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• (1520)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)): I think we're going to begin now. I know there was some congestion trying to get access to the tunnel to get over here this afternoon, but there are enough of us here to begin. So I'd like to say welcome.

Before I begin the meeting, I'd like to acknowledge that it's an important day for this committee, and indeed for all parliamentarians, as we acknowledge International Women's Day and acknowledge the progress we've made and the road we yet have to follow as we try to achieve equality for women in Canada. I want to note this today and note the work we're doing here.

I don't see anybody here who was with us in New York—oh, yes, *Mme Brunelle*. Some of us had an opportunity to attend at the UN and at the IPU in New York as part of International Women's Day and the Beijing Plus 10. I think I can speak for all of us in saying it was indeed very worthy.

I would also like to acknowledge that we have with us—and I don't know whether they're all here today yet—young women from McGill University who are part of the Women in the House program and are shadowing some of us as we move around the whole Hill. I would like to welcome them and hope we are some inspiration for them as they choose their careers.

I would now like to thank members of the three departments who have come before us today. As you're all aware, we're doing an extensive study on gender-based analysis. Some may think we're too extensive, but I believe the committee feels this is a very important matter to address some of the inequality issues related to women in this country. We are trying very hard to determine both what the government is doing and what the government is not doing. We welcome you and look forward to your presentations and to having an opportunity to have an exchange with you.

I'm going to go in the order in which delegations are listed on the agenda. I'd like to begin with Karen Green, the acting executive director of corporate services in the Department of Justice. Welcome.

Ms. Karen Green (Acting Executive Director, Corporate Services, Department of Justice): Thank you. Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Karen Green. I'm a lawyer with the Department of Justice. I have worked in the diversity and gender equality office at the Department of Justice for three years. In two of those years I was the senior adviser and general counsel of that group. I'm very pleased

to be here to talk to you about the department's work in the area of gender-based equality.

I've had an opportunity to review the transcripts of the committee on this subject matter, as well as some of the background questions. I have tailored my comments to address the questions posed, as well as some of the other issues that have been raised in the transcripts.

My comments will be provided under the following three headings: background on the Department of Justice and its involvement in GBA; why integration—the new approach we've taken; and third, continuing challenges for the implementation of GBA generally.

With respect to the background, in response to the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and the 1995 federal plan, the Department of Justice established the office of the senior adviser on gender equality, better known as SAGE. The original intent of the SAGE office included a five-year mandate for the completion of its work. This deadline was extended well beyond the five-year mandate.

• (1525)

The SAGE office developed and published a Justice-specific policy on gender equality analysis in 1997. It was entitled "Policy of the Department of Justice on Gender Equality Analysis", and it continues to be the guiding policy document for the department. A binder of materials was published, and a training program was developed and delivered on how to apply the policy. In 2000, the SAGE office merged with the diversity policy group and was renamed the diversity and gender equality office, better known as DAGE. The merger recognized the importance of the intersectionality of diversity in gender issues.

DAGE, with the support of a committee comprised of experts in the field of gender and diversity analysis, judges, and academics, developed a new training package and program entitled "Social Context Training". The training was modelled on that used by the National Judicial Institute in developing its training for judges. The training was delivered to members of the executive council as well as to some middle managers. It was quite successful.

In 2001, the executive council, recognizing the complexity and range of issues that the department dealt with on a daily basis, made a decision to integrate the diversity and gender function into all aspects of the work of the department. The timeline for this integration was December 2004. The DAGE office has now been closed, and the responsibility for ensuring the inclusion of a diversity and gender analysis is now the responsibility of each and every employee in the department. Core DAGE functions, like GBA analysis, and continued work on the agenda for gender equality, of which Justice is a partner with Status of Women Canada, Health Canada, and HRDC in its former configuration, have been transferred to a group within Justice called the policy integration group.

My second heading is "Why Integration?" Why did we choose this approach? The department made the decision to integrate the DAGE function into all of the work of the department after careful consideration. Some of these considerations included the recognition that the department had been working conscientiously on this issue since 1995, had provided training to employees on more than one occasion, and had developed capacity. There was recognition that a number of areas in the department were working in areas that directly impacted equality issues: the human rights law section, the charter group, the public law policy group, victims, aboriginal affairs, and others.

The third reason was the recognition of the broadening scope and nature of issues and the complexity of the issues dealt with by the department. The department further recognized that an internal capacity of a centralized unit to provide timely, expert knowledge in all areas of the work of the department was an ideal that would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. There was recognition that diminishing resources government-wide and greater competition for human and other financial resources would likely not provide for the increase necessary to adequately fund the unit to meet the capacity required.

Further, the department recognized that a centralized unit made the work on gender-based analysis the job of a few people and reinforced the perspective that gender and diversity analysis was something that was conducted outside of or in addition to the analytical process. There was recognition that timeliness of involvement was a key issue, and it was important to have diversity and gender consideration form an integral part of the analysis from the beginning of the process. There would be a greater likelihood of achieving this if each sector assumed responsibility for its inclusion.

Thus the intent of the integration strategy is to ensure that the ownership and responsibility for diversity and gender analysis is placed with the department as a whole and individually with each employee. Secondly, it's to build organizational capacity, competency, and accountability. Finally, it is to foster and support the notion of the importance of including diversity and gender

consideration as an integral core component of the work of the department.

• (1530)

With this new approach, even though we still have a specific unit dedicated to GBA, and even with the training we've done for our senior managers, there are some ongoing challenges for the department. These include being able to report with consistency the good work that is being done by the department. Instruments for measuring results have not been developed, and this makes it more difficult to assign accountability. And finally, ongoing vigilance is needed to ensure that diversity in gender analysis remains a priority in the department.

On a broader level, having worked in this field for a number of years, I've identified some continuing challenges for the implementation of GBA generally. These basically go to things that would help those of us who work in the field. It would make our job a little bit easier if some of these broader infrastructures were in fact in place.

I was very interested in the comments made by Ms. Pauline Rankin in her February 24 appearance before the committee. Some broader policy direction could assist federal departments in doing this work and would remove the necessity of each department having to recreate its own infrastructure and process for dealing with diversity and gender concerns. Some of these broader challenges include, as identified by Ms. Rankin, the assumption that gender equality already exists. A second very important point is that there is not a shared understanding of what it is we are talking about in terms of this thing called GBA. This other point goes to that: one size does not fit all. Having said that, there need to be some common accountability mechanisms and indicators. Presumably they would be premised on this common understanding of what it is we're all being asked to do.

Also, in developing this common understanding, it's important to determine what constitutes a success in terms of doing a diversity in gender analysis. Is it the fact that the analysis is done? Is it the fact that the analysis was used and applied to the policy or to the outcome? There are varying levels of indicators, and we have to be more specific in terms of what we're using as indicators of success in outcomes.

The final point I want to make is that a mechanism for compliance should be established. I'm not a big advocate of that being compulsory, but it certainly would be helpful if a reporting on GBA was in fact compulsory, versus actually doing the analysis.

Those are my brief opening comments, and I'll be happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That was very interesting.

From the Department of Health, who wants to take the lead?

Ms. Caroline Weber (Director General, Policy Planning and Priorities Directorate, Health Policy Branch, Department of Health): Deanna St. Prix-Alexander is actually going to take the lead, but I'm Caroline Weber, the DG from policy planning and priorities. I'm here on behalf of Ian Shugart and the Health Policy Branch. I'd like to think he asked me to come on his behalf because I am a former director of the women's bureau at the former HRDC and therefore have an ongoing interest and history in this.

Deanna has a prepared statement. We're not distributing it at the table at this time because we didn't bring our translated versions, but we'll get it to you very shortly.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

Ms. Deanna St. Prix-Alexander (Executive Director, Women's Health and Gender Analysis Bureau, Department of Health): Thank you.

First, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today to discuss GBA and the work of Health Canada in helping the people of Canada maintain and improve their health.

It is fitting that on International Women's Day, we are speaking about an issue which is so central to women's lives in Canada. So,

[English]

happy women's day.

[Translation]

The Bureau of Women's Health and Gender Analysis, formerly the Women's Health Bureau, was established in 1993. Its mission is to promote equitable health outcomes for women, men, boys and girls across their lifespan, by encouraging department action to make the health system more responsive to women's health, and to gender differences in health.

