



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Health

HESA • NUMBER 020 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, October 17, 2006

—
Chair

Mr. Rob Merrifield

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC)): I'll call the meeting to order.

First of all, I see a hand.

Pat.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Chairman, I would like to introduce a motion on procedure. I wanted to do it at the last meeting, but unfortunately we ran out of time, and I wasn't able to do it. I would like to be able to do it today, and if I could do it before the witnesses appear, that would be great.

The Chair: What we'll do, because we have two other motions, is put that off until we take the motions, or until after the witnesses and questioning period is over, and then we'll accept it. Feel comfortable that we'll take it before the meeting is over. Is that all right?

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you.

The Chair: At this time I want to introduce our presenters, to some degree, here this afternoon.

We welcome the Honourable Michael Chong, Minister for Sport. Thank you, Minister, for being here. You're going to be upstaged a little, Minister. Please don't take it to heart, but a three-time Olympian will do it every time.

Silken Laumann, thank you very much for coming and presenting to the health committee; and your associate, Sandra Hamilton. It's good to have you with us.

Then we have, from the Aboriginal Sport Circle, Rod Jacobs—I think you're going to be presenting—and Stephanie Smith.

Thank you all for coming.

We will start now with the presentations.

We'll start with Minister Chong. If you'll introduce the staff with you, we'll accept your presentation at this time, and then we'll move on to the other two.

Hon. Michael Chong (Minister for Sport): Thank you, Chair, for the introduction.

I am here with two officials from Sport Canada, Tom Scrimger and Jacques Paquette. They will be able to answer questions you might have afterwards as well.

I'm delighted to be here with the Aboriginal Sport Circle, and Silken as well and Sandra. I think the last time we saw each other was in Fredericton.

Thank you very much for allowing me to appear before the committee.

[Translation]

Good afternoon members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen.

I am very please to be here with you today as the minister for Sport, to discuss an issue that is of concern to us all.

[English]

Rising obesity rates and lack of physical activity, especially in our children, is a serious, significant, and long-term challenge facing the country. The only way we can meet this challenge is for all of us—parents, educators, the private sector, the sport and fitness communities, governments, and other stakeholders, all of us—to tackle this challenge together.

As we can see from the alarming statistics before us, it is imperative that we reverse this trend. Brian McCrindle, a cardiologist at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, said, "This epidemic of pediatric obesity may become the most important and devastating public health challenge of the 21st century." In fact, some experts believe that an increasing number of children could die before their parents as a result of this obesity epidemic if we do not act now. The solutions to this looming crisis are complex and will require coordinated and sustained effort from everyone. I'm sure you'll agree our children's health is worth it.

We know that regular physical activity is of immense benefit to dealing with childhood obesity, but today's children are no longer as active as they once were. There are a variety of reasons for this. For many children, physical activity is no longer an integral part of the day. Children are bused to school, driven to wherever they need to go, and parents are often concerned about letting their children play outside unsupervised the way many of us might have done when we were younger.

We are well aware of this problem, and our government has already taken several measures to address the issue.

[Translation]

We have demonstrated our commitment to the good that comes from sport and physical activity by introducing the children fitness tax credit. This initiative is valued at \$160 million per year and will encourage participation in sport while reducing the cost of organized physical activities for many parents.

An expert panel was appointed by my colleague the minister of Finance to make sure that this tax credit delivers maximum benefits when it comes into effect on January 1st, 2007.

Our government made a commitment to encourage all Canadians to be more physically active and play sports. Currently, only 31 per cent of Canadians age 16 and over are actively engaged in organized sports. As surprising as the statistic may seem, less than 3 per cent of Canadians with a disability are involved in sport. Clearly, the challenge before us is great.

That is why earlier this year, I announced our government's new policy on sport for persons with a disability. This funding will improve access to sport, increase participation, and support our athletes with disabilities.

• (1540)

[*English*]

In addition, our policy on aboriginal people's participation in sport aims to reduce the barriers to aboriginal participation in sport. We recognize the positive role played by sport and recreation in strengthening the emotional, mental, and physical, as well as spiritual aspects of aboriginal life. The Government of Canada has committed \$1 million annually to increase aboriginal participation, with a focus on enhancing coaching and building the capacity of provincial and territorial aboriginal sport bodies. I am pleased to say that these actions on the part of the government are strong, tangible manifestations of our commitment to get all Canadians active and fit through sport participation.

In the last nine months as minister in this portfolio, I have become familiar with many of the communities—local, provincial, non-governmental—in the wide world of sport and physical activity. Indeed, we have numerous partnerships to support the work of others in this field. Sport Canada has negotiated a number of bilateral agreements on matching funds with all provincial and territorial governments. These agreements support grassroots projects to improve sport participation opportunities for children and youth and aboriginal peoples. I have a few examples.

In British Columbia, community hubs for sport development gave over 2,200 children the opportunity to learn about and play soccer. This program reached 15 schools and also resulted in more than 80 coaches being trained in soccer and mini-soccer officiating.

In another example, in Newfoundland and Labrador there was recently held a Festival of Sports that reached most regions of the province and enabled 7,000 students to take part in non-competitive sports. There are plans to extend that reach to remote areas.

In Saskatchewan, Sport Match places a high priority on aboriginal schools. The program provides students with the opportunity to experience new sports and achieve active and healthy lifestyles.

During a June federal-provincial-territorial meeting of ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation, we acknowledged overall targets for the participation of children and youth, girls and women, and the importance of working collaboratively in implementing public awareness campaigns. These targets include increasing sport participation rates for girls aged five to nine from 68% to 73% by 2012, while at least maintaining the current rate of

participation for boys in the same age group at 77%. The target for teen participation levels is an increase of 5%, from the current 66% to 71%, by 2012.

The importance that regular physical activity programs in schools can play for children and youth cannot be overstated. While I recognize the clear jurisdiction the provinces and territories have with respect to education, I would like to invite my counterparts to open a dialogue on how we could expand our partnership in this regard. The upcoming FTP meeting of ministers responsible for sport and recreation in Whitehorse next February would represent an ideal opportunity for my counterparts to share their thinking with me.

Sport Canada also assists national sport organizations and multi-sport service organizations through its sport participation development program, with a view to increasing participation. Preference is given to projects that target children and youth in under-represented groups—in other words, girls and young women, aboriginal people, people with a disability, youth at risk, and the economically disadvantaged.

Some examples include support to Athletes Canada for Run-Jump-Throw, a program created to develop basic motor skills pertaining to all aspects of physical fitness that has a reach of over 25,000 students across the country; Softball Canada's program, Learn to Play, which has introduced the game of softball to thousands of kids over the past couple of years; and Speed Skating Canada's Cutting Edge program, which is aimed at children aged six to thirteen, with the goal of increasing interest and skill in speed skating.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

These are just a few examples of initiatives that we have undertaken, working across all levels of government, that aim to address the issue of physical inactivity of our children and youth.

[*English*]

As a government and as a society, we are recognizing the infinite benefits that accrue from sport participation. Over the last nine months, my thoughts on sport in Canada have coalesced around what I call a core sport philosophy. As I see it, a core sport philosophy has three prongs: it's about participation, it's about competition and winning, and it's about supporting both the novice athlete and the elite athlete.

Allow me to focus just on the participation aspect for today. I am more convinced than ever that sport is a fantastic school of life. It speaks to almost every aspect of our daily lives and to the codes and values that guide us as a society. Through sport we learn the thrill of victory and the excitement of victory. Through sport we also learn to deal with disappointment and defeat, sometimes in the most public and exposed situations where there is no room to hide. In sport we learn to set goals and we learn to push ourselves to higher limits.

Sport appreciates talent and judges you on your skill, your ability, and your merit, without regard for race, religion, or creed. It bridges our differences and levels our status. Sport in Canada allows a guy with the last name of Chong to start a rugby club in small-town Fergus, Ontario, home of the Fergus Highland Games.

The lessons of the playing field make great athletes, but they also make great citizens, so our focus on participation is motivated by a much broader recognition of the benefits of sport in society. Our government wants to help expose as many Canadians as possible to the life lessons that sport teaches us and allow them to reap the rich social and health benefits that sport participation offers. I am confident that you will all see how the initiatives I spoke of earlier help in that regard.

Thank you very much for your attention. I'm sure that by working together we can help increase sport participation among all Canadians, including children. In my view, inaction is not an option. Our children's futures are at risk, and we need to act now.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister, for that presentation.

I should mention to committee members that the minister has a tight timeline and he has to be gone by, I believe, 4:25.

• (1550)

We'll now move on to Silken Laumann. The floors is yours, Ms. Laumann. Please give us your presentation.

Ms. Silken Laumann (President, The Silken Laumann Active Kids Movement):

First of all, I'd like to thank the committee for having me here; it's a marvellous opportunity. It's such an important issue. I would really call it the "childhood obesity and inactivity" committee, because I think these really are such deeply connected issues.

What's happening to our children is almost overwhelming, when we hear that only half of Canadian kids are getting enough physical activity for optimal growth and development. And when we hear some of the statistics around obesity and inactivity for our children, they're alarming. We know the health costs—that it costs twice as much to have an inactive, obese smoker in our system as to have a healthy person; that our system is built on the premise that our healthy young people support our aging population. We can only imagine what happens when the young people are not healthy.

There's also a huge cost to the children themselves, not just in the quantity of their lives but in the quality of their lives—how they feel about themselves when they're inactive and overweight. That was really startling to me as I wrote my book *Child's Play: Rediscovering the Joy of Play in Our Families and Communities*. I talked to a lot of children and listened to how children who are obese feel about their futures. Some of the studies I read showed me that these children felt less hopeful about their futures than children with cancer.

As an advocate for children and activity, I think we deserve to take a serious place in this discussion. We need to look at physical activity as not a "nice to have" for our Canadian children but a "need to have", a primary building block for good health in our children. I

think sport and physical activity have too often in our culture and in our funding strategies been seen as an extra, as a "nice to have".

My first recommendation to this government and to this committee is that we put serious dollars into physical activity initiatives for children. There are so many programs out there that we see are working; they're actually getting kids active. There are lots of experts in our country who know how to get kids moving, know how to take an inactive child and get them engaged in physical activity, and they're struggling for funding. They're constantly having their hands tied. I think we have to look at a serious financial commitment that's not going to take a back seat when we have a critical issue in health care but is going to be a sustained commitment on the part of the government.

