



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Health

HESA • NUMBER 006 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, December 6, 2007

—
Chair

Mrs. Joy Smith

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on Health

Thursday, December 6, 2007

• (0910)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this is a study of the government's response to the committee's report entitled "Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids".

As all members are aware, we have another meeting here at 11 o'clock. You will notice some people coming in shortly to take their spots for the very important ethics committee meeting with Mr. Schreiber. We will try to get through our meeting on time to give them some room and some time to prepare.

This is our second meeting on the government response to the childhood obesity report. I would like to welcome officials from Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, and the Department of Finance. We will begin the meeting with an opening statement by Robert Eyahpaise from Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada, followed by Mr. Hutton.

We will start with opening remarks, please.

Mr. Robert Eyahpaise (Director, Social Services and Justice Directorate, Community Development Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My name is Robert Eyahpaise and I'm the director of social services and justice, part of the social policy and programs branch at Indian Affairs. I'm here with my colleagues from the northern affairs program.

We concur with the focus of the standing committee's report on the need to address the specific circumstances facing aboriginal children and youth, especially when it comes to childhood obesity. The health and well-being of our aboriginal youth is vital for the future of their communities and for Canada. The report's direction is in keeping with our department's commitment to take concrete action in advancing the interests of aboriginal children and families and enhancing their well-being by providing the necessary support to our various programs.

When it comes to the health of first nations and Inuit children, the lead is with Health Canada, with their first nations and Inuit health branch. However, Indian and Northern Affairs plays a support role through the funding of programs that impact the social determinants of health. We continue to deliver services to first nations children and families through the first nations child and family services program, income assistance, assisted living, family violence

prevention program, and the national child benefit reinvestment program. As an example of placing children first, we recently renovated our child and family services program towards an enhanced prevention approach that would see early intervention and prevention services that would stem the flow of first nations children coming into care. This work was done in partnership with provinces, first nations, and through INAC, through a tripartite accountability framework that started in Alberta. Drawing upon the success of this enhanced prevention approach in Alberta, we are now working with partners in other jurisdictions.

Also important is the work being done in the northern affairs program. For example, the northern contaminants program is carried out, together with northern aboriginal organizations, to study the implications for human health of contaminants found in certain traditional/country foods. This work results in dietary advice to northerners that reinforces the fact that, in most cases, the benefits of consuming country foods outweigh the risks. However, we are committed to continuing to assess the risks in traditional/country foods due to contaminants.

Further, we are reviewing our food mail program, which covers part of the cost of shipping healthy, affordable food to isolated northern communities. This is an interdepartmental effort including Health Canada, Industry, Transport, Agriculture, and Defence. The review will, first of all, determine how well the existing program meets its primary objective of ensuring that northerners, young and old, have access to a healthy, affordable diet, and will examine the adequacy of the current accountability regime. Next, we will assess potential improvements and how best to implement them. And finally, we will arrive at a durable solution.

The review will include stakeholder engagement. Also, we certainly welcome the views of this committee.

During the review, the department is taking nearer-term measures to improve accountability and efficiency and enhance food quality.

Five years ago we launched food mail pilot projects in three northern communities to focus additional support on priority perishable items that help form a healthy diet, such as fresh dairy products and vegetables. Since the pilot projects were launched, we've seen costs of these foods go down and shipment volumes increase. More work, however, is required to assess the impact on nutrition.

We are also about to release a revised northern food basket, used to monitor the cost of a healthy diet in isolated northern communities. The revised basket contains a wider selection of foods and reflects Health Canada's most recent Canada's food guide. The revised basket also includes a more accurate measurement of what it actually costs to feed a family in the north.

● (0915)

As indicated in the government response to the Standing Committee on Health's report, INAC will continue to work with other federal partners, drawing upon and reinforcing basic democratic values such as transparency, accountability, responsibility, and bringing clarity to the roles of the parties.

The Government of Canada's response to each of the report's recommendations provides details about programs and services already in place designed to help prevent unhealthy weights among aboriginal youth. We will continue to work with Health Canada and other federal partners, first nations, and aboriginal groups to help first nations and northern communities find ways to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles. We need to continue to work in partnership towards solutions that draw upon ideas from communities and individuals at the local level to ensure that we have sustainable and healthy communities.

With that, I thank you for giving me the opportunity and the time for this presentation.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you very much.

Now we will continue with Mr. Hutton.

Mr. Scott Hutton (Associate Executive Director, Broadcasting, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning. My name is Scott Hutton. I am associate executive director, broadcasting, at the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. I am here today with Martine Vallee, our director of English pay and specialty television and social policy in broadcasting. Also with us today is Linda Nagel, president and chief executive officer at Advertising Standards Canada.

Thank you for your invitation to appear before you once again to talk about the commission's role regarding food advertising to children. We understand we have been invited to speak to recommendations 8 and 9 of the committee's report, "Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids". We will also respond to the questions that were addressed to us by the committee in our presentation.

[Translation]

The CRTC is an independent public authority that oversees the broadcasting and telecommunications industries in Canada. The Commission's mandate, as outlined in the Broadcasting Act, is to regulate and supervise Canada's broadcasting system in a manner

that contributes to the cultural, social and economic objectives set out in the legislation. This includes ensuring that the system serves children—by fostering their participation through appropriate programming and ensuring their protection from inappropriate material and behaviour.

The Commission is sensitive to the role that broadcasting, and television in particular, plays in transmitting and influencing social values.

[English]

However, it is not the commission's role to prohibit advertising of certain products. It is our role to ensure that advertising is responsible, and by responsible, we mean it respects the special characteristics of a child audience, particularly the vulnerability and impressionability of children.

The commission is involved in the development and enforcements of broadcast codes. Such codes play a critical role in setting out industry standards and specific guidelines for programming and advertising. Broadcast codes are developed by the industry, sometimes at the request of the commission, and at other times they are initiated by the industry itself. In recognition of longstanding societal concerns about the potential for advertising to negatively impact children, the commission requires broadcasters to adhere to two industry codes regarding advertising content: the code for broadcast advertising of alcoholic beverages and the broadcast code for advertising to children. Of particular interest here is the broadcast code for advertising to children.

● (0920)

[Translation]

The Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children was created in 1971 by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters and the Canadian Advertising Foundation, now Advertising Standards Canada. The Commission has required broadcasters to adhere to the Code as a condition of licence since 1974.

Advertising Standards Canada plays a major role in the administration of the code in that all advertising to children must be reviewed and pre-cleared by the ASC before it can be broadcast. The code establishes specific criteria about what can and cannot be communicated or depicted in children's broadcast advertising.

[English]

Among other things, the broadcast code for advertising to children prohibits the use of puppets, persons, and characters well known to children or featured on children's programs to endorse or personally promote products, premiums, or services. It also contains clauses to ensure that children are not unduly pressured to buy, or have their parents buy, particular products.

Additionally, the code limits the scheduling of commercial messages during children's programs. Clause 11 states that, "Children's advertising must not encourage or portray a range of values that are inconsistent with the moral, ethical or legal standards of contemporary Canadian society."

[Translation]

Advertising Standards Canada has created five interpretive guidelines pertaining to clause 11 of the code in the last three years. The guidelines address the advertising of food products to children, and were developed in response to growing societal concerns about the impact of such advertising on their health.

Two of these guidelines were implemented in September 2007. These guidelines are used by the ASC to evaluate food and beverage advertisements targeted to children under 12, as part of the pre-clearance process that all broadcast ads must go through in order to air in Canada.