• (1535)

[English]

At Health Canada, GBA requires the assessment of the links between sex, gender, and other health determinants, including environmental, economic, social, cultural, genetic, and other differences, to develop research policies, programs, and legislation.

Within health we find that GBA allows for a more rich and contextualized analysis, and it has the potential to deliver greater dividends of returns with more targeted interventions that are important to health. Sex and gender are interrelated through complex pathways. We must distinguish between sex—and by that we mean the genetic, biological, metabolic, and physiological characteristics and processes—and gender—the socially constructed roles, relationships, values, attitudes, and forms of power that are commonly attributed to either men or women—to understand how they interact to contribute to health and illness.

For example, life expectancy at birth is a key indicator of a population's health status. In 2002 it reached highs for both women and men in Canada. Life expectancy for women is 82.1 years. Men, on average, can expect to live 77.2 years. Women, however, experience years of disability and have more co-morbidities than men. Women also bear a larger death burden than men due to sex-specific causes, and by that we mean things like breast cancer, ovarian cancer, pregnancy-related complications, etc. On the other hand, there is evidence that men are more likely to die from external causes such as accidents and injury.

This highlights the importance of gathering and reporting sex disaggregated data and of gender analysis to develop effective strategies for diagnosis, prevention, and treatment.

Gender-based analysis was first formalized at Health Canada with the development of the women's health strategy in 1999. One of the four principal objectives of the strategy is to ensure that Health Canada's policies and programs are responsive to sex and gender differences and to women's health needs.

Gender-based analysis was further strengthened in 2000 with Health Canada's release of its gender-based analysis policy, promulgating that this approach to developing policies, programs, and legislation will help us secure the best possible health for women, men, boys, and girls of Canada.

Health Canada's gender-based analysis implementation strategy was endorsed in October 2003 by the department's executive committee. The five-prong strategy aims by 2008 to advance a systematic approach to policy development, and I quote, "To implement GBA means that Health Canada fully integrates gender into its day-to-day planning and operations".

Located in the Health Policy Branch, the bureau of women's health and gender analysis works with the branches and regions of the department in implementing the women's health strategy and the gender-based analysis policy. In 1996 the bureau was allocated additional resources to establish and fund centres of excellence for women's health and to fund other recipients of the women's health contribution program.

Since 2003 the bureau has shifted internal resources to reflect the government's reinvigorated approach to achieving gender equality and the role of the Minister of Health as a champion of the agenda for gender equality.

During this period as well, more evidence nationally and internationally heightened awareness of the significance of gender and diversity constructs in understanding and addressing health and health systems issues.

The gender-based analysis unit of the bureau is mandated to build GBA expertise through focused capacity building, including training on the theories and practical applications of GBA to Health Canada's business lines and priorities. Resources include the internationally recognized *Exploring Concepts of Gender and Health*, coaching-style training that guides staff in applying GBA to real-world case studies, and a quarterly e-bulletin on GBA.

In 2004, GBA focal points, as they are called, were identified from our regions and branches. They advise the bureau and they support the development of work plans in their respective branches and regions.

● (1540)

In support of the Minister of Health's role as a champion for the agenda for gender equality, two policy pilots were launched. One is on a study of family and formal caregivers of people with mental illness. The other is a study on the utilization of dental services and central nervous depressants by first nations and Inuit people covered under the non-insured health benefits program. In addition to reporting on the outcomes of these two policy pilots in 2005 and 2006, the bureau reports semi-annually to the department's executive committee on the implementation of GBA at Health Canada.

Other important work to improve reporting and accountability includes the bureau's work on women's health indicators and guidelines for the development of gender-sensitive health indicators. The aim is to better monitor women's health and women's health outcomes. This research initiative will develop, validate, and evaluate a core set of indicators that takes gender and diversity into account.

The work of the bureau and its GBA unit in building capacity is supported by all program areas of the bureau, including the women's health contribution unit, the policy analysis unit, and the information dissemination unit. Knowledge generated from the women's health contribution program and its Centres of Excellence for Women's Health, the Canadian Women's Health Network, and working groups has built a firm foundation of evidence on women's health. This knowledge enables informed policy, as seen, for example, in the recently ratified Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. In addition, the women's health community and the bureau worked diligently to ensure establishment of the Institute of Gender and Health as part of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research in 2000.

Bureau policy staff provide analysis and advice to Health Canada staff. For example, the bureau's interventions with regard to Health Canada's HIV/AIDS Treasury Board submission resulted in the reflection of the distinct physiological and social vulnerabilities of women and girls, including aboriginal women and girls. This gender-sensitive approach enables us to shed new light on emerging trends in incidence and distribution of this disease.

There are challenges in implementing gender-based analysis. Progress to date on GBA implementation has been on the first phase of increasing awareness of the benefits of applying GBA and commencing application. Progress, however, is uneven, supported by the enthusiasm of some individuals and slowed by the resistance of others. With heightened GBA awareness, the bureau now receives increased demands. It's important for us to target interventions early at key policy tables. It is also important throughout Health Canada to

continue building understanding of responsibilities and skills in the application of gender-based analysis.

Another challenge is that there has not been a long history of research data collection and knowledge of women's health and gender and health issues. It is a fairly new domain. The differential impacts of sex and gender are not easily detected. In health, differences can be less obvious and more complex given the determinants of health, which alone and interactively influence health. These determinants and their compounded effects must be taken into account. We know that more needs to be done. GBA expertise, application, and accountability must permeate across sectors, including governments, civil society, and, where it is in the interest of advancing health, private enterprise. Responsibility for women in clinical trials policy is one example.

We have the partnerships in place to move forward on the necessary interdisciplinary multi-sectoral work. Involvement at the highest levels in implementing comprehensive, transparent accountability processes with levers to promote action is an important part of ensuring legislation, policies, and programs that contribute to gender equality. We are continuing to work to support women's health surveillance and health reporting given this context.

It is now also timely to review the women's health strategy to influence a vision of the future. Development of a renewed plan of action on women's health with targeted objectives will need to focus research policy and program work on life cycle and diversity issues. It must take into account the emerging knowledge and the needs of Canada's diverse peoples and the voice of civil society.

● (1545)

We are working, for example, with aboriginal organizations, women, academic experts, and stakeholders to develop a pan-Canadian action plan to address the health issues of aboriginal women and girls and to articulate a vision of wellness.

In addition, advances in biotechnology, genomics, information technology, and nanotechnology have become powerful new platforms for scientific discovery. Many of these advances and new technologies have vast implications for women's health. Researchers and policy advisers need to respond to these advances by investigating how women and men experience health and health care in an ever-changing environment and in the context of their communities.

Through the ongoing Government of Canada and departmental commitments to women's health and gender equality, we have a window in this complex system for collaboration, coordination, and clarity to ensure a sustainable approach that is relevant to the lives of the women and men, boys and girls, of Canada.

Merci.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Thank you, indeed.

Mr. Lévesque.

Mr. Louis Lévesque (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Finance): Merci.

Good afternoon, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

My name is Louis Lévesque and I am Associate Deputy Minister at the Department of Finance. I am pleased to be here to discuss the gender-based analysis undertaken by the department.

[*English*]

I'd like to begin my opening remarks by outlining a little bit the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Finance within the federal government to provide some context. I will try to articulate what we do around three themes and then weave in how gender analysis plays into that.

The first element is what we call the economic and fiscal policy framework. The overarching preoccupation at the Department of Finance is to help the government develop and implement social and economic policies and programs that foster strong and sustainable economic growth. This growth is the key to job creation, income growth, and improvements in standards of living and well-being for all Canadians.

Over a number of years, after a number of years of very difficult fiscal circumstances, to support the objectives of increasing Canadians' well-being, the department has continued to build a growth-enhancing policy framework that's based on strong macro-economic policy fundamentals that include low and stable inflation, prudent fiscal planning, balanced budgets, and falling government debt to keep interest rates low, reduce uncertainty, and boost confidence. These policies provide the right environment for economic growth and job creation by encouraging investment in human and physical capital and innovation, which are the key drivers of economic growth.

