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—
Chair

The Honourable Judy Sgro

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•(1110)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order. This is the 16th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Good morning to all of you.

On your desks in front of you, in this multitude of documents, you should have the agenda, the briefing documents....

Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Just before we start, I would draw attention to the book Ms. Mourani has written on the Montreal street gangs. I want the Status of Women to be aware of this book. Sorry for the interruption, but I thought it might be something you'd want to take a look at.

The Chair: I was planning to acknowledge that at a later point in the agenda. Thank you.

You have briefing documents from the Library of Parliament on how to study the main estimates, a copy of the Canadian Heritage votes 110 and 115, and the committee calendar.

We'll move to our discussion today on the main estimates. The representatives today are not going to be making presentations. They are here to answer questions anyone has on the estimates so that the committee thoroughly understands the intention of votes 110 and 115.

I also have to mention that the committee has the opportunity to adopt, reduce, or vote negatively on each vote. We do not have the ability to increase, but we do have an ability to decrease. I sense that's not something we're particularly interested in, but I wanted to make sure I pointed out what we can and can't do in the main estimates.

I welcome Florence Ievers, who is our coordinator. Nanci-Jean Waugh is the acting coordinator and ADG of communications, external relations and outreach. Jackie Claxton is the DG of women's programs and regional operations. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud is the acting DG, policy, GBA and research—so we'll be seeing more of you later on this month. Guylaine Metayer is the director of corporate services.

They're here to answer any questions the committee has on the votes we are being asked to table.

Ms. Neville, would you like to start?

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Ms. Stronach is going to move ahead.

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): On September 25 the government announced that the funds allocated to a number of departments and departmental programs would be reduced. The Treasury Board secretariat's background on effective spending indicated that the Status of Women will see \$5 million in administrative savings. This \$5 million is not reflected in the 2006-07 report on plans and priorities for the Status of Women.

Could you please provide the committee with an explanation of what are considered to be administrative savings?

Ms. Florence Ievers (Coordinator, Status of Women Canada): If you look at the estimates and vote 110, which is the operating expenditures, the reduction of \$5 million that begins to apply next fiscal year will be taken out of the \$11.5 million that's there. So \$11.5 million is the total operating budget of Status of Women Canada, and you take \$5 million out of that.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you for being here this morning.

Can you tell us what process you're going to put in place to determine how the \$5 million will be taken out of the budget? Who will you be doing the consultation process with? Will it be determined internally? Can you identify what work you've done to date to identify the \$5 million?

Ms. Florence Ievers: The \$5 million is a significant cut out of the \$11.5 million. We have to look at everything that Status of Women Canada does. Vote 115 on the grants and contributions is not touched. The process will be internal to Status of Women. We will be looking for administrative cuts. Given the magnitude of the cuts we will be looking at what we do, and ensure that we make the best possible decisions and present the minister with the best options so we can continue to improve the lives of women and bring results to Canadians.

Hon. Anita Neville: Of the administrative costs you're cutting, the \$5 million, what portion of your overall budget went to research each year?

The Chair: Can I interrupt for one minute?

I want to make sure that everybody has the information being referred to so they can follow.

Ms. Grewal, do you have it?

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): No.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): We do not have the main estimates.

The Chair: One was printed off the Internet, so it has the same content but a different cover.

• (1115)

The Clerk of the Committee: They also have copies of votes 115 and 110.

The Chair: You have the two pages that show the votes. Each one of those should be in your packages. It's the same information, just formatted differently.

All right. We can resume the discussion.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

My question is on research. What portion have you spent on research and what do you anticipate, if that's fair?

Ms. Florence Ievers: We were spending 6% of our operations budget on research, which was \$1.5 million. Of that, \$1.17 million went to the policy research fund and \$370,000 went to direct costs like FTEs, staff, printing, translating, and distribution of the research reports.

At this point it's too early to tell what research will remain and what will not. We're still in the process of examining that.

Hon. Anita Neville: We all know that good research provides good policy. Do you anticipate that some research might come under program dollars?

Ms. Florence Ievers: Yes. As you know, a lot of the funding goes to that kind of activity. Perhaps Jackie can be more clear as to the new terms and conditions and what they will mean.

Ms. Jackie Claxton (Director General, Women's Programs and Regional Operations, Status of Women Canada): Through the grants and contributions program, an activity related to research that is directly tied to an outcome linked to the specific initiative that's going to have a direct impact on the situation of women is something that would continue to be supported through the grants and contributions of the women's program—as long as it's directly tied to a specific outcome.

Hon. Anita Neville: I'm thinking of the women's health clinic funding in Manitoba that was looking at poverty as a determinant of health, which is subsequently having an impact on policy. I'm concerned that there will still be an opportunity for those kinds of initiatives.