[English]

Taken together, these guidelines prohibit ads for food products directed at children that are inconsistent with the Food and Drugs Act and regulations or with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's guide to food labelling and advertising. They encourage responsible use of the advertised product, including responsible portions. They prevent the discouragement or disparagement of healthy lifestyle choices or the consumption of healthy foods recommended in Canada's food guide to healthy eating and other Health Canada nutrition policies for children.

We have copies of the five interpretive guidelines with us today for your information.

[Translation]

The Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children operates alongside efforts to use the power of broadcasting to connect with young audiences in a positive way, and to promote healthy living. In April 2007, Concerned Children's Advertisers launched a campaign. This is an independent group of broadcast and corporate partners that produce and use advertising. It is supported through a partnership with the ASC and Heritage Canada.

The goal of the group's most recent campaign, "Long Live Kids", is to motivate and inspire kids to make smart choices about food and physical activity. According to data from Concerned Children's Advertisers, 96% of children were reached at least once by the latest public service announcement, and feedback has been positive.

More detailed data on the effectiveness of this campaign will be available in March 2008.

• (0925)

[English]

Of course, if a further review by the government yields evidence demonstrating a need for further action within our mandate, the CRTC will act accordingly.

Thank you for your attention. We would be pleased to answer any questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you very much, Mr. Hutton.

If you could table those five interpretive guidelines with the clerk, we'd appreciate that. Thank you.

We'll start our questions with Madame Kadis for seven minutes.

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, everybody.

First let me say I am disappointed in the government's response. I do not feel it has been significantly identified as a national priority, and the ramifications, which have been referred to by some of our guests in terms of Long Live Kids, will not benefit significantly, in my opinion, from the government response.

It seems to be a lot of rehashed initiatives, some very positive, some very worthy. We need I think new and stronger leadership and direction and funding to turn the tide and reverse the trend of childhood obesity, not only for the aboriginal population but for our Canadian children population as well.

Regarding the children's fitness tax credit, what we've talked about here is that this is going to be, in the government's opinion, one way, one component, to help reverse this serious trend. What I'm interested to know is, how will you address the fact that there will still be barriers for many children, socio-economic barriers? They just won't be able to participate. You have to have the money up front, of course, before you get the credit. How do we know we can encourage more children?

How will you be monitoring that, so that it's not just the children who are doing it, which is a positive thing, but new children as a result of this particular, what I'd consider, small measure? How will this be followed through? Will we study the weights of the children? How will this be effective in a substantive way to reverse the trend of childhood obesity and help to enhance the health and well-being of Canadian children?

Mr. Sean Keenan (Senior Chief, Personal Income Tax Division, Tax Policy Branch, Department of Finance): The tax credit itself was introduced to encourage families to enrol their children in activities, physical activities that comprise a high level of cardiovascular activity, to encourage them to provide them with some funding. By itself, the tax credit will provide an additional incentive for those families, but we wouldn't be able to surmise, from the tax information we receive, the changes in the weights, how that has an impact on individual children, but we'll be able to tell from the credit and from the information we receive on the uptake of the credit what the value of the credit is and what that means in terms of an increase in children participating in physical fitness activities.

From a Department of Finance point of view, we wouldn't be able to take that information and determine how that's impacting individual children per se.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: I'm concerned also, Mr. Chair, that the effectiveness will not be evaluated for five years. I think if they're going to put forward an initiative, and there is an interest in significantly helping the serious issue of childhood obesity, then we need to have a plan, at least. I don't in any way think this is nearly adequate in stemming the tide, but at least we'd like to see some accountability in here, not have it evaluated in five years' time. I think that's far too long. This is too serious an issue, and the implications are too serious for our children.

We need to know what this is doing in terms of the issue of childhood obesity. Are more children participating as a result of the children's fitness tax credit, or is it the same children? This needs to be tracked to have any value.

Do you not think we should be doing this in a shorter timeline? Do you feel we should be using this in a way that can have some positive impact on our children and their health, or just as a tax credit? Tax credits are tax credits. To me, this should carry the accountability component and give us some statistics. That's something this committee is looking to do from this report, so we can have a positive reversal trend.

● (0930)

Mr. Sean Keenan: The tax credit itself is only one component. It is a single initiative to encourage families to enrol their children in physical fitness activities.

Following Budget 2006, there was a committee that was formed, the Expert Panel for the Children's Fitness Tax Credit, and they recommended additional changes to the fitness tax credit that was introduced in Budget 2006.

The committee itself recommended a review of the credit and its performance, but acknowledged that just given the way the credit works.... It takes effect for the 2007 tax year; therefore, families are going to receive a credit on their 2007 income tax forms that they will submit in 2008. The department will get some data at the end of 2008 to determine how much people have claimed. Very detailed data on individuals and how many children that we could potentially draw from would be available in 2009. That's for the first year. And then for 2008, to determine how that would have changed will take us another year.

The expert panel itself recognized that it would take at least four years to get two years' worth of tax data. Our intention, from a Department of Finance point of view, is to say the tax credit itself, as a single initiative, as part of a plan to encourage children to enrol in activities, will require the time to do a comparative analysis once the data becomes available.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Again, there are so many children in our population, clearly, who would not be able to take advantage of that particular option and opportunity. And to in any way suggest that this is an initiative that will seriously fight, in a way that's substantive, the issue of childhood obesity in our Canadian population, I believe, is a false concept, particularly in the way it's been set up, Mr. Chair. We don't even know if more children, other than the children who have already participated, are participating. We won't know for several years. We can't afford to wait that long.

I really say, with great respect, that if we're going to have this initiative, accountability needs to be built into it. We need to hear back about whether this is in fact helping in this area, and we need to do so much more if we are going to actually have an impact, as other countries have, in actually reversing this serious trend. This is, as one of our other speakers mentioned, an issue of "long live our kids". So, please, let's all keep that in mind. And whatever influence we all have, we encourage a much stronger leadership role by the federal government.

This committee certainly worked very hard on this issue in a very positive way, I felt, because we really had that great interest to ensure the longevity and quality of life of our children.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you very much, Madam Kadis.

We'll go to Madam Gagnon.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question, which has to do with aboriginal health, is for the representatives of the Department of Finance. If I have time, I also have a question for the CRTC officials.

Under the Constitution, aboriginal health is the responsibility of the federal government. In the 2007 budget, \$2.1 billion was allocated to aboriginals and there was \$145 million for Quebec. But the royal commission had asked for \$20 billion to help aboriginals live with more dignity and have a better quality of life.

Real changes need to be made for aboriginal first nations and the Inuit. I would like to know what part of the budget is set aside for administering aboriginal affairs. The entire federal contribution is just \$2.1 billion.

How much is allocated to the communities? Some court challenges seem rather costly. We are far from the \$20 billion called for by the commission.

May I ask my second question, which is for the CRTC?

● (0935)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Absolutely. Go ahead. Yes, it will save time. Thanks.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Quebec has refused to allow broadcast advertising aimed at children.

I am not sure whether you will be able to answer my question. I would like to know whether the absence of advertising intended for children may have a direct influence on falling obesity rates in Quebec. I know that here in Parliament, some members from other provinces would like to bring in the Quebec model. I would like to know if this model offers real answers.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Mr. Keenan.

[Translation]

Mr. Sean Keenan: I am responsible for the children's fitness tax credit, but I do not have the numbers for how much of that is allocated for aboriginals. I can provide them to the committee later.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: That being the case, representatives of the department of Indian Affairs can give us the numbers. I would like to know how much of that amount is allocated for these communities. I have not been to visit aboriginal communities, but people there have seen horror stories unfold on a daily basis.