There are people now in Canada.... This issue has been talked about in the media now for at least three years, and people are starting to pay attention. I would argue that we are reaching a tipping point, where people are wanting to take action. For three years we've been running something called Silken's Active Kids. We take calls from people who have heard us speak, who have read articles I've written, and who say, we want to do something. These people want to know how they can connect to the best ideas and the best practices, how they can take action.

We got a call last week from the City of Vancouver, which is hosting the Olympic Games and which is asking us, how can we get our community more active? So there are people who are really searching for the ideas, the strategies, the best practices. They want to connect to others who are having success in this area.

I believe there's a place for a national strategy on getting children active, a national strategy that would engage communities and give them a tool kit for how to get things active. There are a lot of tools for how to get children active.

There's a lot of duplication in this area. Many of us, in our cities, in our schools, are being charged by the same challenge—let's get our kids active—and we're duplicating marketing materials, duplicating strategies. There is an opportunity here for the federal government to take a lead position, with a national strategy that engages Canadians. It could be with the Olympic Games, or it could be with other programs that are being suggested, but I believe there's a real need in this area.

I can't speak on this issue without addressing what's happening in our schools. Our schools used to be a place where physical activity was taught by physical activity experts, where we had intramurals, where we had sports. Our schools today no longer provide enough opportunities for children to be active.

I think one of the most startling things I learned while writing my book is that our elementary school children are being taught by teachers with little or no training in physical activity. We are not empowering our teachers to teach physical activity with innovation, with enthusiasm, with skills. How do we expect to turn on a generation of kids to being physically active when we're not even giving them the basic skills and giving the teachers the innovation in order to teach physical education properly?

As well as physical education, children are no longer receiving adequate access to after-school sports and intramurals. After-school care and before-school care have become really important. There's a huge percentage of children now in after-school and before-school care. I think this is actually a really important opportunity. We should be training our before- and after-school care providers in activity, in how to lead groups of children. Now many children come home at 6:30 in the evening from school, and they're hungry, and they have homework, and their families are tired.

That window between 2:40, which is when my children get out of school, and 6:30 is a very important window for activity. I'd like to see a lot more effort being put in on the part of the education system, with us as a federal government and provincial governments really supporting it.

Our schools are public spaces. In a place like Rouleau, Saskatchewan, theirs is the only gym in the entire city. They should be available for all children to be in after hours, to play. There are many programs we have come across in our country that were running basketball clubs or running floor hockey and that have had to close down because of the fees they were having to pay to keep that gym open after school hours. I don't think this should be happening. When we have an obesity crisis in our country, when we have a crisis around inactivity, those schools should be open for all the children in all the community to enjoy without this cost.

The last recommendation I would like to make is that we're very careful about the message we share with our children around inactivity and obesity. When we think about our fondest memories of childhood, for many of us it was riding our bicycles around the neighbourhood and playing road hockey. The neighbourhoods were our network; we met our neighbours; we connected to a sense of community. While we were running and jumping and playing, we were experiencing joy. And we weren't thinking about strengthening our bones or building our lung capacity; we weren't thinking about getting healthy; we were just playing.

I think the messages we as a government and we in our organizations share has to be around that joy and that play for children, because that's what children want to do.

Thank you.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Now we'll go to our final presenter.

Yes?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I have a question for you.

We were supposed to hear the minister and then have a period of questions, according to today's agenda. We were to hear the minister and then proceed with a question period. Furthermore, there are more witnesses. Why was the order on today's agenda changed?

[*English*]

The Chair: I understand what you're saying. What we had wanted to do is to make sure we had enough time for all of the questions, so we just placed the minister there. At the last meeting there was some discussion about whether we'd even invite the minister, so we decided to put the minister in a panel. You certainly are free to ask the minister questions in the question time period.

We're going to go ahead with the presentations, and then we'll open it. We've done this with the other meetings as well. We had the same problem when, I believe, as a finance—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Chairman, we agreed to the minister's appearance and he has now outlined his positions to us. I think we should have the opportunity to ask him questions. He has to leave at 4:15 p.m. and we will not be able to ask him questions. That is not right.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. If this is the will of the committee, I'm certainly open to the idea. We've had two presenters right now. If we want to go to questioning and then have the final presenter after a round of questioning, I'm open to that, if that's the consensus here.

I'm seeing a lot of nodding heads.

Okay, then, let's do that. Is it fair to say, then, we'll do one quick round for each of the parties on the questioning, and then we'll go to the final presenter and then continue with the questioning? Is that fair?

Okay. Who is the first questioner over here?

Ms. Dhalla.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): I want to thank all of the panellists and the minister for coming out. Silken, it's a pleasure to have you. To hear you speak with such energy and enthusiasm about an important issue was extremely admirable.

I have a question for the minister, since he is on a time constraint. There are a couple of things. There was an important program that will probably resonate with many people in this room and around this committee, and that was the program called ParticipACTION. I think it was a program that was promoted among many school-aged children to promote physical activity and to promote play. I think there has been some talk about bringing that back. From what I have been hearing, there has also been a lot of controversy and resistance in regard to that. In your capacity as minister, could you provide insight into the whereabouts of this program, whether it will be reinstated by the federal government, and what this committee needs to do to ensure this type of program is initiated.

Hon. Michael Chong: I thank the honourable member for the question, through you, Mr. Chair.

It is true that the government is looking at various ways to promote the need for physical fitness and participation in sport among Canadians. We also have a campaign commitment to reintroduce the Awards of Excellence, those badges that you and I probably went through the public school system with. I have made it clear to officials at Sport Canada that we will only proceed if, first, the results can be shown—if the program can be structured so that results are ensured—and second, if there is value for money. To this point, we have not reached an agreement yet with ParticipACTION, but those certainly are two criteria that need to be in place if we are to proceed.

With respect to some of the criticisms that have been out there, I believe they've been unfounded. There were suggestions that this would be a sole-source contract. That is factually incorrect. This would be a contribution agreement, and contribution agreements are subject to a set of Treasury Board guidelines than are different from those for contracts, so the information that was reported out there was factually incorrect.

It was also suggested that existing organizations out there could undertake this work or are undertaking this work. That too is factually incorrect. There are a number of organizations out there—multi-sport organizations and other non-governmental organizations, to be sure—but none of them is engaged in a national public awareness campaign to promote the need for physical activity and sport.

The reason we think it's a good idea to embark on this path, just to finish up, is to look at the good example of good public policy with respect to anti-smoking. Throughout the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s there was a plethora of research to show that smoking was bad for your health. There was no doubt about that, but it wasn't until governments in Canada put in place regulations to address the sale of tobacco to minors and restrict the sale of tobacco, as well as a public awareness campaign, that you really started to see a significant decline in smoking among various groups in Canada. It wasn't until those two pieces were put in place. It's a public policy success story.

We have a similar parallel with challenges around a lack of physical activity. It's been clear in the research. There has been a plethora of research since the 1950s and 1960s that being physically active, being physically fit, is tied to good health care outcomes—good cardiovascular health and the like—but we've not seen a decrease, or we've not been able to tackle this problem. Our government's view is that the children's fitness tax credit, which the finance department has estimated will invest up to \$160 million a year into children's fitness and sports, plus a public awareness campaign that's tied to some of the things we talked about during the campaign, like the Awards of Excellence, would be very good two pieces of the public policy puzzle to put in place to attack this challenge. That's where we're coming from.

• (1600)

The Chair: Ms. Bennett.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Thanks very much.

Obviously, in evidence-based practice, practice-based evidence, tobacco is an excellent example. When I was elected to this House, smoking was at 31% and it's now at 20%.

I would like to know what evidence you were using in choosing to spend the \$160 million a year on a tax credit rather than investing in the kinds of programs that Silken Laumann was talking about, that would be community-based and would hit the most vulnerable of our Canadians, who sometimes can't even afford the running shoes, let alone the hockey membership. In evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence, I would like to know what evidence you have. Do you have evidence from Nova Scotia that more kids actually participated, that more kids are more active? Sometimes public policy is that we have to do something; this is something, so let's do it. It isn't actually about evidence-based practice. I would like to know that.

Also, where did you get \$500 from, and what was the policy process for choosing that rather than investing in the kinds of programs that we know work?

Hon. Michael Chong: Through you, Mr. Chair, thank you for the question.

The first thing I want to emphasize is that the tax credit has not taken effect yet, so we don't have any results to analyze in terms of what impact it's had.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: But in policy analysis, did you examine whether tax credits work to incent the people who need the most—some who don't pay taxes?

Hon. Michael Chong: There's clear evidence with respect to other tax credits, such as the tax credits introduced by the previous government in areas like post-secondary education and training, that they do have a significant impact. Our government's view is that a tax credit was an effective way to deliver help very efficiently and very quickly to parents with the cost of registration and other eligible fees for sport and physical activities that are largely school-related—related to provincial areas of jurisdiction.

This was a way for the federal government to use the taxation code to do that, but I'd also like to add, though, that this is not—

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: No, but do we know whether one more kid will participate, or whether it's just the kids who are already participating whose parents will get a tax break?

The Chair: The asking of the question, Ms. Bennett, is through me. Could you please allow the minister to answer?

Hon. Michael Chong: The other thing I want to emphasize is that this is not the only thing the Government of Canada is doing to assist children's participation in sport and physical activity.

For example, one of the initiatives I'm quite proud of is the core operational support we give to the Canadian Tire Foundation for Families. They've developed a program called JumpStart, and we provide them with core operational funding of about \$250,000 a year. With that money they've been able to leverage 40:1 dollars; in other words, for every dollar that we've given them, they have raised another \$40. In the next year they will contribute over \$5 million to assist disadvantaged children with the purchase of sporting equipment and other related physical fitness equipment.

Our government is proud to support programs like that; we're not suggesting that the tax credit alone is going to deal with the problem. It's a multi-faceted approach, and the tax credit is just one component of it.

• (1605)

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Gagnon is next.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Thank you.

I have a question and a comment. My question is on the tax credit. I realize that the purpose is to encourage people to participate in physical activities, but I do not think it is helping the most disadvantaged members of our society, because this is a non-refundable tax credit. That means that one has to pay taxes. Therefore, those who do not pay any taxes will not be able to benefit from this tax credit. It will not serve as an incentive for the most disadvantaged people, those who do not have the means to pay for physical activities.

