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PRINCIPAL(S)/PRINCIPAUX: Jeffrey L. Orridge, Commissioner of the CFL

SUBJECT/SUJET: CFL Commissioner Jeffrey L. Orridge delivers his annual State of the League address where he discusses wide-ranging topics as it pertains to the League and its business.

Moderator: I still see some people standing in the back. If you can just take your seats, please. It's not going to be a short morning. OK.

Bonjour, tout le monde, et bienvenue.

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the 2015 State of the League. Just some housekeeping items before we begin today. Number one, I was asked to remind everyone that the Football Reporters of Canada brunch, induction, and AGM will take place on Sunday at 9:00 a.m. in – and I'm going to try this – La Provisieur (ph) room. Provencher (ph) room. There we go. Is that good? Excellent. And of course that's at the Fort Gary. Secondly, the order of things that are going to happen today. So the Commissioner's going to come up on stage, he's going to make some remarks, then we'll go into the Q&A. I'll moderate that for the Commissioner. And then we're going to do a photo op at the very end with the Grey Cup trophy and the football with our brand new logo spot on it. So without further ado, ladies and gentlemen, the 13th Commissioner of the CFL, Mr. Jeffrey L. Orridge.

(Applause)

Jeffrey Orridge: Good morning, everyone. Thanks for joining us here this morning. And thank you for coming to the 103rd Grey Cup presented by Shaw. You tell our stories, you offer your insights, and you really do help us stay in the news and be part of the national conversation as well as the local conversation. This morning I plan to do three things, because I typically do things in threes. I'm going to answer your questions. I'm going to give you an honest assessment of the state of the league. And hopefully I'm going to make some news by telling you about something new that we're launching. So actually, I'd like to start with that.

As you know, this is a year of transition for our league and for me personally. This is my first Grey Cup as Commissioner. And working with the support of our board of governors, I'm bringing some new ideas and some new approaches to the league. I believe this is also the start of a transformation. I will continue to celebrate what is great about this league: our authenticity, our character, our uniqueness. But because in today's world, if you're not changing, adapting, progressing constantly and substantially, then you're not only getting passed by, you're actually

getting left. The first thing we need to do is to update and transform how we present ourselves. This Is Our League was a great positioning for the CFL when it was presented several years ago, and we will always respect and cherish our history, our traditions, and our important place in the culture of this country – always. But today's CFL is made of so much more. We have world-class athletes doing amazing things. Our games are fun and exciting and social, the place to be on many nights in many of our cities. We play now in new and newly renovated venues, delivering great value through wrap-around experiences that are fun, affordable, and accessible. And we're exploring and even inventing new ways for fans to engage with our brand and each other. So the time has come for a new brand positioning, a new tag line, and even a new logo. It's all captured in this brand new video. So let's take a look.

(Video)

So there you have it. I know I have a lot more to go through, so I'm going to try to control my enthusiasm at this point. It's fast, it's contemporary, and it's clearly forward looking. It has a look and feel that is more now than nostalgic. It represents the past, but it also invites our fans into the future. The new tag line is What We're Made Of. It allows us to really showcase what is true and best about the CFL today. And then there's the new logo. It features a more contemporary font and a cleaner design, with elements that can be pulled out, which work well in many formats, including what will be a new merchandise look and new, fashion-forward apparel. The three laces on the stylized ball represents our three downs and the pride in our unique game. The maple leaf remains as we are proudly Canadian. But we're more than that. Look, we're not asking our new fans or casual fans to join our already avid fans in the stands just because somehow it's their duty as Canadians. We're inviting them to join us because the product and the experience are fun, exciting, accessible, and authentic. We're showcasing who and what we are today, and we're looking to build for the future.

Our fans are tremendous. You see that here at Grey Cup more than anywhere else, and we love them. But our fans will be the first to tell you that we need more fans, and in particular, we need to attract that next generation of fans so this league is strong for years to come. Throughout our conversation, I think you'll see two things. The first is why we need to do this now. We face some significant headwinds, and, while the league has come a long way and is in a stable place, it would be foolish and even irresponsible for us to ignore these rapidly changing landscapes and challenges that it presents.

And here's the second thing. So here's why we can do this now. We also have a lot of momentum, with new stadiums in place and more on the way, some great, new stars on the field, emerging technologies, and the social dynamic that allow us to reach new fans in new ways. And we need to capitalize on that. In fact, I sometimes feel like a quarterback in a windy stadium. At times in the game I can feel the wind at our back, and we want to take advantage of it. At other times we feel the wind in our face, and we need to strategize on how to move the ball in different ways. But I believe opposition always creates opportunity.

So here's an important example of our game. So there's no sports analogy needed here. Our game, it's our reason for being, and we love it. And it's one of the great games in the world. And this year we made it better. The rule changes

that our rules committee developed with the help of Glen Johnson and introduced by our board of governors had a dramatic and positive effect. Scoring was up eight percent. CFL offences increased their scoring by the equivalent of one more touchdown per game, up 44.5 points per game in 2015 compared to 37.7 points in 2014. We saw a touchdown every 6.6 possessions this year compared to one every 7.9 possessions a year ago. Game flow improved. The average game was two hours and 52 minutes, three minutes shorter than a year ago, despite an expanded use of replay. Because of other innovations, such as headsets for officials, it allowed for pace to pick up. We made the convert less predictable and much more exciting. One-point converts were good 85.5 percent of the time instead of 99.5 percent of the time. And the two-point converts were successful 65.9 percent of the time, and became a more effective weapon.

