

their accredited sport governing bodies, make it clear that they wish to participate in such events, the Government will make it possible for them to do so. Moreover, the Minister responsible for Fitness and Amateur Sport will have his officials meet with national sport governing body representatives immediately to determine whatever opportunities may be available, or may be developed, to offset this setback to our amateur athletes and provide alternative competitive forums in their pursuit of excellence.

The Government is aware that the final deadline for acceptance of invitations to the Games is May 24. While any dramatic change in the situation in Afghanistan seems unlikely, the possibility cannot be entirely excluded. The Government therefore intends to continue monitoring the situation closely. It remains up to the Soviet Union to create the conditions in which the Olympics can take place. Should it become apparent that, contrary to present evidence, these

conditions are being created, the Government is prepared to reassess the request it is making today.

Finally, Madame Speaker, we ask Canadian athletes and Canadians generally to support this important decision which has been taken in the national interest. We all recognize the sacrifice this represents for our athletes who have trained so hard and for whom we have so much respect. It is, of course, not their fault any more than it is the fault of other Canadians who are also being asked to support Government policies designed to impress upon the Soviet Union that international terrorism in all of its manifestations—whether by armed students or disciplined troops—is unacceptable to Canada. The Government urges Canadian athletes to respect its advice. We are confident that they and the Canadian Olympic Committee will have the national interest at heart and will decline to participate in the Moscow Games in the interest of Canadians and free peoples everywhere.

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