If we want aboriginal people to adopt better eating habits and improve their quality of life, this money will not be enough to do it. I think that the government's action with respect to first nations was very unsatisfactory. Five years from now, other members may be sitting here at the health committee table, and the goals we wanted to achieve will not have been achieved.

[English]

Mr. Robert Eyahpaise: With respect to your question on the budget and the amount that goes to the programs, I will have to probably respond at a later date with the details, but I know that over the years our programs have been targeted more at the community level. We have tried to make the appropriate transfers, and a large bulk of it does go to the communities. I'm talking about funding that goes to other programs outside the food component of it. I'm talking about operations and programs and services in which we've had a promotion of the notion of self-government or else more local control; in these cases, a lot of our funding will go to the community level.

I can only give you one quick example of recent moneys we have been provided from the government for child and family services in Alberta. There, we were able to get \$15.2 million. I'd say 99% of that will be going to first nations agencies and organizations. That's the sort of transfer that's taking place.

To provide greater detail on the food component, I'd probably have to defer to our finance people—we're part of the social program area. We will provide you with that more appropriate answer in a written response.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: I am not sure that the numbers I have are accurate, but they say that 40% of the funds are allocated to the administration of the department of Indian Affairs. You may not be able to provide an answer this morning because you do not have the figures with you. Nevertheless, it is clear that these funds do not really go to the communities.

I think that the government is relying too heavily on data about the future, that is, three, four or five years from now. Between now and then, no course adjustment is in the works to really help aboriginal communities live decently with dignity and respect. I would like the committee to complete its initial study of another file, and then go see what is really going on in aboriginal communities. That is the federal government's responsibility.

Thank you.

Do we turn things over to the CRTC to respond now?

• (0940)

Mr. Scott Hutton: To answer your question, we do not have any data other than what we submitted last time. We are working with people in the department of health. I think we worked with them during the interdepartmental consultations following the report and the recommendation for a thorough review of the situation, not only in Quebec, but internationally. This study is now in progress, and we will be learning more about it during a seminar to be held next March. I believe people from the department of health told you about it last Tuesday.

At the moment, there is less obesity among young Quebecers than among their counterparts from other Canadian provinces. The national average is about 26%; in Quebec, that number is 23%. Those numbers are from 2004. Like the committee, we found that since the ban on publicity aimed at children was brought into effect, rates of obesity increased among young people in Quebec faster than elsewhere in Canada. We therefore have reason to doubt the effectiveness of this measure.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you, Madam Gagnon.

If any questions were asked for which there wasn't a full answer, please send the answer to our clerk and we will distribute it to all the members.

We'll move now to Ms. Wasylycia-Leis.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson.

Thanks to all of you for appearing today. I want to start with folks from INAC and look at the children's fitness tax credit. Given that it's an income-based program, you need to pay taxes. How many aboriginal families do you think—and break it down—both on reserve and off reserve would benefit from the children's fitness tax credit?

Mr. Robert Eyahpaise: Again I will have to get that answer, because unfortunately we don't have any experts here who deal with the children's fitness tax credit. I don't know if our colleagues from Finance could help us with that.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: But would you at least comment on the belief by many people in the field that this tax credit will not reach very many aboriginal people because they either don't have the income to pay for it, it's not a refundable tax credit, or there may not be programs available to put the money towards and therefore they would be ineligible?

Did you have any input into this program as members of INAC, and did you have any concerns?

Yesterday or the day before we asked officials how many aboriginal communities would have recreation facilities or community centres. The guess was made of maybe 50%. Do you have an accurate assessment?

Mr. Robert Eyahpaise: Through our infrastructure programs, the department supports recreational centres, community centres, and cultural centres. To date so far—and this is a global figure—we have 732 such centres across the country. But I'll have to get the actual breakdown on how many of them are defined as recreational, cultural, and community centres.

A large number of the communities do have such centres. We have 732 of them, so that would probably equate to almost one centre per community. But how they're used depends on the communities themselves, in terms of whether they have cultural and recreational programs...and whether they are used to house gyms and fitness centres. So that's the sort of detail I will have to get for you.

• (0945)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: I'd appreciate the breakdown.

Back to my first question, I wonder if you can provide any information on your projections around the number of aboriginal people who would be able to access the children's fitness tax credit.

Mr. Robert Eyahpaïse: Okay.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Hill, your paper suggests that you're going to review the food mail program and a few other aspects. It seems to me that one issue you haven't touched on is that even when good quality food gets to the north—that might include fruits and vegetables—we're still talking about being unable to afford to pay the prices for these goods.

Do you have any recommendations around the northern allowance, and any other recommendations that would help aboriginal people, on and off reserve, in remote and isolated communities access food when it is available?

Mr. Andrew Lief (Senior Advisor to the Deputy Minister, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): I can start. Fred is certainly the expert on food mail.

I've been asked by the department to lead a fundamental review of the program. Actually, my appointment on this was coincidental with the government's response and the tabling of your report.

The terms of reference for that review are broad, and we want to be looking at more than the food mail program, as you suggest, since there are a number of determinants to whether people can actually afford the food and to whether they're actually making choices to eat the food, regardless of the price and affordability. We will be looking at those things and at how those things interact with each other in the context of the review, so that we can make sure we're targeting our efforts where they're going to make the most difference. We will certainly be talking with our colleagues in Finance about their feelings in that area.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: But you would know now the discrepancies in prices between southern and northern communities. A quart of milk would be how many times the price of a quart of milk in, say, Ottawa?

Mr. Andrew Lief: I'll defer to my colleague, but in general I would say that probably on average it's about twice the rate throughout the north, and that is with the food mail program that already significantly reduces the cost from what it would otherwise be.

I would caveat that by saying that the prices throughout the north differ, depending often on the distance from southern centres, but for a variety of other reasons as well, so there's not an average kind of difference. Of course, the further north and the more isolated and remote the community, the more expensive it would be. The food mail program helps equalize those costs across the region.

What we can say with some assurance is that prices under food mail are much lower than they would otherwise be. The impact is the highest in the farthest and most remote and isolated communities. We could probably send you some examples as to what the situation is in various representative communities.

Fred, would you have other thoughts? Could you be more specific?

Mr. Fred Hill (Manager, Northern Food Security, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): With respect to milk in particular, a two-litre carton of milk is generally in the \$6 to \$7 range in isolated communities using the food mail program.

We do monitor prices in communities that use it, and we will shortly, as Robert mentioned, be launching a new food basket to track not just the prices of individual foods but also the cost of a healthy diet that is consistent with Canada's food guide.

● (0950)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Would you be able to conclude now, without further study, that lack of access to wholesome food and out-of-range prices for good foods are factors contributing to obesity among aboriginal children?

Mr. Fred Hill: I could say that it is clear from the studies we have done that the three major barriers to consuming healthy foods such as vegetables, fruit, and milk, as reported by community residents, are price, quality, and availability. That's been established from baseline surveys in our pilot communities and an additional survey in Labrador. Those are aspects of the food supply that we're dealing with specifically through this program. But on its own, even if food mail service was free, rather than 80¢ a kilogram, which is the rate charged, I'm not sure food would even be affordable at that rate.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you very much, Ms. Wasylycia-Leis.

We'll move on to Mr. Tilson.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My questions, Mr. Chairman, deal with advertising. I suppose they're mainly to Mr. Hutton and Ms. Vallee. I would appreciate getting a copy of this broadcast code.

Advertising is certainly a powerful influence on our society. I have a house full of toys just to prove it.