Changes to the passing game to give receivers more room to operate while preventing defenders from pushing off. It actually worked. Our game was more wide open, and it featured more scoring, no doubt. At the same time, defences were scoring threats – as scoring threats continued. CFL defences returned interceptions and fumbles for 34 touchdowns during the regular season, six percent up from the previous year but up 40 percent from a few years ago in 2012. On the other hand, penalties were up nine percent and almost two flags per game. In 2014 they were up 18 percent over the previous year. So the trends slowed this year compared to last, and the number of flags declined as the season progressed. But at the same time, we still sit at 23.5 flags per game in 2015 compared to 18.4 in 2013.

We need to continue to drill down on the causes. I think it's unfair and way too simplistic to solely attribute this to officiating. How can we work with our coaches and players, as well as our officials, to reduce the number of penalties? There's been a lot of talk, as there is every year in every league and every sport, about the quality of officiating. Mistakes are made in any human endeavour. And when our officials make a mistake, they admit it. I wish everyone who watches our game was just as quick to acknowledge when a good call is made and when a good game is officiated. The team of officials is the only one on the field expected to be perfect every game. Overall, our officials do a really difficult job very, very well. But I say to them and I say to you our best can always get better, and we'll always work to get better. In particular, our rules committee will examine in the off season whether an expanded use of replay in some circumstances can help to ensure that we get it right, especially on big plays, without unduly slowing down the game.

I believe the most significant challenge facing our product was injuries to quarterbacks. Seven of nine CFL clubs lost their starting quarterback, and sometimes their top two quarterbacks, for significant periods of time. Only Henry Burris in Ottawa, incredibly the oldest quarterback in the league, made all 18 regular season starts, with the asterisk that Calgary's Bo Levi Mitchell was rested in their final game. So maybe Bo would have qualified for that as well. But you get the point, right? Our teams used 28 different starting quarterbacks this year, a CFL record, at least for the vast majority of the league's history, operating as a nine-team entity. So a record 11 quarterbacks made their debut as a starter. Injuries are part of any sport, but this was clearly an extreme case. The truth is this affected teams' ability to perform at their best, and so it did affect our product. In games where a club had their number one quarterback available, teams went 58 and 35. In games where clubs turned to their

back-up quarterback to start or went deeper down on the depth chart, the teams went 23 and 46. When you consider how rule changes opened up the game for offences and scoring went up, imagine the fireworks that we might have seen if those offences had have – have had their best fire starters behind the centre. But it was just one of those years, extremely rare years, for quarterback injuries. But maybe there are some underlying issues. We're going to examine that.

And while we have done much to protect quarterbacks – you can't hit a quarterback passing when high or low, for example; you can't hit a quarterback when they're sliding – there's even more that we can do. I plan to sit down with our teams, our football leaders in the off season and really examine this issue. That being said, there really didn't seem to be a pattern of injuries, a pattern to these injuries. In the case of Darian Durant, there wasn't even contact on the injury that put him out for the season. But we owe it to our fans, our players, and our product to take a careful look at this.

We also saw both tailwinds and headwinds at the same time when it comes to attendance. We saw sell-outs in places like Hamilton and Ottawa. That's a very positive momentum, given that a few years ago there was even talk about the CFL's relevance in Ontario. But we we saw and experienced fluctuation and some softness in other markets, and overall our attendance was flat, and it has been flat for the past several years. This is one reason why we want to show what a great time a CFL game is, and why we're looking forward to new venues in Saskatchewan and Calgary in addition to the ones we've opened in other cities, including here in Winnipeg. It's also why our teams are working to deliver the very best game experiences for our fans and to connect with those fans between games.

Outside the stadium, according to some measurements, we experienced a 15 percent drop in our television ratings. It's my belief that this was the result of a perfect storm. Now, television is down across many properties as the industry undergoes massive changes in the digital age. But we faced unprecedented competition from the Pan Am Games in Canada, the FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada, the Blue Jays' surge, which captured much of Canada's attention, and forced the displacement of our team in the biggest market in Canada. And teams in some of our strongest TV markets – Saskatchewan and Manitoba – had very tough seasons on the field. Given all that, I believe the fact that an average of 589,000 fans watched each and every of our regular season games speaks to the strength and the resilience of the CFL on TSN and RDS, and the quality work our broadcasters do week in and week out. Still, it would be irresponsible if we didn't take this seriously. I know we do, and so does TSN and RDS. We need to continue to elevate our brand and make change that will ultimately transform our league, and that will be reflected by positive ratings.

One of the things that we did this year is we experimented with Thursday night games, and it was very successful. And some of our highest rated games were on Thursdays. It's this type of innovative thinking, adjusting to the marketplace, taking some informed chances, that will help to continue to transform our league. It's something we can build on next year. Again, while there are headwinds, there's also momentum.

One of the most important things that could have been done this year was to improve the situation in Toronto, and now we have. We announced the Argos will have new local ownership in Larry Tanenbaum and Bell Canada. They're moving to a refurbished, outdoor venue, BMO Field, as early as next season. We can't assume that these two things will automatically ensure that the Argos, who have been strong for years now on the field, will be just as strong in business. However, there is tremendous potential for a new era for the Argos, and a new era we plan to mark with a tremendous Grey Cup in 2016 in Toronto.