One other question, and then perhaps Ms. Stronach has others. I'm concerned about the operating budget and what this will mean to regional offices. I know there are currently some vacancies that I assume will not be filled. Are you looking at cutting back in the regions?

• (1120)

Ms. Florence Ievers: As I mentioned, we're looking at all our operations. We can't leave anything off the table, given the magnitude of the cuts, so we're looking at everything.

We're looking at streamlining and looking for efficiencies. We're looking at identifying if someone else can give the service instead of us. Is there duplication? Is there overlap in some of the areas we were working on? Those are the kinds of things we're looking at as we look to apply the cuts for the next fiscal year.

Hon. Anita Neville: My last question to you, or perhaps entreaty, is on the whole issue of consultation on the cuts. I think it's really important that some of the stakeholders, and perhaps even this committee, have some opportunity for input into where those cuts, efficiencies—whatever one calls them—are made. That's simply a comment.

Do we have more time?

The Chair: That should be the last question.

Do the witnesses have a comment?

Ms. Florence Ievers: I have heard your entreaty.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

The Chair: There is another minute left if Ms. Stronach has any additional...

Hon. Anita Neville: I'll leave it at that right now, thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Good morning, ladies.

I have a brief question about something of concern to me. Today, a letter was published expressing the views of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Status of Women. I don't really understand what she means by this, and I quote:

In light of the inaccurate information that has circulated regarding \$5 million cuts to Status of Women Canada's administrative costs, I believe it is appropriate to set the record straight. These goals will be met by rationalizing and improving program efficiency and the cuts will in no way affect the budget.

What does that mean?

Ms. Florence Ievers: If you read the following sentence, you'll see that the Minister points out that the Women's Program, which has a budget of \$10.8 million under Grants and Contributions, will not be affected in any way. What that means is that the Women's Program has received, and will continue to receive, \$10.8 million, under Grants and Contributions.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: When it says "\$5 million in administrative costs", does that mean that Status of Women Canada can reduce its administrative costs by \$5 million?

Ms. Florence Ievers: Status of Women Canada is not limited to the Women's Program. We have one branch that deals with policy and provides advice on gender-based policy. We also have a research branch, and a gender-based analysis branch. In addition, we have Corporate Services, Communications Services, a department that looks after consultations and communications, and we have the instigators—or promoters, if you prefer—of Women's History Month, International Women's Day, and the Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case. Status of Women Canada does not only deliver grants and contributions.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Please continue.

Ms. Florence Ievers: In order to carry out all those activities, we have an operating budget of \$11.5 million.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Do you...

• (1125)

Ms. Florence Ievers: Program administration *per se* costs \$3.8 million. As a result, the cuts being asked of us by the government will affect something other than program delivery. The Minister is convinced that she will be able to find that \$5 million by enhancing efficiency and rationalizing our activities.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Does administering the Women's Program cost \$3.8 million, or less than that? How much does it cost to manage that program?

Ms. Florence Ievers: Managing the Women's Program costs \$3.8 million, but we are not talking only about program delivery. The branch that looks after that is the branch responsible for the Women's Program and Regional Operations.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you.

Ms. Florence Ievers: Our employees at different service points across the provinces and the regions do not only deliver the program. They also sit on interdepartmental committees with other colleagues, to advocate for women's equality. They also take part in developing strategies related to rural women, and the agreement in Vancouver, which means that there is an important component for women living in Vancouver. They carry out consultations with stakeholders and with the provinces, territories and governments. They provide a great deal of information about federal programs, not only those delivered by Status of Women Canada, but other programs that can be of interest to women and help them move their issues forward.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Which means that...

Ms. Florence Ievers: The \$3.8 million does a lot more than just pay for program operations.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Which means that the \$3.8 million, out of the total of \$11.5 million, allows you to manage not only the Women's Program, but all the other things you talked about...

Ms. Florence Ievers: No, the cost of the Women's Program is \$3.8 million.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: So, it costs \$3.8 million just for the Women's Program!

Ms. Florence Ievers: That is the cost of the Women's Program and Regional Operations. The rest of the \$11.5 funds the other activities I just described.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: How are you going to cut \$5 million?

Ms. Florence Ievers: It won't be easy.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: The Minister has said that activities will not be affected, but all the things you just referred to—analysis, research, information and awareness-raising—are activities; they're not just hot air. Where are you going to find that \$5 million? You have \$3.8 million to manage everything—in other words, the Women's Program and Regional Operations. And in addition to that, there are all the other things you just talked about.

