broad participation stage, I absolutely agree, where we have to do more.

British Columbia and Quebec, I must say, are in leadership roles in some of their school-based programming; it's being restored. It used to be there when we were in school and it has been cut back over the years. I hope to be working as much as possible with them.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: I have one more quick thing. You mentioned schools. That's where a lot of people start out, whether it be in basketball, or track, or whatever; it's in the school system, especially if you're in rural Canada and you don't have that major track there and everything. I wonder if there is a way that a little more direct funding could go to some of the lower echelons in sport, because that's where our elite athletes come from. I hope this could be in your mind.

Thank you.

• (1550)

Hon. Stephen Owen: I think that's well said. I agree.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schellenberger.

Mr. Lemay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Good morning, Minister.

I have worked on the national and international scene more than 25 years now. I knew six ministers of state for sports who preceded you: you are the seventh minister. I am now a member of Parliament. On the international scene, in the sport of cycling, I have been a part of all of the winter and summer Olympic Games since 1984. Therefore, I was in a position to observe that there was no planning at Sport Canada. Unfortunately, Sport Canada is forced to beg and defend its budgets every year. As a member of the committee, I can make a recommendation on this subject, but I must tell you that this is unacceptable.

It is unacceptable that to this day, in 2004 and soon 2005, there is no five-year planning. How many medals do we want in 2008, in Beijing? How many medals do we want in 2010, in Whistler? How many medals do we want in 2006, in Turino? How many do we want in 2012? We do not know. "The best ever", some will say. If the committee must make a strong recommendation to allocate funds covering more than one year, two years or three years, then it is time to tell us. For my part, I believe we need four-year budgets. That is my first question.

Secondly, I have seen, as you probably have, some studies. There have been enough studies. Minister Owen, you have enough studies to fill two Parliament buildings. Studies have been conducted on performance, how to meet goals, how to make sure that our athletes perform better. Now, we need to act. How are we going to meet the goals set by the Canadian Olympic Committee? You know that it is the committee which will travel to the Olympic Games and accompany our athletes there. How are we going to meet the goals established by the committee?

My third question is a bit special. When we talk about athletes, we also talk about coaches. There is a serious problem with respect to the latter. Minister Owen, we are now losing our best coaches. I hope you are aware that we are losing our best coaches to Australia, France, New Zealand and other countries, in all disciplines. Since

2003-2004, coaches have picked up and left. How are we going to keep our best coaches?

Those are my first three questions.

[*English*]

Hon. Stephen Owen: Thank you for your remarks and for your contribution to the sport of cycling, and beyond it to broader high-performance sports in the country. You have been one of the leaders, and that's well recognized.

I think you're right that in any program we need stable funding. To the extent that we can have four-year funding, quadrennial funding, I think that is a proper horizon to be able to plan for, maybe even going forward with four-year plans and rolling them over each year, so that each year we're confirming that further horizon and doing proper audits and holding programs accountable to see whether they're working.

We're all aware we're in a pre-budget phase, and while it wouldn't be appropriate for me to say exactly what I'm suggesting in terms of the budget for Sport Canada, I can assure you we're very much engaged in the budget process. As I've said publicly—and probably this is going further than I should, but in any event—I consider the \$120 million to be a base on which we're building, rather than simply an extra \$30 million for one year, although from budget to budget that's technically what it is. The Prime Minister has asked me, and has said so publicly, to come to cabinet with a revised, integrated plan for sports in Canada, both participation and high-performance. The budget process is the first stage in putting that forward.

I take your point, and it's something certainly I support and am suggesting.

As to sunseting, though, and this goes to Mr. Schellenberger's question as well, it can be useful in forcing both an administration and politicians to really carefully consider the value and success or otherwise of a program. But I think this rolling idea is a better way to do it than rushing right to the end, leaving people in doubt, and then either saving them at the last moment or cutting them off.

On a related subject, you mentioned your medal counts and asked what our target is and what our plan is to get there. You're right, there have been numerous studies. The most advanced and most recent I've seen, about a month ago, is a report presented by the group Own the Podium, and the Canadian Olympic committee is supporting it. It draws on the greatest expertise I think we have in this country—first in winter sports, and the methodology will be extended now to summer sports—for analyzing exactly what we need for very high-level development to literally, as they say, "own the podium" in 2010, but it also has targets for Turin for the winter Olympics and will have them for Beijing in the summer Olympics.

It's a really good framework. It fits within our athlete development framework, and it's something we not only have to identify but then plan for and fund to meet the goal. The coaches are absolutely critical. Looking back on my time as an athlete and a student, I know when you think of people who have a real impact on your life it's often your coaches at different times. It's not just because the sport is fun, but the values you learn—the pursuit of excellence, the good health—all come together.

I met with the Coaching Association of Canada at their annual meeting in Winnipeg about six weeks ago. I met last week with Ian Bird and the Canadian Professional Coaches Association, which is a new advocacy group for professional coaches in the country. We have been able to put \$10 million of that extra \$30 million this year into coaching because of the central importance it has to performing well—in any sport, but certainly on the high-performance side.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I would like to understand something. I don't know if you have seen how the Australian Commission for Sports operates. With all due respect, I will tell you that the Australian Commission is a very good model for Canada, given all of its accomplishments.

However, I do not agree with Australia in that it argues a choice must be made between winter sports and summer sports. It is abundantly clear to me that Canada must participate in both Olympic Games. We could perhaps draw inspiration from the work done by the Australian Commission for Sports.

I will ask my other questions in the next round, but before concluding my comments, Madam Chair, I would like to ask a question.

The 11th FINA Swimming World Championships are going to be held in Montreal in 2005. Canada's image will suffer if this competition must be held elsewhere, and this concerns us. I would like to know what your intentions are as regards this event, which is experiencing serious financial problems.

• (1600)

[*English*]

Hon. Stephen Owen: First, Madam Chair, to deal with the Australian model, you're right, more than 20 years ago Australia decided it was going to concentrate on eight summer Olympic sports. They tend to be ones that are not team sports, because you can get more medals with fewer people. They've been extremely successful at—not to be derogatory—buying medals: identifying talent early, streaming them out, and putting a lot of money into a few sports. It works.

I talked to my colleague Ken Dryden, and he says the participation model we like to use as a broad base, identifying and supplying the elite athletes, is a true one, but you can also, as we know from the Soviet era, start with a narrow base and just concentrate on a few highly skilled people.

Speaking of the Australians, I met with Senator Rod Kemp in Athens just before the games, and we had actually a couple of bilateral meetings on our respective systems. They don't spend very much more than we do—in fact, it's almost the same—but they do it in a very concentrated way. What he told me is they're rethinking their approach because they're getting such a political backlash from parents who see their kids not having sport in schools and they see obesity rates rising. They're getting a lot of political pressure, paradoxically, from the public to say no, we can't just put it into high-performance sports; we have to start getting more sports into the schools.

I don't think the answer is one or the other; I think it's getting the right combination. There's no question that our high-performance athletes are a pride to our country. They're an inspiration to all of us to be active and to pursue excellence.