These sound macroeconomic policies are complemented by other policies, what we call effective structural policies, such as a fair and efficient competitive tax system, efficient product and labour markets, and effective regulation of the financial sector to help Canadians invest in the drivers of growth.

It is a framework that has worked really well in recent years to the benefit of all Canadians. There's more information attached to the presentation, but I won't dwell on that.

Since the deficit was eliminated in 1997, Canada's growth and standard of living has been the highest among the G-7 countries and the growth in... Why this long introduction? This growth has been beneficial for all segments of society, but particularly for women. An important element of strong economic performance is obviously a key factor for improving measurements of gender equality. The recent numbers—the numbers are in my presentation and there are more at the back—show that all segments of society, men and women but women proportionately more, benefited from the improvement in economic circumstances.

I won't bore you by going into individual numbers.

The results illustrate how a sound economic and fiscal policy can contribute importantly to the achievement of economic equality between men and women. In this context, it is important to bear in mind that the gender impact of government policies must be examined in a broad context that goes beyond that of the incremental impact of specific policy changes. That's obviously a particular challenge in the Department of Finance where we have, I would say, rather blunt instruments. We're not in the microsurgery department in terms of policy. We are more in the business of framework policies that have wide-ranging implications.

So, again, more information on improvements in the economic situation of men and women can be found in annex A, the first annex to my remarks.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Now, I want to emphasize that putting in place conditions that are conducive to strong sustainable economic growth has a major effect on the fiscal capacity to finance benefits and services for Canadians. In this regard, as you know, the strength of the Canadian economy has enabled the government to make very substantial investments in priority areas such as health care, children, research and many others in recent years. Once again, reinvesting in these programs enables us to better reach our goal of equality between the sexes. There is therefore a direct link between good economic performance, the government's fiscal capacity and the ability to invest so as to attain greater gender equality. This first point deals with the government's macro-economic policy framework.

Secondly, I'd like to deal more specifically with gender-based analysis. The Department of Finance also has specific program responsibilities in a number of areas: developing tax and tariff policy, managing federal borrowings on financial markets, administering major transfers of federal funds to the provinces and territories, developing regulatory policy for the financial sector, and as I mentioned, representing Canada within the international financial institutions.

In answer to your specific questions, the department does carry out gender-based analysis for those policy initiatives under its direct area of responsibility, especially as part of the budget process, which is, after all, the government's way of announcing major decisions. Pre-budget consultations are an important input in this analysis because they assist the government in assuring that the proposed policy initiatives do not have unintended consequences on various segments of the population, including women.

[English]

Going back to some of your questions, the department doesn't have a separate unit to coordinate gender-based analysis. Individual branches are responsible for conducting gender-based analysis in their respective areas.

However, as most of the department's legislative agenda focuses on tax policy changes, most of the analysis is conducted in the Tax Policy Branch. I will briefly describe the policy analysis that takes place in this branch when specific proposals for changes are assessed as part of the budget process.

Examples of gender analysis carried on in other parts of the department that have specific program responsibilities—namely, the Financial Sector Policy Branch and the International Trade and Finance Branch—are included in annex B to my notes.

In examining the role of gender analysis in evaluating proposed tax policy changes, it is useful to look more broadly at how tax policies are developed. In this regard, the starting point is the strategic direction from the Speech from the Throne. Proposals and comments from parliamentarians, individual taxpayers, and other interested groups are also key inputs in the development of the tax policy proposals.

Another step is assessing how these proposals achieve their stated objectives and evaluating them on tax policy grounds, the classical one being, obviously, that they promote fairness and efficiency. A fair tax system recognizes that differences in individual circumstances affect ability to pay. An efficient tax system encourages work, saving, and investment, all of which provide benefits for Canadians by promoting growth and raising standards of living.

In some cases it is difficult or impossible to determine exactly what segments of the population will benefit from a specific change. For example, changes to corporate tax rates will affect investment decisions and therefore will have a general effect on the level of economic activity, but it is not known whether and to what extent such changes will have different implications for different segments of the Canadian population. Similarly, the implications for specific groups of changes to the goods and services tax, which is applied to a very broad range of goods and services, would be generally difficult to estimate.

• (1555)

[Translation]

In contrast, by their very nature, proposals to change the personal income tax system directly affect specific individuals, which means that it is often possible to evaluate the implications for some segments of the population. Indeed, one aspect of evaluating the fairness of a proposed personal tax measure is examining the characteristics, for example in terms of income, age and gender, of

those affected. The impact on specific groups can then be taken into consideration along with other fairness and economic implications of the proposal.

Personal income tax proposals fall into two categories: broad-based measures, which impact most taxpayers, and targeted measures, which are usually aimed at a specific group in unique circumstances, for example, persons with disabilities or low-income families. In developing and assessing targeted measures, an important consideration is the right of an individual under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to not be discriminated against on the basis of gender.

[English]

While it's not always possible to break down the gender of beneficiaries of the specific proposals—for example, where spouses may pool expenses or transfer credit—it can be done in many cases. For example, it is estimated the increases in the personal amount announced in the 2005 budget provide a larger percentage of tax cuts to women than to men, reflecting the fact that it's a very progressive tax measure that delivers higher tax relief, in percentage terms, at lower income levels. The new recipients of the disability tax credit, under the expansion announced in the 2005 budget, are expected to be equally split between men and women.

That's for the portion of the Department of Finance responsibility for areas for which we have specific program responsibility.

I want to turn to the third area. Here the department plays a central agency function, along with the two other central agencies, the Privy Council Office and the Treasury Board Secretariat. We are basically giving advice and making recommendations to the government on decisions about—most of the time—funding for new proposals in various policy areas. In these cases, what we are facing is the situation of operational departments making proposals for changes in areas related to their specific lines of responsibilities, as part of the cabinet decision-making process. Funding decisions on these policy initiatives are typically made in the budget—a number of decisions are made off the budget cycle, but the budget is a moment where an important number of those decisions are made.

In that particular context, the Department of Finance does not generally undertake its own gender-based analysis of the various proposals; it rather relies more on the analysis done by the operational departments in preparing their memoranda to cabinet during the year, but there is clearly an element that this is flagged in terms of the analysis and advice provided in the context of decision-making for the budget.

With that, I will conclude my opening remarks. There is further information at the back. I hope my remarks have been helpful and I look forward to the discussion.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lévesque. I think all your presentations have given us a lot to think about and to respond to.

I'm going to begin with Ms. Grewal.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for your time and your presentations.

When analyzing policies, do departments break down demographics from age, income, size of community, etc.? If you have, have you noticed any significant differences between the subcategories? What were the costs involved in using GBA in your department? We asked last week, and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration did not have a cost analysis for set-up and training of their GBA unit. The official simply said the cost was three annual salaries. I would like to know, in dollars, how much it cost your department to set up GBA, and I would like to know the ongoing costs. According to departmental officials, diversity and gender equality is now integrated into the work of the department. Can you give me a concrete example of how diversity and gender equality have been integrated in the department?

•(1600)

The Chair: Who are you addressing your comments to, Ms. Grewal?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Anyone.

The Chair: Just to give you a bit of an idea about the rules of procedure, the first round of questions is seven minutes, and it includes both the question and the answer. I'm going to go across and ask you to respond, and I know you've got a lot in that question, but if you could respond as succinctly as possible, I would appreciate it.

Ms. Green, do you want to begin?

Ms. Karen Green: With regard to the cost of setting up the GBA, we did have initial costs for setting up and we did have costs allocated to a specific unit, which in its heyday was about \$1.5 million to \$1.7 million.

At this point in time, there aren't specifically dedicated dollars. But if we were to cost out, which we have not done, doing the analysis and the sections of the department that are actually working on it, we would have a cost factor. But I don't know what that is. So I don't know what the answer to that question is within the Department of Justice because we've just taken on this decentralized model and it hasn't been costed out in that way.

With regard to research information, we do collect research information by gender and also by diverse groups, depending on what the nature of the issue is, including aboriginal peoples and

others. So that information is collected. I can't give you specifically what that is. We do have a research unit within the department that does capture statistics for us, and we do encourage them to break them down. We also are funding a project, along with the Status of Women and some other federal departments, where they're collecting some gender-specific information.