A committee was established for the purpose of analyzing the eligibility criteria for this program. I am told that this is a difficult process that will end up being costly. Can you tell us how feasible your tax credit is and how likely it is to achieve its goals? That is my first question.

My comment relates to the ParticipACTION program. Stanford University conducted a study on the increase in obesity amongst children at the time that program was in effect. They noted that child obesity increased by 300 per cent.

Can we conclude that this program was effective in preventing obesity amongst children if, during that time, there was a 300 per cent increase in obesity?

I do not think that the tax credit benefits our most vulnerable sectors, that is, communities that do not necessarily have the money to pay for the physical activities that ParticipACTION focussed on.

Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you for your question.

I will answer in English because I can give you more information in English in answer to your question.

[English]

To answer your first question about child poverty, we haven't finalized the structure of the tax credit, but that will be made known in the next two months by the Department of Finance and the Canada Revenue Agency. We don't know exactly how it's going to be structured, but what I can tell you is that we are very aware of the challenges facing parents who are in disadvantaged groups, and of the high cost of participating in some of these sport activities, such as hockey. Hockey is a very expensive sport. It's expensive for municipalities to maintain arenas; it's also expensive to buy equipment, especially for somebody who has a young child who is outgrowing his *pantalons* every two months. I could tell you that hockey equipment is very expensive to buy every couple of years, with rapidly growing children.

That's why I've said before that we believe in partnering with Canadian Tire. We've provided them with core operational funding of \$250,000 a year, and they've used that money to then raise, through a variety of partnerships, \$5 million a year. This year alone, they will spend over \$5 million purchasing equipment for kids across the country. To date, about 35,000 children have been recipients of this equipment.

It's done by the local dealer network. There are plenty of Canadian Tire dealers in the province of Quebec. It's got the widest reach, and as a matter of fact, it's probably got a wider reach than any government or any private sector company. There are close to 500 Canadian Tire stores throughout Canada; this company has an unbelievable reach, and they've used their dealer network to get into the communities to deliver help for children who are in disadvantaged groups.

With respect to ParticipACTION, you cited some statistics regarding the increase of obesity while the program was in effect. As the member for St. Paul's mentioned earlier, it's difficult to assess what the result would have been—what the increase in obesity would have been—had the program not been in effect. In other words, we did not have a control group that was outside the population, a group for whom the program wasn't in effect.

These kinds of public policy initiatives are often hard to quantify and to analyze, but what I can point to, by all accounts—from the information I've received and the information I've read—is the public policy with respect to anti-smoking campaigns. It's been very effective; it's been looked to as a model to decrease smoking rates among different groups in the population, and that's the model I've looked to in terms of tackling some of the challenges we face with physical activity.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Fletcher, you have five minutes.

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the minister for taking time out of his busy schedule to come before the committee. I didn't realize that the minister was a rugby player. They have quadriplegic rugby, and perhaps we should play sometime, Minister. I'll even give you a handicap.

In regard to the tax credit, I've heard a lot from my constituents that the tax credit has really been very helpful to them and that they are encouraged to enrol their kids in more sport. Could you comment on the scope of the types of sports that would be involved?

Also—and this may be for both Silken and the minister—if there are more kids involved in sport, what impact does that have on elite sports? Since Sport Canada invests a lot in elite sports as well, what impact will that have on community-based sports? What is the synergy there?

Hon. Michael Chong: Through you, Mr. Chair, to the member, I can answer the first part of your question; I will defer the question of the role of elite athletes to the four-time Olympian here, as to the role model they can play.

With respect to the tax credit—and I think this may, in addition, answer the question of the member for St. Paul's with regard to what evidence or research we have to put in place this tax credit—the finance department has done an analysis on this and has estimated that this tax credit could cost the federal treasury up to \$160 million a year when it's implemented.

Sometimes these numbers get especially large. The way I like to look at this number is that it's the equivalent of an investment into children's fitness and sports of \$500,000 into each Canadian community of 100,000 people. It's a significant investment, and one that we believe will have a huge impact.

We haven't finalized the structure of the credit and the list of fees that will be eligible, but the government has struck a three-person panel. Each person has been paid an honorarium of \$1 to consult with stakeholders across the country.

The panel is made up of Dr. Kellie Leitch, chief/chair of pediatric surgery at the University of Western Ontario, an esteemed Canadian doctor and a success story; Dave Bassett, from Vancouver, who is involved in amateur sport out there; and Michael Weil, president of the YMCA of Montreal. It's an esteemed panel. They've been travelling the country. They've been receiving hundreds of submissions and suggestions as to what fees should be eligible. I want to emphasize that this investment is not just for sport; it's for sport and physical activity, and it will allow parents to recoup some of the costs for children under 16.

We think it's going to make a tremendous impact. To put this in perspective, Sport Canada spends about \$143 million a year on its programming, including support for Olympians and support for participation. This tax credit, when fully estimated, could cost up to \$160 million a year—in other words, an investment larger than the entire investment we put into Sport Canada every year. So we think it's going to make a tremendous impact, and I'm quite excited about it.

I'll pass the second question, about role models, on to Silken.

Ms. Silken Laumann: Sport is a good thing. It increases physical activity and certainly can add value to children's lives, but I think it's important for the sport we play in our communities to reflect the values we hold within our communities, so that our community sport speaks to things like fairness and inclusion and is a great experience to children.

I know there's an organization out of Ottawa here, a national program called True Sport, that addresses and challenges communities to create the kind of sport in their communities that is a positive experience for kids, because some sport experiences can be negative experiences for kids. I think we need to really pay attention to that.

There is a worldwide trend of obesity and inactivity, and there is lots of talk in the elite athlete community about how that is decreasing performance and world records in track and field. This is not just North American; we're seeing it in track and field in Europe. I had a discussion in this regard just recently.

If we want to keep producing great athletes, does it matter that our kids are active? Absolutely, because it's a continuum. I started off my elite athletic training by riding my bicycle and walking to school and hacking around a lot, and eventually, at the age of 17, found the sport of rowing and found my passion. I think there is a very strong correlation between how many kids are active and our ability to produce top-level athletes in the long term.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'll have to correct the record as well—a four-time Olympian. When you have over three, what's another one here or there?

We certainly appreciate you as a role model to the country, and it's staggering, actually, when you think of what you have accomplished, so thank you very much.

Ms. Priddy, you have five minutes.

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Thank you. Thank you, everybody, for being here.

My first question is to the minister, because I assume we'll get other opportunities with Silken Laumann.

In the \$500 that is being spent, do we have a baseline, and will we have a way of knowing whether the \$500 is being spent by parents who could not previously enter their children into sport, or whether the \$500 is being spent by parents who already are spending the \$500 to put their children in sport? Could we end up, then, with no new children enrolled in a program because they still cannot afford that money?

I heard Mr. Fletcher say lots of people have been calling him. They've been calling me too, but in my riding they don't like it, because it's not going to make a difference for very many people, so I think a whole group of folks are being left out.

I want also to suggest that the issue of poverty and the fact that it will be impossible for people to do this.... They are often the children who need it the most, because some percentage of overweight children are overweight because they live in poverty and their parents can only afford high-calorie food.

So I'd like to know about the baseline; I'd like to know how you're going to know if we're spending on the same kids who are currently playing. I'll stop there.

And I have one more question on the aboriginal money. How much is for the already skilled athletes and how much is to encourage children? How does the \$12 million break down?

Hon. Michael Chong: I thank the member for her questions.

I'll try to address the first one, which was about generally how we are going to measure this and, if I understood correctly, how we are going to deal with children from disadvantaged groups.

The first thing I want to say before I go into that, though—and I think Silken will attest to this as well—is that what's important here is physical activity in sport. It doesn't always have to be organized physical activity, and it doesn't always have to be organized sport. A lot of these activities simply don't cost any money. We're talking about encouraging children just to go out there and play, to get off the PlayStation and out to the playground, to be physically active for twenty to thirty minutes a day, in unstructured play. So it doesn't always have to involve great sums of money or organized sport. That's just the first thing I want to say.

• (1620)

Ms. Silken Laumann: I agree.

Hon. Michael Chong: However, certainly there's a need for organized sport. With respect to that, one of the measures that we do have is Statistics Canada's collection of statistics on obesity rates. StatsCan also collects statistics on physical activity, and what I can tell you is that these are some of the metrics by which we can measure performance. However, as I mentioned earlier when one of your colleagues asked the question, it's often difficult to ascertain the impact of programs because there's no control group outside of the general population with which you can make direct measurements.

I think there's a general consensus that the anti-smoking campaign was successful. In terms of the actual metrics on physical fitness rates and obesity rates, though, those are things we can look to. There's no control group, to be certain, but at least there are some statistics that we can take a look at and analyze.

With respect to disadvantaged children, as I mentioned before, our government provides JumpStart, which is the program that Canadian Tire has, with \$250,000 in its core operational funding. They've leveraged that public investment by raising another \$5 million this year alone to help children from disadvantaged groups in terms of equipment and the like.

I believe your last question had to do with aboriginal funding. What I can tell you is that I, as minister, have increased funding for

aboriginal participation in sport by 40% in the last nine months. We are spending a significant amount of money for aboriginal participation in sport, and it will amount to close to \$20 million over the next five years—and that's just on the participation side.

Ms. Penny Priddy: Does that include supporting already skilled disabled athletes to go further, or is that for little people?

Hon. Michael Chong: This is for aboriginal participation in the sport community. This is in addition to the money that we provide for national sport organizations and for elite athletes. It is simply to encourage, to facilitate aboriginal participation in sport. It's a significant investment.

Ms. Penny Priddy: Albeit their own sports, sports that they may choose within their own culture?

Hon. Michael Chong: It's being done through a variety of different mechanisms. I'd be more than happy to provide the breakdown for you.

Ms. Penny Priddy: I would like that. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We've had our first round, and now we're going to go to the last witness. We'll ask Rod Jacobs if he would testify, and then we'll pick up the questioning from where we left off.

Minister, I know you have to excuse yourself soon, so we won't be offended if you have to run away.

Perhaps we can ask if the officials can stay for the questioning. One can stay? Okay.

Mr. Jacobs, the floor is yours.