We also had a very strong year when it comes to corporate partnerships. In fact, it was our strongest year in CFL history, with the exception of the 100th Grey Cup. We signed tremendous new partners, including Cal Tire, Post, AGF, Microsoft, and of course our great friends at Shaw, the first ever presenting sponsor of the Grey Cup. And we renewed some other great partners, including CP, who dramatically increased its investment, and Tim Horton's, Purolator, Nissan, the Keg, and Kubota.

We're taking other steps to expand our fan base and reach beyond Canada. Our partnership with the ESPN, posting mostly moderate ratings, has established us firmly in the US, where fans can watch this Sunday's game on ESPN2. Our partnership with British Telecom has given us a foothold in the UK. And we're streaming the Grey Cup, presented by Shaw, around the world to approximately 150 countries via You Tube. Building on our new brand positioning, we will launch a brand new digital platform in the new year, including a new team and league sites that work well on mobile as well as tablet and desktop, because that's how the world engages in sports now and sports properties as well as brands on line in this new day and age. We're very excited about our move to Adidas as our official apparel company, and the new uniforms will be introduced in 2016. And there will be more to come, much more to come.

I spent my first season this year watching, listening, learning, and doing. And I look forward to engaging our board of governors on a new strategic plan in the year ahead. I'm enormously proud of what we, under the banner of the CFL community, do. This year the CFL, its teams and its athletes contributed times and millions of dollars to amateur football across the country; worked with Football Canada to certify minor football coaches in safe contact, blocking and tackling techniques; participated in the Purolator Tackle Hunger, which collected more than 700,000 pounds of food for Canadian food banks; encouraged by fairness for gay athletes through our partnership with You Can Play; taught youth about active and healthy living by supporting the Box Program; raised funds and awareness for women's cancers through CFL Pink; and helped to support high school football through the Nissan Kick-Off Project, just to name a few initiatives. We also announced a comprehensive, league-wide policy on violence against women, which is an important step forward.

Thank you for your patience during this rather lengthy presentation, but I wanted to be as fulsome and transparent as possible and to be honest with you about our headwinds that we currently face, as well as confirm our stable foundation and our forward momentum. On a final note, I'm really looking forward to the 103rd Grey Cup presented by Shaw, and want to thank everybody associated with the game and this wonderful festival that we're enjoying here in Winnipeg. We have

so much to look forward to at the CFL. Transitions and transformations are not always smooth. But a vibration and a bit of turbulence is something that you go through at times when you're actually gaining altitude. And I have every confidence that the CFL is going to achieve greater heights in the years to come. Thank you very much. I really look forward to your questions.

Moderator: We'll start with Lawless.

Question: Gary Lawless, TSN. Jeffrey, you currently don't have a drug testing policy in place. Could you speak specifically about the changes that you're trying to make, and where are you set right now in discussions with the CFL PA, and when you expect to make an announcement on those changes?

Jeffrey Orridge: That's a good and timely question. You know, it is unfortunate that we don't have a drug testing policy in place right now. It's not good for the players, it's certainly not good for the league. But we've been working hand-in-hand with the Players' Association on developing something that will be much more forward thinking and much more positive, and much more beneficial. So you know, from the time I started, I was on the job less than a week when I was informed that the current lab that we had, that was WADA certified, would no longer be testing for us unless we made some changes. So since that time, I've always been espousing change and positive change for player health and safety. I mean, that's our number one concern.

At the present time I really can't disclose the particulars because we're still in conversation with the Players' Association. As you know, it's part of the collective bargaining agreement, and so we've got to do it in partnership with them. And we want to make sure that we do get it right. And so as soon as we have something concrete, and we make an announcement, you'll know the details.

Moderator: Terry.

Question: Terry Jones of The Edmonton Sun. One of the buzz words you used there was accessible. We in the media in my time have never experienced the Canadian Football League to be less accessible than it is right now. There are a multitude of examples which I intend to supply you with at a later date as the President of the FRC. But I didn't hear anything in your speech to suggest that this is one of your largest problem areas, and I'd like to hear a response from you if you have any intention of making changes to what, from my point of view, looks like a league that's being run more by its coaches in that area than people like yourself.

Jeffrey Orridge: Well, thank you for bringing that issue to my attention. You know, we pride ourselves on being accessible, clearly, to the fans. And certainly we should be more accessible to the media, if that's an issue. I mean, as I mentioned at the beginning, we rely on you to tell our stories. We rely on you to make us part of the national conversation, not just the local conversation. So more access for you is only beneficial not just for you but to us as well, and also the players and the teams. Showcasing us, highlighting us, profiling us, telling our stories, that's vitally important. So thank you for bringing that to my attention, and we'll certainly be discussing things in the off season, and maybe having conversations with you about tactical applications

that would make it more conducive for you and more convenient for the teams and the clubs and the coaches and the players for more accessibility.

Question: (Off microphone): But you haven't identified that as an issue at this point.

Jeffrey Orridge: Well, I'm glad you brought it to my attention now because, now that I'm hearing about it, it's something that I'll put on the list. I mean, I've got a long bucket list of things to do, but I'm not saying that this is any less important. It will be one of the things that are a priority. Because as I said, we depend on you guys.

Moderator: Thank you. Simmons. Oh, sorry.