Ms. Florence Ievers: Yes, there is the department responsible for gender analysis, research, policy analysis, communications and consultations. You know, we can review our budget and try to see where we can realize certain savings. I believe that in our individual areas, we can all find ways of tightening our belts. That is how we will save money. We also have to ask ourselves whether a particular

service is still relevant or whether it can be combined with other things. As I said a little earlier, everything is on the table. We are obviously seeking greater efficiency, but we will have to look very closely at our activities and determine what is the most likely to yield positive results, in the interests of all Canadians.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ievers.

Ms. Mathysen, go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you, Ms. Ievers.

[English]

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm quite impressed—

The Chair: Sorry, Ms. Mathysen. We will have a speaker from this side.

Mrs. Smith, go ahead, please.

We'll go back to you, Ms. Mathysen. I'm sorry. My apologies.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you.

Thank you, Florence, for your presentation today. Could you comment on something? While we're looking at the budgets here today, in the estimates, could you go over something once again? Clearly there is room for a \$5 million cut in terms of efficiencies. So it's not talking about taking away from women's programs. Could you speak a bit about the women's programming, the \$10.8 million and what that does, and what that means in terms of the estimates we're talking about here. Clearly, efficiencies and accountability and transparency and lack of waste are very important in all departments. It's taxpayers' money; it's not our money. So could you speak to that a bit this morning?

• (1130)

Ms. Florence Ievers: I will ask Jackie Claxton to tell you what the program does and what results it brings.

Ms. Jackie Claxton: I think as you saw last week, we have a very clear direction for the renewal of the terms and conditions. The focus is on the economic, social, and cultural situation of women. If you look at the documents, you'll see that the long-term outcome of the program is the full participation of women in the economic, social, and cultural situations or life in Canada. Translating that into concrete, tangible reality means that literally hundreds of women's and other organizations at local, regional, and national levels across the country will be supported to carry out concrete strategies. I know that's somewhat broad, but I think it's one of the underpinnings of the program, that we have a broad outlook and that we are able to support groups working on a cross-section of issues.

Currently, two of the critical areas that the departmental agency has identified are aboriginal women and economic security. If we look at aboriginal women, we can look at the concrete strategies being supported in the Yukon, in Newfoundland, in P.E.I., and in New Brunswick. I'm just thinking off the top of my head here, but this just gives you an example. I think those are concrete examples of the approach of the program, which is direct participation. These are the women being affected by the issues, who are working together to make a difference, to make a change in their lives.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you.

Anybody on the committee, please feel free to...whoever you think is best. I'm sure Florence will give some direction on who that might be.

Clearly there have been a number of years in which, in my view, there hasn't been a huge amount of accountability. There were many reports, many studies, and many things that were very good at the time, I'm sure, but now we believe, on this side of the House, that it really is time for action. So when we're talking about this tightening up and this awareness of using every dollar to benefit women on the ground, we're talking about women in our communities all across our nation who need the support and need the help to forward the cause of making sure that women get the economic support and the kinds of tools they need to continue to grow in society. I believe very strongly that all women are equal under the Constitution. It's the fact that the barriers are out there that has to be addressed. Whether you're a man or a woman or a child, there are many barriers you face on a regular basis.

Looking at the estimates today, we see that there is a considerable amount of emphasis put on these on-the-ground kinds of initiatives. Here at Status of Women, I know we're doing some study on human trafficking as well, and we're doing some very concrete things for which there are timelines, accountability, and transparency.

Could you comment on some of the very important things that are being done for women all across this nation, and aboriginal women in particular? I know Sisters in Spirit and initiatives like that are being supported. Would anybody like to comment on that?

Ms. Florence Ievers: You can talk about the issue of trafficking. That's an issue that came to our radar screen a number of years ago, when not very many people in the country were prepared to look at it. Status of Women Canada did something at that time. A number of departments were working on pieces of that puzzle but were not necessarily looking at it from a gender perspective. What we set out to do was commission some research to find out more about the magnitude or the kind of problem that existed.

We also co-chaired, with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, a round table of the appropriate officials, meaning officials from Justice, the Solicitor General, Foreign Affairs, CIC obviously, and Status of Women, to look at the different components. That work led to a more gendered, I would say, protocol that was signed in Palermo on human trafficking and smuggling. Canada's contribution was important in engendering that, and I would say Status of Women was really part of the catalyst that made it happen.

That also led domestically to the new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. In that act, there is an offence on human trafficking that can bring penalties of up to a million dollars and life in prison.

So that's how Status of Women contributed to that.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Mathysen.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you very much.

I wish we could indeed add more money to this department, because it seems to me that the work you do is quite remarkable. You described an incredible array of activities and advocacies.

I'm quite interested in what you said about the contribution that SWC made in regard to protecting women connected with trafficking—immigrants and refugees. Obviously that contribution came from research reports and the work that women's groups were doing on the ground, which leads me to my question. How does the department plan to consult with women's organizations now on the key public policy issues in the next year if groups that receive money from women's programs are no longer able to do the research or engage in advocacy of the kind that Ms. Smith and you were talking about?