With regard to an example of how diversity and gender are being integrated into the department, I'm not sure if you want a substantive or a process answer to that question. One of the ways we did it was around an aboriginal women's consultation we held. It involved aboriginal women and several sectors of the department, as well as the three national women's organizations. We addressed a series of issues around key themes identified by the aboriginal women's groups. It involved nine different government departments being represented, including all of the GBA groups, as well as several sectors of the department, where we were able to identify a cross-section of issues with a diversity of aboriginal peoples. That's one example of how it substantively played itself out.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lévesque.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: Similarly, it would be very difficult to cost for the department the amount of resources dedicated specifically to gender analysis because it is done in branches. We've never had a specific unit, so it's hard for me to get at that.

In terms of research, we do a lot of research based on publicly available data, such as Statistics Canada data. We're facing the same challenge as everybody else; that is, often there may not be ways to get to the answers because the data is not there. We have access to confidential tax data in terms of the personal income tax system, which allows for some of the analysis, as I mentioned, being done in the Tax Policy Branch. It gives us some advantage in doing that because we have quite disaggregated data and we can request special kinds of runs. But we're facing the same constraints as most everybody else in terms of that area.

The Chair: Ms. St. Prix-Alexander.

Ms. Deanna St. Prix-Alexander: We currently have a GBA unit within the bureau and its budget is about \$350,000 a year. But that does not take into account the work of the rest of the bureau in supporting GBA through policy work and the research and work supported through the women's health contribution program as well as the GBA focal points in the regions and branches, which substantively do other work but include GBA in their responsibilities.

With regard to the issue of diversity and health, we find consistently that our aboriginal peoples are having greater health disparities across the life cycle. This is true for aboriginal women and men and boys and girls. So this is a group we're paying more attention to.

•(1605)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Brunelle.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon. I'm pleased to meet you.

I would like to start by asking Mr. Lévesque a question. You told us, Mr. Lévesque, that the sustained vigour of the Canadian economy allows the government to help out more economically disadvantaged groups, including women. I'm wondering what you think about Statistics Canada's figures, which show that in 2002, 52% of single-parent women, 42% of women alone over age 65 and 35% of women alone under 65 were still living below the poverty line. I reacted a little when I saw that one of the measures you would suggest to deal with the problem was an increase in the basic exemption, which was announced in the 2005 budget. This will apply to women more than men, of course, because their incomes are lower.

To what extent will gender-based analysis or some other type of analysis help solve the problem? How can your department help overcome poverty among women, single-parent families and particularly older women?

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Lévesque.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Lévesque: I cannot get into a debate about which policies should be implemented. That is not the role of public servants. However, I would just like to repeat what I was saying about the role of economic growth. If we look at the situation at a particular point in time, we can make a judgment about the extent of the inequality. However, the data show that economic growth has tended to reduce this inequality. So this is a positive factor. Should we be doing more or less? What programs should be implemented in order to move more quickly? That is a political debate. Only our elected representatives can answer these questions.

The same is true with respect to increasing the basic personal exemption. In strictly analytical terms, an increased basic personal exemption provides a much more significant tax reduction, percentage-wise, for low-income people than for people with higher incomes. As a good economist, with all things being equal otherwise, if we compare the situation before and after the introduction of this measure, we will see an improved distribution in income as well as a more progressive tax system. Overall, given that there is always inequality at the moment in income distribution, this will help reduce the gap between men and women.

That is as far as I can go. Our elected representatives must make a decision about this. Is this the right initiative to improve...? An analysis of this measure shows that it helps make the tax system

more progressive and helps to reduce inequalities. It is not up to me to comment, to say whether this is the measure that should have been introduced or whether we could have introduced a different one, for example.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I will come at this question from a different angle. To what extent does the gender-based analysis done by your department allow you to suggest possible solutions to the elected representatives to deal with problems such as the poverty of women?

Mr. Louis Lévesque: All I can say it is that this is one piece of the information. Depending on the analysis, if we introduce this particular measure, it will have the effects I described. It becomes a factor in the decision-making process. It is up to the government and our elected representatives to decide which factor they will give the most importance to, or which mechanism they find the more appropriate. The interesting aspect of the analysis—or of a simulation—is that it shows that the measure in question will help to achieve the objective. Is it the objective to which the government wants to give the priority at this time? It is up to the government to decide that. The idea is to have the analytical capacity... We have some data bases that allow us to identify whether taxpayers are men or women. We have done a predistribution of the impact, and that is the basis on which decisions are made. This information is on the table.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Do I still have a little time left?

[*English*]

The Chair: You have more time.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I would like to discuss pay equity with Ms. Green. We hear that there is still a 15 to a 30% wage gap. If I understand correctly there used to be a model in the Department of Justice under which women had to report that their pay was inequitable in order for the system to come into play.

A task force made a number of recommendations. I am someone more familiar with the Quebec model. In Quebec, companies with 10 employees or more have to implement a pay equity model. Is such an obligation part of the demands of this federal task force on pay equity?

•(1610)

[*English*]

Ms. Karen Green: Thank you for your question. I think it's important.

We have forwarded a letter to the committee with regard to the pay equity task force. I think it was given to the clerk of the committee and distributed to committee members. I think those questions are best left to the pay equity task force at this time. As the letter states, and I think it was your discussion earlier in a previous committee meeting, and the reason remains the same, they're not in a position yet to report. They are meeting with stakeholders.

So I would ask you to reserve that question until such time as you're able to pose it to the appropriate people.

The Chair: On a point of clarification, Madam Brunelle, a letter from Justice was circulated to all members. We will be discussing it and committee business at the end of this meeting on this matter.

Ms. Kadis.

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

We have talked with our witnesses for several months now on the issue of accountability. I think Ms. Green mentioned the idea of an annual audit or reporting. You thought that would be a positive and constructive move forward.

I would like to ask all our witnesses today how you feel you would fare at this time, in general terms. We have seen different degrees of implementation across the board, and we're trying to get a handle on where we're really at. Obviously, some have been more extensive, such as Immigration, I believe. For others, perhaps Health, their field would lend justice to these areas, but there is obviously disparity. It's something we want to come out with some recommendations on.

You could advise this committee on how you feel at this point. What tools and methods could we give you on this kind of audit that would, I guess, take away roadblocks and expedite the process?

The Chair: We'll start with you again, Ms. Green.

Ms. Karen Green: I think what would be helpful from my point of my view would be more of a common understanding of what the expectation was, because you can ask departments to report and be accountable, but if the accountability mechanisms aren't the same, or what we're reporting on isn't consistent among the departments, it's hard to make comparisons.

So we need to be clear up front about what we are asking people to do and then have some defined, broad accountability measures so that there's some kind of uniform reporting across departments. Even though the process for actually getting there might be different because of the unique needs of our departments, there has to be, I think at the start, as Ms. Rankin said in her presentation, a common understanding of what we're all being asked to do and in fact what we're asking our departments to do.

Then we have to know what it is we're being accountable for. Is it the fact that a gender analysis is being done? Is it the weight that's given to the analysis? Is it the outcome of the analysis? What is the measurement? What are we trying to get at? I think there needs to be consistency around that. I'm not sure necessarily whether an audit is.... The use of language is very important, in terms of what we ask people to do when they hear "audit". If it's an annual reporting of what they're doing, I think if we had to do one in the Department of Justice we would fare quite well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lévesque.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: I think it's a quintessential issue about how departments address horizontal issues. This is not the only one. There are environmental sustainability considerations, official languages, and.... I could have a long list. I must say that in my experience, for what it's worth, I'm a little bit—not reluctant—skeptical as to the value of creating more paper, in the sense that if you provide a template for reports you will get reports, and about how they effectively change the way we are influenced, and how you make progress in having these considerations built into the actual work of people. I'm not quite sure it's through creating another layer of report.

If I had some views, I'd probably say training, awareness campaigns, and those kinds of things are more productive. There's a need for accountability, absolutely, but I'm a little bit leery of inventing a template for a report, because you will get reports. For Parliament I don't think it's a question of the amount of information or reports on many areas that are being produced so much as whether they have actual live links to the activities of departments. Otherwise you just create an industry where there's a period for reporting and there will be elements put in the report.