Question: Dave Naylor, TSN. Commissioner, what is the league's view on the possibility of one team wanting to hire a coach who is on contract to another team and add to his title? Say a team would hire a coach, try to hire a coach, and make him their head coach and assistant GM, even though that coach is under contract to another team. What is the etiquette that the league considers appropriate?

Jeffrey Orridge: Well, I think generally speaking – and I think this is kind of the culture of sport, where you give a courtesy call to the team that you're going to address, and you let them know and you have that conversation. And I think it's really about conversation and dialogue, and it's about interpersonal interaction. And I think that's where, you know, that's where the successes are, when you have those kinds of conversations up front, you're honest, you're open. But I think that's part of the general culture of sport, you know, that kind of professional courtesy that you extend.

Question: So do teams have, then, the right to block such moves?

Jeffrey Orridge: You know, it depends on the specific contract. Right? So without knowing the details of the contract and what the arrangement is, it's really hard for me to --

Question: Sure.

Jeffrey Orridge: -- speculate on a blanket, you know, approach. But yeah, it would depend on the contract. But clearly, you know, we're all in this together. We all want to work well together. And teams are interested in their individual success, but we as a league are interested in the success of the entire league.

Moderator: Anyone else? There's got to be more. We'll do Paul, and then we'll go to the left. Go ahead, Paul.

Question: Jeffrey, some – close to five months ago you were in Winnipeg and you said that a new drug policy was just weeks away at most. What did you misjudge?

Jeffrey Orridge: Yeah, well, you know, things don't go always according to plan. And we live in an imperfect world. I realized that I have to have a partnership with the Players' Association. And because it's part of the collective bargaining agreement,

it's a lot more complicated than I originally assumed. And we want to make sure we get it right. And so as we, you know, continue to delve into the policy and the uniqueness of this policy, it became a little more complex. And certainly the players have to have this whatever agreement they have has to be ratified by the entire constituents. And they only meet twice a year, and this is one of the times when they meet. So --

Question: How much is the Players' Association resisting change?

Jeffrey Orridge: Well, I don't think they're resisting change. I think they're -- that they're very concerned about making sure that it's equitable and it's fair and it's reasonable and it's right, and it's not just right for today but it's right in years to come. Because we don't want to have to revisit this kind of situation year in and year out. So we want to make sure we get it right and it's for the long term. But you know, both of us have a shared interest in player health and safety, and that's one of the things that's paramount for both the Players' Association and the league.

Moderator: Andrew.

Question: Commissioner, Andrew Bucholtz from Yahoo Sports. Do you have an update on the concussion litigation against this league? And do you have any plans either to address concussions for former CFL players or for current CFL players?

Jeffrey Orridge: You know, I really can't comment on anything that's under litigation right now. So I'm going to kind of defer on that.

Question: OK, but do you have any plans to address concussions for people who have played in this league or people who do currently play in this league?

Jeffrey Orridge: You know what? The great thing is that this league has made tremendous strides and continues to work very hard on player health and safety. And one of the things that we did this year is we partnered with the NFL on a new, experimental concussion protocol, I'll spare you the technical details, but it has to do with eye movement. Right? So being able to get out ahead of it and diagnose it even earlier on. But we continue to work with medical professionals as well as the NFL and other people in sport. You know, concussions are not unique to football, and they're certainly not unique to the CFL. Hockey, soccer, even competitive cheerleading, I mean, we're all faced with these things. I've got a couple of kids, right? I've got a ten-year-old and a five-year-old, and both of them participate in the sport. So if anything, I'm very, very conscious of making sure that they participate in a safe environment. We're working with Football Canada on a safe contact program to make sure that blocking and tackling is done properly and effectively and safely. So we've got a number of things in place, not just on the professional level, but certainly on the youth level.

Moderator: Drew.

Question: Commissioner, Gerrard Drew (ph) from The Hamilton Spectator. In July of 2010, then-Commissioner Mark Cohon wrote to Hamilton city council trying to convince them to invest over \$60 million in a new stadium. It talked about the economic value of hosting Grey Cups, and it sort of dangled multiple Grey Cups for Hamilton if they built the stadium. They did that, and the city invested the

money, but still no Grey Cup for Hamilton up until this point. I think there is concern about the transparency of the process regarding how Grey Cups are awarded to various cities. There was talk that, you know, there was some sort of sweetheart deal for David Braley. It's back in Toronto now within a very short period of time. How does the league plan to address the issue of awarding Grey Cups to various cities? How is that process going to be more transparent? And how does Hamilton get one?

Jeffrey Orridge: Well, don't be concerned about Hamilton. It has an incredible stadium, it's got an incredible community, and I'm sure that there will be a Grey Cup coming to Hamilton in the near future.

In terms of how Grey Cups are awarded, it's a decision that's discussed and oftentimes debated, but ultimately made by the board of governors under a lot of different criteria. So in terms of transparency, you know, in the past I believe we've notified people, we've made the announcement a year at a time, and certainly, you know, maybe 16 months, 18 months, maybe even two years in advance. And we'll continue to do that. It can be a complicated process. But I assure you that there is equity and reasonableness applied to every decision that we make when it comes to the Grey Cup. But Hamilton is a great stadium, great environment, and it's a perfect place to play a Grey Cup.