Mr. Rod Jacobs (Manager, Aboriginal Sport Development, Aboriginal Sport Circle):

[Witness speaks in his native language]

I'm Rod Jacobs, from Walpole Island First Nation, here in Ontario. I thank the Creator for giving me this opportunity. I also thank and acknowledge the traditional territories that we're in, which are those of the Algonquin people.

I want to thank everyone for giving us the opportunity to speak here today on this very important matter. But first, before I begin, I want to start by letting you know my father will die of obesity—and I'll get back to that.

As you know, obesity is related to many health risks in Canada. Over 50% of children and youths are either overweight or obese. This is one of the many factors that leave aboriginals vulnerable to a host of other health problems, such as cardiovascular disease, gall bladder disease, joint disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. Aboriginal people have a prevalence of diabetes up to five times higher than the general population of Canada. This in turn leads to a host of other chronic health issues.

In my language, *niiyaw maajiishkaa* means “to have an active body”. That’s one of the things we practise. But you all know this, and you have many experts at your disposal to help understand why this is the case. Suffice it to say that obesity is just one of the suite of health challenges faced by aboriginal peoples. In fact, aboriginals as a population don’t score well on many of the key determinants of health: employment and working conditions, income and social status, education and literacy, health services, and healthy child development, just to name a few.

The challenges are bigger than any of us. They are a vast and complex puzzle that require comprehensive and steadfast attention on many fronts. For this, there is no one solution. The Aboriginal Sport Circle has its part to play.

The circle is comprised of thirteen provincial and territorial aboriginal sport bodies. We were incorporated back in 1997. We have been working for ten years to develop the mechanisms for aboriginal sport and recreation that provide one small piece of the puzzle. We know sport and recreation provide an avenue for healthy, active lifestyles for all ages, and they are a good way to counter obesity and being overweight. What some people don’t know is that sport and recreation also provide other essential elements for people’s well-being.

Effective sport and recreation programs provide a vehicle for development of personal skills and self-esteem. They build community fabric, they underlie cultural connection and creative expression, and they counteract boredom and provide healthy alternatives for our youth. They teach teamwork and leadership and provide a place to belong. Sport and recreation have been used effectively for social development, crime prevention, substance abuse recovery, social inclusion, relief for young mothers, and a safe haven when one is needed. Where recreation directors and coaches exist, there are role models and an avenue for communication, for education about healthy eating and dealing with racism, for setting goals and reaching them.

In short, a community that is building a sport and recreation capacity is doing far more than providing active outlets for its kids. Powerful medicine is what we’re dealing with.

We’re dealing with a powerful medicine that comes from our traditional teachings of the medicine wheel that encompass the spiritual side of us, the emotional side of us, the mental side of us, and the physical side of us. As one, when we complete the circle, that medicine heals. It doesn’t put a band-aid on anything; it heals us from the inside.

In February 2000, a national recreation round table on aboriginal/indigenous peoples was held in Maskwachees, Alberta. The delegates created the Maskwachees Declaration, which I’ll read

now: “Sustainable commitment and investment in active living, physical activity, physical education, recreation and sport are essential to promote health and address social issues facing Aboriginal/Indigenous Peoples in communities across Canada.” This still rings true.

Our path is a long one. We have been grateful for the ongoing support of Sport Canada in the development of the aboriginal sport policy. We recognize that it is important that we achieve meaningful inclusion in Canada within sport and recreation. Sport Canada has provided leadership among the FPT ministers of sport and recreation across the country, and these ministers have given aboriginal sport and recreation their attention over the past two years, but there is still more work to be done.

● (1625)

Further to this, we need to develop our PTs: our provincial and territorial aboriginal sport bodies need to be developed, as well as our grassroots. There is more work to be done in furthering that capacity; they can be provided the resources that will sustain them. We believe in doing that through our traditional teachings.

Our communities know the power of sport and recreation, particularly for our children and youth. Many communities have demonstrated their commitment by diverting their own scarce resources from other priorities into recreation directors and programming, but in many more that has not been possible. Many of our recreation directors are coming from other priorities—from our health budgets, from our education budgets, from our justice budgets. Government doesn’t put its focus on recreation directors in our communities, which would help eliminate the obesity. If we invested time and money where the root source is, we would eliminate obesity; we’d have fewer bills, we’d have fewer health, education, and justice problems in our communities.

What is the role of Health Canada and INAC? To date, these ministries have been not particular partners in advancing aboriginal sport and recreation, but as we said before, there are many pieces to the puzzle, and we are one of them. We acknowledge the work being done for our communities in the spheres of education and public health, but we would willingly accept help in these two spheres, which are natural complements to our own, particularly in the area of health promotion. The pathway to greater health for each community will depend on all three of us working together.

The long-term athlete development model developed by Sport Canada takes a lifelong approach to sport. Our communities’ past traditions have taken that same approach. We were going and coming, and there was always physical activity; sport has always been part of our lives, as well as recreation.

You asked the ASC here today to talk about obesity. Perhaps we've stretched your patience by extending our response to a wider perspective. We believe that healthier weights come from healthier lifestyles and that lifestyles are both environmentally and culturally based. In expanding the aboriginal sport and recreation movement, we can make a difference by drawing on traditional lifestyles, cultural practices, and holistic attitudes towards life. A happy, healthy community that laughs and plays together is perfectly consistent with aboriginal traditions, and it contributes much more than healthier weights.

This past year our national aboriginal hockey championships—which the director general, Tom Scrimger, attended—were aired live on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. They were among the most successful sporting programs they have ever had on the television. The championships drew the largest viewership, and because of that the network wants to continue to work on sport with us in the Aboriginal Sports Circle. We mention this because, between those 600 male and female athletes who come to our championships, there are another 1,000 at least in each of the provinces and territories who are striving to reach that goal, striving to participate.

We turn our attention to the North American Indigenous Games, which Ms. Tina Keeper is well familiar with, where we see her. It's so important to see the 5,000 or so athletes parading on the field, because sport and recreation means something to them. They have a goal, they become healthier, and they strive for that.

We point out these things because we see that these activities within aboriginal sport and recreation are very important and are powerful medicine for us to heal a hurting nation.

● (1630)

I talked about my dad when I began, because he will die. He will die of heart disease; he's obese. He comes to that although seven generations ago our people were strong. Our people were very strong. We gave up a lot, and now it's time for us to get that back.

Our people have told us to think seven generations ahead. Obesity will not be a problem in our communities, because we will fight it. My dad will die, but his memory will live on in his grandchildren, because he instilled values into my heart and into the heart of our youth. That's what we're here for: to eliminate those problems.

[Witness continues in native language]

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation. It is a complex issue we're dealing with, and it's refreshing to hear first nations peoples and ask them for their thoughts on the matter. You're absolutely right: therein lies some of the solutions.

Mr. Batters.

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): I want to thank the minister for being here today.

To all our presenters, thank you very much for your recommendations. They will help us greatly in writing our report on childhood obesity, which is a critical issue facing this country. Thank you also for the public awareness opportunity that this provides us today. A lot of this issue can be combated with education. We're fortunate to have this meeting televised today, and many Canadians will be

watching at home. By watching this meeting, parents may think about how they can get their kids to shut off the TV and the computers and get outside to play.

Your message, Ms. Laumann, is certainly a good one.

I would also like to take this opportunity to trumpet the example that you quoted from Rouleau, Saskatchewan, the example of a "play in the school" night. Last year on Wednesday nights, they played in the school, with teachers and parents joining people of all ages. This is in the great riding of Palliser, my riding. It's better known as Dog River, where the hit TV show "Corner Gas" is filmed. I wanted to trumpet that example, and I'll be following up with those people when I get back home.

I think decision-makers must make fitness a priority in our schools. If this message isn't delivered in our report, we will have missed the boat. When I was in elementary school, we had daily physical education. We had intramural sports, which was a big part of being a kid, and some of my fondest memories are of intramural sports at school. I believe I heard the minister hint that he wants to bring back the Canada fitness program, with the different badges—gold, silver, bronze. Canadians will remember this from school: the flexed arm hang, endurance runs, and the little relays with bean bags. This was excellent for promoting physical fitness and for getting the kids to play. It was also a way to have more active kids and aspiring Olympians.

In my riding of Palliser, a hot topic is the building of a multiplex fitness facility in Moose Jaw. Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, wants to build this multiplex. It will include a hockey rink, curling rinks, an indoor soccer facility, and a walking track, which will certainly be beneficial in -40 Celsius weather. I know that provincial and territorial ministers met with Minister Chong and also Minister Clement, the Minister of Health regarding the infrastructure deficit that exists in this country. I'm wondering how those discussions are proceeding.

What is your department, the sports department, doing in conjunction with the Ministry of Health to push this issue forward? What is on the horizon in respect of infrastructure funding for health and fitness in Canada?

● (1635)

Mr. Jacques Paquette (Associate Deputy Minister, International and Intergovernmental Affairs and Sports, Department of Canadian Heritage): Those questions are more for a minister than for officials, in a way. There was a meeting in June with FPT and the Minister for Sport, and the infrastructure issue was discussed at length. At that time, Minister Chong said that Minister Cannon was conducting consultations with all the provinces and territories to identify the priorities for this new envelope that has been announced for the coming four years. Depending on the result of this consultation, a decision will be taken. At the moment, we're waiting to see the results of the consultations with the provinces. As you know, Sport Canada doesn't have an infrastructure program. This resides under Minister Cannon.

The Chair: Ms. Keeper, five minutes.

Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.): I'd like to thank Mr. Jacobs for his presentation. It is indeed part of our effort on this study to ensure that we have the voice of aboriginal people.

I really want to thank you.

[Member speaks in her native language]

When you talk about our people in terms of physical strength and health, which were traditional to who we were, I have to mention that my grandfather was an Olympic athlete. He actually ran in the 1912 Olympics. When he ran in that event, he ran against two other native American athletes. So indeed that has been instilled in me through my family—the life on the land, and certainly the physical and well-being that were traditional. I really appreciate the information you gave us, especially around sport, an activity that your organization is involved with.

Also, I would like to thank the different sectors that have to be involved as we move forward on this issue. I'd like to direct my question, though, to Silken Laumann.

In your background as an Olympic athlete, you had an opportunity—which is rare, obviously—to participate with other elite athletes from around the world. I would like to ask your thoughts in terms of what a country needs to do. Are there countries that have had exceptional programs, or exceptional commitments to their youth, to physical activity, that maybe you're not seeing here in Canada?

