

Olympic Boycott

I would like to find out whether or not the arrangements which were made for the CBC to cover the games in Moscow and the moneys which were allocated for that purpose have been cancelled.

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, no action of that kind has been taken as yet because this decision was arrived at and announced only today. However, I can say that the government is determined to use all the means at its disposal to dissuade and discourage the CBC from covering the Olympics.

Mr. Nielsen: Get Ouellet after them.

Miss MacDonald: But this happens to be public funding and a decision which the government would have arrived at, I presume, after not only consultation with other countries but also consultation with ministers responsible for agencies in Canada. Therefore, I would have expected a firm commitment that there would be a cancellation of that when the minister spoke this afternoon, and when he replied. Can he tell me when he will be in a position to give us that information? It would seem to me that his colleague should be able to meet with the president of the CBC tonight to convey the government's decision and to make it clear that if the government has cancelled its participation, or indicated that it wants to cancel its participation in the games in Moscow, it surely would want to see the CBC, a government agency, also cancel its participation there.

Mr. MacGuigan: There is absolutely no difference between us as to the desirability that the CBC not cover the games. The hon. member's party is fond of proclaiming from time to time the independence of the CBC, which we certainly believe in, but the hon. member's words right now do not sound like that.

We will use every means at our disposal to discourage the CBC from doing this, but that is a decision for the CBC to make, and we will certainly take that up very strongly with the CBC.

Mr. Clark: Will you start now or in four months?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Madam Speaker, first of all I should like to tell the minister that we have been in agreement with that decision for several weeks already. Our athletes have worked hard, have trained energetically and are ready. Can the minister tell the House, on behalf of the government, whether he has considered steps to encourage those athletes, perhaps to compensate them for the considerable expense they may have gone to? For instance, is there any intention of compensating them through some other competition, that could be very interesting and could somehow make up for the efforts they have made?

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, as I have already mentioned, the minister responsible, my colleague the minister of fitness and amateur sports, intends to meet Canadian sports

organizations without delay in order to give our athletes opportunities to appear here in Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Wenman (Fraser Valley West): Madam Speaker, just to pursue the last question one step further, sanctions always involve sacrifice, and we have clearly identified that the sacrifice will be made largely by athletes. It is very important that that sacrifice is not made in vain. There is no real compensation in a secondary type of non-Olympics. That is one minor compensation, but it is not a real compensation.

Somehow people have the image of an athlete as being a very wealthy person who can spend his money freely to develop. However, of course, that is not true. The sacrifice in many cases is a thwarted professional career, much lost employment income, four to eight years of intensive training five or seven days a week, and broken dreams. All these things are payment that they will make in sacrifice.

If in fact the Olympics are not held or this money is not expended as suggested, I suggest that the money which will be saved—and it will be substantial whether it be with regard to the CBC or whatever—could in fact be used to compensate the athletes directly for their personal losses, be they loans or expenses incurred on their behalf in the past year.

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, I fear that the suggestion is impractical in its terms. I think the only way by which we can hope to compensate the athletes is through forms of organized athletics. I should point out to the House that when my colleague, the minister responsible for sport, and I met the Canadian Olympic Committee, the committee was totally opposed to the notion of alternate games of any kind. It refused to discuss that matter with us because it said that this was totally opposed to its views and, it believed, the views of Canadian sporting bodies. However, we intend to carry on a dialogue.

My colleague and his officials will very shortly—immediately—be meeting officials, not only of the Canadian Olympic Committee but also of the other sports governing bodies in Canada, to try to arrange for the upgrading and the augmentation of existing sporting programs so that our athletes will not find that their training was wasted. They will have an opportunity to participate and, I might say, now that we have a boycott—and this is where we differ from the opposition—with the announcements to come within the next few days from other countries as to their boycotting, the boycott will now be effective.

Mr. Beatty: No thanks to you.

Mr. MacGuigan: Those who do compete in Moscow will themselves realize that the medals they attain are of very little value. The medals which will be achieved in other competitions around the world may well be of more intrinsic importance to the athletic community than medals they might gain in Moscow with the kind of competition which will now be there.