Question: Commissioner, Jason Gregor, TSN in Edmonton. The ratio – you mentioned the quarterback injuries. We saw it in Calgary, we saw it in Edmonton, where they have to dress a defensive lineman in games just because the depth of Canadian offensive linemen, once you get a few injuries, isn't there for most teams. Has there been any talk – a few GMs have mentioned a ratio change or exemption on the offensive line, or even lower the number of starters as Canadians. Has that been talked about?

Jeffrey Orridge: You know, it's not – there have been quiet discussions about that, but it's not something that's on the front burner right now. You know, we always want to get the best players available, and injuries this year have been unfortunate. And it's not just among quarterbacks, but it's been throughout the league. So you know, it's something that we need to address. In terms of ratios, we're going to try to get the best players possible. And of course, you know, we've got a Canadian player ratio, which is very, very important to our league and of course our country. You want to see guys that you know that are from your community and certainly represent Canada in this league.

Question: And what – on – you had mentioned being social with your fans. The website was less than desirable for fans. They couldn't get any statistics. People even wanted to start a fantasy league, they couldn't get it done. What's the reason why there's been such a delay in having your website, which is the easiest way to connect to the younger fan base, not accessible?

Jeffrey Orridge: The way is easy; the how and the implementation can be a little more difficult. Just like building a house, sometimes you'll have construction delays. There are things that you don't anticipate and things that are improvements each time that you say hmm, that's a great idea, let's put that in. So don't worry, the website is coming. It's going to launch next year. Improved stats, improved opportunities for fantasy. It's going to be something awesome, very similar to what we're doing with the

whole rebranding, right? It's about new and improved. It's not about perfection, but it's about progress. And the website, the new website, you're going to be really, really excited about it. And that is the other thing that's going to engage new fans of that demographic. We know the importance of statistics, we know how the younger demographic consume sport, and oftentimes it's fantasy. You never actually have to play it down to be fully engaged with the CFL if you're on line.

Moderator: Lawless.

Question: Gary Lawless, TSN. Commissioner, in the new CBA players were allowed to sign one-year contracts without options. This year may be the largest free agent class, well, certainly the largest one we've seen in a long, long time. Is there some concern at the league level and amongst the board of governors that there's going to be a lack of continuity amongst teams? You know, the Argos have more than 24 free agents this year. That could see a ton of players changing hands, changing addresses. What are you guys talking about on that level?

Jeffrey Orridge: You know, what's great is parity in the league. I mean, if you look at this year's results, I mean, Ottawa was two and 16 last year. There was a lot of concern about, when they were entering the league as a new franchise, would it dilute the other teams, would it dilute the league, would it dilute the brand. Quite the opposite, it seems, right? The great thing about sports is it's unpredictable. You never know what product you're going to get, and you never know how a team is going to assemble. And the chemistry among the team is just as important as the star players. So you know, we'll see what happens, but I think it's too early to speculate on what may be. I think this year was a great example of the unpredictability, the excitement, the uncertainty, and everybody having something at stake. And you can have a team that was just a couple of years four and 14 vying for the Grey Cup championship. Last year an expansion team, two and 16, here this weekend. Amazing stories. And it's only in sport, and it's only in football, and it's only in the CFL that we can see these kinds of things.

Question: Just to follow --

Moderator: Yeah, go ahead.

Question: Just to follow on the same subject, Dexter McCoil of the Eskimos, he's a player who's filed a grievance because he doesn't believe he was offered that one-year contract. Where -- what is the status of that grievance, and when do you expect it to be resolved?

Jeffrey Orridge: You know, I really can't speculate on that, again. I'm not intimately involved with it. And of course if it's the subject of litigation, you know, it's our policy not to really comment on it. It would be unfair to speculate or to offer anything more.

Unidentified Male: (Off microphone): The website. (Inaudible)

Jeffrey Orridge: Yup. You know what? There was a question about the website. I said next year; it's actually sooner than that. It's next week. And you're right, there have been delays, but we want to make sure we get it right. And when you see it,

you'll be really glad we waited to have the product that we do now. It's going to be awesome.

Question: Farhan Lalji from TSN. You've been asked a couple of times about the drug policy, and you mentioned the players only meet a couple of times a year. They're meeting now. Is there a proposal before them right now, a working document? And regardless, you've said you want to get it right, but is there a timeframe, a target for when you want to get this done?

Jeffrey Orridge: I want to get it done as soon as possible. And I take responsibility for ultimately getting it done. We're working with the Players' Association. There is a proposal in front of them right now. I'm sure they've been discussing it. And I'm sure they're going to respond and they'll get back to me as soon as possible. But I think, you know, there's a whole issue of making sure that we do the best we can for the players with the players. And I think, you know, it's unfortunate that we don't have a drug policy in place right now, but we're working towards making it better. Right? Our best can always be better. We're always looking for ways to improve things, and particularly when it comes to players and their health and safety. And the drug policy is one of those things, right? We want to make sure that the people who are competing actually deserve the right to compete, and they're competing in the right way.

Moderator: Dan.

Question: Commissioner Orridge, Dan Ralph from Canadian Press. Is the game Sunday a sell-out? And if not, is that a concern?