Mr. Hutton, in your presentation you talked about restrictions on advertising during children's programs. As the code points out, there's obviously the pressure that's put on by children on mom and dad. I guess my question goes to the restrictions for advertising. Maybe I've misinterpreted what you've said. Why would that just apply to children's programming? I see advertising to children on television. I suppose children are still up, but adults are seeing it, and it isn't the best of foods. So my question is this. Why wouldn't you apply that beyond that certain time of the day when there's children's programming?

Mr. Scott Hutton: The codes do apply beyond children's programming. We're being specific with regard to children's programming, but it also applies to advertising potentially directed at children. So all of those advertisements are pre-cleared and are judged against the code and the guidelines that ASC has put in place.

I can ask Linda to maybe add a little more on the process on that front for you.

Ms. Linda Nagel (President and Chief Executive Officer, Advertising Standards Canada): The children's broadcast code defines children's advertising as advertising for which children are the predominant users, and the advertising is directed in a manner that is specific to children.

Mr. David Tilson: I've just seen this for the first time, so I'm not too familiar with this document, the broadcast code for advertising to children. I'm pleased you brought that to the committee to make us aware of that.

I wonder if you can tell me the process for how restrictions are put on through the CRTC specifically. Presumably there's legislation, there's regulation, there are guidelines, and there are all kinds of things. How does that work? Who decides those things and how does that happen? Let's say, in particular, someone in your office says, "This food isn't good. This particular food is not good. It's going to make some kid fat." How do you regulate all that? How does that happen?

Mr. Scott Hutton: I'll start with that last point. The CRTC is not the body, nor do we have the expertise or the mandate, to determine that this food is not good. We rely on the regulations that are put in place by Health Canada under the Food and Drugs Act. So we defer to them and work with them in that regard. They're the people who determine that.

How does the mechanism work? Essentially what the CRTC does is through conditions of licence; each and every broadcaster receives a licence. We place a condition of licence upon them, requiring them to follow this code. So although the code has been developed and is administered by the ASC, it is really the CRTC that ultimately enforces the code. Broadcasters must ensure that the advertisements they put on their channels or on the airwaves respect the code. It is their responsibility. That's how we give this mechanism force of law. The CRTC regulates broadcasters. Broadcasters must follow this code.

What happens over and above that is that broadcasters are required...and they go to Linda Nagel's organization, the advertising standards councils, to pre-clear pursuant to the code. That organization administers the codes, provides guidelines, and updates them. Ultimately we approve whatever code through a public process. Whatever's put in place, it's our responsibility, but they administer the code. They administer pre-clearance. Every advertisement destined to children is pre-cleared. Food is pre-cleared through this organization. So it never appears on the air. Broadcasters have the responsibility to make sure that if it is not pre-cleared and it does not respect this code, it doesn't appear on the air. So there is quite a precise mechanism for that.

• (0955)

Mr. David Tilson: I'm sure you and I have seen something on television, an ad, and said, "That food makes you fat." I bet you've done that. I've certainly done that. But then again, you and I may be wrong; maybe it doesn't make you fat.

So you and I agree that what's in the ad is not good for you, for whatever reason—our common knowledge, or whatever—but notwithstanding that, you and I may both be wrong.

I guess where I'm going on this is, how did the regulators, whoever they are, decide that a particular advertisement is inappropriate for children and inappropriate for adults?

Mr. Scott Hutton: You and I can agree personally that a certain food may cause obesity. It is the responsibility of Health Canada, and the people within that portfolio, to make those calls. As a regulator, I cannot make that call for them. I don't have that authority or responsibility. I rely on them. So in our regulations and in the code, we respect what they put in place.

To the second part of your question, if one sees an ad that is deemed to be inappropriate, there is a complaint mechanism and there is a review mechanism. It starts with the ASC, and then, should that not be satisfactory, it would move to the CRTC for ultimate resolution.

Ms. Linda Nagel: I have just a quick comment.

All broadcast advertisements for food are subject to two layers of approval. The first review is to ensure that food advertising is consistent with the provisions of the Food and Drugs Act and regulations—which, of course, is Health Canada's regulations—and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's guide to food labelling and advertising. That's the first layer of review.

The second layer of review, which is very special, on children's advertising is against the provisions of this code. As I think Scott mentioned just a few minutes ago, in new guidelines in the last year, several new things have happened.

First of all, three new guidelines were added to help target this whole issue, to ensure that serving sizes for children were appropriate and that advertising encouraged healthy lifestyles.

The next thing that happened is that in April of this year, industry announced that 15 major food manufacturers and food advertisers were embarking on a new voluntary program, called the Canadian children's food and beverage advertising initiative. In this program, these 15 advertisers have committed to reducing and changing the shape of their advertising that is specifically directed at children, to promote healthier choices and to encourage healthy lifestyle messages to be included in advertising. This initiative will apply across all media.

The specific commitments for the children's initiative will be announced early in 2008, and we'll share them with you then.

• (1000)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you very much.

Mr. Chan.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, thank you to the guests who appeared at this committee.

Mr. Chairman, this is my first time participating on this committee, so I didn't have very much time to go through the response from the government. The first feeling I had after browsing through the report is that I share the feeling of my colleagues on the lack of response from the government in this report.

For example, just on the first recommendation, where the committee has recommended setting benchmarks in dealing with this problem, trying to reduce it from 8% to 6% by 2020, in the government's response they refuse to set any benchmark. That's not being responsible.

Also, if you look at the response to the first recommendation, they talk about the lack of experience in getting data and so on for this issue. Yet it's amazing, in the section on heavy weight they say the CCHS included a one-time survey and found that there is 26% obesity among children to age 17. But they won't do any assessment again until five years later, until 2012. If it's such a big problem we're facing, why wouldn't we do a survey sooner than five years? How come we're not monitoring this problem more closely?

The other problem I have is that I heard that the problem within the aboriginal community is twice as bad as in the general population.

My question is for the gentleman from Indian Affairs. I understand that the lead on this issue is Health Canada, but have you participated to exercise your duty? If the problem in the aboriginal community is twice as bad as in the general population, are you able to insist on or to get your fair share of the government's efforts to double the effort in the aboriginal community? Keep in mind that a lot of the natives won't be able to take advantage of some of the tax credits from the finance department because most of them don't pay federal tax.

Mr. Robert Eyahpaise: You are asking a very difficult question that's really of a broader nature in terms of the responsibilities of Health Canada and this department: the jurisdictional issue of who is doing what. This is a dilemma that has been faced by both of our departments. What we have been trying to do, though, wherever we could, say, for instance, when we deal with the social determinants of health, is to try to engage both departments in talking about the issues. Very much like the poverty rate of children, for instance—we have three out of five aboriginal children under six who are living in poverty, and that's a social issue, but in the meantime it goes directly to the health issue of these children—this is where there has been very much a concerted effort by both departments to engage at the working level to say yes, we have jurisdictional differences here, but how do we work together to try to improve the social determinants of health?

Wherever opportunities arise to do that, it is one of the thrusts we try to make. It is not only on the health side, but in all social program areas—for instance, in youth suicide, which is in some ways a Department of Health issue, but it's an Indian Affairs issue as well. What we have done is engage the appropriate departments, Health Canada and us, to ask how we will resolve this issue.

It's very much an ongoing discussion. Then it's a question of coordinating it, for instance, with the new tax credit we're talking about. Again, a concerted effort is being made, but there definitely has to be more coordination of the appropriate departments to address this, because the issue of childhood social and health problems somehow at times gets compartmentalized because of program authorities and program funding. What we're trying to do is to ask how to over-layer that and work in partnership.