We've all seen in the news in the last couple of weeks that FINA and the world aquatic championships are in financial difficulty. The Canadian government is the largest contributor to those games. We've committed \$16 million, \$13 million of which has already been paid; there's \$3 million left. They are in serious, we gather, financial difficulty. December 21 is a crucial day for us to hear from them exactly what their needs are.

I agree it is an embarrassment to the country, the province, and the City of Montreal if these have to be moved to another site. The difficulty is—and they seem to be somewhere between \$12 million to \$18 million short—they're short because they've very much over-estimated the ticket sales and the corporate endorsements and investment. This event is to be in August in Montreal. It's a terrible thing if it has to be moved somewhere else, but we'll see where this goes. I can tell you that we as a government will want to know a lot more about the specific accounting difficulty and shortfall before more federal dollars go into that initiative. But you're right, it would be a great shame if it couldn't go ahead.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Lemay, I gave you 14 minutes.

[*English*]

I apologize to the other members of the committee. I wasn't paying close enough attention.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Marc Lemay: It's a wake-up call.

The Chair: No, you just used up two and a half spots.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you to the minister and his officials for showing today.

Sir, one of the concerns I have is with regard to the average family out there, whether it be in Victoria, St. John's, Whitehorse, Moose Jaw, or Lévis, Quebec, the challenges they face in trying to pay to get their child or themselves into some form of physical activity, either the cost of joining a gym, like Nubody's, or something of that nature, or putting their kid through hockey, soccer, or baseball. The registration fees are quite high, regardless of the sport.

One thing that an awful lot of people in Nova Scotia have asked for, as well as Scott Logan of Sport Nova Scotia and many others across the country, is to look at the tax system in terms of relieving some of the financial pressure people have.

I absolutely agree with this statement: “An objective of the Physical Activity and Sport Act is to encourage, promote and develop physical activity and sport in Canada.” As well, “Better health for Canadians requires more than just timely access to health care.” The government must also work with other people “to enhance sports activities”.

One of the saddest days I saw was when the federal government gave up the 1976 lottery, which was for sport, culture, and recreation, and handed it over to the provinces in the mid-1980s, and there was no jurisdictional aspect on it to ensure that the money was dedicated for sports, culture, and recreation. Most of the provinces put it into general revenues.

Saskatchewan, from what I understand, has a dedicated aspect of that fund that goes to sports, culture, and recreation.

Seeing how you can't tell the provinces what to do with their lottery funds, I think it would show great leadership—as it says right here, the federal government showing leadership—to allow the tax system to assist families in alleviating some of the costs.

The bill I have before you was drafted by people within the riding. Basically what they're asking for is that if they pay for themselves or their family members to register for a sporting activity, be it joining up for soccer, or dance, or whatever it is, they be able to claim that fee—say, \$100—similar to a charity donation.

It's quite ironic that we can give money to a political party and get a tax deduction, or we can give money to the United Way and get a tax deduction, but we could sign up for a particular sport or physical activity, and that's it. It stops right there. I'd just like your feelings on that.

• (1605)

Hon. Stephen Owen: Thank you for the question, and thank you for your initiative of bringing this before the House, because that ensures it gets proper attention.

As the minister responsible for sport, I will enthusiastically support the notion of having some relief for—

The Chair: You might have an argument from some of your own members, Mr. Owen.

Hon. Stephen Owen: The “but” is coming, Madam Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: You are much more democratic than Mr. Stoffer.

Hon. Stephen Owen: I'd certainly support the idea of greater funding for sport, and the tax system is one way to do it. We could do it a number of other ways.

I think the difficulty we have, of course, is that there's wide demand for decreased taxes. The Minister of Finance is considering many of those requests now, this being one of them, so it's going to be a matter of priority.

But I can imagine that one of the answers he might have is, all right, we start with sports issues, and then we'll want violin lessons, and then we'll want supplemental science. Then what about post-secondary education? There is some tax relief there, but scholarships are even taxed now. We have to have the revenue from somewhere.

I am an advocate of greater funding for sport to allow more people to take part in it. So I will, of course—thank you, Madam Chair—vote with the government, which is usually prudent in my position, but this is an issue where, whether it comes from direct funding or from the tax system, I think we need to do all we can to support participation.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Sure.

It amazes me how quickly we can give the oil and gas sector tax incentives in order to promote the activity, for example, on the east coast. We don't have any complaints on that. If it creates opportunities and jobs, it's a good thing. But when it comes to sport, we have to debate it and argue it and find reasons not to fund it or do it.

I just find it amazing that my colleagues on either side of the House would argue that the major international companies can receive tax incentives fairly quickly, yet when it comes to Mr. and Mrs. Smith in Halifax, Nova Scotia, trying to fund their kid through dance, we have to debate that and find ways to say no.

On that, the GST back to municipalities and the new deal with cities, from what I have read from everywhere, both deal with infrastructure in terms of roads, bridges, water, sewer, and so on, but I don't hear anywhere that some of that funding would be dedicated to recreational centres, soccer fields, or sports fields of any kind.

The reason I say soccer is because I've coached soccer in British Columbia, the Yukon, and Halifax, and I'm very proud to say that our team finished first in Nova Scotia this year. My young daughter, Amber, was the goaltender. She's under 14. I just had to throw that in.

But what they're really lacking, especially in rural areas, are facilities. If the federal government is going to initiate any kind of a deal with municipalities, I would like to see part of that funding dedicated to recreational facilities.

• (1610)

Hon. Stephen Owen: That's an interesting suggestion. Certainly in some of the infrastructure programs we've had over the last few years, in my previous role and now currently with western diversification... We administer the infrastructure programs in western Canada.

Certainly in the Canada-provincial infrastructure programs in the past, recreational facilities, community centres, and such have been eligible, but we tend to allow those to come from the bottom up. So they're identified by communities themselves, and then the provinces and the federal government will have to agree with the due diligence that this is necessary. But certainly for community centres in Vancouver and in northern Manitoba, I have taken part in those decisions to see the lead of a municipality identifying that as a primary need being funded.

Whether the new deal for cities and the gas tax money is cast at first that broadly, we'll have to see, but a point of discussion in the federal-provincial-territorial ministers meeting last May, I think—before I was there—was to do, as I mentioned earlier, an inventory of facilities across the country and to consider at its next meeting whether we should be looking to all levels of government for an infrastructure program directly for physical facilities. So that is very much alive.

I've had discussions with a number of provincial ministers so far, including the minister from Nova Scotia, who is very much in favour of an infrastructure program dedicated to it. But it doesn't have to be dedicated to it if it's a general one and it's a local priority. There are triage situations where water and sewer may be seen as more immediately necessary.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Scarpaleggia.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, a few years ago, as you know, we had a wonderful public service announcement program called ParticipACTION, which I believe—I don't have the figures—was highly successful in terms of encouraging Canadians to embark on physical activity. Now, for example, with respect to environment issues, we have a public service advertising campaign called, I think, the One-Tonne Challenge, which is very similar to ParticipACTION in terms of its approach. How would you feel about bringing back a program like ParticipACTION?

Hon. Stephen Owen: I think that's a good idea. We've actually resurrected—that's probably the wrong verb—or refinanced a ParticipACTION board to come up with a business plan for a public relations encouragement, drawing on the experience of ParticipACTION. I agree with you, it's probably vivid in most of our minds how effective it was as a public presentation of a need for activity.