Ms. Silken Laumann: It's a great question, and it's one I'll answer conservatively, because I don't know a whole lot about what's going on in every country. I know some great examples are Australia and Norway. In Norway, physical activity is a way of life. People cross-country ski to school, they walk, and they really integrate activity in a way that we were doing 20 years ago. They don't seem to have the same challenges around fear. In our communities, we have so much fear around letting our children out of our sight. I think we've done an outstanding job of keeping our children safe over the last decade and a really bad job of keeping our children well. Some of that is around our own personal comfort zones about letting our children out of our sight.

We need to create safe places for our children to play in our communities that won't cost anything. We're promoting an idea called “play in the park”, which any community can do; 72% of Canadians live within a kilometre of a park, which is an amazing statistic. I got that from Mark Tremblay, actually—from some of his material. It doesn't take a lot of effort to get a couple of neighbours together to supervise a park one night a week so that children can enjoy unstructured activity. Then the whole neighbourhood starts to find out about it, and you can imagine some of the initiatives that can grow from there.

With respect to your question, there are some countries that never seem to lose that connection to the outdoors and to the unstructured play that our culture is certainly in danger of losing altogether and certainly has lost significantly in the last 20 years.

By the way, that 20 years actually gives me hope. That tells me that this is not a long-standing cultural norm and that we as Canadians actually know how to play, how to do sport, and how to

be physically active. We just have to re-educate ourselves about the importance of it, and we have to make it a priority.

• (1640)

Ms. Tina Keeper: Have you personally seen a change in terms of our commitment to athletes over, say, the last 15 years or something like that?

Ms. Silken Laumann: To athletes, or to physical activity initiatives? To both?

Ms. Tina Keeper: I guess to athletes. Is there a particular mindset? One of the things that I've been really stunned by in this study was the level of obesity and the urgency of the problem, so I'm wondering if there's—

Ms. Silken Laumann: Yes, there are just so many places. The problem has crept up on us, and we've really just started to recognize the enormity of it and to take it seriously. We're still a little bit in denial about how important it is. We do need to spend real money to tackle this problem, and it has to be tackled on many different levels. The schools are a critical piece of that. The education that our elementary school children are getting, as I said in my comments, is not sufficient. And we need to stop graduating teachers without any physical activity training.

The opportunity is there to provide greater training for before- and after-school care, but parents are the first in line. We buy the groceries. We actually dictate how our families spend their time. Certainly, what I have been doing nationally is really promoting the importance of families' having unstructured play, of getting outside and kicking the soccer ball with their kids, of giving themselves permission, instead of signing up for another hour of tutoring or another hour of language, to actually spend one night a week having a family night to get kids out and be physically active together.

Australia, as I mentioned, is a good model. They have very strong physical education experts in their schools. They have a culture that values physical activity, and we have a culture that watches physical activity on television. We watch sport on television, and that has been a shift. If we are going to continue to produce great athletes, which is one end of the spectrum, we also have to continue to really value and support activity on every level, from the level of the kid who wants to participate in hockey because it's fun, to the level of the kid who has a dream to be the best in the world. If we're not supporting the dreams of our children to be the best in the world, then we're supporting mediocrity. We need to support our elite athletes, but at the foundation we need to look at all these initiatives.

There are so many things going on in our country that are really good, as I said in my presentation. There are people who really know how to engage young people. I would suggest that the federal government take a role here in creating some sort of funds for these lean, mean programs—\$5,000 really has an impact in these communities—so that they are easily accessible and are something like the Edmonton inner city project. In Edmonton there is a wonderful project that gets kids playing before and after school. They are the neediest kids in that community. They are strapped for funding. A little bit of funding makes a big difference.

Does that answer your question? I was long-winded.

The Chair: That's fine. You were, but it was very good, and it was helpful to the committee, so I let it go a little bit longer.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Davidson, you have five minutes.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank the witnesses today. Certainly it has been an interesting presentation, and I've enjoyed hearing from each of you and the minister as well, although he has had to leave.

What has come through loud and clear to me this afternoon is that we need to pursue healthier weight through healthier lifestyles, that this is an entire package we are looking at, and that there is no one answer. Each of you has given that portrayal in your presentations.

I was quite interested, Rod, when you talked about the whole aspect of life and incorporating everything—the spiritual, the emotional, the physical—and making a better, healthier person all the way around. I'd like to comment just a little bit more on that.

Then I have a question for Silken as well. You talked about Norway, and you talked about Australia and the different attitudes that they have toward physical activity. In particular with Norway, you talked about the fear, or perhaps the lack of it, compared to what we're used to. That is one of the big things. There is a huge reluctance on the part of parents to allow their children to be out on their own or to be in parks or to be walking back and forth to school. After Rod comments, if there is time, I'd like you to comment a bit more on that and on how we might work toward achieving that.

• (1645)

Mr. Rod Jacobs: Thank you, Ms. Davidson.

Two years ago, I was about 310 pounds. I didn't know what was wrong with me. I was grossly obese. I came to the Aboriginal Sport Circle, and I had to start my healing journey. I remember the day: it was in March 2004. I got down on my knees and I prayed. That's what our people did, and that's what our people need to do—get back to the things that were us. So I prayed. I had to deal with sexual abuse, drugs and alcohol, suicide. Everything in my community I had to deal with—that was me. As a 12-year-old child, I'm driving my parents' car, getting my brother to his hockey games, because of drugs and alcohol. I had to deal with the emotional side of things.

My elders taught me that the spiritual side of things is the eagle, and the emotional side of things is the bear. The bear is very heavy, like emotions. Once I started to get this, my mind started to change. I started to grasp who I was. That 300 pounds wasn't me. I was carrying it around because of all of the things I had to deal with. My mind started to change, and the weight started to come off.

The mental aspect is the turtle, and sometimes the changing of our minds is slow. But it took place. The physical side is the wolf. I started to become faster. Right now I'm the healthiest I've been since I was maybe two. It's amazing what we can do when we try to achieve that holistic side of ourselves.

It's about utilizing our elders. Our elders were a big part of our communities. Now they're becoming distant. The youth were so important. They were a source of guidance to us. I talked to a friend

of mine this weekend who had a difficult decision to make. She was babysitting her niece and nephew. I told her not to ask them the question, but to just let them speak, because they'd give her the answer.

Holistically, we have to take an inclusive look at every aspect of our lives—family, spirituality, emotions, mentality, and physicalness. We need to get back to that, but a lot of times our people stop there. We have to thank the Creator—*Chi-Miigwetch*—for giving us this opportunity. Holistic living has provided me with a healthier lifestyle. I can live longer. I know I will continue to fight for these kids, our aboriginal youth and every person in Canada, to make sure they're holistically finding who they are. Sport and recreation is one aspect of this. The Victoria Playhouse, which I've been to a number of times, is very important as well.

Our culture is great. We need to practise our culture. That's who we were made to be, and we need to honour it. Once we start honouring who we are, we become whole.

The Chair: Thank you.

Silken.

Ms. Silken Laumann: Thank you.

Rod, thank you for reminding us what health really is: the mind, the body, and the spirit, and how integrated all of those things are. We often talk about teaching the whole child in our school system, and what you've shared is very beautiful.

I want to address the question of fear and how our communities have changed. It's a complex question. It's really one about social change and how we can impact our communities to make a positive social change and begin to trust one another. I think it really is a matter of increasing our comfort zones slowly, because it has taken a long time to get where we are today, from a place where certainly I, as a child, was left to my own devices until dinner time. I had dinner and couldn't wait to go outside again until the street lights came on. That was the sign we had to come in. So things have changed a lot in 20 to 25 years.

“Play in the park” is an idea we promote, and I have observed what happens when communities start something like “play in the park”, where they're working together to supervise a local park. People come together and start to get to know their neighbours. They start to engage in conversation, and the kinds of conversations that certainly happened in my community.... The first day we did it, we had six children out. Now we're regularly getting about thirty children coming to play in the park, and their families come. But kids have also started walking to school, because now we know who lives in what house and the kids have developed a further connection. Six-year-olds now know ten-year-olds in the same school because they play in the park together.

So I think it's a slow social change. I think the starting point is creating open community spaces where people can come together in a way that is maybe initiated by the community but is supported by governments' and cities' free open space, where the doors are open for people to come. They can then use their initiatives to actually come together in that space.

So I don't think I can snap my fingers and say to just let your kids out, but I do think that by starting a discussion, like we are today and like the one you've been engaged in for some time now, around the health of our children.... Twenty years ago, we didn't wear seat belts and we didn't sit in car seats, but we've somehow gotten to a place where we wouldn't think about putting our children in the car without a child seat. I drag my child seat right across the country to oma and opa's house, in order to put my children in a car seat.

Physical activity has to be such a priority for us as parents, as teachers, and as community leaders that we wouldn't think of supporting a government that didn't make it a priority, that we wouldn't think of supporting a school that didn't have an integrated physical education approach. That is going to take a little bit of time. It takes our talking about it, discussing it, and continuing to promote and take seriously the critical piece that physical activity has in our physical, emotional, and social health.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madame Demers, for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to all of you for coming. I am pleased that you came. I greatly admire you, Ms. Laumann, and you as well, Mr. Jacobs. I think that your journey is an example for everyone.

Mr. Paquette, before asking my questions I would like to make a comment. I think that the minister is practising what he preaches — his skating is excellent. He skated around my colleague's question. You must tell him that he is very good. However, I think it is unfortunate that Health Canada could not be bothered, over the 30 years of its existence, to study the impact of the ParticipACTION program. Other countries have similar programs and have done so.

I have a study before me that was published by the *British Medical Journal*, a well respected publication. Five hundred and ninety-two children participated in a physical exercise program for one year for the purposes of determining whether or not exercise had

an impact on obesity. The physical exercise had no impact on weight, but it did have an impact on motor skills and on health. I think that is important.

I also think that it is important to be concerned about obesity. I am obese and I admit it. I have problems but I often go to Tim Hortons to buy a carrot and bran muffin and an orange juice. I thought that was good for me and now I realize that it is not good for me at all.

I think that there are many issues that we need to identify, examine and be aware of. This is not just a question of exercise, it is not just a question of practice. There is also the number of calories that we are ingesting and that we can lose through exercise.