This is probably not what you're trying to get to, which is how this is intimately woven into the considerations and the analysis of that fundamentally probably more cultural and awareness issue. As to how you balance this with the need for accountability, I'm not sure I have the answer for you. But I'm telling you, if you ask civil servants to produce reports, they produce reports. Whether that is the best way to advance the issue, I'm not sure.

• (1615)

The Chair: Ms. Weber.

Ms. Caroline Weber: The thing that strikes me immediately, though, is that with the new program activity architecture that's driving our reports to Parliament—in the new RPP that you'll see over the next month or so, and then in the following departmental performance reports—where we have an organization like our bureau for women's health, we're going to be reporting on the activities of that unit. So you will be getting performance reporting information from us, not right away but certainly in the foreseeable future, because the requirements of that new PAA include things such as performance measures. We've been engaged in an exercise within the department to talk about what the performance indicators look like in policy areas. We treat this as an integral part of the policy area, and because we have a separate group you'll be getting separate measures on it.

You could also identify it as a horizontal issue, which has also been identified in the PAA, where there are elements of activities that are shared by departments that we are being asked to report on. That's another way of handling it.

Lastly, within our bureau of women's health—and I'll ask Deanna to comment on this—there's also a pretty sizable fund for research, and it has its own separate evaluation and reporting requirements.

Ms. Deanna St. Prix-Alexander: Thanks, Caroline.

I agree that the PAA is a good way to go. As the Treasury Board has been putting focus on results-based management, it's opportune to build on those initiatives. Definitely, in terms of specific program areas such as the women's health contribution program, there have been program evaluations done that show the value of those investments for health outcomes.

I would also like to suggest, in response to the colleague's questions on what we're measuring, that there is also opportunity to focus accountability and reporting instruments on short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes. I would suggest that perhaps doing a gender-based analysis in the first place would be a good goal for a short-term outcome. Then perhaps in the longer term we'd be looking at the actual results of the policy or the legislative instrument in terms of the actual health outcome.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're moving to Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Thank you for your presentations.

My first question is for Mr. Lévesque. Just so I'm clear, are you saying a gender-based analysis was done on the most recent federal budget?

Mr. Louis Lévesque: The budget includes measures for which we have specific responsibility, such as the income tax measures. For those measures there was a gender-based analysis done to the extent data were available, and I mentioned some of the elements. For most of the other decisions in the budget, what we do is basically review memoranda to cabinet emanating from departments and provide advice on those memoranda to cabinet in terms of funding levels and other issues like that.

Part of that exercise in providing the advice, an element we specifically flagged in our analysis in all the initiatives this year, was consideration of the question of gender. Most of the time drawing on the analysis was done in terms of the memoranda to cabinet.

• (1620)

Ms. Jean Crowder: What would that look like? A check in a box saying "gender-based analysis conducted by the department"?

Mr. Louis Lévesque: No. If we had supporting information that said this type of initiative would specifically contribute to equality... It would depend on the information that's available in the underlying memorandum to cabinet. Sometimes we wouldn't have the information; sometimes we would have the information. If we have that information, we will provide it as part of the decision-making process on initiatives that do not emanate from the department, because that's most of what the budget is concerned about.

Ms. Jean Crowder: One of the things I understood you to say was that part of the gender analysis happens in the pre-budget consultation. My experience with that is that witnesses appear and the information may or may not be considered.

Let me talk specifically about tax measures, because you talked about tax measures. What was interesting...and maybe you could just explain to me what the gender analysis looked like on this. There are actually, I think, 32% of tax return filers who currently do not pay

any taxes, and a significant proportion of those are women. So with respect to progressive tax measures, what would the gender analysis look like on the 32% who don't currently pay taxes?

Mr. Louis Lévesque: In the particular case, the specific measure I mentioned is the increase in the basic personal amount that is included in the budget proposals. For that particular proposal we have tax return filer information that allows us to see who would get tax relief, what the financial impacts would be, and what the distribution would be by income and gender. We did that analysis and that's the information. It's one element of the information that was provided in that context. That's the type of thing we—

Ms. Jean Crowder: So it wouldn't have considered the people who currently would not benefit from that raising in the level for exemption.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: These people are not impacted in the sense that—

Ms. Jean Crowder: Well, they are impacted in that they're already living in poverty, so any tax measures that look at programs...

Mr. Louis Lévesque: Again, we go back to there being different choices the government could make.

Ms. Jean Crowder: But your department wouldn't make recommendations to the politicians. Most of us who are politicians rely on the bureaucracy to make recommendations with respect to the impact of policies.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: Typically—this is just to give you background information—there's multi-channel input within the budget process. What happens is that you have a number of outside groups that either send in submissions or appear before the finance committee, which does pre-budget consultation; at least they fund a report to the finance committee. There are the minister, his staff, and officials who go around the country to discuss the budget, and they basically sit down with groups from, for example, universities—

Ms. Jean Crowder: I'm actually familiar with the process.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: So you're quite familiar. All of that is brought together, leading to discussions in which proposals are emanating from those quarters. Certainly, the department puts proposals or counter-proposals, but that's in the context, so basically we get our direction from ministers in terms of—

Ms. Jean Crowder: So all we need to do is convince the finance minister to provide direction to the department to do a more meaningful gender analysis and it would happen? So it is political will, is what you're saying.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: I'm not saying that. I'm saying the proposals that end up being decided on in the budget are the result of a political decision by the government. In terms of analysis that goes into individual proposals, if we have the information and a particular proposal is discussed, we will provide the information. That's what we tried to do this year, have information on gender-based impacts to the extent possible—certainly in the things that emanated from the department, because our main area of responsibility is tax, and that's where we have a lot of data and information. Also, we try to draw on the analysis done by departments, because a large portion of the budget is about decisions, funding decisions, relating to discussions at cabinet committees and on a number of issues identified in the Speech from the Throne, and all of that. Again, that's one element we try to bring to the table in terms of decision-making—as much information as we have. It is either from these memoranda to cabinet or we can garner it from our side.

I'm not trying to oversell this. In many cases you don't have information—because you don't have good data, that is—but in some cases we do. The point is, we try to bring that information as one element in the decision-making process.

The Chair: You have a little more time.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Oh, good.

I was interested in your comment around.... Ms. Kadis actually referred to accountability; it is a question around accountability. We were fortunate enough, a number of us, to go to the United Nations. We heard a number of experts talk about how the only way to make change is to put in place laws and then do monitoring and enforcement, and that was an international conference. Many of us don't see education and voluntary compliance working. Could you talk a little about that?

• (1625)

Mr. Louis Lévesque: I cannot comment on the broader scheme of things, such as what government policy effects change in the real world. I'm just commenting on my experience within the public service and what's most effective in terms of driving change. My experience tells me creating reports may sometimes not be the best way to go, but that's just in terms of experience I've had.

One risk you have with formal reporting is getting into a formal exercise. If you're trying to have gender analysis woven into policy consideration, to the extent possible, when it is available, that's a different thing. To me, from the Department of Finance, that is the key element. We're a policy department; what's important is that these elements be taken into account in the decision-making process and that the advice we give take into account those elements. I just ask myself whether the best way to proceed is to create another layer of report.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you, and thank you for your presentations today. I made some notes on each and every one of them as you were speaking.

The thing that strikes me as we are... We all agree gender-based analysis tools are needed in all aspects, but when I listen to everything, I can't help but wonder—when you do find something in

your data, what's done with it? I don't see much... The tools are being used; I'm convinced of that, because we've heard so many presentations here on committee. You analyze your data—at least, that's what I did when I was in stats; we gathered data, and whatever data it was, you analyzed it. Then you predicted outcomes, and then you implemented the outcomes so something could be rectified. Are you at that point, or anywhere near that point, at this time?

The Chair: Who are you directing your question to?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Anyone can answer that, because it involves all departments.

The Chair: Who wants to go first?

Go ahead, Ms. Green.

Ms. Karen Green: I think tools are helpful, but what we have found, in our experience in the Department of Justice, is there's a false sense of security with tools. In the subject matter of gender and diversity, it's difficult to have a tool that takes people to the level of analysis. It leads you to information, but it doesn't necessarily lead you to the analysis. I think Ms. Rankin makes this point in her presentation. We're busy making the tools and maybe losing sight of the purpose of the tools.