We have funded them this year—I did in September—to come up with a plan early in the year, which must also be consistent with a joint plan that we're funding with Health Canada for active living. This will deal with nutrition, with weight, with activity. We don't quite know the form of it yet, but it's very much under way.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's great. I had no idea.

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thank you for raising that particular program.

Mr. Reynolds, I'm pleased to see you at our committee meeting and looking so healthy. Somebody is looking after you well.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): It's nice to be here. I'm feeling very healthy.

Mr. Owen, I want to thank you and your staff for being here, and I want to say before I put the questions to you that I appreciate the good work you're doing in British Columbia with the Olympics—part of it being in my riding. I've heard good comments about the cooperation we're getting from you and your department, and it's a fabulous event for all Canadians, which is really good.

Hon. Stephen Owen: Thank you.

Mr. John Reynolds: Mr. Lemay, all my colleagues have brought forward great ideas so far, and I hope you've been listening to them all.

I couldn't help but think when I was listening to them that everything they're talking about could be done; it's just a matter of money. I know you, thanks to your former role as an ombudsman, understand how government works and that you have to listen to some of the problems, but you have great skills. I'm thinking of things like the millennium program, which is finished now, and the sponsorship scandal, but there are other areas in government we should be looking at. The anti-smoking lobbyists, I think, get more money than your sports department does in this country. It's time somebody in the government looked at the programs.

There's sport, and we just talked about coaching. I have a son who made college-level football in the United States because his coach at West Vancouver Secondary was an ex-NFL player. I have a young son who made the basketball team at St. George's because in Arizona, where we lived for five years, he had NBA people teaching him how to play basketball. I made a high-level football team because I had a coach, Herb Trawik from the Alouettes, and then Johnny Johnson, who'd won a Grey Cup ring. They were experts. They did give you, like you talked about, the feeling.... We didn't worry about guys on our team smoking or drinking because we had good coaches who taught us it wasn't necessary.

Is it not time—we spend a lot of money on drug programs and smoking, as I mentioned—that we looked at increasing the money in sport, enough to make sure all these young people...? I know we could get into the violins and dancing at school; those things are all just as important. But if you look at schools today, you'll see we don't have the participation we used to have, whether in sports or in any other things.

That's part of the problem. If young people have nothing to do, they have to go out and do something, so you have more young people smoking. Even with your gazillions of dollars in anti-smoking programs, young kids are down the street smoking and doing drugs.

I think I'd like to hear if you have anybody in your department really saying to government, let's get serious about this. We're hoping maybe you can get it up to \$180 million annually for sports—well, that's what the sports groups are hoping for. I'd like to see it a lot more than that. I know my party has a little bit more than you have, but I don't want to get into politics. I think it's really necessary that we look at where this money is going to come from and how we rejuvenate this country. You have ParticipACTION—you can get me going on that—and that's a very good program. We have to encourage every province and come up with programs that work with the provinces. I'd like to know if there's anybody in your department really looking at those things.

You mentioned you met the professional coaches; I met them also. I think they're looking for 10% of whatever your budget is. I think that's a great idea. I'd like to know if you're going to do that, because you can't do things without good coaches. You can't just pick anybody. Coaching is not the way it was in the good old days when mom and dad volunteered to go to the park and be the assistant baseball coach. You don't necessarily know that you're getting good leadership.

The coaches I knew when I had the privilege of living in the States for five years, in Arizona, and through the boys and girls clubs...you couldn't be a coach in basketball unless you went through a system. Most of those coaches came from the NBA or a close relation to it, so they gave the right advice. And it wasn't playing to win—sure, it was to win, but it was always that playing the game was most important; that's what they taught.

Is your department really looking at anything? Let's get out of the box here and stop just looking at getting another \$20 million or \$30 million. Get serious, because we can win the 2010 Olympics. You and I both have a little extra score to win because we're from there, but Canadians are proud right across this country, from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island, if we win medals. To do that we have to have a total sports program.

You have a minority Parliament right now, so this would be an excellent time to come up with something a little bit different that would rejuvenate this country.

• (1615)

Hon. Stephen Owen: Thank you for that inspiration, because I think it's the type of sentiment those of us who feel it deeply—I agree with you—have to speak loudly and often and together. Not to militate, but I encourage all of us to underline the importance of sport and the need for adequate funding. As I said previously, it's cheap, it's fun, it's value-based, it's healthy, and the return is tremendous. The more voices the better, and I appreciate yours.

The coaching is critical at all levels, and it certainly is if we're going to get those really just final milliseconds and millimetres to go from fourth place to third place, or to get onto the podium. A wonderful result of Athens, once we get over the fact that we only got 12 medals, was that of the 264 world champions who represented Canada there, 80% of them came in the top 12, so they're just missing by that much. Coaching, better equipment, and more assistance so they can spend even more time at the training than they already do, which is almost around the clock—all of those things will help.

The Coaching Association of Canada is highly professionalized and getting more and more professional. Their professional certificate program is—I don't know, Tom, but I get the sense it is—one of the best in the world and is becoming better and better. We have put an extra \$10 million into that program this year, but it has to go more broadly. I often reflect that the most difficult dollar for any government to spend is a preventative dollar, yet it's obviously the most cost-efficient, and socially it's the most progressive because you're saving people from illness or whatever: sport is a great preventative idea.

We're coming forward. Yes, there are people in the department who are thinking of all of these things, and we are bringing together ideas to cabinet for a new program. It wouldn't be appropriate to go into the details, but I can tell you that everything you're stressing is something that's considered to be immensely important by the department.

• (1620)

Mr. John Reynolds: May I have one final short question?

The Chair: You're well over your five minutes, Mr. Reynolds.

Mr. John Reynolds: My colleague had 14 minutes.

The Chair: I know, but I'm skipping their next turn.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Why?

Mr. John Reynolds: I just have one short final question.

The Chair: Make it a very short question—and a very short answer, Mr. Minister, please.

Mr. John Reynolds: There is talk of the Calgary facilities being closed down, and this is going to hurt us in the Olympics. Are you doing anything to make sure they stay open?

Hon. Stephen Owen: Some of the Calgary facilities are getting pretty old now—since 1988. What has been immensely successful, and what you and I will be pushing for concerning the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, is the \$200 million—I think it was—legacy set up after the 1988 Calgary Olympics to support the endowment and the ongoing high-performance program: CODA, the Calgary Olympic Development Association, which has been tremendously successful. John Mills has done great work there.

It's a difficult thing as well, though. We've heard in the last couple of weeks that the alpine combined and the ski jumping are not going to be supported by CODA. They haven't actually been supported by the Government of Canada since 1996 because of the very low participation rates and the poor international performances, which go hand in hand. So you have a sport that is an important Olympic sport, but with ski jumping facilities being very expensive and very few people doing it and very poor results, it comes back to the idea of targeting a bit as well. I would probably see a falling off of that particular facility, but generally this is a well-run program, and it has worked well.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I am going to skip you, Monsieur Lemay, having given you 14 minutes

[*Translation*]

instead of five minutes.

Mr. Marc Lemay: It was very interesting.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): I too would like to welcome you, Minister, and your staff. I agree with Mr. Reynolds' point about occupying children with good coaches. It not only keeps them out of trouble, but they play for the glory of sport along with winning medals.

