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PRINCIPAL(S)/PRINCIPAUX: Olivier Poulin, Director, Communications and Public Affairs, Canadian Football League
Randy Ambrosie, Commissioner, Canadian Football League

SUBJECT/SUJET: CFL Commissioner Randy Ambrosie delivers the 2018 State of the League Address at Grey Cup 2018.

Olivier Poulin: Hi, everyone, and welcome to the Commissioner's State of the League. The Commissioner will say a few words off the top, and then we'll open the floor for questions. Commissioner, ready?

Randy Ambrosie: I am.

Olivier Poulin: Let's go.

Randy Ambrosie: Well, good morning, everyone. It's great to be here with all of you. I should say, you know, I didn't get a lot of sleep last night, thinking about the event today. I got up first thing and I asked Barb if it was too cold for me to go outside, and she looked at the phone and she said no, you have to go. And then, as I was walking away, I could swear – I think under her breath she told me to man up. So here I am. I was walking from the washroom a few minutes ago and Rod Pedersen from Regina offered the salutation to break a leg, and I thought, well, maybe it'd be better if he did break my leg.

But you know, it's been a year since we were together, and I've done a lot of learning. And you know, this isn't an easy job, but it's a job I love. And I have to say, you know, I've enjoyed pretty much every minute of the experience. But after now about 16 months, I think, you know, as much as I'm excited and happy with all of the progress we've made, I know we still have more work to do. And I'll answer your questions today to the best of my ability, but what I will say is that I think that there can't be real absolute in the answers because I think we're on a journey to, you know, to grow and improve the game, to make the game safer for our players, to make the game more exciting for our fans, to bring more fans in, welcome more fans in.

In some cases we've done a really good job, as you probably know. You know, our TV ratings this year are up 15 percent in our 18-to-49 category, and, with our partners at TSN and RDS, something we're exceptionally proud and excited about, bringing in a

whole new generation of fans, which is exactly what we've always been talking about, you know, in this league. Our overall ratings were up five percent, another exciting statistic.

We're having this amazing conversation about the future of the CFL with a tenth team in Halifax. And of course that's something that, for many of us, that's been a dream now for decades, the idea of this truly coast-to-coast Canadian Football League. And we've got this amazing group, called Maritime Football: Anthony LeBlanc, Gary Drummond, and Bruce Bowser. And we're totally committed to their efforts to get that tenth team. There's a great process in place. There's actually a document that we signed and agreed to that lays out all the steps that it would take to get to it, but ultimately, the big hurdle is the stadium. And Anthony's going to make himself available to you to do interviews, and he can give you a more full and complete update. But you know, without launching any kind of marketing campaign, they've already sold or had commitments to more than 5000 season tickets. And I would say, just based on my own experience of being in Halifax and visiting the region, there is an enormous enthusiasm and excitement for the idea of a team in Atlantic Canada, something I'm personally very excited about, and I think it could be great.

You know we've been talking about CFL 2.0, and we have our friends today in the room from Mexico, Oscar Perez and his son, and Alex, the Commissioner from the LFA. We're going to have a little signing ceremony at the end of this session that will bring us one step closer to this international vision for the game of football in Canada, to grow the game.

You know, this year I've travelled coast to coast back and forth many times, but I've been not only spending time visiting with our teams and stakeholders in the CFL, but in college football as well. Coach Nill in BC, Coach Harris in Calgary, Coach Morris here in Edmonton, Brian Dobie in Winnipeg, Coach Marshall at Western. I've been to Laurier, spent time with Danny Maciocia in Montreal, been to Laval, took in a football game at Laval, took in a football game at Western, because I think this has to be a rising tide raises all boats exercise. I think we have to work with our college football partners.

But I've also learned in that journey that we need to find more ways to develop Canadian players, often our players that are leaving their college experience aren't quite ready for the CFL. And how can we get them ready, and this opportunity to think more internationally may be exactly what we need to do. And that is when the player, you know, is done with their college and junior experience – and I should also say that I visited Coach Sargeant, the Saskatoon Hilltops and that amazing facility they have. And they just finished winning their fifth junior championship. And I spent time talking with all of them about how do we get more Canadian kids developed and ready to play CFL football.