Ms. Laumann, my question is for you. This morning, I eat a muffin and I drank 8 ounces of pure orange juice. That is good thing, is not it? Do you know how many calories that represents and how long it will take me to lose those calories? It is unbelievable, it adds up to 512 calories and I would have to walk at a brisk pace for at least an hour in order to lose those calories. The same applies to children.

I would like to hear your opinion. Do you feel, like Mr. Jacobs, that exercise is not the only factor? We also need to make sure that parents are aware that the number of calories consumed has an impact, that they are aware of how many calories they and their children are consuming and that they also know what the ultimate consequences of those calories are? Do you think that what I am saying is a bit far fetched or am I right?

• (1655)

[*English*]

Ms. Silken Laumann: No, I don't think what you're saying is frivolous; I think it's very important. The first comments I made were that we can't separate the issues of obesity and inactivity from diet. We can't say that to be healthy you just have to exercise. Here we have experts on the physical activity piece, and that is why we're addressing it. You have had many experts who have spoken about the nutrition piece; I am not a dietitian. I know that it is an equation. I know that when you are physically active, not only are you burning calories but you're also changing your body composition, you're building muscle, and all of that has a long-term impact.

And it's not just about weight; it's about heart health and bone health. Weight is the visible sign for a lot of people that somebody is out of shape, but it's not the only sign. There are many young people who are very thin but do not have adequate lung capacity and do not have adequate bone density. For instance, one of the things I learned is that young girls develop 23% of their bone density between the years of 12 and 14, and that's the exact age when young girls drop out of sport, drop out of structured activities, and often don't have a fallback of unstructured activities.

So there's a strong correlation, and your comment was not frivolous. Parents are buying the food, and economics is involved here as well. When you look at the poorest communities, what is the food source in those communities? Where is the local store? If it's a 7-Eleven, we have a real problem. We should be really looking at the kinds of stores we're putting in the poorest communities and, in an ideal world, making the best food the cheapest food.

But these opinions take some time to change. It's about education, yes, to a certain extent. It's also about planning our communities in a better way, giving the poorest communities in our country access. One of the statistics I looked at recently is how economics relates to obesity and how single moms in this country are our poorest citizens, which actually means that children are our poorest citizens. And those children have a higher risk of being overweight and obese.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you very much. I absolutely want to ask Mr. Jacobs a question.

Mr. Jacobs, were you, as a First Nations' member, consulted on the content of the *Canada Food Guide*?

[English]

Mr. Rod Jacobs: Canada's Food Guide, for me as a first nations person growing up, was really unrealistic. It doesn't do anything for my people. We have better luck buying five bags of chips to feed our families than fruit. And that's terrible.

Yes, I'd probably put in extra dollars to get me to where I'm at now. But my sister can't; she's on social assistance. There are no jobs in our communities. As Silken said, it's not just about physical activity; it's about our economic—

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: My question was this: was your community consulted during the drafting of the new *Canada Food Guide*?

[English]

The Chair: Her time is gone, but I'll allow the answer.

Mr. Rod Jacobs: From the Aboriginal Sport Circle's perspective, no, we weren't consulted.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lunney, you have five minutes.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to thank all the witnesses. The Minister had to leave, but I appreciate the officials being here, and Silken Laumann, and Rod, and all of you, for the very interesting discussion you've stimulated today.

I want to put three questions quickly out here. I'll just put them all out here.

Silken, I'd like you to address the great program that you mentioned was in Edmonton, with its little bit of money and good results. I'd like to know what kind of a low-cost investment that was. Maybe you could describe that. If you could just hold onto that, I'll run through these quickly.

I wanted to ask the officials what years did the ParticipACTION program actually run, because there was a period when it was active. I haven't heard that actually explained. Maybe you could explain that to us.

I wanted to come back to Rod. I want, first of all, to thank you for your own personal story that you shared with us and for making yourself vulnerable in explaining it. I think you had us all fascinated by it. In my coastal community, Nanaimo—Alberni, we have a lot of

first nations people and the predominate group is Nuu-chah-nulth. They have an expression that our interpreters will probably have a challenge with. It's *hishuk ish tsawalk*, which in their language means everything is one; literally, we're part of nature, and nature is part of us. And I think that dealing with this challenge of obesity certainly ties in with that.

I appreciated that you raised the points about how sport involves teamwork, leadership, social development, as well as the physical aspects and the spiritual, and you tied those together so nicely for us. I know that some of our own aboriginal communities, the coastal communities that are isolated, with 800 people and 250 school kids, have basketball teams. The kids are really good at basketball, but they're isolated and their ability to participate and interact with other communities is limited.

And now back to the officials, we talk about a 40% increase in funding. I think I heard the minister say there was \$20 million to increase aboriginal participation in sport activity. I wonder if you could explain where and how you see that. What is the vision? How do you see the new funding applied, and what type of venue or approach is anticipated with the increased funding?

So I'll just put those questions out for starters.

• (1700)

Ms. Silken Laumann: Should I answer first, since I had the first question?

I'd like to share not just Edmonton but three ideas, because they all share a commonality in that they were initiated by the community. The City Centre Education Project in Edmonton was initiated by a principal who said we don't have enough money to hire a physical activity expert, but we need one, so let's work together with other schools to do so. They got five schools together and they hired a physical activity expert. They also hired a public health nurse to help initiate a change in food policy within the school. They identified lots of kids in their school who needed some special help in accessing physical activity programs. So they trained and brought in experts to create active before and after school care. I don't have the exact numbers on how much that cost. I did at one point; it's not at the top of my mind.

In Erin, Ontario, there's a program called Erin Hoops. It started off as a basketball club. Many kids played in this basketball league, but then it got too expensive to play in the school. They took on the school board; they took on the city. They lost on all counts, but Patrick Suessmuth, who ran the program, didn't give up. He found a community centre, a space that was a little bit rundown, and somehow he negotiated a free lease to open that space. And 500 kids a month now come through that space. They don't only play basketball, they rollerblade, they play ping pong, and the only rule is no hitting and no slamming of doors in that place—again, some real innovation.

Whitehorse had a problem with vandalism in its inner city school. They created something called the Whole Child Project. Again, they opened the school doors in the evening. They partnered with the RCMP, who ran a school bus all around the neighbourhood. They invited grandparents, uncles, children, etc., to come into this open school concept.

Various resources were offered in that school. One was floor hockey and basketball, one was healthy cooking classes, another was helping people who needed to navigate the social programs so they could access the further help of the community. We talked to one of the mothers who went through this program with her three kids. She was in a deep depression when she accessed this program and credits this program for getting her out of the house one night a week to play with her kids. It saved her from deep, deep depression.

All these things have something in common. They happened because somebody wanted to take action. That action was supported by some money in the community—in one case, the RCMP; in another case, some private funding; and in another case, some government funding. A little bit of money in those kinds of initiatives really goes a long way.

Mr. Jacques Paquette: I want to answer the questions quickly.

The first question concerned ParticipACTION. It started in 1971 and was very active in the seventies and eighties. And in the nineties, public as well as corporate funding decreased significantly, so it ceased in 2001. That's the story of ParticipACTION.

The second question concerns the funding for aboriginal activities. First of all, the framework we're using is the aboriginal policy we developed and announced last year, and that was done in close consultation with the Aboriginal Sport Circle. So the priorities are there. We are developing some action plans.

At the moment we're using different channels to spend the money. One channel that is quite important is the federal-provincial-territorial bilateral agreements, where we put in a total of around \$4.5 million, and that's being matched by the provinces. It's part of the new funding we're going to use to increase these agreements with the provinces to specifically target aboriginal sport initiatives.

Another part of that money is also going to be invested in a coaching strategy, because that was also identified as one of the main priorities we should look at.

• (1705)

Mr. Rod Jacobs: Mr. Chair, if I can just add to that, we're very grateful for the policy on aboriginal people's participation in sport and recreation. The dollars that are allocated will be going to develop our provincial and territorial aboriginal sport bodies and continuing to build capacity, as well as looking at our aboriginal coaching program, as we feel that leadership is very important.

We'll be doing that and we'll continue to work with Sport Canada to ensure that the dollars assigned to the national sport organizations are geared toward increasing aboriginal participation and that we continue to work with our national sport organization partners to ensure we're reaching targets.

The Chair: Once again, I'd like to thank the witnesses who came forward today. This is becoming a fascinating study.

The Aboriginal Sports Circle, Rod, thank you for being here and sharing.

Silken Laumann, four-time Olympian, thank you for what you're doing right across Canada in promoting healthy living for active kids. It's a great cause, and all Canadians owe you a great debt. Keep up the good work.

I would also like to thank the minister and his officials for being here.

We'll take a two-minute break and then we'll get into the motions the committee has to deal with.

Thanks again to all of you.

• (1715)

The Chair: We'll start again with the procedural motion. Ms. Davidson has introduced a procedural motion. I think everyone has it in both official languages.

You can speak to it, please.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

As I said earlier, I wish to introduce this procedural motion. I wished to speak to it at the last meeting, but because of lack of time, I wasn't able to.

We are sitting here today listening to witnesses on an extremely important study we have undertaken. I don't think there's anybody around this table who wants to do less than a full study, a full hearing of witnesses who would do justice to this study. We have heard from a lot of people here. We have a physician who sits on this committee, and we have a person of aboriginal descent on this committee. We have those who are extremely interested in land use planning and infrastructure issues. All of us, I believe, have to some extent questioned the input that went into the new Canada food guide and whether there was enough consultation.

I'm putting forth this motion, Mr. Chairman, because I feel we need to hear from health professionals, we need to hear more from the first nations and Inuit groups, we need to hear what provincial initiatives are out there, and we need to hear about the impact of our built environment and infrastructure, so we can develop a full report that will have input from everybody. By my best estimate, we have probably spent about \$100,000 to this point on this study, and I would hate to see us put forward a report that is not complete.

Therefore, I would move this motion. I won't read it, as it is lengthy, but everybody has a copy of it now.

The Chair: It sounds like this is adding another meeting on health professionals, first nations, the provinces, and infrastructure and environment. Is that it?

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: My motion asks that we undertake at least four meetings, in addition to the current work plan.

The Chair: Okay. I'll open discussion on the motion.

Madame Gagnon.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: That brings me to the motion that I tabled.