I have two quick questions. I'll put them both forward, and you can answer them in your own time.

I think low-income families have no idea how to access funding information. I know it is a provincial jurisdiction, but I'll give you an example. There were about 180 children from low-income families—I was not in politics then—and they had to pay to go to the schools to play in the winter months. We did not want them standing on the corners getting into trouble. We had to get some friends together and arrange a place for them. They had no idea, and even I didn't know, that this funding was available. Perhaps we could have some information, either through the political offices or the Internet, so they can access that funding. I'd like your comments on that.

We are now funding the Argo stadium in Toronto, I believe, and we spent \$365 million on the SkyDome, and the biggest proponent now owns it for \$25 million—that was Mr. Godfrey. My question is, can we ensure we have some influence such that these facilities, the Argo stadium that's being built or the SkyDome facility, which are white elephants, can be utilized for sport for universities or colleges, or even schools?

• (1625)

Hon. Stephen Owen: That's interesting. I assume you meant Paul Godfrey, not John Godfrey.

Mr. Wajid Khan: I'm sorry, yes, I meant Paul Godfrey.

Hon. Stephen Owen: That's an interesting idea. We have eight Canadian sport centres across the country, and I know there's been a proposal recently talking about the Olympic stadium in Montreal being linked with the Canadian centre there. We certainly don't get involved in directly funding facility development outside of something like the Olympic games or national games, nor do we support professional sport. Maybe there are opportunities in existing professional sports facilities, where they are not working to capacity, for the athletic system in Canada to buy time or share facilities, certainly if it's an underutilized resource.

Mr. Wajid Khan: What about pointing out information?

Hon. Stephen Owen: That's important. Maybe we could look at a number of things. One is that perhaps the ParticipACTION plan that's going forward could, in each local area, have additional information about programs that are available. As well, there's the active living public information program we're doing with Health Canada.

Another way to go forward is with the regional developmental agencies. I'm familiar with Western Economic Diversification. We have urban development agreements in the west, in Vancouver and Winnipeg, and we're looking to expand them to six other cities. They're looking at inner-city situations and low-income families. I'm keen to see inner-city sports and cultural opportunities included. That's another way we can expand it, and perhaps through the other agencies across the country.

I should mention, Madam Chair, if I may in further answer to that, the four-year Olympiad for 2010 starts in February 2006 as it hands off from Torino. Included with the four-year Olympiad is a four-year cultural Olympiad, which will see cultural activities across the country funded in relation to or under the name of the 2010 Olympics. We'll have a four-year run of that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Oda.

Ms. Bev Oda: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Minister, for making yourself available. I've noticed that you're very diligent in writing down key words for questions, so I would like to ask four questions, if I could, some of them very short.

First, you described an integrated approach to sport and physical activity. In your discussions with the health department, I'm wondering if within the health accord there was an aspect about prevention and promotion, physical activity being a key part of that, and if some funding has been earmarked for that.

You mentioned discussions with member Ken Dryden. I'm not sure whether it's child care or early childhood education, but is there an aspect of physical activity, and developing early interest in physical activity, in that program? As an aspect of that, in the social transfer for post-secondary education, is there any support for post-secondary education activities and their requirements?

I'd also like a little bit of an overview on the commitment and support to the Paralympics and to Paralympic athletes. What proportion of your budget dollars do you commit here?

Very quickly, I'm wondering how the federal government made commitments to FINA and what kind of scrutiny the original business plan was given before the original commitment was made.

Finally, I'd just like to make a case. Mr. Reynolds has left, but I know he has a major sporting event happening in his riding. My riding is very close to the little town of Lakefield, Ontario, and they are looking at a speed skating oval. I see some benefits, because they've generated enough interest in that particular sport...and as you know, that specialized facility is not accessible within any reasonable distance.

So if a community can generate interest, get local government support as well as private, rather than focusing on specialized facilities, necessarily, where events are going to be taken, having some program to look at not just your hockey arenas.... We're now adding second and third pads to our hockey arenas, and we're adding lacrosse boxes, etc., but this is highly unique.

Those are my four questions, Mr. Minister.

• (1630)

Hon. Stephen Owen: Diligent as I am, my notes here show six questions.

Ms. Bev Oda: I squeezed a couple in.

The Chair: Three minutes.

Hon. Stephen Owen: They're all excellent questions, thank you.

On the integrated prevention and promotion, yes, Health Canada, particularly under Minister Carolyn Bennett's areas of responsibility in public health, does have a prevention and public information program started, which we are partnering in so that the sport side and the healthy active living side are both properly considered.

On child care, again, right now it's in the presentation materials that early childhood education and development includes physical education and physical development, both from the physical health side, or the healthy living side, and the value side. As someone mentioned, these activities are highly value-based.

Ms. Bev Oda: That's right.

Hon. Stephen Owen: On the social transfer, we've taken the health part out of it now, so it illuminates both the health and the social, including post-secondary education. Student representatives from CASA, who were here a couple of weeks ago, are really pushing us and urging us all to split out post-secondary education as well so that this would be more illuminated. Apart from that lump that's given to the provinces by formula, the federal government's initiative on post-secondary institutions is really around the research side, sports medicine and sports science, in terms of broader areas of research.

On the Paralympics, my Lord, if anything makes me, and all of us, I'm sure, proud as Canadians, proud as human beings, it's to see the accomplishments of people like Chantal Petitclerc. In Athens we had 140 Paralympians; they won 72 medals, 26 gold, and came third in the world. If there ever is an indicator of the level of social development of a country, I think you couldn't get a better one than people overcoming real barriers. I'm on a personal campaign to get the Paralympics renamed the "Ability Olympics", because that's what they're demonstrating, this incredible ability to overcome odds and achieve excellence.

As I think I recall from an earlier briefing, we are the only country in the world that treats our Paralympians on exactly the same basis, through the athletes assistance program, as Olympians. The levels of tax-free grants are the same as for the high-performance athletes.

The Chair: Mr. Minister, perhaps I could ask you to keep your replies a little bit shorter. With six questions, you're going to take the rest of our meeting. Ms. Oda was brief in her questions. Maybe you could come to your answers—

Hon. Stephen Owen: I'm sorry, I will be very quick here.

On FINA, we have a federal representative on the board. It didn't come to the board until early November that there were financial difficulties with the overestimation of ticket sales and corporate endorsements. And it wasn't until a board meeting in late November that they actually came to a decision to come formally to us and the province and the city for greater funding. So that information was

not available, even through the general board, until relatively recently.

I've met with the Lakefield folks, and we've talked, and they've talked to the department, about ways in which a municipally supported, private sector, provincial, and then federal...could perhaps qualify for an infrastructure program. That's the route we'd have to go. Sports Canada doesn't directly fund infrastructure.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

It's a Liberal slot next, so I might take a couple of minutes, if you don't mind.

This is the round without the Bloc. You used up the two slots you had. But we'll be back to you again.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: We're at the end, are we not?

[English]

The Chair: No, no.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: We have until 5:30. If other members of the committee do not have any questions, I may ask some, may I not?

The Chair: I myself have a question to ask.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Go ahead, Madam Chair.