And so I think we're on an incredible journey. I personally believe that the future for our league and for football in Canada's very bright, but also recognize that there's challenges that have to be addressed, and we continue to work at those. But I think we

can do both. And that's something I'm often asked, is, well, why are you focused on all of these international activities when you have issues to deal with at home. And my answer is quite simple: because we can do both, and we should do both. We should have our eyes on the horizon. We should be looking forward and looking out into the future, and planning for that bigger, stronger Canadian Football League that we've been talking about for the past 16 months, and frankly, that we've all been hoping of and dreaming of for many, many years.

I have literally no doubt that the people in this room love football and love the Canadian Football League, and I think that we can do it all. We just have to set our sights – we should have an idea of a grand vision. And hopefully over the course of the next hour we'll get a chance to talk about that vision and share some ideas with one another.

So with that, OP, I think we can open it up to questions.

Olivier Poulin: Thank you, Commissioner. We're going to open the floor for questions. Please raise your hand so I can add you to the list. Please wait until you have a microphone in your hand so we can hear you loud and clear. Please identify yourself and the media you are representing. First question will go to Didier Ormejuste from RDS.

Question: Good morning, Randy.

Randy Ambrosie: Good morning.

Question: My questions are regarding the state of the franchise of the Montreal Alouettes. As you probably know, they've announced that they're going to reduce the stadium capacity from a little bit more than 23,000 to 20,000 seat. The team president also said that the finances of the team are not – you know, are not doing well, and that there's a direct correlation with the product on the field. How worried are you about the state of that franchise, especially with the way that it has been, you know, trending the past couple of years?

Randy Ambrosie: Thank you. Yeah. Well, look, I think it's safe to say that you can get up in [the morning] in this job and worry about a lot of things every day. And I certainly have concerns. I have concerns because that has been such a great franchise for us, and for many reasons, the franchise hasn't performed the way people in Montreal and the Quebec football market expect.

I think the issue of contracting the size of the stadium is just a tactical decision. It's to reduce the capacity. It's like a inventory management issue that businesses will do to reduce the amount of supply they have available to make the supply that they have available more valuable to the consumers. I think what they can do is shrink that capacity a little bit. Let's get that capacity full again, and then we can start pushing back out to that 24,000-seat limit.

But there is no doubt that there are challenges there. You know, they've won three Grey Cups with the Wetenhall family as the owners. There's obviously been a lot of success in that market. There's no doubt that the Wetenhalls have had a great amount of success. But I think they would tell you, if they were standing here with me today, that they've been disappointed in these last number of years.

And so, you know, we're committed to working with them to look at how we work together to find solutions. I was heartened last night to listen to Pierre Vercheval talk about just how fundamentally strong the market is for football, and having gone and talked to Danny Maciocia and to have gone to Laval, to the Rouge et Or, to see just how robust the football market is. We actually visited with Football Quebec as well and talked to them, and there is no doubt there is a very strong football market. But somehow we've missed that connection with Alouette football, and we have to find a way to get it back.

So I share those concerns, but I also know it's an amazing football market, it's an amazing city, and it has had more than its fair share of success, and we just have to find a pathway to get back to that.

Question: Have you had any indications from the Wetenhalls that they're considering perhaps selling the team in the near future?

Randy Ambrosie: Well, we haven't had that kind of conversation. But I know they are concerned. I you know, I talk with Andrew quite frequently, in fact I would say almost every week, and I know that he's concerned and worried and we have to find a solution. You know, we're not only going to work together with him from a league office perspective, but all of the teams.

And that's been one of the great maybe changes I've seen just in these past 16 months, is that we've got a board of governors that are really committed to working together, that they're committed to helping one another. The sharing of resources today at the league is second to maybe any period of time that we've ever had in the league.

So I think we're going to find a solution. We'll work with the Wetenhalls to find a solution. Because football in Montreal is critical to the future of this league, and it is such a great football market that we've got to have a great, strong franchise there, as we do in our other CFL cities.

Olivier Poulin: Terry Jones.

Question: Randy, let's pick up where we left off last night at the awards, with Bo Levi Mitchell saying, you know, urging the CFL and the CFLPA to get the CBA thing done tout de suite, sort of thing. Do you think there's a mood and an attitude between both groups to make that happen, or should we just buckle up and wait till the last minute, like always?