Definitely this has been very much a concern of ours.

•(1005)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you very much, Mr. Chan.

Hon. Raymond Chan: May I have one more question?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Perhaps you may on the next round, but now we'll move on to Ms. Davidson.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a couple of questions, first of all for the Finance people.

I am referring to recommendation number 11. I don't know whether you have the report in front of you or not, but it's talking about establishing a reliable baseline with respect to the number of children who enrol—you've referred to some of this before—and then reporting on the uptake of the children's tax credit within two years and evaluating the effectiveness and reporting within five years.

I'm going to ask two or three questions here and then let everybody answer.

My question to the Finance people is, have you met the recommendations this committee put together as far as a timeline is concerned? Does your response clearly indicate that you're going to meet the recommended timelines?

That's my question to Finance. I also have a question for Mr. Hutton.

When we talked about advertising at the committee, when we were doing this study, one of the biggest questions that was left was, who has jurisdiction over what kids actually can see? I wonder if you could refresh my memory and comment a bit on whether, in this day of satellite TV and all of the broadcasts that are coming in that are not Canadian broadcasts to which kids have access, your codes of advertising apply to this area or whether there is a restricted area that you have jurisdiction over.

My third question, to INAC, refers to recommendation number 12. Part of that recommendation said "provide appropriate healthy food and physical activity standards and programs in first nations schools within federal jurisdiction". I'd like you to comment on that, please.

Thank you.

Mr. Sean Keenan: With respect to the recommendations on the children's fitness tax credit, as I mentioned earlier, there was a question on establishing a benchmark for participation in sports by children and youth, which is not really a tax question, but there are some data via the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute's physical activity monitor, Statistics Canada's general social survey, and Sport Canada. So there are some data available on children participating in activity.

In terms of the uptake of the children's fitness tax credit, as I mentioned earlier, 2007 is the first year of the tax credit, so we will receive data on how much is being claimed for the purposes of the tax credit by the end of 2008. So we will meet the recommendation concerning the timeline.

In terms of establishing the effectiveness of the credit itself, we would need more than a single year's worth of data in order to say—

• (1010)

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: The recommendation was for five years.

Mr. Sean Keenan: The recommendation was for five years, so we will have more than one year in about four years' time. So we would be able to meet the benchmark timelines established by the committee.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you.

Mr. Scott Hutton: The CRTC regulates broadcasting. Broadcasting on radio stations and on television stations we're familiar with. There are also forms of pay and specialty television—the TSNs of the world, and Discovery, etc. We regulate all of the Canadian services. We also regulate the companies that, as broadcasters, distribute signals. We regulate the cable companies that distribute television signals in Canada, and we regulate the satellite companies that distribute television and radio signals here in Canada. So our rules and regulations apply to, obviously, all of those, but in particular the licensed broadcasters, the radio and television.

What does seep in across the border are the regular airwaves of stations in Detroit. They are certainly seen in Windsor without any distribution, so we have to trust our American friends, our neighbours to the south, to act responsibly in that area. They are not subject to our rules. The same thing goes for the services that are, for example, distributed by Canadian cable companies or Canadian satellite services that emanate out of the United States or anywhere else in the world for that matter. They are subject to the rules in their home countries, not to our rules.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you.

Mr. Robert Eyahpaise: Finally, on the healthy food and physical activity standards and programs in schools, I think in our last presentation, when we were here in October, we mentioned specific examples of schools and first nations communities that were actively taking health and physical program standards, like those in other jurisdictions—for instance, provincial programs—and incorporating them into their communities. That is really an ongoing type of work that takes place likely at the community level, where they are trying to at least raise the standards that other jurisdictions are undertaking, and also keep in mind the advice they would get from the federal government, from Health Canada, for example, on what an appropriate measure would be. So that sort of activity does go on very specifically in certain communities for sure.

One of the other things, though, is that our education program authorities right now are being renewed. This would be one of the concepts that would be discussed at that level, but those are going through the approval authority renewal process at this time, so I would probably need to get the education people to comment on that.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Is that ongoing right now?

Mr. Robert Eyahpaise: Yes.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you very much.

We'll move on to Monsieur Malo.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Chair, I would like to begin with a more general comment. We heard witnesses on Tuesday, and we are hearing witnesses today, Thursday, talk about the government's response to the committee's report on childhood obesity. Most of the comments I'm hearing relate to actions taken in the past. Many witnesses have talked about various programs designed to meet the current and past requirements of various departments and agencies.

Despite all this, Mr. Chair, it is clear that obesity rates among aboriginals and the general population are skyrocketing. I don't know whether the various agencies and departments have understood the urgency that we tried to emphasize in the report. I would really like to have heard the witnesses say that they understand the urgency and that in the weeks and months to come, they will put forward a number of innovative proposals to fight childhood obesity. So far this morning, Mr. Chair, I have been disappointed.

I have some questions for the people from the CRTC as well as for the people from Advertising Standards Canada because this morning, I, like everyone else, received a copy of the children's advertising code. I found it interesting, but why limit this to children under 12? Teenagers are just as vulnerable, and they are not protected by the code. Why did the people responsible for this code decide to set the limit at 12 years?

• (1015)

Mr. Scott Hutton: Improvements have been made since the code was first developed because of concerns about programming for children, who are the most vulnerable audience. That is the main reason we decided to say that children under 12 are more vulnerable to advertising than teenagers are.

Mr. Luc Malo: Nevertheless, we know that our teenagers are very aware of style and other social phenomena that encourage them to consume. We know that today's teenagers, as a segment of the population, consume a lot. We know it, advertisers know it, and they take advantage of it.

Will we ever have advertising regulations or some kind of code that takes into account this segment of the population, adolescents, who are very sensitive to advertising and style?

Mr. Scott Hutton: The code applies to children under the age of 12. We also develop regulations for stations that specialize in programming for children and teenagers. Advertising regulations apply to all of their programming. We do more than just draft the code.

In this case, our system is backed by licensing conditions. There is also a regulatory system run by industry representatives in partnership with us. This applies to all of our domains, not just advertising.

For teenagers who are a bit older and therefore somewhat less vulnerable and better able to understand, we have put forward programs to help them understand advertising.

Public service announcements—programs developed by broadcasters, the Standards Council of Canada or Concerned Children's Advertisers—are broadcast to help children and teenagers—those over 12—understand advertising and become informed consumers.

Mr. Luc Malo: Since the code was implemented, have you rejected many ads before they could be broadcast? Do you receive a lot of complaints about messages that have already been broadcast? Advertisers are pretty smart people. They read the code and figure out ways to get around it so they can advertise and sell their products. They want to sell lots of stuff, and I think that they manage to. Once again this year, during the Christmas season, people will go over budget to give their family and friends things they need.

Can you provide a short answer to this question?

Mr. Scott Hutton: The CRTC receives very few complaints because ads are pre-approved. I could count the number of complaints we have received on one hand, but I will give Linda the opportunity to explain what she does.

•(1020)

[English]

Ms. Linda Nagel: In terms of the children's clearance process, it really is the most stringent advertising review that we have in Canada, and perhaps around the world. As a matter of fact, we've been a model.

The Children's Clearance Committee, which includes both industry and parent representatives, meets every other week to review finished commercials to make sure they comply with the provisions of the code. If the committee determines that the commercials meet the criteria in the children's code, then the commercial is assigned a clearance approval number. That means it's been approved twice: once to make sure it meets the provisions of Canada's food laws and regulations and the second to ensure that the Children's Clearance Committee has approved it. If they don't approve it and if it doesn't have a number on it, then the broadcasters will not air it.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Malo: Are there many like that? Can you tell me how many ads are rejected before they ever air?