The Chair: You will give me a few minutes.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Of course, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: First of all, Mr. Minister, as I sat here I came up with a brilliant idea, which I hope you will take under serious consideration as we work forward to the 2008 Summer Olympics, and particularly the 2010 Winter Olympics. Our analyst here and I were just talking. He went through school when ParticipACTION was in play, and so did my children. It has shaped their lives, it is quite that simple. My daughter played hockey all through medical school. During her internship and her residency, nothing took priority over her hockey or her jog every day. I put it all down to the Olympic program they had in the schools during ParticipACTION, when kids could compete for Olympic badges.

If we started now, letting our kids follow our athletes, perhaps on the Internet, as the athletes develop and train for those Olympics, and we produced some badges—I think you'd find that this part of ParticipACTION was a very small part of the costs—so that the kids in our schools could start training and competing, we could change the lives of our children over the next six years.

I give you that challenge. But that wasn't my main question.

Hon. Stephen Owen: It's a great idea, and we've taken note of it.

The Chair: I'm sure the whole country would be on fire about it.

On the policy on women in sport, although it doesn't say this specifically, I presume that what you're trying to do is increase the participation of women in sport. That's very important, because there's some excellent research showing that girls who participate in sport are less likely to become pregnant in their teens, less likely to start using tobacco or drugs, and less likely to drop out of school.

So what I want to know, since this has been a policy for a while, is how have you measured progress? Are more girls participating in sport or not? I would encourage you to follow Mr. Khan's question: are more kids of low income participating in sports because of our efforts, but not the ones Mr. Stoffer would help out with tax help for their private figure-skating lessons.

Hon. Stephen Owen: That's a good observation.

I'm proud to be able to report that of our 264 world champions on the Olympian team, over half were female, which I think if we're looking at the broad base and at helping to develop high performance, it is a good indicator of the participation rates of women. I don't have that information specifically, but I can certainly get it for you. I agree that it's an indicator we should be watching very carefully.

We do fund a program called ACTive, which is specifically targeted at encouraging girls and young women to participate in sport. That's an independently targeted program that attempts to address the need you identify.

The Chair: I think officials and ministers are beginning to learn that I'm going to ask how you are measuring your success on just about everything.

Hon. Stephen Owen: Well, it's critical.

•(1640)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Minister, firstly, can you tell me the status of the French program for coaches, which should have been up and running for close to two years?

Secondly, I don't know if you are familiar with this wonderful little document which is called

[English]

“Sport and Physical Activity: A New Direction for Canada” was presented by the Sport Matters Group to the pre-budget consultations.

[Translation]

If not, I would strongly suggest that you familiarize yourself with it and go before your cabinet colleagues, and before the members sitting across the way to explain to them that the sport and leisure sector represents more than \$7.8 billion per year for Canada. If the government is not able to invest \$180 million in it, there is a problem.

I also wanted to ask you about the status of the infrastructure program. The information I have is different from the information you have just provided a few minutes ago. It seems as though the

meeting which occurred a few weeks ago between the Quebec Minister, Mr. Fournier, and your officials did not go very well, and that there was not a lot of money for the infrastructure program, particularly for sport infrastructure. I hope I am mistaken. I am following this file very closely and I would like to know where we are at.

Thirdly, Mr. Côté, president of Sports-Québec, would very much appreciate receiving a different letter than the one he received. He has asked me to convey this message. He had asked to meet you, and after four months, the only answer he received was that you could not meet him but that you could perhaps arrange a meeting if he came to Ottawa. If ever you can travel to Quebec City or to Montreal, Mr. Côté would be very pleased to meet you.

My last question is the following. Do you not believe that the Department of Health should invest in prevention and in the promotion of physical activity through the ParticipACTION program and through the wonderful program submitted by the chair? That is where the money is and that is where we should get it.

[English]

Hon. Stephen Owen: To answer your last question first, I couldn't agree more that preventive expenditures make a lot of sense, and that's why I'm working with the minister of public health to make sure their active living program and our programs reinforce each other and have some results.

Minister Fournier and I had a very interesting meeting. We have talked about the bilateral agreement we are looking to make with Quebec next year, which would make approximately \$600,000 available to Quebec for joint projects, particularly at a community level. With respect to facilities, Sport Canada does not fund facilities, so it would have to be through some sort of an infrastructure program.

I had mentioned that in our federal-provincial-territorial meetings we are doing an inventory. We're looking toward our next meeting, perhaps coming up with a common recommendation that there be a specific recreational facilities infrastructure program. But I did mention as well that under some of the previous infrastructure programs, sports facilities have qualified where they've been identified by the municipal level as being their priority.

In western Canada I've personally taken part in numerous decisions where community centres and recreational facilities have been funded by the three levels of government. The Sport Matters Group is an excellent resource for all of us. The group brings together some of the best thinking in the country on sport issues, particularly high-performance sports issues.

Sure, I'd love to see a larger budget for Sport Canada or more financial support in some way. Whether it's tax breaks or however else it's spent, one way or the other it's going to represent money. You can be sure that I'm arguing as forcefully as I can in this budget process for maintained, if not increased, funding. We can use all the help of like-minded people speaking out. This is a matter of obvious priority, and I welcome any and all of your voices in support of that. The prevention side simply just makes good sense to me.

On coaches and French training, I'm not specifically aware of that issue. There was a review of Sport Canada by the Commissioner of Official Languages, which I think had 14 recommendations—12 of which have been followed and the last two are being worked on. My information from her is that she is well pleased with Sport Canada's progress, but I might ask Mr. Scrimger if he knows specifically about the coaches issue.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tom Scrimger (Director General, Sport Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage): As you can imagine, we followed Ms. Adam's recommendations very closely; Ms. Adam takes a personal interest in this file. We sent a letter to all sport organizations reminding them that they must take this into consideration when staffing coaches for national teams. We reminded them that they must be conscious of the fact that they must have coaches from both official language groups for national teams. We are doing a follow-up of all organizations. This issue should be resolved within two or three years. In addition, we will need funds to help sports organizations have coaches on site.

[*English*]

The Chair: Merci beaucoup, Monsieur Lemay.

There are a couple of business items we have to take care of before we adjourn today, and I don't want to lose the quorum before we do that. Do you promise to stay for the motions and votes?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Brown.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the minister for coming today. Sport is one area of the work of our committee that I have the most keen interest in.

As a former national team member in canoe-kayak, I understand intimately the words "playground to podium", and in fact my sport had one of our most decorated Olympians in this past Olympics, Adam van Koeverden, who I'm sure you're well familiar with. So I understand how an athlete gets from learning about the sport to becoming active, and in fact in the spirit of working together in a non-partisan way, I concur with our chair's talk about the junior Olympics program. In fact, that's what it was, and there were medals and ribbons, and I remember starting out that way myself. So perhaps that's something the minister might consider.

I'm also really interested in how we can get more money out there in terms of support of sports facilities. Your throne speech said the government would work with partners to enhance sports activities at both community and competitive levels. Recently there was the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund announced by both the Ontario and federal governments, and there was some wording in there about potentially supporting some sports facilities.