Randy Ambrosie: Well, Terry, it's of course the great unknown. Look, I think there is a great attitude. And you know, we've done some really good work with the players in these past number of years. You know, just last year, the changing to a non-padded practices format and going to a 21-week schedule was done in a collaboration with the players. And we've seen in-practice injuries go down by 35 percent over the past 16 months, in that season and a half since we did it. We've seen the number of player games lost due to injuries go down by ten percent since we made that change. And we did that together. And when we've been talking about CFL 2.0, we spent time talking with Brian and Jeff about that vision and that opportunity to grow the CFL.

So I've said before, and I'll continue to say, I think the future is better together. I think all of the things we want to do will be better to do it together with the players. And so, Terry, I'm optimistic. I really am. I think we can sit down with the players shortly after the season ends, lay out a path to put in place a deal that's fair for both sides: for the players and for the league, and for our teams. And I'm absolutely confident that we're going to get to a solution and get back to playing football at the start of the 2019 season.

Olivier Poulin: We'll go to Bill Solness (ph).

Question: Commissioner, I'd be interested in knowing whether you think it's time for a change with regard to Canadian quarterbacks and the ratio process.

Randy Ambrosie: Yeah, I think that's going to be a question that's going to have to be discussed when we meet with the players. And you know, when I've travelled coast to coast and talked to football fans, there's no doubt that, from a fan's perspective, they want to see that rule changed. And so we'll definitely put that on the table and talk about that with the players.

And by the way, this goes back to my earlier comments about visiting and meeting with as many of the college coaches as I could. And frankly, I'm going to try to keep up the pace and keep meeting them. We need to find a way to continue develop our players at the college level. We need to find a way to get them more playing time. Because sometimes that's just what it takes. It just takes playing time. You've got to be in the game.

Quarterbacks and offensive linemen are two positions that are hard to learn unless you get to do them at game speed. The ability to kind of get settled into the position of quarterback takes game speed. And I hope that this international opportunity that we're on the doorstep of opening, I hope that it's going to create that opportunity for Canadian quarterbacks to get the kind of training and development and game experience they need to come back and play in the Canadian Football League.

Olivier Poulin: Going to go to Jeff Hamilton, then you, and then to Steve Simmons. Jeff?

Question: Hey, Randy. Say—player safety, obviously it's probably the number one priority on both sides of the table, particularly with the players. And long-term disability, coverage that players don't get beyond the one year, the way – we don't need to go into the Jonathan Hefney situation. But the players don't seem to think that that should be used as a bargaining chip, that it shouldn't be used at the table for when the new CBA is done. And I'll just be frank. Why do you think it's not the league's responsibility to cover injuries that happen on their playing field?

Randy Ambrosie: Well, Jeff, I mean, it's a great question, and I don't have a perfect answer. What I can tell you is that I think we will sit down and talk about this with the players, and I hope that together we'll find a solution that everyone will agree to. You know, our season is one game away from being completed, and then we get to enter into a discussion with the players about all numbers of issues, and this one will without a doubt will be on the table. And my hope is that, between us, we're going to find a great solution going forward and put this issue behind us. So you can't change what you can't change. You know, we are where we are. We're one game away from a period of time where we can make that change, and that's my goal, is to find a solution to that as part of our negotiations.

Question: I think it was 2015, the league was celebrated for their violence against women policy and one of the things that really stuck out was how different it was going to be from the National Football League in that it wasn't going to be – I don't want to say zero tolerance, but it was going to be a supportive system, where all parties involved in whatever situation it was, particularly for players who are in the league now, were going to be kind of supported. We have a couple of examples this year – Jerome Messam, Teague Sherman. From the understanding of, I guess, the reporters here, is that those guys didn't really get that support that was promised, and not only are they not in the league but they're not allowed back into the league. I was – just wanted to see if you could reflect on maybe some of the thought process that goes into sort of kind of eliminating those contracts.

Randy Ambrosie: Well, you know, there's a difference and a distinction between, the burden of evidence that an employer has versus what the criminal courts do. In every case when we're in possession of information that makes it absolutely clear that something terrible has happened and is absolutely in contravention of our philosophy and policy on violence against women, we're compelled to act. And in both of these cases, when you are in possession of that information and you see what you see, you can't unsee it.

