

*Private Members' Business*

I suggest that sport-governing bodies understand that they must provide their athletes and trainers with an adequate appeal procedure mechanism based on natural justice. That is only fair, because the interest and welfare of the athletes and trainers must be first and foremost in the minds of sports organization.

[English]

Obviously, there are many questions as to what format athletes' rights should take. Arriving at the right formula will require viewing a number of proposals. One that has been considered is a bill of rights for athletes. This proposal has gained a following with some in the amateur sport community and is worthy of further consideration.

As I have said, Chief Justice Dubin has indicated his support for a grievance procedure and independent arbitration for athletes. I think that they could mirror similar systems that are operating within organizations in the private and public sectors.

Whatever independent review and arbitration process is eventually devised, it has to come from discussions between athletes, coaches, national and provincial sport bodies and also the federal and provincial governments. I include governments because I believe there is a role for them to play in the formulation of such a system.

I believe that given the issue of athletes' rights, it would be beneficial to have government involved in the discussion stage on shaping an acceptable system. I think that a joint, consultative process is necessary in order to examine the frameworks which currently exist outside of sport before settling on any particular model. With governmental assistance, the question concerning how to enforce athletes' rights could also be resolved.

• (1730)

The formulation of an acceptable system to deliver what is required will depend in large part on the work of athletes, coaches, and the sport-governing bodies combining to develop what best meets the needs of the athlete. Settling this issue will of course require a significant amount of co-operation if the final product is to work and show athletes that their rights are being protected and not just simply appearing to be.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the abuse of banned performance enhancing substances has had a serious impact on our athletes and on amateur sports in Canada. Nothing should be done to block the efforts to stop this drug abuse. The elimination of this threat against the health of the athlete and amateur sport in general is a major objective for all those who sincerely care for amateur sport.

[English]

It is, however, important that there be procedures in place that will offer assistance to amateur athletes in defending themselves. Athletes should have access to due process and independent arbitration. Whether the issue involves drugs or team selection, the fact is that athletes deserve to have their rights protected and to have these rights defined.

Certainly, without a system to assist athletes, they are lacking the support they require to become the best that they can be in their chosen sport. A failure to arrive at a system of athletes' rights would be detrimental to both the athlete and to amateur sport in Canada.

In its report entitled *Towards 2000: Building Canada's Sport System*, the task force on national sport policy recommended to the government in August, 1988, that it should:

Ensure that actions and decisions affecting athletes (selection, discipline, carding, negotiation of athlete contracts, anti-doping measures, etc.) are conducted in accordance with accepted standards of due process and natural justice.

I believe that this recommendation is right on the mark. I hope that the government will act and come forward to assist in developing such a system within amateur sport.

In responding to Chief Justice Dubin's report on August 9, 1990, the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport said:

The development of an appropriate independent appeal mechanism will be addressed in the fall.

While this statement dealt with particular athletes named in Chief Justice Dubin's report, a uniform appeal process for all athletes would be a logical extension. I believe there may be a willingness on the part of the minister to assist in the development of an independent appeal process for the entire amateur sports community in the near future.