I know you said those would have to be the priority of the municipalities. I know from my riding that if it comes down to the priority being environmental in terms of sewer and water and roads and bridges, those will end up taking precedence over sports facilities.

My question is, is there some way we can get a federal sport infrastructure fund out there? I am asked a lot already in the short time that I've been a member of Parliament about whether there is money out there to support these types of facilities. There are lots of municipalities in my riding that are working towards that.

So that's my question. Is there a program that would be solely directed towards sport?

• (1650)

Hon. Stephen Owen: I agree with you that we really need that. We can't just rely on the general programs because other things that are more urgent will take priority, although this might be, in a longer term, as important to the community and its health and so on.

So that's on our agenda for the next federal-provincial-territorial ministers meeting that will come up in 2005. We have a specialized meeting for border security; we have a specialized one for highways. We did a strategic one. We now have the municipal rural infrastructure. Certainly the municipal rural infrastructure would qualify, if they can get the priority. In a lot of communities you can.

I know that in the Canada-Manitoba infrastructure program...I took part about a year and a half ago with four different large community recreational and sport facilities with Premier Dewar in northern Manitoba. They were poor communities, yet they had identified these as important priorities for them.

But I do agree that if we could get a specific program and we could get agreement with the other levels of government to participate in it, that might be the way it has to be done, to do it comprehensively.

Mr. Gord Brown: All right. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am surveying the map here. Before my colleagues write off the idea of a tax break for physical activity and sports, I suggest in your next householder you ask your constituents if they would support a tax break for amateur sports and physical activity fees similar to that of a charitable donation. I think you would be very surprised at the answers you would receive.

Sir, I look at your total budget. It's probably one-fifth of 1% of our total GDP. That's quite sad when you say it like that. When you think of what sports can do to prevent social and justice issues and health issues down the road, when you say it like that it's quite sad, really.

I think it would be very helpful to discuss what sport does for our economy, especially in areas like Nova Scotia. You have teams from Cape Breton travelling to Yarmouth, and vice versa, and to New Brunswick, to Atlantic Canada. It gives a tremendous boost for motels, restaurants, you name it. It's a tremendous boost for smaller communities when they hold curling bonspiels or when they hold baseball tournaments or soccer tournaments, or whatever. I think that would be very helpful in educating the Canadian public about what sport does for our overall economy, let alone for social and health costs.

Sir, when I met with the coaches on that, what they were asking for, what they were inquiring about was long-term funding for coaches, not just \$10 million here, \$10 million next year, but a long-term commitment of a certain percentage of your total budget dedicated to coaches, like a kind of A-base funding. What they're asking for is anywhere from, I believe, \$18 million to \$20 million of your budget, a certain percentage of your budget to go to A-base funding for coaches, long term, so that they can plan four, five, or six years down the road and not be worried about whether or not we're going to get funding.

Mr. McCallum, whom I have great respect for and who is a good friend—I jokingly call him the Sheriff of Nottingham—has been going around to all the departments, checking the cushions and pillows, looking for all the dimes and nickels there.

Have you been asked to cough up anything to his coffers?

Hon. Stephen Owen: I think all departments were asked to identify things that they would drop off their priority list first. I think those discussions are still in-house at this stage.

What I can tell you, as I've said publicly, is that I am an advocate for increased spending for sport through Sport Canada and in any other way we can get it. As I said at the outset, I am trying to link with every other department. I'm trying to demonstrate that there is a positive aspect to all of their mandates to support sport.

You mention the economy. I'm certainly speaking for myself in a way, because my other mandate is Western Economic Diversification. I see very clearly, and we see through that department the value of sport, whether it's a Canada Games coming, or professional sports, or just community teams travelling around in their region of the province. So I'm making that pitch.

• (1655)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Before you answer the next question on A-base funding for coaches, you had talked about the international level in terms of promoting sport with other countries.

One thing I would really like to see, if it's at all possible, is working with the Department of National Defence in terms of equipping them with sporting equipment that they can give to kids. For example, they can give soccer balls, a basketball court, or whatever to communities out there. Again, once they go there and do the patrols and do everything they are asked, in a military sense....

The CIMIC program with the army is a very good program.

Hon. Stephen Owen: CIMIC?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: It's a civilian unit of DND that works with the local municipality on how to spend CIDA dollars, how to invest in that community.

For example, in Bihac they were building additions to a hospital, a school, and so on.

One thing that gets overlooked is sport, and I'm glad to see you're looking at the international level to promote sport, especially in the third world.

Hon. Stephen Owen: It's a really deep interest of mine. I've worked in a number of developing countries at different times of my career and observed and taken part, in some cases, in sport in developing countries or war-torn countries. It's phenomenal, the power of it.

On coaches, yes, a dedicated chunk of the Sport Canada budget goes into coaching. Each of the national sports organizations works within a framework that requires certified, professionalized, and long-term planning for coaches. We have to stabilize the budget—I agree with that—at least to be able to give these organizations the confidence of receiving something beyond a one-year horizon, so that if they meet the standards in a continuous way, they will receive the adequate funding.

As I said, the funding has gone up \$10 million this year for two NSOs, for coaches. We recognize the importance of the professional approach that they're all taking and need to take. It's becoming a very widely recognized program in this country at the professional level, so we're supporting it.

The Chair: Mr. Minister, on behalf of the committee I want to thank you very much.

Mr. Stoffer, thank you.

Hon. Stephen Owen: Thank you all. I appreciate your work.

The Chair: We look forward to seeing the main estimates, and we hope we'll get a very clear picture of how much is in sports.

Hon. Stephen Owen: Thank you for all your support and all of your important questions and comments.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we have two items of business. We've made the travel plans for a study of the feature film industry, which we discussed at our last meeting. According to our instructions, our clerk has brought back a revised budget, and I think it's being distributed now.

Are there any questions? This is basically the budget that was before you last time, with the exception that we have asked—Mr. Stoffer, you will be pleased to know—that Halifax be included in the centres the committee will visit.

• (1700)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Was St. John's, Newfoundland, considered at all?

The Chair: We're trying to visit one major centre in each region. We will bring in people from around, so if you have witnesses, producers, and people with an interest in St. John's who you think we should invite as witnesses, by all means let us know.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Sure. Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any questions?

Mr. Lemay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Are the dates which appear on the budget applications the ones which are going to be set or can they be amended? Are they the right dates?

The Chair: For the most part, our dates depend on when the bill on copyright will be tabled.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Okay.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's the best we can do right now in terms of dates.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: None of them are....

The Chair: We'll know a bit better when we have some sense of when legislation will come to us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: We have to notify our whips as soon as possible on future travel. You are familiar with the process.

[*English*]

The Chair: Please let your whips know this is coming. It'll go to the Liaison Committee tomorrow at noon, and then it will have to be approved by the House leaders later that afternoon. Your whips are on that committee, by and large, so please let them know this is coming and it has—if it does—the unanimous endorsement of the committee.

Mr. Brown.

Mr. Gord Brown: Madam Chair, are these weeks when the House is sitting?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Gord Brown: Okay.

The Chair: Do I need a motion to approve?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I'll move it.

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

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: How many committee members...?

The Chair: Twelve.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I see where Ms. Bulte is going with this. Do all 12 members of the committee have to be present everywhere?