And the responsibility is bigger than just the Canadian Football League. It's all about doing something, you know, good in Canada. I think that's been something that's been so important, an important role for the CFL, is to be a leader. And you know, our players – I say this so often – our players are remarkable. They're in the community all the time. They're the most selfless professional athletes in the world. And it's because

there's baked into this league this idea of our commitment to the community. Well, it has to extend into this area.

So when we are, as I say, in possession of information that makes it absolutely clear that something terrible has happened, we have to take action. And in the cases you're describing, we were in fact in possession of that information. That made it clear what our duty was. And our responsibility was to take action, as we did.

Olivier Poulin: Randy Rudkertz (ph) from CBC Radio.

Question: Wanted to ask about – I've heard you talk about the new template for the Grey Cup and what Edmonton's doing this year, what Calgary's going to be doing next year. What is the template? What do you see – or what do you want to see Grey Cup being in the years to come and kind of raising the bar? What does that look like to you?

Randy Ambrosie: Well, first of all, what I want to see is it to be huge. So the template, just to start with that first question, the template is that we used to award the Grey Cup to a team, and the game was essentially a hundred percent their responsibility. The festival was their responsibility. And whatever outcome – financial outcome – that was that team's reward. And what we decided to do was something very different. And the credit to the governors, that this is our most cherished asset, that this should be something that we share together, that all the teams should share in the burden and the financial outcome, and the league office should play a significant role in making sure that there's continuity and that there's learning.

So you know, what's been different – and I can't really imagine there would have been a better place to do it than right here in Edmonton, with this organization that has such a long and incredible history of community support – that the idea was that when we started the planning process for Grey Cup 2018, Ottawa was at the table. And Ottawa was contributing their experiences in Ottawa last year. So, in past years, imagine it was a series of 100-metre sprints. You would get the Grey Cup, you would do your 100-metre sprint and pass, and then the Grey Cup would go to the next city and they would do it. But it's more like a relay now, where as one team is finishing Grey Cup, the other team is already running, and they're passing the baton at speed. And you know that you can run faster, and the four-by-100-metre time is faster, than the individual 100-metre times of all of those athletes. And that's the idea here.

And then Calgary's at the table because Calgary has actually been watching and learning from what Edmonton is doing. And that means Calgary's getting a head start on their planning. So it's a much different philosophy.

The other is that we used to just award the Grey Cup to a city. It was kind of a bit of a rotation formula. And now we've gone to a bidding formula. And it's remarkable what's happening in the teams that are bidding. We've had three presentations for the 2020 game. And they were remarkable. The innovations that the teams have put in front of

us – in fact, we had hoped to have a decision on 2020 in this room today, but we couldn't because the bids were so amazing that we've got to go back and revisit them. But what it's showing us is that, if we lay a challenge at the feet of our teams, they'll respond incredibly well.

So you know, the vision for Grey Cup is it should be literally the biggest day of celebration in Canada. Grey Cup day from coast to coast, with our tenth team, and Canadians, whether you've been here for 15 days or your family's been here for a hundred years or more, it should be something that you take part in and share with your family.

And we want Grey Cup to be bigger and better than ever, and we thank our friends here in Edmonton for what they've done this year because they definitely took what Ottawa did, which was amazing, and they decided in a very conscious way to make this the biggest Grey Cup ever. And if you've had a chance to go down and check out the festival, you saw last night the Shaw CFL Awards and how amazing they were. I think that they're going to set a really high bar. And the nice thing is the guys just a little bit south of here generally don't like to get beat by the guys just north of them. And I think we can readily expect that Calgary next year is going to be fantastic.

Olivier Poulin: Steve?

Question: Randy, Steve Simmons, Toronto Sun.

Randy Ambrosie: Hi, Steve.

Question: There seems to be some confusion around the league about the front office salary cap, coaching salary cap, and how it works. I'm wondering, A) why is there confusion; and, B) would Mark Trestman's salary next year count against the Argos' salary cap for the front office?