That's just one point I would make around the tools. I think checklists are good—have you done this, have you done that?—but the tools, I think, still need some more work.

The Chair: Ms. St. Prix-Alexander.

Ms. Deanna St. Prix-Alexander: Yes, we have tools, and they are integrated, in some cases, in the analysis we're doing. We gave you the example of HIV/AIDS. In the development of the department's strategy, it's really important in terms of prevention work in terms of how Health Canada supports women in terms of preventing HIV/AIDS, and it's also important in terms of understanding the causes and the spread of HIV/AIDS to women and girls and also in terms of the treatment of HIV/AIDS.

Other areas we have included, in terms of gender-based analysis, include the work we're doing on the human trafficking. Some of you have mentioned that you've gone to the UN. Canada is working on a protocol for trafficking in people. We're using the data we have from the RCMP and from others to better understand the phenomenon of human trafficking in women and children so that we can better help Canadians identify it and help the health systems identify it and ensure that the appropriate supports are in place in helping the women get the treatment they need and also the broader social supports they need if they are indeed trafficked.

• (1630)

The Chair: Mr. Lévesque.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: I have one comment. From our perspective, obviously a big challenge we face is that given the nature of our interest, which is very broad, it's very difficult to make a linkage or to track in time, when you have a specific measure, what are the impacts of that specific measure, like very broad outcome measures of employment levels, or whatever. From our perspective, probably the standard we aspire to is to ensure that we have a clear view of what the most likely impacts are going to be over time, in terms of when you propose or you advise on specific measures, but then to keep tracking and monitoring the impacts: are you going in the right direction on the general parameters? That's why I had the elements in the beginning of the presentation reinforcing the fact that you have a strong economic framework, you are making progress economically, and that progress, the data we have, is contributing to progression towards equality.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bulte.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Mr. Lévesque, I'm somewhat surprised by your comment. You said that by increasing the basic personal amount women benefited more than men do. How did you come up with that? If there was some criticism of the budget, it was actually that the \$10,000, that basic personal amount, also went to people who were making \$100,000 and \$200,000. How did you determine that it helps women more than it helps someone in the higher income bracket? It helps everybody in a higher income bracket.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: The typical measures people use to measure the redistributive aspects of the income tax system, such as Gini coefficients or whatever, would show you that an increase in the basic personal amount is increasing the progressivity of the income tax system, because in percentage terms the value of the tax relief is much more important at the low end than it is at the high end. So if you look by income level, the share of overall taxes paid by lower-income groups would go down, in terms of an increase in the basic personal amount, and the share of taxes paid by the higher-income groups would go up.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Sorry, how would it go up? If I'm now increasing my basic personal amount, I'm reducing the amount I'm having to pay. Therefore, I will be paying less tax if my personal income exemption has gone up.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: Yes, but what you are doing is reducing the overall burden—

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: But am I incorrect in that? If I'm increasing my basic exemption, I am paying less tax.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: Yes, everybody is paying less tax.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Everybody. Thank you.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: But as a percentage of income or taxes, the relief is much larger at the low-income end than it is at the high-income end, which means the proportion of taxes paid... Let's say the income taxes were \$80 billion before. Let's say the increase is worth a billion. The taxes paid go down to \$79 billion. If you look, let's say, by income quintiles or deciles at the share of taxes paid by various income groups, you'll observe a very large diminution at the low end and a much smaller diminution at the high end. The share of

overall taxes paid by higher-income people will have increased in that standard measurement of progressivity in the tax system. It's very technical.

Then you get into whether if you have a billion you should do this as opposed to that in order to get different objectives. That's a different conversation. That's a conversation I cannot get into in terms of—

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: Did you do a gender-based analysis on increasing the RRSP to \$22,000 and the impact that has on women? I know that SSHRC was actually doing a study on the fact that women tend not to benefit from being able to put money into RRSPs because they earn less. In fact, there are some real implications for women, in that they're not able to save in the same way men have, and the RRSPs tend to benefit men more. I know SSHRC was doing it; I don't know whether they've finished their study on that.

Was that taken into consideration?

• (1635)

Mr. Louis Lévesque: It is clear that the increase in RRSP limits will benefit, in terms of reduced taxes or deferred taxes, people at a higher income level. There's no doubt about that. That's one element to take into consideration. The various factors that went into that decision were issues of competitiveness in terms of tax-assisted savings compared with those, for example, in the United States, and the overall progressivity of the retirement income system, which has public pensions at the low end—CPP, OAS, and GIS. The budget provided for increases in the GIS. CPP and OAS are mostly at low to middle income, but higher-income people have to replace their income more with private savings. It was felt it was appropriate to increase retirement income limits, more in line... Also, there are a number of other side effects in terms of improving savings incentives generally to increase savings, and also a benefit over time of displacing flows of revenues to the government from now to the future, when we'll be facing income pressures from retirement.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I'd like to concentrate on the gender-based analysis part of it. I know years ago—well, not years ago, even last year—Status of Women would always do a review of the budget. Do you review, when they do their own gender analysis? I haven't seen one this year, but in the past I know that Status of Women Canada used to do their own gender-based analysis. Do you know if they've done it? Do you look at it? Do you look to see how it—

Mr. Louis Lévesque: I don't want to say in any specific way what we review and do not review, because I don't know the answer to that. I would have to get the staff to say what has been looked at in a particular element, but it's pretty obvious in the case of RRSP limits.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: I don't want to talk about RRSP limits, because I know my time is limited.

I'm really surprised at the lack of gender-based analysis done in the Department of Finance. I remember when I first was elected in 1997, when the Prime Minister was finance minister, the finance department tried to introduce a seniors' tax benefit. That was essentially killed by the fact that it had a huge detrimental effect on women. A gender-based analysis was actually undertaken at that time by the women's caucus. I don't know if you were around in 1997.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: I spent two years on the seniors' benefits, between 1996 and 1998. You're really talking to the right person.

Hon. Sarmite Bulte: That's terrific. Then you know what happened. Basically we were looking at the impact and the horrible effect it would have had on Canadian women.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: We can debate why the government decided not to go ahead with the policy, but the analysis was very clear that, on balance, benefits for women were to be increased under the proposal. The issue was that some women would have lost their OAS because of the family income clawback. Whether that was part of the decision not to go with the proposal is one thing, but there was clear analysis done in terms of what the impact of that proposal would have been. Clearly, it was increasing redistribution and would have overall increased benefits going to women. That's a factual point. I can provide you with information.

The Chair: I think we'd like that information, actually, but we're not going to get into a debate right now.

Madame Bonsant.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Good afternoon.

My question is for Ms. Green, from the Department of Justice. I would like to know how many women in your department have key positions, from which they could become judges, for example.

Second, do you have a career development program for women who wish to have several careers in their lives?

[English]

Ms. Karen Green: That's a good question. I don't really have an answer for you, but I could undertake to find that out and pass that information along to the committee.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant: Thank you.

You say that you do not want to get into a political debate, Mr. Lévesque, and I respect that very much. However, when I read your brief, my hair rather stood on end, up on hand, because it includes the comparison between the wages of men and women. This is 2005, and women are still earning 77¢ for every dollar earned by men. That is not a question, but rather a comment.

In addition, I have worked at the income tax office, and I know that it is easy to increase the basic personal amount and change the tax tables. I hope I am not mistaken when I say that this will be profitable. However, when a person earns \$10,000 a year, income tax exemptions are not very high.

As a deputy minister, how can you exert any influence on ministers or on political decisions with gender-based analysis? As a public servant, how can you put forward the right solutions? I know that you are not engaged in politics, but do you exert significant influence on the decisions made by the ministers?

• (1640)

Mr. Louis Lévesque: I often hear that finance department officials are too influential. That is the main thing I hear.

More seriously, you raised the matter of the basic personal amount, but you made another point first.

Ms. France Bonsant: Yes, I was talking about the wages made by women, compared to those made by men. We are still at 77¢ compared to \$1.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: I would like to come back to the point I was making earlier. There is a gap, but the country's economic performance in the last seven or eight years seems to have helped reduce the gap. It is still too wide at the moment, of course, but that is another matter. At least, the improved economic performance has helped women, and this has made it possible to reduce the gap somewhat. That is all I am saying. That is what is shown by the data on employment rates, salary progression, and so on.