[*English*]

The Chair: You will find that I don't like to spend money we don't have to spend. Almost inevitably there will be some members of the committee who will not travel, for one reason or another. This is an important enough study that I think all members of the committee who wish to travel should have the opportunity. As I mentioned last week, I have also asked our clerk to look into the possibility of using government meeting facilities that may be available in the centres we're going to, rather than paying for hotel space, translation, and so on. So if we can save money, we will, believe me.

Meanwhile, if any of you have any upgrade points you wish to share with the chair...because I don't travel, remember, I live here.

Madam Bulte.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I think it's very important, if we engage in this study, that everyone participates in it, Monsieur Lemay. It is wrong if we just choose one or two people, because then we'll really be into a subcommittee. So either the committee agrees this is work we think is important or we don't.

I don't think it's fair, when we come to actually writing a report, if members haven't had the opportunity to meet with people across Canada. I say so from my own experience. When we did the broadcasting study I was precluded from travelling with the committee, and there were many times when I felt.... So I'm a huge advocate of making sure that as many people.... If this is important to the committee, then we should all buy into the committee and all work together.

I don't think it's a question of saving money. We either commit to it or not. If to do a study properly requires full participation and spending the money accordingly, we should not be looking for cuts. Again, if it's not something we want to take seriously, let's not do it. To do it properly means all of us working together, plus the resources we need to do the job properly.

• (1705)

The Chair: That's agreed. Okay.

The other thing we have before us are the appointments that are coming up under various agencies under the jurisdiction of Heritage Canada and therefore this committee. We don't have dates for when these vacancies might occur, so we don't—

The Clerk of the Committee: The dates were circulated to members.

The Chair: I'm sorry. Okay. It would be helpful if the dates were in here.

Ms. Bev Oda: Is there a list we can look at?

The Chair: You may already have this document. I think you'll notice on the first two pages you have either the chairpersons or the executive directors of the various organizations. Past that you have mostly memberships on the various boards.

I presume the committee wishes to give a little more time and attention to the person who is either going to be the director, executive director, or the chair of the board, than to members. It's not that the members are unimportant, but obviously the senior people do set the tone.

Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Why don't we restrict ourselves to the heads of different departments, rather than going through the whole list? That's 150. Just deal with the main guys, because they will set the tone, as you said.

The Chair: I'll take the advice of the committee on this. Certainly I know the House leader is anxious to have a sense of which of these appointments we want to review. We always have the option when they come up, if we feel other work we're involved in is more important, of not choosing to do that.

Ms. Oda.

Ms. Bev Oda: I certainly appreciate the gesture of an opportunity to review these appointments, but unless there is some change in the actual process, I don't know what we will accomplish at the end of the day, other than us being a little more informed. When I look ahead and see the amount of work we have to do as a committee, I wonder if this is valuable use of our time.

The Chair: As a statement, do you think it's not...?

Ms. Bev Oda: I don't think it is.

As I say, to devote one meeting in an already very busy schedule for all of us and to have a discussion would be very interesting, and some information would come out, but at the end of the day these appointments are going to go ahead. We don't have a process by which this committee can make a recommendation that would be taken into serious consideration by the government. So I would suggest that as these things come up.... I think probably our film review, maybe the National Film Board, could come up, if it seems to be the right timing. But as for some of the others, I would suggest we focus on the work of the committee in the committee's agenda.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Mr. Brown.

Mr. Gord Brown: I think the people in the Ottawa area would be keenly interested in hearing from the National Capital Commission's chair, or the proposed appointee or re-appointee. He's supposed to be coming anyway.

The Chair: Yes, he's supposed to be coming.

Mr. Gord Brown: Maybe that would suffice.

The Chair: I'm seeing four here that are particularly relevant to our study of the film industry, and if they come up in that timeframe, we might want to pay particular attention to them. I'm looking at the CBC....

• (1710)

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: We've done the CBC.

The Chair: We've done the CBC. Sorry.

I looking at the CRTC, the National Film Board, and Telefilm.

Ms. Bev Oda: Madam Chair, CRTC's mandate has nothing to do with feature film and theatrical film.

The Chair: I'm aware that its mandate doesn't, but I have certainly heard from people that some of its decisions around Canadian content have affected the film industry.

Anyway, it's up to the committee entirely.

Ms. Bev Oda: When does the term of the actual chairperson end? Who are we talking about? I know the term of the vice-chair of telecommunications ends at the end of this calendar year.

There's certainly no purpose relating to film to have the vice-chair of telecommunications come before this committee.

The Chair: You said not until December 2006.

Ms. Bev Oda: That's right.

The Chair: Mr. Kotto, and then Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Madam Chair, on the face of it, it may seem that it would be absurd to see all these people. At the same time, it would be relevant to discover to what extent the culture of patronage remains predominant within this new team. You know that this is like a ball and chain. Several negative cultural factors have undermined politics, generally speaking. It is not just one party that is opposed to the others.

The member for Timmins—James Bay mentioned that 99 per cent of members of the CBC's board of directors were federal Liberal Party donors. This fact raises some concerns with respect to ethical issues.

Basically, that is what I am concerned about.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I would like to follow up on what Mr. Kotto just said. It is part of our duties, as a committee. It is in the rules, and I don't see how we could circumvent them. We will not give up our power to anyone else. That power and that duty belongs to the committee. If we want to rid ourselves of that power and duty, all we have to do is change the Standing Orders. But, in the meantime, it is our duty.

[English]

The Chair: Merci.

Ms. Bulte.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Madam Chair, we've always had the option of bringing people before us; it's always been there, and it will still be there if do we want to bring some people together.

And with respect to Mr. Côté's comment about what Mr. Angus said about how the CBC is full of Liberal appointees, I would put him to strict proof thereof, firstly. Secondly, just because a person is a Liberal or a member of your party does not disqualify them necessarily. If they have the credentials to run a corporation or to do the job, it doesn't matter what party they're from. I think we have to look beyond that as a committee, and I think we've done that. One of the great things about this committee is that we can remove that edge of partisanship to look truly to see if a person is qualified. I think that's what we should be looking at, and not their party affiliation. I don't care what their party affiliation is.

I agree almost with Ms. Oda, that the pressures are going to be on the committee, unless you want to sit every day. We're going to end up burning ourselves out. I think we need to prioritize. If there's an appointment the committee wants to review, by all means, any committee member should feel free to bring that name forward. I'm sure, in the interests of cooperation, we'll find the time.

But I think to say ahead of schedule that we'll look at these next ten is just making work for ourselves, especially when we have important issues such as UNESCO or copyright or all of those things that are important to us. When we do get into copyright, it is going to be a long slog. I'm hoping that legislation will be there in the spring when we come back.

The Chair: Mr. Kotto.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maka Kotto: I would not want to harp on this, but I would reiterate that we are faced with an ethical problem. We mustn't forget that we represent Canadians and Canadians are finding it harder and harder to trust politicians.

We are talking about patronage. That's something we have to take very seriously. We are somewhat removed from the real world, which explains why we might not take it seriously, but out there, it's something that people feel very strongly about.

Even if belonging to a political party or being close to one is not really a factor, it becomes an aggravating factor in the eyes of the public. I am not going to go over the list of the many scandals, but clearly doubt has settled in and there is a crisis in public confidence.