Randy Ambrosie: Well, Steve, I'm not entirely sure why there's confusion, but if there is, then we have to fix that. So that's on us, and that's on the team presidents and together for us to make sure that our football operations people clearly understand how it works. You know, Steve, I'll just take a step back. You know, this football operations strategy was really built off of three of our team presidents who formed an ad hoc committee to really study the issue of where we were in terms of football operations, and we had a lot of inconsistencies. It was actually our fastest-growing expense category as a league. And those three presidents sat down and then made a recommendation to their colleagues on a way forward.

You know, I think of it this way. If you thought about a two continuums, you know, vertical and horizontal, you want to have on the horizontal continuum of, call it football quality, from low to high, you want to obviously be in the high football quality end of the continuum. But in the intersecting business continuum of business strength from low to high, you also want to be on the high end of the business quality. And that means

running a good business. That's having fiscal discipline. It means managing your business thoughtfully. And you want to be in that top-right quadrant.

I think sometimes as a league we haven't been aspiring to that top-right quadrant consistently. And that's got us into troubles in the past. And if we're going to have and make a commitment to our fans to a big, strong Canadian Football League, then that's going to have to come by not only having a great game but having a great business as well.

So Steve, go back to your original question, if there's confusion, then that's on us. And that means that we're going to have to go back to our team presidents and go back to our football operations people and make sure we sort that out. But I think we've left lots of room to make sure that we can hire great people to coach our teams and to run our football operations group, and that comes from the presidents, who are the ones who do that day in and day out.

As for your question about Coach Trestman, we actually built a bit of a formula inside of this strategy, where there's an ability to have a bogie, where if you are making a change, that that change doesn't affect you negatively in years to come. And that was, again, a strategy that was developed by the team presidents. And that could very well apply in this particular case.

Olivier Poulin: Alright, we'll go just behind you, Steve, if you don't mind passing on the microphone. Just behind you. Yeah.

Question: Thank you.

Olivier Poulin: Thank you.

Question: Good morning, Commissioner. Raffy Boudjikianian, CBC News. Yesterday you told my colleague in an interview that you wouldn't be having anything new to say this morning about concussions. And I guess my question is, is that reticence partly linked to the fact that the league is still facing that \$200 million class action lawsuit from former players.

Randy Ambrosie: Well, I can't recall the conversation I had with your colleague, but I'm actually happy to talk about concussions. And I'll say this. So the promise I made all of you and the promise I made the players, and, I think, by default, that I made the fans, is that I would make every effort I could to educate myself, and that the league would make every effort to educate ourselves on the issue of concussions and concussion management. And just this year we were in London with the National Football League co-sponsoring a concussion conference. And what was great about that is it brought in sports from around the world. We had hockey and soccer. We actually had the people from the equestrian world there. We had Australian-rules football, we had rugby. They were all at the table.

And what we learned is that we're all sharing this burden. This isn't a football issue; this is a sports issue. And in fact, there's approximately four million concussions in North America every year. And the vast majority of those concussions happen when people fall. If you just do the simple, linear math, that means there's been 40 million concussions in the last decade. And if you go back 20 years, there's been 80 million concussions. This is not just a sports issue then, but this is an issue for medicine and for society.

We learned at that conference, for example, that there's what they're calling modifiers, and that they're learning that there may be a link between mental health and concussion recovery. So for instance, they think that things like learning disabilities, that if you have a learning disability, it takes you longer to recover from a concussion than if you don't; that if you're suffering from depression or anxiety, that it may take you longer to recover from a concussion or not. And that's very important to know and understand. Because it means that now we have to address the fact that we're not only going to have to deal with the physical health of our players, but we're going to have to start addressing the mental health of our players as well and think about how do we make sure that they are both healthy of body and mind and spirit.

So the work continues. We have to follow the science. We have these amazing doctors. I was blown away. So here I am, a layperson, in a room full of, world-class neurologists and scientists in London, listening to them talk about the issues. And it's complicated. But we have to keep listening and paying attention. You know, I'm also happy to say, we've done a lot. What I learned in that room is that our concussion protocols are about as good as any sports league in the world. But that doesn't mean we should stop working towards better protocols.

I think we're seeing evidence that our players are starting to feel more willing to acknowledge that they've had an injury. You know, one of the problems with the concussion injury in the past is players just didn't want to give their helmet up. You know, in fact, teams had to literally take their helmet away and hide it because players want to get back on the field. I think we're seeing amongst the players a more willingness to acknowledge that they've taken a hit and they need some help. And we're asking the players, their teammates, to play a role in that as well.