Jeffrey Orridge: And you know, I think tickets are still being sold, but I think it's pretty close to being a sell-out. But regardless, I know it's going to be a great game, there's going to be a great crowd, there's incredible enthusiasm. You know, this is the one thing that is truly a nation-building event. I've met people in the last couple of days that I've been here from all corners of Canada who are avid Grey Cup fans. There are people who've been here, you know, 30, 33 years and they haven't missed a Grey Cup. So I'm not really worried about the crowd, I'm not worried about the fan base, I'm not worried about the game. It's going to be an incredibly exciting game with two incredibly exciting teams, and it's going to meet and exceed people's expectations, no doubt.

Moderator: Madani.

Question: Commissioner, over here, Arash Madani from SportsNet, to your left. No, right here.

Jeffrey Orridge: Hey, Arash.
Question: How you doing?

Jeffrey Orridge: Good.

Question: Understanding I'm asking this question to the first African-American Commissioner in sport, most of your players, the majority of your players, are non-Caucasian and yet there's only one black GM and there's one black head coach, and he's in an interim role. Do you feel it should be a priority to implement

a CFL version of the Rooney rule for interviewing for executive and coaching positions moving forward?

Jeffrey Orridge: I think the CFL has always had a history of inclusiveness and giving people opportunities based on their content and their character, not on their colour or their creed. I don't mean for it to be – to sound like a trite answer because it's not. It's very serious, and I take it very seriously. But you know, once again, if you're qualified in this league, you'll get an opportunity. And I think you'll see that more and more. There are people who are being groomed as we speak right now. There are people who are being sourced. I mean, the best thing that we can possibly do, that any employer can do, is to be able to source from the broadest pool possible of the best talent possible. And I think that's what we continue to do.

We saw that – I gave an award last night, the Commissioner's Award, to Bernie Custis. He was the first black quarterback in the CFL, and in professional sport, in 1951. And so I think he paved the way for a lot of what's happening now. But you're seeing more people of colour, clearly not just on the field but in positions and administration, and positions of authority. So you know, the CFL continues to be progressive.

Question: But would you want to see some kind of a Rooney rule in place, where there has to be at least one minority candidate interviewed for a coaching or management role?

Jeffrey Orridge: I think that we need to hire the best people possible. Right? Wherever they may come from, wherever that may be. Right?

Moderator: Friesen.

Question: Paul Friesen again, Winnipeg Sun. Is it your hope, Jeffrey, that a new drug policy will match, if not exceed, the NFL's for first-time offenders?

Jeffrey Orridge: You know, I think that we need to be conscious and cognizant of the fact that we need to do what's right for us, for our league. Right? The NFL is a completely different league. They operate very differently than we do. So we have to do what's appropriate for us.

Question: It's one of the tenets – it's one of the tenets of a strong policy, according to all the people in the industry: stiff first penalty and public disclosure, not to mention independent results management. You had neither of those three. Will you have any of those three?

Jeffrey Orridge: Yeah, well, you know, we've engaged CCES again for consulting on developing a new policy. So I'm sure it's going to be in accordance with what CCES feels is the standard for the Canadian Football League. I'm confident about that.

Moderator: Thanks, Paul. Gordon.

Question: Gord Holder, The Ottawa Citizen. Commissioner, you spoke earlier about a priority about player safety. I wanted to ask you about that in relation to scheduling. You've got teams playing three games in 11 days with travel, teams playing twice in four and five days with travel. What can you do about – what will you do about scheduling to enhance the stated priority for player safety?

Jeffrey Orridge: Yeah. You know, scheduling is a complicated beast, and it's like a Rubik's cube, right? If any of you remember Rubik's cube. When I was growing up, you had to match everything up. Anyway, it can be complicated. Right? Part of it has to do with not only team preferences but stadium availability, broadcast windows. There are a number of things that go into it. We certainly want to make sure that the environment for the players is the best it can be. We want to make sure they get enough rest. We want to make sure they're healthy. So we do everything that we possibly can, and we'll continue to do everything we possibly can, to make the environment as conducive as possible to have the best performance on the field. And one of those things is making sure that they're as healthy as possible.

Moderator: Just a time check here. So it's 9:50 a.m. We'll go to Steve.

Question: Commissioner, say I'm a 30-year-old not engaged in the CFL and I'm a sports fan. How is it a video, a logo change, your words of rebranding, and a new website, how is that going to engage me in the Canadian Football League?

Jeffrey Orridge: It's going to get your attention. That's the first thing. By doing something new and fresh and exciting and innovating, it naturally garners attention. The other things that we're doing is our online applications are going to improve, our website is going to improve. It's all those other things where we'll be able to reach out to fans where they live, and people who are non-fans, right? It's that new generation of fans, it's that next generation of fans, it's the Millennials that are very important to us. But we have to do what is relevant to them and play where they're playing, right? So by our multi-platform executions, that's going to – that's what's going to reach them.

Question: Commission, in the back. Dave Campbell from 630 CHED Radio. Just right here, straight ahead.

Jeffrey Orridge: Straight ahead.

Question: Right here.

Jeffrey Orridge: Sorry, the lights are so bright. I really apologize.

Question: That's good enough.

Jeffrey Orridge: Wait – OK. Better.

Question: About a year ago, Eskimos President and CEO Len Rhodes started a movement to try and get the season moved up by a couple of weeks. It seemed to be gaining some traction with other teams from around the league. It seems like at the league level he said that it's not gaining as much traction anymore. Why is

that? What are the challenges, I guess, from your perspective of moving the season up? Because two weeks ago it would have been 13 degrees here on Grey Cup Sunday.