If we were to renew or to approve all the appointments and then were faced with another patronage scandal, we would suffer the consequences. Our credibility would be in jeopardy. It may take a lot of work, but we must find a solution.

I want politicians to clean up their image. I want Canadians to think of them differently than they do today. Let's just say that right now, they don't have a very sexy reputation.

• (1715)

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Oda wishes to speak.

Could I suggest perhaps a bit of a compromise? It's evident that Monsieur Lemay and Monsieur Kotto wish to review all appointees; others feel it's not worth our time, except for the two that are perhaps most relevant to the major study we'll be undertaking in the next few months.

Every committee has been asked to let the government House leader know which appointments they would like to review. As Ms. Bulte says, if we decide midway through, we always have the power under the Standing Orders to review any appointment that is of particular interest to us. Perhaps what we could do is let it be known that we are interested in reviewing those that come due in the next, say, six months, or between now and June, or something like that.

Anyway, I'm open to accept any motion that anybody would care to make.

Mr. Scarpaleggia.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I just wanted to make a comment, Madam Chair, in response to Mr. Kotto's comment.

I belong to another committee, the government operations and estimates committee. I know from that committee that the President of the Treasury Board is in the process of creating a set of criteria and procedures for making appointments across the government. To

some extent, I think that government-wide initiative might satisfy some of Mr. Kotto's concerns.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Oda.

Ms. Bev Oda: I just wanted to add that when I look down this list, my personal view is that I don't think it's realistic for us to say that over the next year we're going to look at 159 appointments.

The Chair: No.

Ms. Bev Oda: I would also suggest that if copyright comes in the spring, there will be as much work on copyright as there will be on the film review, and it will be more complicated, since it has to be integrated with industry as well.

In light of that, when I look down the list, I see we've done the CBC; we've done Telefilm, just last week. We just need confirmation...I think the CRTC may not be pre-eminent. However, there's the National Capital Commission; we've already scheduled a meeting with the NCC. And I would suggest the National Film Board could be done in concurrence with our review of film.

Other than that—the list provided—I would say those would be the priorities. I think they're already being handled.

If I could just make one comment regarding Mr. Kotto's observations, the chair was quite correct when we were looking at the appointments for the CBC and Telefilm Canada that the committee's responsibility was to look at the merits of the person being nominated, whether we felt they were experienced, their vision of where they saw the organization going, etc. We've tried to work at the committee as cooperatively as we can, and if the person's only merit is their political affiliation, I think just reading a CV will tell you that.

I would make a motion—Madam Chair, you've been asking for one—that in light of the list given to us, because of the nomination process, we not review any specific nominations coming forward but incorporate them into the work we're doing, which we've already scheduled. Of course, every member has the right to make a special request.

• (1720)

The Chair: Can I take that to mean we would still like any appointments referred to this committee, as they have been for a number of years now, and we reserve the right to review any individual appointment?

Ms. Bev Oda: Yes.

The Chair: Peter.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I'm not a regular member of the committee, but you say there are 159 possible appointments, and if you wanted to review each one, yes, indeed you'd be here many hours. Is it not at all possible for the chair or the clerk to send a letter off to the people who are successful in being appointed to those areas asking them to send a copy of their CV to the committee, and then you can decide which ones you want to review?

The Chair: I think that's what I just referred to. The appointments are always referred to the committee; they're always announced with the CVs attached.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: All of them?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Every last one?

The Chair: Every last one.

Mr. Kotto.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maka Kotto: Madam Chair I'd like to come back to what Ms. Oda said. She claimed that when she reads a resume, she knows to which party, and she was referring to the Liberal Party, the candidate belongs to. Had it not been for the in-depth research, we would not have received the information about the CBC directors, for example. We mustn't forget that we are dealing with an issue which, in a democracy, is the fifth estate, the fourth being the press. When one controls culture, it is easy to use it as a weapon to manipulate or influence people's opinions.

If we keep on accumulating biased appointments, we will be putting democracy in jeopardy. Epistemology provides an explanation for this.

[*English*]

The Chair: Merci.

Ms. Oda.

Ms. Bev Oda: Madam Chair, if I could just correct the record—I guess it's a correction—I said that the person's experience and whether there was some merit to the recommendation of the nominee could certainly be looked over and reviewed at that level through the CV—not their political affiliation. I did not try to say that you could tell the political affiliation of a person from the CV.

The Chair: May I then just respond to the House leader that the committee wishes to continue receiving notice of the appointments? Though in the process we've had for the last couple, it was referred to us before the appointment was finalized.

Ms. Bev Oda: I don't think my motion asks for any change in that.

The Chair: Except that what the standing order specifies is once the appointment has been made, it's referred to the committee.

Ms. Bev Oda: What I'm suggesting—and I guess it's a pre-emptive kind of motion—is that if we look at this list of potentially upcoming appointments, we take the approach I've put in my motion. I wanted to change the process.

The Chair: So that we understand the motion clearly, would you mind repeating it?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Madam Chair, on a point of order, if we do official motions we need 48 hours' notice. I don't want to be picky about that, but I want to be able to know what it is I'm voting on right now. Is it even necessary to have a motion? Can't we just agree to something, as opposed to...? What is the consensus of the committee, as opposed to a motion?

• (1725)

Ms. Bev Oda: I just put it forward because I think the chair asked for a motion regarding this, but I'm—

The Chair: Or a recommendation or suggestion.

Ms. Bev Oda: —totally agreeable to whatever the easiest process is, as long as we can come to an agreement.

The Chair: I presume the committee wants to ensure that at least the minimum provisions of the Standing Orders are followed, that any appointments are referred to us, and we can decide which ones we want to review.

Ms. Bev Oda: Yes.

The Chair: Second, the process that the Prime Minister was following with the last two—CBC and Telefilm—was to refer the appointment to us before it was actually made, and limited as the process is, I think it was helpful for us all to know that indeed these people were qualified to do the jobs they were being considered for.

Do we want all of these appointments referred to us? I don't think so.

Do we want them to continue to notify us of the upcoming appointment of heads of agencies, because there are a relatively limited number of those, and we would inform them of any that we wish to review because of their relevance to the work we are currently undertaking?

Finally, what if there's a vacancy of an executive director of an important agency and the House won't be sitting for three months? How do we want that handled? Do we want a vacancy to sit there for three months until we meet? I don't think so.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Madam Chair, if I may, we're not even in that position yet. Certainly, as long as the House isn't prorogued, if we have to we can come together in the summertime. I've come in the summer to continue to work on legislation. I can't see that we would try to put in place a process and then—

Mr. Wajid Khan: Let's not go there.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: —stick our noses up in the air and say, no, we're going to make it when the House isn't sitting. I don't think that's what anybody is suggesting.

The Chair: Have I generally captured something that people are reasonably satisfied with?

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: We can come back if we have to.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any basic disagreement with that?

Ms. Bev Oda: I'm glad to hear you say two years.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Two, three, four...two more, three more.

The Chair: Ask for opinions around the table.

That concludes our business for today, unless there's anything any member of the committee wishes to raise.

Hearing nothing, I declare this meeting adjourned.

Thank you very much for joining us, Mr. Stoffer.

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