So no, I think we have so much more work to do in this area. We have to continue to look for ways to make the game safer. We're certainly not where we're ultimately going to get to, but I think we have made some good moves and some good steps. But nobody – none of our team doctors, none of our team presidents, none of our coaches or GMs, and certainly not myself – think that we've reached our destination. We still have more work to do.

Question: OK, thanks. And I just want to ask you about growing the league too because you talked about that a lot. You cite a 15 percent growth in the 18-to-49 demographic. That's a pretty wide demographic, and I'm wondering if you can tell us how much of that growth is on the younger side of it.

Randy Ambrosie: Yeah. I'd have to get one of my colleagues who's a lot more knowledgeable on the subject. You know, just maybe anecdotally, I can tell you that things like our Family Day initiative this year were remarkably successful. And I was at a number of those games, and I had an opportunity to see all these young people. And there was some great coverage, and we saw these four-, five-, six-year-olds holding up a sign, 'my first CFL game'. And you don't know if that is the beginning of that lifetime journey. Our friend Paul Graham talks about the Knothole Gang. I still think he owes the Eskimos about \$200 in back ticket revenue for when he snuck in. But we know that his love of the league started from an early age, and we saw evidence of that. We talked to the Argos after they ran the first Family Day game, and they said they had the biggest walk-up crowd they've had in years at BMO Field, and those are good signs.

So I don't have the specific data, but I think we are excited that we're starting to see this effort that's been made by the league and by the teams over this past decade, we're starting to see it pay off and we're starting to see younger families returning to our games and coming back in greater numbers. So we have a lot of encouraging signs, but boy, we still have an awful lot of work to do. But we're going to work with our broadcast partner, we're going to work with our teams, and we're going to do everything we can to make sure that every Canadian knows that they're welcome in our stadiums, and if they come, they're going to have a great experience.

Question: Thank you.

Olivier Poulin: Alright. The line-up goes Marshall Ferguson, Scott Stinson, Dave Campbell, Arash Madani, and then we might have time for you, Terry. Marshall?

Question: Hi, Randy. Marshall Ferguson, TSN 1150 Hamilton. The question I'm about to ask you has been posed several times over, both to you last year and previously to Jeffrey Orridge. The stadium litigation in Hamilton. It felt like there was a celebration, week-long, this year when it got announced that there was actually positive momentum on it and it was basically dealt with. I want to ask you: what does that change from the league's perspective? And furthermore, for you personally, not just with the stadium but for the city of Hamilton, when will you look at it and say that's ready to host a Grey Cup?

Randy Ambrosie: Well, I think the question's already been answered. I think they are ready to host a Grey Cup. And we will want them to have a Grey Cup. And one of the things that I love about Bob Young and Scott Mitchell is they have embraced this CFL 2.0 philosophy –pardon me, this Grey Cup model philosophy – of bidding on the games and making sure that, when we do bring a game to Hamilton, it's because Hamilton is going to put on the greatest next show in the history of the Grey Cup. And so I'm very encouraged.

And I think that the city of Hamilton is going through this amazing renaissance. The city is changing dramatically. In some ways, it's not the old Hamilton that people might have

thought about. There's this whole revitalization that's happened there. And that's part of the story that Scott and Bob are telling. And of course the Tim Horton's Field and all that's happened there. So I think we're ready.

You know, nobody wants to short-circuit the bidding process because they believe that it's so important to the future of the Grey Cup. But I know from what I've seen and observed there no doubt in my mind that Hamilton is going to get its turn at a Grey Cup, and it is going to be, when it happens, it is going to be the next great Grey Cup in the history of our league.

Olivier Poulin: Dave.

Question: Randy, in the back here. The topic of one division sort of came up after the end of the regular season.

Randy Ambrosie: Sorry, I –

Question: I'm right in the back here.

Randy Ambrosie: Oh, there we go. Sorry, couldn't --

Question: You're – you're probably blinded by the lights there.

Randy Ambrosie: Yeah.

Question: But yeah, the one division subject kind of came up again. And it seems to be gaining a bit more steam. I know it's something the Eskimos want to bring up in the off season, and Wally Buono said that this is now a national league. But do you see anymore – do you see any merit for this discussion on one division? Do you see that, you know, possibility? And secondly, is there any movement on moving the season up earlier?