[English]

Ms. Linda Nagel: We have some, but what happens is because it's very expensive to make a commercial, advertisers of course want to make sure they're going to meet the provisions of the children's code. They come in and they meet with our technical specialists, our analysts, and they work on their commercials in advance in a concept stage, to make sure they're going to meet the provisions of the code.

But there are lots of commercials—for example, commercials that are developed in other parts of the world—that sometimes advertisers might like to use in Canada that won't pass the test in Canada.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Merci, Monsieur Malo.

Now we'll move on to Mr. Fletcher.

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

I'd like to thank the witnesses for coming here today.

The questions have been very interesting. I'm a little bit concerned about some of the questions coming from the opposition—particularly from the NDP—as they seem to stereotype first nations people as people who don't pay taxes and therefore tax credits don't benefit them.

In fact, if tax credits are not effective, I wonder why the NDP representative from the Western Arctic, Denis Bevington, is calling for Ottawa to give northerners, especially aboriginals, a bigger tax break to help offset the higher and rising costs of living in the north. So obviously tax incentives do work for all Canadians, though it's agreed they're not the full answer.

I'm going to just ask three questions and then leave it up to the panellists to respond. My first question is about the fact that for the food program the funding has grown significantly over the last few years, from \$29 million to \$47 million. I'd like you to explain why that is, and it might be a good thing—I would just like to know.

Also, I'd like to know if you could explain the measures we are taking as a government to improve the conditions of families that are in lower socio-economic circumstances and their capacity to make healthier choices.

Finally, I want to ask you about something that has been topical and in the news of late. Schools provide, obviously, an important opportunity to deal with issues. And in particular around first nations issues, I wonder what is being done at the school level that falls within the federal jurisdiction.

Those are my questions.

Mr. Andrew Lief: Thank you very much for the questions. I'll start off on your first question, which is what's happening with the rising costs of the program.

Essentially there are two major drivers of the costs of the food mail program, and one is demand for the food, which is a good thing. The more the demand goes up for healthy food means people in the north are actually consuming it, and this is essentially a healthy diet, so that's very positive.

Demand has been growing fairly rapidly and steadily for the program for a variety of reasons. Number one, population growth is often higher in these communities than in others. Number two, there are about 140 communities that are eligible for the program. About 77 use it extensively, and more eligible communities come on every year. The third thing is that people's consumption patterns are changing, partially due to the program and awareness, but also due to social and demographic situations happening in the north. For example, as certain traditional foods are becoming scarcer and more difficult to acquire, people need to shift to other sources. Advertising is also having a huge impact on children to encourage them towards southern foods as opposed to traditional foods.

I would also say that on the cost side, what is continually increasing are fuel costs of transporting the food from the south to the north. This committee and others will have seen a supplementary estimate pretty well every year for this program. One of the peculiarities of this program is that funding in the base of this department is \$27.6 million, which is about half of what's required to deliver the program at existing levels without being required to increase the rates charged to shippers that would in turn increase the rates of food in these communities. What happens every year is we need to go through the approvals process and come before you, to Parliament, to seek the additional funding required to meet this increased demand and the rising costs, to stay at the same level we're at in terms of the level of subsidy per kilogram, if I can say it that way.

One of the things we're hoping to do in this review is frankly address this situation, so that we can see if there's an effective means of providing or supporting access to affordable food that can be funded on a sustainable basis.

I should mention that we appeared last week before your colleagues, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, to go over the supplementary estimates. That's before the House right now, and that's seeking \$20 million. We'll know in the near future whether Parliament decides to support the government's request in that regard.

• (1025)

Mr. Steven Fletcher: There are two other questions about the schools.

Mr. Robert Eyahpaise: Just to answer your question in terms of what's being done to improve the conditions, the lower socio-economic conditions, facing aboriginal people to make healthier choices, definitely from the social programs area, I think that's a very good question in terms of the overall health and well-being of a community. Of course, we're talking about childhood obesity here and the health factors, but definitely research has been showing that higher levels of education and economic development are most likely to lead to more improved and long-lasting results for the quality of life at the community level.

What we've done in our social program areas is to provide basic social services such as food, clothing, health, non-medical assistance for persons with functional limitations, for instance, at the community level, and support for family violence prevention programs. We try to carry these programs out to be reasonably comparable to provincial standards. We ask, how do we support a community so that they are equivalent to their counterparts outside of the reserve setting, for instance? With that, we try to provide the appropriate and adequate funding and support in key areas.

For instance, with the national child benefit reinvestment program, we have the early childhood development support and we have income assistance by which we're trying to streamline our welfare program, so that they are supporting communities at the appropriate level, but also trying to encourage them to enter into the labour market stream as well. There are a number of programs that we provide directly that try to address the social conditions and how to support them, so that they are measuring up to or at least getting close to provincial standards.

As I mentioned earlier, what we've tried to do as well is to be innovative in key areas, such as partnering with Health Canada, for instance, in suicide prevention, etc.

• (1030)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Fletcher.

Now we'll move to Madam Wasylycia-Leis.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

First of all, I would suggest to Steven Fletcher that he take a little trip across the tracks in Winnipeg and go north and witness a community that has a very high number of aboriginal people who have access to almost no recreation facilities.

Point Douglas, the poorest and oldest neighbourhood in Canada, has no pool because it's shut down. It doesn't work. This government, like the previous federal government, wouldn't contribute part of the infrastructure funds or allocate specific infrastructure dollars for programs like that.

The North Winnipeg YM-YWCA has been shut down for over 10 years, and there was no help from this government or the previous government.

Mr. Chairperson, I would suggest that if this government is serious about dealing with the health needs of aboriginal children, it would look at family income and realize that we are talking about relatively low incomes, many of which are so low that the families don't pay taxes, yet they are being hit daily with programs that give higher benefit for higher incomes.

I would ask officials here—I would love to ask Mr. Fletcher, but I'll have to wait for another chance—why you haven't made recommendations to make sporting equipment purchases eligible under the credit. Why isn't there a recommendation to transform the tax credit into a refundable tax credit to reach low-income populations? The children's fitness tax credit does not meet the needs of low-income Canadians, particularly aboriginal and Métis and Inuit children and families, so why not expand the tax credit to make participation in non-organized sports and fitness programs part of this program? That's one question.

The other question is whether you could tell me if you have \$1 million to help open the North Winnipeg YM-YWCA, which would serve a lot of aboriginal people and help prevent obesity. Would you agree to a percentage or to adding money to the infrastructure program to provide for those needs? That's one question.

The other question has to do with advertising. I've listened carefully to what's been said today, and I don't know whose responsibility this is, but I think we need to start looking at a different model in terms of advertising that affects children and teenagers. It should be along the lines of the Quebec model and along the lines of our committee recommendation. If it's not the responsibility of the CRTC, then is it the responsibility of government? Whose responsibility is it to bring forward a form of restriction on advertising targeted to children to deal with the fact that children and young people are now being bombarded with junk food advertisements?

I don't think anybody can deny that, no matter what code we've got. If you turn on the TV, kids are watching news. They're watching family programs and not just children's programs. They are being inundated—bombarded—with junk food advertisements, and the foods most frequently marketed to kids and their parents are energy-dense or high-fat foods. So is it not time we had a much more regulated model and actually restricted advertisement that has such damaging consequences?