Jeffrey Orridge: Yeah. It's still not bad weather here. And the weather is unpredictable. We have talked about moving the season up. It can be very complicated. We've got to look at a number of forces that are competitive forces as well as practical forces. One of the things, if we move the season up a few weeks, one of the things we'd have to contend with is what else in the sports landscape is going on at that time. Right? If we started moving it up earlier in June, then we're competing with NHL playoffs and Stanley Cup finals, then we're competing with the NBA finals, baseball is in progress. So the competitive landscape can be very different. The other thing that we have to contend with is stadium availability and looking at that. We have to look at our fan base, and where are people available, and what time are they available. If we move it up too early in the season, kids are still in school if we have weeknight games.

So it's all of those things that we take into consideration when we're evaluating what the schedule will be, whether it's a week moved up or two weeks or where it is. But it's – once again, as I mentioned before, it's really very complicated, but we take it very seriously and we have a bunch of different analytical measurements that we utilize to make sure that we have the best schedule available, and also to the earlier point, that the athletes are best prepared to perform at their highest level.

Moderator: We'll do Dave and then Terry.

Question: Commissioner, we're aware that the CFL is an integrated league with – between Canadians and Americans in every – almost every position: players, coaches, executives, GMs, owners, and now the Commissioner's chair is occupied by an American. The only role in the Canadian Football League that is not integrated is officiating. It is all Canadian, which creates an issue of depth beyond the officials you have. A lot of people in your league talk about wanting to hire and train US officials from border cities to work CFL games to give you more depth. Is that something that you think is worth considering?

Jeffrey Orridge: So I think there are two points you made. Integration is a very good point and a very good example, and I am the living, breathing example of integration, gentlemen. I am both an American by birth but I'm a Canadian by choice, right? So I've got the dual citizenship. The second thing is, in terms of officiating and expanding our depth, absolutely. We're having conversations constantly with CIS and amateur football about cultivating talent here and expanding that pool and getting more people interested in officiating.

The other thing is, candidly, we've had conversations with the NFL about officiating and what kind of exchange of knowledge we can have with them in terms of improving our product. But we're always looking to improve, we're always looking to get better. Nothing is perfect. And certainly in officiating, it is the hardest job in all of sport. They're expected to be perfect every single game, every single play. I don't think anybody among us – I'm sure any of us can attest to the fact that we've made a mistake in our careers. Right? As journalists, as administrators, as executives. So it's a really difficult job, but always looking for ways to improve and

always looking to tap into knowledge bases elsewhere, and always looking to mentor and cultivate and grow every aspect of our game, not only players but officials as well.

Question: Do you like the idea of hiring Americans?

Jeffrey Orridge: I like the idea of being able to get the best talent possible.

Moderator: Terry.

Jeffrey Orridge: And you know, one thing is understanding that our game has different rules and different regulations. And it's a different field. So there are always adjustments that have to be made. But I understand that in the past there have been officials who've come up from the south and participated here, so I don't see anything wrong with that.

Moderator: Go ahead, Terry.

Question: Yes. I would like to go back to the moving the schedule ahead up issue, and this is almost a confirm or deny question. But is it not true that your rights holder, TSN, essentially vetoed that idea?

Jeffrey Orridge: No. That's not true. They didn't veto the idea. You know what? TSN has been an incredible partner. And they are willing to work with us on whatever accommodations we need to make the game better and to make improvement on the game.

Moderator: Kurt.

Question: Just as a follow-up to Dave's question there about the officiating, can you put more money into it anyhow? Will that at all help solve – I'm assuming – would you admit fairly or unfairly that the image of the league took a hit a bit this year with the officiating?

Jeffrey Orridge: I would think that money is not the solution. I would posit the fact that we need to think about all the other things that go into human error and utilizing other things to help solve and mitigate human error. And whether that's expanded use of replays where and when appropriate; whether that's better methods of communication on the field, I mean, it's a bunch of different things. And Glen Johnson is really the expert. But I think one of the things that we always do, and Glen has done a superb job in this, is working with the players and the coaches, as well as the officiating staff, in terms of bringing them up to speed on the rules and what's required and what the standards are. So you know, and Glen does that every week. You know, he takes clips of here's what happened that was done right this week, here's what needs improvement. Right? So it's a constant training and a constant education on improvement.

I think this year has been one of the exceptional years as well because we've had a lot of new rules implemented, and so people were getting used to them. And as anticipated, we saw a downward trend in penalties as the season

wore on, right? So I think we can continue to anticipate that, that there will be fewer penalties, because people will be making less mistakes.

Moderator: We've got about three minutes left, so we'll take a couple of questions – couple more. Farhan.

Question: You mentioned briefly – Commissioner, right over here.

Moderator: Just right there on the left.

Question: You mentioned briefly about expanded use of replay. Can we expect to see an expanded use of instant replay for 2016? And one of the areas I know that got a lot of attention this year was offensive pass interference and making that a possibility.

Jeffrey Orridge: Yeah. The rules committee is going to look at that in the off season and we're going to evaluate those things, and that and many more things, like we do every year. But the whole goal is making the game better, improving the product. And everything we do is to that end.

Moderator: Drew.