Randy Ambrosie: So in respect of the question on the one division, I think we have to have that discussion this winter. Because I know there's enough interest amongst the teams to have the discussion, and that's the way it should be. And I think we should talk to our fans, which I did last year. In fact, I was asked if I would go back on the road this winter and do another series of fan town halls and really get the fans' feedback on the issue. So I'm planning on doing that again this winter.

You know, we're always torn between these two different, competing paradigms. One is this great tradition in Canada of the east versus west and how fantastic that has been. You know, I remember as a kid those little Grey Cup pool tickets, and you got your score for the east and your score for the west. And that's how I grew up.

I also think that when – not if; when – our tenth franchise lands in Halifax, the idea of two five-team conferences is very compelling, with an unbalanced schedule, and

creating more intense competition within each conference, and having two balanced conferences would be very cool in that way. I've said that I thought it would be better to help Anthony and Gary and Bruce get this project completed and get this team before we make that decision. But I think we should have a consultation with our teams and our fans this winter to see what kind of appetite there is to change the format. Or maybe there's a more creative way of doing this that we haven't thought of yet. So we should definitely look at that.

And then your second --?

Question: About moving the season up, and there's been talk two weeks, a month.

Randy Ambrosie: Yeah, so --
Question: Is there any movement there?

Randy Ambrosie: -- so in our request for 2020 Grey Cup bids, we've actually asked the teams to bid one week earlier than they have been bidding in the past. And so that is actually -- the move is afoot, and that came as a result of our friendship and partnership with TSN and RDS. We worked together at how would we make this work. Because this is something we want to do together with our partners and make sure we're moving in lockstep. So for 2020 we've talked about and asked the teams to bid for one week earlier. And that's the basis on which those bids were submitted. And I think that's encouraging. And you know, it's a step in the right direction.

And remember that Grey Cup in -- I think until the late fifties was actually played in December. So you know, it's not as though the date we currently have has been, you know, baked in for 105 Grey Cups, now 106 Grey Cups. We have moved it. And I think it's a good idea to keep looking at that. And I know in particular cities like here in Edmonton and in Regina and in Winnipeg, it's a particularly important issue for them, and something that we're committed to talking with them about.

Olivier Poulin: Scott?

Question: Commissioner, Scott Stinson with Postmedia, right here.

Randy Ambrosie: Hi, Scott.

Question: The NFL settled with its former players a couple of years ago, and now the National Hockey League has reached a legal settlement over concussion-related injuries. Does the CFL not owe some sort of responsibility to former players who might have been injured before you put all these safety measures in place?

Randy Ambrosie: Well, in fact, we are in discussions with the plaintiffs in this class action suit. And in the case of the NHL and the NFL, that process took time to reach the outcome that they've achieved. And we are in discussions. And we would like

to similarly reach a successful conclusion with the plaintiffs on this matter, so we're going to work at that. I think, obviously, no one would – none of us, not the plaintiffs nor ourselves – want this thing lingering around in perpetuity. So yeah, we are going to – and again, think about no more off season, just football season and business season. This has got to be an item that gets talked about as soon as we hit the ground Monday morning and get ready to address issues like this.

Olivier Poulin: We'll go to Arash, and then we're going to have to introduce our guests for the --

Randy Ambrosie: OK. That's fine.

Question: Randy, to your right, in the back.

Randy Ambrosie: Oh, OK.

Question: Coaches are paid to win. Coaches, their livelihoods are based on winning and losing. Some of the staff people I've spoken with and players say coaches are going to basically use most of their staff cap for assistant coaches, coordinators, etcetera, which means there'll be less money around for equipment people and trainers, which are the people who are really entrusted in keeping guys safe, keeping guys on the field. Why not remove coaches and some of the people who are involved with player safety from that cap?

Randy Ambrosie: Yeah, so we've actually built this in two different categories. So they are separated. There isn't the borrowing from one category for another. They are separated, in part to make sure that the issues relating to football operations, relating to player health and safety and equipment, and all of those other vital parts, that's a separate category from the football category. And we did it specifically so that we wouldn't see those one spilling over into the other or vice-versa.