Ms. France Bonsant: You should have been here before Christmas, when the women's groups came in to testify before some committees. They said that they had less and less money. In 1994, the Committee on the Status of Women had \$10 million. This is 2005, and this body still has a budget of \$10 million. I do not think electricity sells for the same price it did 25 years ago. I find it hard to believe that poverty is...

Mr. Louis Lévesque: Our economic data show that the jobs created and the real salary increases were distributed in such a way that some of the inequalities between men and women have been reduced in recent years. That is a fact that I would like to emphasize.

Ms. France Bonsant: We are still poor, in any case.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: As to the influence we can exert on the decision-making process, I come back to what I was saying earlier. Our role is to provide advice to the decision-makers regarding the various proposals put forward. We try to take into account all the relevant public policy considerations.

As I tried to explain earlier, one of the points we made clear explicitly in our analysis in the way in which gender-based analysis helps reduce inequalities or achieve equality between men and women. In a number of cases, we have information; in other cases, we do not.

What decisions are made subsequently? That is where politics comes into play. It is up to the minister to decide what to go forward with. At the very least, our role is to ensure that the information is on the table, so that it can be discussed.

Ms. France Bonsant: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Just for Ms. Bulte's information, FAFIA has actually done a gendered analysis on the tax filers for the RRSP benefit. Only 1% of all female tax filers, or about 145,000 women, are in the income category of over \$100,000 and would actually gain from this. Statistics Canada talks about the fact that 43% of all Canadians live on incomes of less than \$25,000 a year, so they would not likely be able to actually put any money aside. And women are overrepresented in that group.

I actually have a question for Ms. Green. My understanding, from your presentation, is that gender-based analysis is now integrated throughout the department. When policy or legislation comes before the justice committee, how is that gendered analysis presented to the justice committee? The reason I'm asking is that I did check with a couple of justice committee members about how they saw gendered analysis coming to them on various pieces of legislation, and they really had no knowledge of it.

• (1645)

Ms. Karen Green: The answer to that question is that often the policy work for legislation is done by the department wanting to pass the legislation, and the actual drafting is done by the department. So the policy work and the gender analysis may not be done internally in the department; it may, if it's either tax law or health law or something else, just come to the justice department for drafting, which means any of the policy work, including a gender analysis, would already have been done at that point.

What happens at the Department of Justice is that it reviews legislation to ensure compliance with the charter, which of course includes the equality provisions. I think the justice committee could specifically ask for the analysis concerning what gender analysis was done. But unless it's specifically asked, it's just included as part of one of the factors going into the making of the legislation, or the policy around what the legislation is going to be.

Ms. Jean Crowder: The justice committee itself, unless it specifically asked for it, would not necessarily have presented to them the fact that a gender analysis had been done on this particular piece of legislation and that these were the ramifications of it.

Ms. Karen Green: That's right.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Okay. So again, back to the justice... Is there any retrospective? I'm looking, for example, at civic legal aid. The reduction in funding around civic legal aid has had an enormous impact on women, because it's primarily family law. That for me is a really good example of a lack of gender analysis around a policy. I'm wondering if you could comment on that specific one.

Ms. Karen Green: Sure. I won't comment specifically on the substance of that particular issue, but I think what you're raising about the process is a very good point that has been raised by several of the committee members here, which is, if a gender analysis is done, what weight is given to it?

The fact that a gender analysis is done does not mean it's going to be reflected in the actual policy outcome. There's an issue around what weight we give to that and, when there is an issue around competing interest, how that decision is made. Often that decision can be made at a political level or at a bureaucratic level. That's just common sense really, or the practical way this analysis plays itself out.

Ms. Jean Crowder: That's actually interesting, because I don't think it's ever been made quite so clear to me that a gender analysis could be conducted yet not be taken into consideration when the legislation is actually put into effect.

Ms. Karen Green: It's not that it wouldn't be taken into consideration, but it's a factor that's considered along with many other factors.

Ms. Jean Crowder: But it could... We see policies and legislation that result in direct adverse impacts on women. I'm struggling to get my head around it. Are we then saying that 51% of the population just doesn't count?

I don't want you to answer that.

Ms. Karen Green: I'm not going to, don't worry.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thank you.

I'd like to talk to the health department, just really quickly. I think you have a very challenging role, because you're responsible for an area that actually has implementation at the provincial levels, in that health policy is developed and funded federally but actual delivery of health care services happens at the provincial level. Could you tell me if there's any intersection around gender-based analysis between what happens federally and what happens provincially?

Ms. Caroline Weber: Let's be careful about health care. We really don't get into the delivery of health care, but through the Canada Health Act we ensure access and work towards adequate, high-quality care for everyone. Beyond that, I think your interest here and primarily what's driving your question is access in provincially funded systems.

In general, unless we're seeing something that is in violation of the Canada Health Act in those basic principles, you're not going to see a GBA on a new policy initiative in health care policy. There is a very clear distinction there, and we're pretty far away still from actual delivery. I want to be really careful about that.

The Chair: Thank you. I have to complete that round.

Mr. Powers.

Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.): Mine will be a simple question, just to set the stage for the second question.

In the execution of gender-based analysis, the process within the Department of Justice is decentralized, in the Department of Finance it is decentralized, and in Health Canada it is a centralized unit. It's a mixed model?

I see you nodding, so I will go to the next question.

How do you do internal audit of gender-based analysis to make sure the analysis is full and complete, the people doing the analysis are staying current, or whatever? Ms. Green, you raised earlier the point that everybody seems to be doing—you didn't say it, but certainly Dr. Rankin indicated that there are no clear-cut rules of engagement, if you want to call them that—either a similar or “similar to” version of gender-based analysis. Whether it's right or wrong, who knows? I concur with you that one of the things we need to look at is a review of the process seeking some agreement about the process, and ultimately at the end results of it.

But to help me along, are we going through the process for the sake of doing the process? Do we actually do, notwithstanding what Mr. Lévesque has said about new paper, somewhat a self-examination, an audit of how we're doing it and why we're doing it?

I have about two minutes for all of you to collectively answer.

• (1650)

Ms. Karen Green: Within the Department of Justice we don't do an audit per se. The focus in the department is more on outcomes so we can see the results of what we're doing rather than how we actually got there. I think it would be helpful to have a reporting on analysis being done and what happened with the analysis, just an analytical piece so the department knows where it is with respect to the analysis, what some of the challenges are, and what some of the ongoing work is that we need to do, whether that be around quality assurance, consistency in application of the policy, or whatever—just taking stock. We haven't done that in the department. That doesn't mean we're not going to, but at this point we haven't really done it.

Mr. Russ Powers: So there is absolutely no gender-based analysis being done within the Department of Justice? You are relying upon what—

Ms. Karen Green: No, that is not what I said. You asked me if we were doing an audit, and I'm saying the audit is not being done.

Mr. Russ Powers: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Louis Lévesque: I can only repeat what Karen just said. I'm not aware that we've done an audit of our gender-based analysis.

Mr. Russ Powers: Okay.

Ms. Deanna St. Prix-Alexander: We've not done an audit of our gender-based analysis, but because there is a biannual reporting requirement to the departmental executive committee, we ask our gender-based focal points to give us reports on what's been going on in their branches and regions. In addition, with the development of branch and regional work plans, one of the key elements developed for the work plans is for branches and regions to do their own environmental scan of what is happening in their areas, so that they can have a more integrated approach to reporting.

Mr. Russ Powers: In that regard, is the analysis of the data both quantitative and qualitative in the reports back to the executive branch? Do you know? Are you aware?

Ms. Deanna St. Prix-Alexander: It's mixed. What I could say is that on some elements, where the bureau has either led a GBA or has intervened, we could discuss more wholesomely the extent of the GBA analysis. In other areas we could report on something such as the assisted human reproduction legislation, which had a statement saying that women are more impacted by assisted human reproduction. That is just an example of the differences you can get.

The Chair: Do you have another... You have 30 seconds.