I don't know how much time I have left, but could I get answers on both questions?

Mr. Scott Hutton: I can go first if you want.

If it's a question of banning a certain food from being advertised, the clear answer there is that it's Health Canada's responsibility. They set the regulations in that regard.

What we do at the CRTC is try to put an environment around the advertisements that are not banned, let's say. We have our code and we work with the industry in that regard. It is more of an enforcement mechanism.

We also work with the industry—and I think programs have been put in place on various fronts—to promote healthy living, to redirect existing advertising for certain products of that nature towards a more healthy advertising environment.

The companies have certainly heard the committee, and the industry heard the concern and put in place, through Linda in 2004, extra guidelines to reinforce our codes, and did the same thing again in April 2007. Linda, through her organization, is putting in front public service initiatives. Other entities, such as Concerned Children's Advertisers, are also moving ahead on that front and

redirecting advertising. The biggest companies in the nation, the biggest broadcasters, are collaborating to redirect many ads and to redirect that effort towards the promotion of healthy living.

● (1035)

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis: If you want to give a quick answer...I still want to get another answer in.

Ms. Linda Nagel: The advertising industry, indeed, wants to be part of this multi-faceted problem. You can see from your own report last year that obesity rates, for example, in Quebec are higher than they are in Alberta. So certainly on advertising, we're putting new programs in place, but it's really important to recognize that we want to be part of a big solution to a big problem that is about many things. We hope we can contribute.

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis: On my four questions relating to the tax credit and infrastructure, is there someone from INAC or Finance...?

Mr. Sean Keenan: With respect to the tax credit, the expert panel recommended that where activities don't involve supervision, these not be covered by the credit, because their recommendation was that supervision was required to encourage active participation, and also for a safety reason, that essentially organized activities would require an adult. Therefore they recommended that self-directed activities not be eligible for the credit.

I should note that Bill C-28, which is currently before Parliament, implements the changes for DTC-eligible children that were announced by the Minister of Finance last December, where essentially the fitness tax credit is being enhanced. For children with disabilities, it in fact provides an additional credit equal to up to \$500 where a DTC-eligible child has enrolled in a program that costs at least \$100 and the equipment that is required for those DTC-eligible children would also be covered by the fitness tax credit.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you very much. There's not much time.

Madam Davidson, please.

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

I think the one thing we realized when we were doing this study—and it certainly was an exhaustive one as we went through it and heard all of the witnesses—was that this was not a simple solution. It was a huge problem, but there was no simple solution. It involved many different aspects of society, from parenting methods to health methods, to physical activity, to any number of things. I think the committee recognized and realized that the issues that have been put in place and the methods that have been put in place by this government and by previous governments were not meant to be the be-all and the end-all. They were part of a large overall picture to try to improve the health of our children.

It's not just a federal government issue; it's federal, provincial, territorial, municipal. It's all-encompassing. I think when we did our report it reflected that, that it was going to require a lot of cooperation from all levels and from all aspects of society.

Having said that, I just want to talk a little more about the food mail program. In the government response it says it's being reviewed to determine whether it's the most effective and efficient means of addressing the issue. Could you just speak a bit to that review and where that might be going or what may have been done to this point?

Mr. Andrew Lieff: I'd be happy to. Thank you very much.

First of all, if I could be permitted, I'd just like to mention a number of things that happened preceding the review that set a bit of the context in terms of where we're moving with this program.

As you've heard, pilots have been launched in three communities that have a basket of priority perishable foods, like milk and vegetables, subsidized at a higher rate, meaning that the per kilogram costs of shipping those foods north are 30¢ now as opposed to 80¢ before. So we are now getting the data from those pilots that will be fed into the review to help us with our understanding of the difference that price makes in terms of people's choices. We need to do a little bit more work to understand what the nutritional impacts are, because price is only one determinant of consumer choice; of course, advertising and other things play a significant role too.

A number of things have happened with respect to the eligible foods. Some of the less nutritious foods have been removed from the eligible list. For example, fruit-flavoured drinks that aren't fruit juice were eliminated from the list in 2004. We've eliminated shipments of food to certain types of businesses and government institutions, such as mining, oil and gas, and construction companies on the business side, so that we can focus our efforts on the people in communities who need it the most.

As was recommended by the Auditor General in her report in 2002, which reviewed entry points, the government chose to focus its efforts in 2005 on a particular entry point with a challenge, the Churchill entry point. This year we've added Winnipeg to the Kivalliq region as an entry point. We're seeing significant price reductions in that region as a result of that change.

We have developed and are very close to launching a revised northern food basket, which will be a more appropriate price monitoring tool, so that we can understand a little better the impact of this program on prices. Canada Post—this week actually—announced.... Formerly they had guidelines on shippers for packaging and handling to improve food quality. Those have now been switched to requirements on suppliers. So there are enhanced requirements and further guidelines.

So work is ongoing to continually improve the program.

In connection with the review, and as everybody on this committee has pointed out, it's a multi-faceted issue. We realized early on that we needed an interdepartmental effort on this. So an interdepartmental team has been assembled, as we mentioned in our introductory remarks.

On the accountability and governance side—and accountability is another theme of this committee—we've launched an internal audit,

which won't be directed by me, but will be fully independent under our internal audit group, on the governance in INAC of this program. It will determine and make sure we have the appropriate measures in place so that we can assure parliamentary committees and the government that there are appropriate management controls in place and thus we can assure value for money.

We are finalizing our project plan, although some projects have been launched. Again, I would invite this committee to.... We'll be following closely the concerns of this committee so that we can, as appropriate, build them into our review plan. As I also mentioned, we have a \$20 million supplementary estimate before the House right now so that we'll be able to maintain rates for shipping food this year while we're carrying out the review without having to increase rates, which would surely increase the price of food.

● (1040)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you very much, Madame Davidson and Mr. Lieff.

If you could table those two reports you're showing us, that would be great.

Now we move to Madame Kadis.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm interested in asking a question of the gentleman and his associates from the CRTC. The government refers to this Canadian children's food and beverage advertising initiative but fails to mention collaboration with consumer organizations or academics.

In terms of—with respect to this particular initiative—companies devoting at least 50% of their advertising targeted to children under 12 to the promotion of healthy dietary choices and/or active living messages in practical terms, what does this mean in practical terms? Who is determining what is a healthy dietary choice? What criteria are being used? For example, what interest specifically does, say, a soft drink company have in promoting active living messages to children under 12 if it's not to encourage them to consume their products, which are largely unhealthy, specifically to trying to reduce childhood obesity?

In other words, who is making those determinations? What is your definition of “healthy dietary choices” or “active living messages”?

● (1045)

Ms. Linda Nagel: The Canadian children's food and beverage advertising initiative has very strict criteria on what will be determined to be a healthy dietary choice. For example, one criterion might mean that it meets the Heart and Stroke Foundation's health check program. Canada released its new food guide this year—Canada's food guide—so another could be if it meets a recommendation that's contained within Canada's food guide. Another would be if it can make a biological role claim. For example, calcium helps maintain healthy bones and teeth.

So there are very specific criteria. They have to be scientific standards. That's number one.

As well, some companies will be electing not to advertise directly in programming that's directed to children under 12.

So every company that's a participant is going to meet the initiative in its own way. Advertising Standards Canada will be publishing the commitments in early 2008, and we'll be happy to share them with you. We will also be ensuring, through a monitoring program, that the companies are meeting their commitments, and issuing reports on how each company does relative to its commitments.

So it will be a very transparent process.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Is this on a voluntary basis? That's what I was hearing from the testimony.