Olivier Poulin: Alright. Randy, if you'd like to introduce your guests.

Randy Ambrosie: I would. So you know, this journey to an idea of a CFL 2.0 started with a conversation amongst the governors about the fact that we don't have one kind of CFL city. We actually have different kinds of CFL cities. So you'd say in some respects, you know, Edmonton and Regina and Winnipeg and Hamilton and Ottawa, you know, could be maybe well identified by a similar culture of a very strong Canadian identity, but our cities like Vancouver and Toronto are big, international cities, and Montreal being so wonderfully unique on its own, that we had to not think about our game through the lens of one strategy that's one-size-fits-all strategy, but ultimately a strategy that was customized.

And once we started talking about the fact that we had these international markets, we started to think, well, what's going on in the world of football. And it just so happened that one of the things that I did was I ran into Blake Nill, the head coach of the UBC

Thunderbirds, and Blake said hey, have you looked at Mexico. They're playing incredible football in Mexico, and I had the opportunity through Blake to be introduced to Oscar Perez. And Oscar is one of the owners and founders of the LFA, the League Football Americano, in Mexico.

And through a series of discussions with Oscar and his son, Jose, who serves as Oscar's interpreter – he's now my adopted nephew, Jose, and Alex, the Commissioner of the LFA, we started this conversation about what could we do to grow the game of football in Canada in the CFL, and in Mexico, where we could work with our players to welcome in the best players from Mexico into the CFL and then find opportunities for Canadian players, maybe those that are coming out of college or junior that aren't quite ready, and give them an opportunity to go and play professional football in Mexico and get some seasoning, if we could share resources and learn from one another. We've got some of the best football coaches in the world, and if we could get our football coaches interacting with our partners in Mexico, that that would be very positive.

And as a result of all of that, and with tremendous support from our board of governors, unanimous support from our board of governors, to advance on this strategy, I'm happy to announce today that we've reached an agreement, a letter of intent, that frames a relationships with our friends in the LFA, with Oscar Perez. We are actually, thanks to a great effort from our CFL team – Christina Litz gets a big shout-out, Christina Litz and Paul Graham at TSN, and our friends at ESPN – we're going to be broadcasting the Grey Cup game in Mexico on Sunday in Spanish for the first time ever. And this [is an] opportunity to think about this not as a small CFL but a big CFL, the CFL that welcomes in our friends from around the world, and I'm happy to say today that we're going to invite Oscar and Alex to join me. We're going to sign the letter of intent and really use this to kick off the beginning of what we hope is a really long-term, fantastic relationship that helps us grow the game of football.

One of the things that's contained in the letter of intent is the idea of doing a football scouting combine this coming winter, probably in January, where the LFA will be hosting us and putting on display the best players that Mexico has to offer. We'll give our coaches and GMs an opportunity to see these wonderful, young athletes. And I think it's the beginning of a new beginning for us. So if I can, I'd ask Oscar and Alex to join me. We have a table set up, and we're going to sign the document and really use this as the beginning of the new beginning. CFL 2.0 is now officially open for business. And Oscar and Alex, if you would join me, I'd like to have you help me sign these documents.

(Documents are signed)

Randy Ambrosie: And I'd offer that Oscar and Alex will make themselves available to the media to visit with you. I should just say we had an opportunity to go and visit them in Mexico, and not only to spend time with the league, but to visit their college football system. We visited their national championship team. They were practising. We got to see their players. The head coach was so excited to have us

there. He actually had their field goal kicker put a bit of a show on for us. He put the ball 65 yards out and kicked three field goals like it was basically a PAT. And it was an amazing experience to see their warmth and hospitality for us.

You know, it's the beginning of something. We don't know where it's going to take us, but we think it's an exciting journey, and I couldn't be more honoured to welcome our colleagues and friends from Mexico into a relationship with the Canadian Football League. So gentlemen, thank you, and welcome.

Unidentified Male: Thank you. (Inaudible – applause).

Olivier Poulin: Well, this concludes this morning's session. Thank you, everyone. As Commissioner Ambrosie mentioned, the LFA representatives are available for interviews. We're going to do this just up front here, because we also need to turn the room around for the fans' State of the League that follows a little bit later. Thanks, everybody. Merci.