Mr. Russ Powers: I have just a comment, and it's certainly not reflective of these presenters at all, but as this whole thing has been playing over for the last couple of months, I'm equally as encouraged as I am discouraged. I think we are going to have an interesting time putting together our report.

The Chair: Ms. Yelich, you and I are the only ones who haven't asked any questions yet.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): I think I am more confused than I ever was. It just appears that, as Mr. Lévesque said, it has to go horizontal in order to do a good job, but I'm disappointed that we don't hear the analysis. That was very interesting about the seniors. As you said about the Department of Justice, if we knew some of the analytical work that has been done, we legislators could probably do a lot better work. I am sitting here wondering how we could, though, because maybe it's the bureaucrats who write it, and maybe that material never comes to us. I don't know, but it is very interesting.

Do any of you have any comments that you would like to make on that?

• (1655)

Ms. Caroline Weber: In my former department, one thing we did was to get the deputy minister to ask, in relation to any policy proposal that came to her table, what GBA had been performed on this, and what the answers were to that question. So if it's not readily apparent to you in the items that come before you, then you can ask that question in terms of what its impact is on women. Tell them to show you their analysis, or ask what their gender-based analysis is, so you know. Sometimes we find no difference, and that's why it doesn't play out; sometimes, as you've heard here, there are competing objectives, and there are trade-offs. I find it hard to believe anyone actually still generates policy that has adverse impact, because in general that kind of policy or legislation doesn't stand.

Anyway, knowing the differential effects we sometimes see may be in the context of a number of other competing policy objectives, whenever we've come across adverse impacts, we've tailored the policy to make sure those were completely eliminated—or if not, at a minimum, they were diminished.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Is there analysis done at provincial levels with your counterparts—with Health, Justice, Finance? Is there gender analysis? Do you know, or would you be able to answer that? That was interesting also. You don't deliver the services, and most of us can see that is rarely where the impact is in all of your areas.

Ms. Deanna St. Prix-Alexander: I can say the Centres of Excellence for Women's Health would actually undertake some gender work, under project funding with some provincial governments.

For example, in Manitoba, they did some work for the government on gender planning for health authorities, so it does happen. The B.C. Centre of Excellence for Women's Health also has done project work for the B.C. government to develop a women's health strategy. That would also include setting priorities on some items the government would want a gender analysis on, so it does happen.

Because part of the women's health strategy actually says one of the objectives is for us to support effective health service delivery to women, we have found creative ways in creating partnerships with organizations—NGO organizations and others—that support, at the health service delivery level, women-centred approaches and gender-based analysis.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: The only other thing... I always worry to be careful what you ask for, for performance reports. I think maybe even Mr. Lévesque answered that. I think you can spend a lot more time writing out reports when you can be doing good work.

I always think of my friends who are nurses. They spend more time documenting... They've spent an eight-hour day with their patients and they're there because they want to be there, or the teachers want to be teachers, but they can't because they're filling out documents and performance reports.

If we do ask for performance reports, I hope we get good guidance from you. I sometimes think you're overburdened with paperwork and can't really do your jobs, so I hope you will guide us if we should go so far as to ask for written performance reports.

Ms. Caroline Weber: Where we're going in the program activity architecture and performance reporting in the federal government is getting you there pretty quickly. As Deanna said, there is this notion of kind of evaluation-type measures on policy initiatives as well, which is new for us. We haven't really had to report on the effectiveness of our policy work before.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: ... [*Inaudible—Editor*]... is what we see. In some of the comments you made today on what is visible—a lot of your health...that you have touched on today—we do see that. We see lots of advertising about HIV, and I think your performance is also by education.

Ms. Caroline Weber: The trickier bit is that we can report on the activity—we can say we've done so many training programs, we have so many GBA focal points, we have so many people engaged in the activity—but you're more interested in the “So what?” question. What's the effect of it? Sometimes you can see it and sometimes you can't. I'm saying when you can't see it, it's because there was no difference, or there were a whole bunch of objectives there. But you would like to know that, I think. That's going to be the tougher part to get at.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm going to just take the prerogative, because I'm the only one who hasn't asked a question.

Mr. Lévesque, I still don't understand. The minister advised the House of Commons that he had asked his policy officials to provide a gender perspective on this budget. I don't understand, in spite of what I've heard today, what we've done differently from previous budgets with this budget. I wonder if you could explain that. Also, if you used any tools of analysis, if you had a model of analysis in looking at this budget...did you? If so, would you share it with us? That's my question to you.

I have a quick question to Health, because I'm watching the clock and I know the bells are going to ring shortly. I'm interested in knowing from you how you would involve, or if you involve, the women's health advocacy groups in your GBA analysis. I'm also interested in knowing where you're at with planning the next women's health strategy and how that's rolling out. That's to Health.

Mr. Lévesque, what did you do differently?

Mr. Louis Lévesque: Just to be clear, what we did was... The budget process is fundamentally a review of hundreds of proposals. That's what it is from the department's perspective. There are proposals that have emanated from departments. There are some that emanate from the department in terms of tax and things like that, because we have responsibility for that, even though they are often coming through recommendations from the finance committee.

Part of that process—and this is what Minister Goodale referred to—and what we ensured this year was an explicit element in the analysis on each and every issue, asking, do you have interim gender-based considerations or analysis that could play into the decision? That was part of the analysis.

In some of the tax measures we had pretty direct answers, and clear answers in terms of our ability to do data. As for most of the other ones, I go back to asking, what are the other proposals? They're mostly dealing with issues that were discussed at cabinet committees and underlying which there was a memorandum to cabinet that took into consideration a variety of factors, including gender-based considerations.

What we did as part of the budget process was to extend if possible, where there was information or where we could produce it by making an analysis of our own—but mostly that would be by digging through the memoranda to cabinet to find these considerations—an explicit element of the advice we provided on initiatives that included what the gender-based perspective was on this particular issue.

That's what was done as part of the budget process, in the sense that the gender-based considerations of the initiatives that were considered were part of the advice and the considerations.

Now, the decisions at the end of the day reflect a number of considerations, so this is not guidance that this was the element that was driving the decision or that there had been a full-fledged analysis done on all of the initiatives, because most of the initiatives—I keep coming back to this—are initiatives that relate to proposals emanating from departments, and it is the departments that have conducted those analyses in the first place.

The Chair: Thank you.

Let's go to the health department, just quickly. I am watching the clock over your shoulders.

Ms. Deanna St. Prix-Alexander: With regard to involving women's health advocacy groups, we have ongoing dialogue with a number of women's health advocacy groups and NGOs that have asked for training, for example, in GBA. We share our resource materials with them. In addition, some of them are quite knowledgeable and have expertise in GBA and have been involved in looking at different issues, women and drug utilization being one example.

Our resources for supporting GBA have really been focused, though, inside Health Canada to support research and policy people on how to do GBA. But we look forward to the interventions and believe the NGOs have a strong GBA knowledge that could allow them to help us with our policies and programs.

With respect to renewing the women's health strategy, we have just started dialogue with the ministers' offices regarding it. We will be working on developing a proposal for how we would move forward, and we have already undertaken some work on understanding what happened with the current women's health strategy in terms of understanding what some of the successes are and the importance of including diversity perspectives and the voice of civil society in moving forward on that work.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you.

Does anybody else have a question? I'm sure there are many.

Mr. Lévesque, you indicated you would provide the committee with the data on the pension analysis and the data on the closing income gap between—

Mr. Louis Lévesque: I will have to go back to what is available from the work that was done in 1996 and 1997.

The Chair: Okay. We would certainly appreciate having a look at it.

Let me just say, on behalf of my colleagues, thank you all very much for coming. This is an issue we are very much concerned about making a difference on, and we will be following your activities. I appreciate your coming today.

Colleagues, we have five minutes. We have the motion Ms. Crowder has put forward, and you've received a letter, I think, from the Department of Justice.

Ms. Crowder, do you want to speak to it?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Chair, I propose that we table this motion until May 5, given the fact that Justice is saying they are working on a process. That would give us a couple of months, and it still would allow us to deal with it before the House finishes sitting in June.

The Chair: We hope.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Jean Crowder: That would still give us time to have Justice come in and talk about what their process is like.

The Chair: Thank you very much for accommodating that. It makes it much easier.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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