Ms. Linda Nagel: We have regulations under the Food and Drugs Act. We have mandatory children's clearance, and then this is an additional voluntary initiative that's being made by 15 advertisers who happen to be among the largest. So it covers the overwhelming majority of advertising that is directed to children.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: But in your best opinion, in view of the magnitude and the seriousness of the problem, the challenge of the rising childhood obesity that we are facing here and all the associated adverse implications to our children's quality of life, to our health care system, to our workforce—in fact, to everything that is in our Canadian society—is it adequate and realistic to just rely on voluntary participation?

Ms. Linda Nagel: Again, this is additional. We already have the Food and Drugs Act. We have the children's code, which is strictly enforced, and we have added new guidelines to it, first in 2004 and then in 2007—that's this year—to make the standards for children's advertising more stringent. So we continue to work in that direction. This is another initiative on top of what... These are all new things that are being added.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Also—I guess this issue was referred to by Mr. Hutton—you will not prohibit any products from going on air through advertising, I believe. So if it were deemed that one particular product more than another product was having a significant adverse health impact on our children relative to childhood obesity and its rise, your position is that you would be advertising that product.

Mr. Scott Hutton: How the system works is that it is not our jurisdiction to ban, but certainly it is our responsibility to enforce a product that is banned.

So if Health Canada—whether it's with respect to a new food or with respect to, for example, smoking—has put restrictions on advertising in that domain, we implement it. And that's first and foremost and front and centre in all of our regulations, that you do not advertise such products. So it is quite clear that when a product is banned we enforce that side of the regulations, even though they are not our regulations. We build that into ours.

What I was trying to indicate earlier is that it's not the CRTC. We don't have the jurisdiction to determine if something is inappropriate. It's somebody else. That's the only thing. We implement the regulations. We implement the calls made by those with the jurisdiction.

• (1050)

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Of course, this serious problem must be a collective responsibility. But you're saying, essentially—if I can just close—that you are reliant on strong leadership from the federal government on the serious challenge of childhood obesity, and that's something we have not heard, that has been profoundly lacking in the government's response, so if we do not hear of a higher bar being set and really the federal government taking hold of this national problem, you will not be able to respond as best as you could.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you, Madame Kadis.

I will move on to Mr. Fletcher, and I understand he might be sharing his five minutes with Mr. Tilson.

Mr. Steven Fletcher: That's right, Mr. Chair.

Thank you. I'm really pleased that there are so many enthusiastic observers in the gallery.

Maybe I'll first just mention that I wish I could ask Judy Wasylycia-Leis why she feels that swimming pools should be built from Ottawa, at a local level, and why the NDP is so opposed to the sport tax credit. By implication, it seems they'd be interested in increasing taxes for families, rather than doing the right thing by making it—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, it is not up to the member to ask Ms. Wasylycia-Leis questions. We are here to ask the witnesses questions. I'm sorry, but that question is out of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Steven Fletcher: I know I can't. I wish I could, but I can't.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Pardon me, Mr. Fletcher, you can comment on anything you like about anyone's comments in here, but don't expect a reply from them. We have witnesses who I think you'd be better off asking for answers from.

Mr. Steven Fletcher: I know. I was just reflecting on some of the questions earlier.

I'd like to ask the panel, or give them one last opportunity...

The federal government actually is doing many innovative things to enhance fitness, including ParticipACTION—we haven't really talked about ParticipACTION today—and the tax credit, of course, as well as just massive investments in infrastructure in general.

I wonder if perhaps the people in Finance or INAC would like to expand a little bit on some of the other things that have not been mentioned yet today.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Maybe, Mr. Tilson, you could throw your question out and have them answer, because we're....

Mr. David Tilson: We're out of time.

My question is to Ms. Nagel. This topic was discussed just recently; that is, the advertising beyond broadcast advertising. You've made it quite clear that this is beyond your jurisdiction.

Why I'm directing the question to you as the president and chief executive officer of Advertising Standards Canada is for what suggestions you have to talk about the broader advertising, whether you get into stores or into the Internet—and I acknowledge you don't have any jurisdiction for this, but you must have put your thoughts to that—and whether you have any recommendations to the committee, and in turn the government, to regulate that type of advertising.

Ms. Linda Nagel: It's so easy to focus on broadcast advertising, but in fact there are additional regulations and self-regulatory codes in place.

Of course, all food advertising directed at Canadians or provided by Canadians, whether it be in print, out of home, or whether it be on the Internet on Canadian sites is governed by all the Canadian laws and regulations that affect that category. The Food and Drugs Act, the Competition Act, and many, many other pieces of regulation and legislation apply. So all food advertising, even if it's not regulated by the CRTC, certainly has to comply with the Food and Drugs Act and regulations.

• (1055)

Mr. David Tilson: I understand that, but obviously, whatever we're doing isn't working. So that's what I'm asking, for recommendations that you think we should take.

Ms. Linda Nagel: One thing the industry has also added is another code, called the Canadian code of advertising standards. That code sets criteria for acceptable advertising across all media—that's Canadian advertising—and we have a broad system where we accept complaints from consumers about advertising that they deem to be in violation of standards. We have added standards, relative to food, with specific reference to advertising to children.

So those have been put in place this year, and we'll be looking to see and certainly inviting consumers to express their concerns about any advertising that they think violates standards.

Mr. David Tilson: If you have any recommendations to the committee, please provide them to us in writing. We would all appreciate that.

Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you very much, Mr. Tilson.

Mr. Andrew Lief: I was wondering if I could answer very briefly the question Mr. Fletcher raised.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Briefly.

Mr. Andrew Lief: I think this committee would be very interested in what the government is doing under the international polar year program. It is sponsoring a number of very important studies, including a number of studies in the Arctic on Inuit health. I'll give you an example of one in particular. It's the Inuit health study being led by Dr. Egeland. It's the largest Inuit health study ever conducted. It's being done aboard the Canadian Coast Guard ice-

breaker *Amundsen*. There are other related research initiatives, but you spoke about arriving at baselines. This is going to be a kind of seminal study on being able to provide baseline information.

One component of it will be to look at children aged three to five, as far as their nutritional health, dietary habits, healthy growth and bones, vision, medical history, and that kind of thing. We hope that will contribute significantly to the body of knowledge we have and help inform us about the effectiveness of potential future interventions. The committee may want to follow up on how that fits into this context.

Thank you for your attention.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Madame Gagnon.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: It is almost 11 o'clock. I have a brief question for you, Mr. Keenan.

You avoided my NDP colleague's question about infrastructure. If the government really wanted to make changes when it comes to factors that lead to increasing obesity, it would have made sports facilities a priority. The government's response leaves much to be desired. You have certainly influenced the government, but we are not seeing enough concrete measures.

I would like to reassure Mr. Fletcher that we do not want the federal government to invest in areas under provincial jurisdiction. Nevertheless, that is one way to get money, because some communities do not have the infrastructure they need to encourage young people to get involved in sports.

Have you urged the government to increase funds allocated for sports facilities? Why have we not seen that in the government's response?

Mr. Sean Keenan: I am not an expert on infrastructure, but I know that in Budget 2007, the government increased funding to the provinces and territories.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Yes, but those funds were not designated for facilities and the environment.

Mr. Sean Keenan: No, but our provincial and municipal partners will use the funds according to their priorities. There is a sizeable envelope they can use to build sports facilities in partnership with the private sector.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski): Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank the witnesses and the officials for their responses. We will continue on Tuesday at the steering committee meeting in camera.

Until then, 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

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.