I tabled a restrictive motion because it did not look like there was time to have Health Canada appear on the topic of the *Canada Food Guide*. I simply requested that the publication of the report of the proceedings be postponed. However, if additional meetings are added, I would like Health Canada officials to come and speak to us on the *Canada Food Guide* and that we have an opportunity to ask them questions. I would like to go further than the motion that you tabled.

I requested a report of the proceedings that led to the creation of the *Canada Food Guide*, but it would be better to have health Canada officials appear before the committee. I would agree to having additional meetings on condition that Health Canada officials agree to appear before the committee.

[English]

The Chair: Now, just for clarification here—

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: That is consistent with the agreement to increase the number of meetings. Are we not calling for some additional meetings?

[English]

The Chair: That's absolutely right. I agree.

Because your motion is really asking for another meeting for the department to deal with Canada's Food Guide, I would ask if you would consider making that amendment to incorporate yours into this motion. Would you be prepared to make yours an amendment to Mrs. Davidson's motion? We have to deal with the motion.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: No. I would like to keep my motion, but I would put forward an amendment so that Health Canada officials appear before the committee.

[English]

The Chair: We can do that when we get to your motion, though. We have to take them one at a time, then. I'm sorry.

Is there any other discussion on this motion?

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Chair, I tabled the first motion. So why are we starting with the last motion that was brought to our attention? We are going about this the wrong way around. I put forward the first motion, which was followed by a second and a third. We will proceed in order.

• (1720)

[English]

The Chair: Let the clerk explain that. One is a procedural motion. That's the only reason it was introduced without notice of motion. But yours had notice of motion.

Is that right?

The Clerk of the Committee: It wasn't necessary to have the 48-hour notice for this motion because it has to do with the subject under discussion today, which is childhood obesity. It wasn't required.

The Chair: That's the only reason we're doing it ahead of yours. If you want to do yours first, you certainly can. I don't think it's a big issue.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: The motion I tabled deals with child obesity, and the *Canada's Food Guide* is linked to obesity. I brought it forward as part of our study on obesity, and after hearing from witnesses who told us that people were disappointed because they had not been consulted, and that the guide did not meet their expectations—

[English]

The Chair: Let's not get bogged down on this. We have two motions on the floor. If you see a reason why this motion would compromise your motion, we can take yours first. It doesn't make any difference. It's already been introduced on the floor. That's why I think we should have the discussion on this motion, accept it or reject it, and then move on to yours.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: I find that having to develop work plans by motion is a sign of total dysfunction in a committee. We need a steering committee meeting, and we need to be able to figure this stuff out without going motion by motion. Having duelling motions is not the way to work collaboratively. One is dropped on the table, and then there's no capacity to have a consensus to find compromise. This means you end up doing yes, no, reject, amendments, and all of this stuff, which is just a waste of time. We've already said we don't have enough time for this committee work, and we're wasting the committee's time doing work plans.

The Chair: Ms. Bennett, my office has been trying to contact yours for the last two days. We were trying to get a meeting together. This was my intent. I had a chance to talk to Madam Gagnon about it. That is what we were trying to do, but time didn't allow it.

You're right in the sense that what you say would be ideal. We did our best to make it happen in this situation. But that doesn't change the motion here before us. I think we need to deal with this motion and move on. It's a separate issue. I did my best to contact your office, and you know that.

Mr. Lunney.

Mr. James Lunney: I appreciate the discussion on this motion.

We've come this far with the study, and I think we've all found it interesting. But there are some key players who would like to present. I would like to appeal to colleagues to consider that we make room for the professionals like the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Pediatric Society. There are provincial representations from the Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy as well as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. They all have something they'd like to contribute to this discussion.

Having come this far, I hope we would find room to make room. I think we could find room for a compromise. The motion from Madam Gagnon proposes to include a discussion of Canada's Food Guide—which probably wouldn't be inappropriate, given the subject matter—within the four meetings. Perhaps we can find room to arrange it in such a manner that we could include Canada's Food Guide discussion as well.

I appeal to colleagues to consider that this can be done. We're talking about four meetings. It's not an inordinate commitment of time. This would allow us to complete the study and enable our report to be as representative as possible in addressing this important issue.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I want to build upon what Dr. Bennett was saying, about this committee trying to work in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. Of the last four or five meetings we've had, at every single meeting we end up talking about whether or not we are going to extend our topic and add more sessions. Everyone ends up with a bad taste in their mouth, because we've discussed this issue from day one.

We had decided on a game plan. Realizing that there were other groups to hear from, we had also suggested last time around, off the record, that we might want to extend the sessions and add on another hour. Many members, I understand, would be willing to sit past 5:30. We could add an extra hour and stay with our original game plan to go on and discuss another topic afterwards.

• (1725)

The Chair: I'll clarify that. We had one working session during the first session back in September, and then we did not discuss future business and what we would go with until the last meeting. This is why Ms. Davidson never had an opportunity to bring it forward. That meeting, if you remember, was cut short at the end because there was quite a heated discussion about this issue. So really there has only been one time when we've talked about it, which was the last time, and now this time.

It's done in the form of a motion. I believe Ms. Davidson is trying to do it that way so that we can just get to a conclusion rather than into discussion on it, because we've debated it considerably. So we either say yes or say no. I think it's very simple.

So if I see no other debate on this issue, then—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Chair, I also believe that it is important that we have a few additional meetings. There are some people we have not heard from. However, I do not quite agree with the list we have here. The provincial representatives are very important. For having heard him, I believe that Dr. Després, of Laval University, can provide us with a very different perspective on obesity. I also believe that it is very important to hear from the Canadian Medical Association. It is absolutely essential that we deal with the *Canada's Food Guide*, because it has governed our food habits for too many years. It is sent to dieticians in school, and they forward it to us. It is not a good food guide. It was not done according to what Canadians should eat, but according to their food habits. It is not a good guide.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Fletcher.

Mr. Steven Fletcher: Actually, I agree with Madame Demers.

Madame Demers, if I may, I will ensure that representatives from Health Canada come to this committee to answer any concerns that this committee has—and that goes to Ms. Gagnon's motion. In the interim, I think there's a motion on the floor, but I will guarantee you that we will have people from Health Canada in to discuss Canada's Food Guide, because I share those concerns.

The Chair: I think the debate was whether or not, in the motion, there are specific witnesses. You wanted to include perhaps a few others. Is that right, Madame Demers? Is that what I heard you to say?

Ms. Nicole Demers: Yes.

The Chair: Fair enough.

Ms. Priddy.

Ms. Penny Priddy: It helps me to understand. I've heard three different groups from Madame Demers. I've seen the ones Ms. Davidson has brought forward. I'm not saying they're not all important, but I'd like to know, if this passes.... I'm not quite sure at this stage what "this" is, because I'm not sure if this is seven more meetings, or four, or what. I don't quite know where we are with it, unless we're voting on Ms. Davidson's motion only, which is why we probably could have done a compromise. The way it looks now, though, it's seven more meetings, which is more than we planned for.

I'd like to know when we're going to start. Could you help me to know the date on which this committee would begin a debate about pharmacare? Let's say the motion passes and Madame Demers' motion passes. When will we...?

The Chair: I hear your question, and I think the committee's intention is that once we're finished the obesity study, we will move on to a pharmaceutical study.

Ms. Penny Priddy: I realize that part. I'm just wondering about the date. It seems to be rolling on.

The Chair: That's a fair question. As I interpret the motion—and this is from the chair's interpretation of what I see—they're asking for four meetings here. If the next motion were to pass, which is the Bloc's motion, it would be five. There are four plus the one Madame Gagnon asked for as well, unless we want to incorporate that into the four. That's why I asked if there was a friendly amendment there.

That's the clarification, so there are five, as I see it. That's what we would be looking at if things stay the way they are right now.

• (1730)

Ms. Penny Priddy: And how many meetings are left before the break?

The Chair: If we do five, prescription drugs would start on November 21.

Ms. Penny Priddy: Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead. I'm sorry.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: The motion reads as follows:

It is proposed that, at the discretion of the Chair, the Committee undertake at least four meetings in addition to the current work plan—

The number of meetings therefore is left up to your discretion; there could be even more than four.

The motion as it is worded cannot be agreed to. We could plan three meetings to hear from dieticians, Jean-Pierre Després, of Laval University, representatives from the Quebec Pediatric Society and someone from Health Canada, who could talk to us about the *Canada's Food Guide*. We should not give you such discretion, because you could add three additional meetings.

If I understand the motion correctly, we would hold at least four meetings, which would be left up to your discretion. If we accept the motion as is, we have to accept the possibility that there would be two or three additional meetings. I think we can agree to three meetings, in addition to the meeting with Health Canada, which would deal with the *Canada's Food Guide*.

[English]

The Chair: Would you make that a friendly amendment, please? Would you make that amendment to this motion? We have to come to a conclusion, and I agree with you, I'm not comfortable with it being open-ended, with the chair's making the call.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: The committee should add three meetings to those already planned in order to further analyze the problem of obesity.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. We wanted to limit it and be definite. That's what you're—

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Three meetings—

[English]

The Chair: Just to interpret what you're saying, we would have the one on the health, the first nations; perhaps the province and the environment could be together; and then the one you are dealing with would be when the department would come forward, right? Would that be fair? Is that your amendment? Then let's vote on it. We will say either yes or no to it.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: —and, to conclude, the motion calling on Health Canada to appear as part of a study of the food guide. That comes out to four meetings. I do not want to include it... Is that all right?

A Member: That is all right.

[English]

The Chair: That's right, that would be the fourth meeting. So we're actually voting on four meetings. That's the amendment.

Is there any discussion on the amendment?

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: When does this stop, though? We go up to four meetings. We have all four groups, and then someone puts forward another motion with another 50 groups that we have not met. Are we going to have another motion put forward to have an extension for another five meetings?

The Chair: I hope not.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: It was my understanding that when we first agreed upon our work plan, we said there would not be a motion put forward for an extension. That was my understanding, and you can

see that if you look back into the transcript. So the fact that a motion is being put forward... With all due respect, I realize that these groups are extremely important, but in this committee we had agreed collaboratively and collectively that we would be discussing pharmacare, which is an important issue to a lot of Canadians.

So is something going to happen at the end of four meetings? Are we going to have another extension of a motion? When does it stop?