Question: I hate to go back to this, but the folks in Hamilton are wondering if they will see a Grey Cup within the next three years, within the next five years. Can you put a timeline on it? Because, you know, multiple Grey Cups within a certain – like, there's no – doesn't seem to be any structure or timeline around this. Is there any way to put some definitive timeline on when we might see one?

Jeffrey Orridge: I really can't put a timeline on it right now.

Moderator: We'll take a couple more. Yeah.

Jeffrey Orridge: But, Drew, I appreciate your advocacy. That's duly noted.

Question: (Off microphone)

Jeffrey Orridge: That's duly noted.

Question: When is Winnipeg getting another Grey Cup?

(Laughter)

Jeffrey Orridge: Sunday.

Question: I hear from the fans all the time. Some people here in Winnipeg were noting and questioning that their Grey Cup ticket was more than their season ticket. Do you think the pricing of the Grey Cup is an issue that you might want to look at, or do you not think it's a problem?

Jeffrey Orridge: You know, I really can't speculate on what the right price for a ticket is. I know this is a very special event. I know it's, for some people it's a once-in-a-lifetime event. I think that, by the crowd, by the energy, by the enthusiasm that's been garnered and generated since I've been here, you know, I think we'll have a good crowd. And I think, you know, the great thing is that the game is accessible not only in the stadium but our partners at TSN and RDS. If you're in the States you can watch it on ESPN. And for the first time ever, via You Tube, 150 other countries will be able to watch the Grey Cup. And that includes our Armed Forces bases around the world, so we're excited about that.

Moderator: Ross too right there.

Question: Jeffrey, regarding scheduling, how much would you like to avoid NFL Sundays in the fall? How big of a threat is the National Football League to your target demographic? And the Seahawks are marketing aggressively in Vancouver. Does that bother you? Are they a partner or are they a --

Jeffrey Orridge: Yeah.

Question: -- opposition?

Jeffrey Orridge: You know, last week, Ottawa and Hamilton, there was about two million people tuned in, 1.8, at the height of the game, yeah. At the height of the game, 1.8 million people tuned in. The game after that with Edmonton and Calgary.

Unidentified Male: Two-point-one.

Jeffrey Orridge: -- we had --

Unidentified Male: Two-point-one.

Jeffrey Orridge: -- 2.1 million people. That was played on Sunday. There were a slate of NFL games being played that same day. I'm very happy about those results. I think that, if you're a football fan, the CFL and the NFL are complementary to each other. I really do believe that we're not in a competition, we're more in concert with each other, because we offer two different types of game, but we're all in the game of football. And people will have a preference for the NFL or they'll have a preference for the CFL, but I got to tell you that the CFL is the most exciting football that I've experienced. I mean, we've got people in motion all the time. The parity in the league, the unpredictability of the outcomes, I'd stack that up against any other entertainment property in the world right now.

Moderator: Last one.

Question: Jeffrey, Jason Gregor from TSN in Edmonton. One last one. You mentioned transparency. Has there been any conversation -- now, you talk about getting your fans engaged all the time. They want to be on line. Having the neg lists public so people can see which players, you know, their team has protected, and also any sort of website that would have -- regardless of -- if you don't want to put out the

actual salaries of players, but when their contracts are done, so fans know in the summer time or in February who the pending free agents are?

Jeffrey Orridge: You know, it's interesting because I don't think any professional league officially publishes salaries and officially publishes details of the contracts. They are leaked, they are planted, they're – sometimes there are press releases, right? But they're leaked. But as a general rule, I don't know of any league that does that on a regular basis. I don't think the CFL would be any exception. I think accessibility is important. I think being able to understand statistics and being able to interact with players on a more personal level, on a more intimate level, the stories being told behind the players, those are the things that are important to people, not how much money they make.

Question: (Off microphone): Which is fine, but what about the neg list? Isn't that kind of a (inaudible) system, essentially? Lots – every other team knows which players, their fans know who's coming up the pipeline potentially.

Jeffrey Orridge: Well, that's something to look at. That's something that, you know, we candidly have not had discussions about. But if it's going to encourage more fan engagement, if it's going to promote the game, if it's going to make our league even more accessible than it already is and improve the product, those are the things we're looking at. So whether it's that execution, that idea, or any others, that's generally what we want to do. We want to promote this game, we want to build this game, we want to build the brand. We want to make sure that each team is healthy and prosperous and independent, and that it's for generations to come. Right? That's what's important.

So any and all ideas we're receptive to. And we put it through a filter, we'll analyse it, and we'll see. So you know, the great thing about being in a progressive league is that we're always looking to improve. And my mantra is we can always better our best. And do we live in an imperfect world? Absolutely. And are we imperfect? Yes. And are we always looking for opportunities to get better? Of course. But it's about progress, not perfection.

Moderator: Alright. Thank you very much. So we're going to do a photo op here at the front, and then one final comment. I have 60 toques to give away, but I'm only going to give to the people who ask good questions. So it'll be on the left. And if I can just ask Lucas and Claire, there's a box there after at the very end before you leave. So photo op here at the front.

Jeffrey Orridge: Before you guys go, just really one quick note. On a personal note, I want to thank you all for being welcoming and being professional and being supportive and being very generous and very patient with me. I've been in this role six months, and it's a huge job, and I'm very honoured and very humbled by it. And without all of you, we wouldn't have a league, quite frankly. It's the fans, it's the supporters, and it's you in the media that help everything work. So thank you again. I really appreciate it.