The Chair: I think the clerk has already answered that question—it was Ms. Priddy's—of when we would start on pharmaceuticals. It would be on November 21.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Could we make a friendly amendment, then? If we're going to have four additional meetings with these stakeholders, can we have an extension to sit for an extra hour every day? We'll compromise, and that will ensure that we can also get to the pharmacare strategy.

The Chair: I don't think we'll need the extra hour, but let's have discussion on the amendment.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: When we decided upon the number of meetings, seven or eight, we said that we would determine whether we had covered the issue of obesity. That is where we are at.

I believe we had some openness. However, three additional meetings, on top of the meeting to hear from Health Canada about *Canada's Food Guide*, would give us some time to reflect on the issue, as had been planned.

I believe that if it is what we decide, we should not go any further.

• (1735)

[English]

The Chair: I'm going to call for a vote on the amendment. That amendment—and correct me, mover, if this is not right—is for three extra meetings, the four in the motion to be incorporated into the three, plus one for the Department of Health on food labelling, *Canada's Food Guide*. We're clear on the amendment?

We have a request for a recorded vote, so I'll ask the clerk to do that, then.

The amendment is for four extra meetings, one of them including discussion on *Canada's Food Guide*.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Will this be the final extension for a request for a number of meetings on childhood obesity?

The Chair: Hopefully we can get that consensus here.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Can we have it recorded? Then we can decide how we're going to vote on this.

The Chair: Do you have a clarification?

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Yes, the amendment takes out “at the discretion of the chair”, does it not?

The Chair: Yes, because I'd prefer not to have it at the discretion of the chair.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I would like to add the word “final”.

The Chair: Well, not at the—

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Then I'll do a friendly amendment to put that forward, as well.

The Chair: Do you want to add the word “final”?

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Yes.

The Chair: Okay, where would you like that word?

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Chair, I am somewhat disappointed. I would have liked us to amend my motion first. I thought I would bring it forward before this one. It was drafted first, and it is my proposed motion. I would have liked us to amend it so that we could schedule another meeting. Deal with this as you wish...

[English]

The Chair: I don't know how we can do it at this stage, because we have to vote on this one and get it done before we can get to yours.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: We can keep three meetings, and deal with the meeting with Health Canada afterwards.

[English]

The Chair: We will have three meetings plus one with Health Canada, and she'll define what Health Canada will be. How's that?

The motion is really to have three meetings, plus one with Health Canada. Yes, that is four meetings, including one with Health Canada. One of them will be about Canada's Food Guide.

Yes, Madame Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: I would like Ms. Davidson's motion to contain three additional meetings, as Christiane's amendment suggested. According to the amendment, there would be only three meetings.

After passing the motion, Ms. Gagnon submitted a motion requesting that we add a meeting with Health Canada to discuss Canada's food guide. That is what we want, because her motion already referred to *Canada's Food Guide*. She wants to maintain the motion and be able to broaden its scope in order to have a meeting with Health Canada officials on *Canada's Food Guide*. We give three meetings to Ms. Davidson and keep one for ourselves, is that all right?

[English]

The Chair: No, that's not what we're trying to do. If we're going to make this sort of final—and the amendment was that we have a final four meetings—then we will go to your motion. And one of those final four meetings will be with Health Canada about Canada's Food Guide. Is that fair enough?

But we'll do that after this motion. So is everyone clear on the motion? We'll have the clerk read it.

The Clerk: I'll just read out that paragraph, as it's amended, to be sure I have it right: “It is proposed that the committee undertake three additional meetings in addition to the current work plan and that during these three final meetings the committee hear testimony”—

The Chair: No, it can't be the three final, because we're going to have four. So say “four final meetings”, and then we'll move that one of those be about Canada's Food Guide.

Let the clerk do this first.

The Clerk: We'll have to mention under... We'll have to say “four” and include the one with Health Canada in there, otherwise it won't make any sense.

The Chair: That's fine, and she can define what Health Canada is.

The Clerk: Okay, and it continues: “and that during the final four meetings the committee hear testimony related to childhood obesity from experts and representatives from the following groups”.

The Chair: Okay, are we good with that?

Ms. Tina Keeper: May I ask a question about the witness list? Why is it so definitive, and why is the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples on there, rather than a health group or a group that is involved with active living or first nations? Why are they there, and why is this list definitive?

● (1740)

The Chair: Okay, I'm going to go to the mover and say that perhaps you could leave it to the discretion of our research team, with the intention that these be there, but drop those names so they have some freedom, because there may be some that can make it and some that can't make it. Would that be fine?

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Yes, and that was my intent when I said that they be given an opportunity to appear. It wasn't to make it definitive. It was to give some suggestions from the list.

The Chair: Okay, let's drop the list. That gives them freedom. We're going to have four meetings and we're going to...

Okay, everyone's clear, I think, on the intent and the motion, and we will call for the vote, then.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: I could address that as a friendly amendment so that you don't need to vote on the amendment separately, if you would like to do that.

The Chair: Okay, then we'll do it all together, as it's seen as a friendly amendment.

All in favour of the amended motion...?

Pardon me?

Ms. Penny Priddy: If it's a friendly amendment, you don't have to vote on it.

The Chair: That's true, so we're just going with it all included in the motion. This is on the motion that already has a friendly amendment.

Ms. Penny Priddy: Can you read the motion then, please?

The Chair: We just did, actually.

Ms. Penny Priddy: Is that the whole motion?

The Clerk: I will read it again.

It is proposed “That the Committee undertake four additional meetings, in addition to the current work plan, and that during these final four meetings the Committee hear testimony relating to childhood obesity from experts and representatives”—and I'll put a period there because we're leaving the rest out.

The Chair: Fair enough.

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

The Chair: It's carried unanimously. Perfect.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Mr. Chair, we should have just kept the original 12 meetings without having to go through this session after session.

The Chair: Exactly.

Let's go to the second motion, which is Madame Gagnon's motion.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Could we say, for example, given that the committee has decided to undertake four additional meetings, I ask the committee that one of the meetings be set aside to meet with representatives of Health Canada to discuss the food guide? Could we come to such an accommodation?

[*English*]

The Chair: You're amending your motion to say that?

The clerk is saying she'll take it exactly as you just said it, from the transcript, and we just have to vote on it.

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

The Chair: That takes us to the last motion.

Ms. Keeper, do you want to introduce it?

Ms. Tina Keeper: Yes. My motion is that, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Health recommends that the government continue funding the first nations and Inuit tobacco control strategy at the fiscal 2005-06 level and that the chair report the adoption of this motion to the House forthwith.

As we've heard over the past number of weeks, there need to be comprehensive approaches to health, particularly in the aboriginal community. The first nations and Inuit tobacco control strategy has been an effective program. In fact, under the first nations and Inuit health branch, first nations and Inuit people have access to no other funding sources on this issue.

There have been a number of partnerships created throughout the territories and throughout the provinces that have been very effective, including partnerships with the Canadian Lung Association and the Canadian Cancer Society. In fact, the Minister of Health and Social Services for Nunavut has reported that there has been a 12% drop in smoking among youths over the past two years. This program has been a five-year strategy—the commitment was for five years—and with the loss of this money, there will be no dollars for the first nations and Inuit tobacco control strategy in the upcoming fiscal year.

The Chair: She has introduced the motion. Mr. Fletcher, do you want to speak to the motion?

Mr. Steven Fletcher: Yes, I'll speak to the motion.

Mr. Chair, I appreciate the member's motion. It is disappointing that we have seen smoking rates increase in the aboriginal community in the last decade or so. In fact, I understand that the smoking rate is up to 60% in one of the youngest demographics, and that was under the previous government.

Canada's new government invests about \$2 billion annually in the area of first nation health and Inuit health. We made investments in the last budget that will have a real impact on improving the quality of life of first nations and Inuit, an impact that will be both lasting and measurable. Improving the health of all Canadians is a shared responsibility, and this government is committed to do its part and to work with others. We are equally committed to improving access to health care and close the gap in the health status for aboriginal Canadians.

This government has expressed its commitment to continue working with health professionals and first nations and Inuit representatives to find a better way of improving the health outcomes of first nations and the Inuit. A new approach will require a greater focus on outcomes, and not simply dollars, to make measurable gains that will improve the quality of life and health of first nations and Inuit.

Therefore, we cannot support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1745)

The Chair: Ms. Priddy.

Ms. Penny Priddy: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I find it a bit puzzling. I'm not doubting anybody, but we have one figure from Health Canada about the fact that it has increased, that there's been no success rate. I hear from other organizations working with aboriginal or first nations youth that they are seeing a difference with programs such as BLAST and BLAST 2.

I was very active in the anti-smoking campaign in British Columbia and took a case to court. Given the fact that we saw a drop, it took quite a while, because those messages had been coming out, not just while we had the youth team and were working like that, but those kids had been hearing those messages from television, from posters, and so on. I'm not sure that first nations children had been hearing those messages for quite as long, so to make a decision in that short period of time concerns me.

If it's only about outcome, I have no argument about outcome. If the money is renewed, then certainly there should be outcomes. There should be a way of designing outcomes, but they need to be designed in the context of what has previously happened with those youth.

The Chair: Madam Demers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I agree with what was just said. Earlier, we heard that Health Canada had invested millions of dollars over 30 years in a program it had never assessed. And now, officials want to show that the program that has only been established for a few years does not work, when there has not been enough time to evaluate results. I believe we should give people the opportunity to really use the program, get to know it, take advantage of it and be exposed to the messages enough times to really benefit from it.

I therefore would support the motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: We can debate more, but it looks like—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: I would like to...

• (1750)

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Gagnon.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: I would only like to add one thing. We will meet with Dr. Després, of Quebec City, the Laval University researcher. He has handed out this little guide. Among the solutions we can apply to change our lifestyles, we can maintain a certain level of activity, monitor the food we eat and avoid smoking. These habits are part of his process. If the aboriginal community has a higher level

of obesity than the non aboriginal community, we also have to help it. In Quebec, we educated people about the harmful effects of tobacco use, and look at the reduction in the number of heavy smokers. Legislation has been very proactive. I believe it is a series of initiatives that lead people to change their lifestyles. This can be found in a small brochure that was handed out to help people change their lifestyles.

Ms. Nicole Demers: That is very well, you are right.

[*English*]

The Chair: We've had a fair amount of debate on this. I think it's clear where we're going with this. I call the question.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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