I also wondered how SWC plans to fulfill its goal of development of an equitable public policy if women's groups on the ground that do the work you were describing with communities across the country can't do the necessary work they need to do to document inequities and provide the solutions that we've been seeking in regard to trafficking and other issues.

Ms. Florence Ievers: The good news in all of this is that the funding was not cut for the women's program. The \$10.8 million remains as it was, and it will continue to go to groups and organizations and individuals. Although there will be new terms and conditions, it nevertheless will go directly to promoting action on the ground in order to improve the lives of women.

On consultation, that activity can continue through the women's program, but we also have ongoing consultations with stakeholders. Last year, in 2005, we conducted a number of consultations across the country. We had six regional consultations and one national one, which was complemented with electronic consultations that reached almost 3,000 Canadians.

We intend to continue to consult. The minister, since she has taken office, has had a number of round tables, and will continue to do so, with interested groups and individuals. For example, she has had a round table with aboriginal women and she has met with a number of organizations and individuals as that has gone along.

Other departments working on issues that have an impact on women's lives also do consultations. I think of Foreign Affairs—they do that on human rights—and a number of other departments. For example, this fall the government is undertaking consultations on matrimonial property as it affects aboriginal women.

So there are a number of activities that don't necessarily have to be generated by Status of Women, but they can help to improve the lives of women and help the government and policy-makers to engender and make good policy as it impacts on women.

● (1140)

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: So the impact of the work done by women in the community through their research...

Ms. Florence Ievers: Research, other activities they may have, will contribute to the knowledge we have to move issues forward—that's always been a very valuable input, the results of the initiatives undertaken under the program.

The member previously mentioned questions of accountability. We have been building more accountability into the program over the last few years. Now each initiative must be evaluated, so we get tangible results from the funds we give. All that work done by the community and by women's groups and others across the country informs our approaches to building gender equality and equality for women.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Yes, and clearly very importantly. But I'm still mystified by how, when they can no longer do the research, they're going to fulfill that very important goal.

I want to continue. What resources are now being allocated toward reporting on Canada's next periodic report to the UN committee responsible for monitoring our compliance with CEDAW? Are these resources adequate to implement the recommendations from the last report, where we're seriously behind?

Ms. Florence Ievers: The preparations for Canada's next report to the UN under the CEDAW convention are being coordinated by Canadian Heritage. They are responsible for coordinating those responses. Status of Women is contributing, and its sphere of activities in a number of departments across the government as well as provinces and territories will be factored into providing Canada's response, and that is due in early 2007.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Do you feel confident you have enough resources to do the job as you would like with regard to the reporting?

Ms. Florence Ievers: We at Status of Women are contributing to the report, and we're fine with what we need to do.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Does Status of Women Canada plan to work with the finance department on the gender-based analysis in the upcoming federal budget? There's supposed to be a gender champion in the finance department now, so will SWC have the opportunity to ensure that the 2006-07 budget will be fair and equitable to women?

Ms. Florence Ievers: We are working closely with all central agencies, the Privy Council Office, Treasury Board, and Finance. There is a champion in Finance, and they have already undertaken some training in gender-based analysis.

Perhaps Hélène can add more to what I'm saying.

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud (Director, Gender-Based Analysis and Accountability Directorate and Research Directorate, Status of Women Canada): Thank you very much for that question.

The finance department is one of the central agencies that has made a commitment, and you've seen that in the government response to the standing committee's report on GBA. They have been starting to do a lot of training within their own department. We're hoping they'll be continuing to build on that expertise and use it in their areas of authority.

We continue to work with them on a regular basis, and I hope we will see some of those results in the next budget.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Stronach.

Hon. Belinda Stronach: Thank you.

My question is around the change in the mandate or funding framework for the program. What effect is this going to have on the budget cuts? You mentioned earlier the programs that will be kept on will be the ones that meet the objectives and the outcomes. If some of the objectives have been changed—equality was dropped, social justice was dropped—and others were added, how will the budget cuts affect these programs? If programs were there to promote equality and equality is dropped from the mandate, will those be at risk?

● (1145)

Ms. Florence Ievers: I'll take your question in one way, and perhaps Jackie can add...

We have to make a distinction. The terms and conditions of the women's program apply to the \$10.8 million that goes into funding; they do not apply to the rest of the activities of Status of Women. We work toward a number of objectives, and those were not changed; it's just the strict terms and conditions of the funding program that were modified.

On the effect, perhaps, Jackie, you can go into it a little more.

Ms. Jackie Claxton: I think the important point is the one you've made, that the terms and conditions relate to the grants and contributions program—and I'm just reinforcing what Florence has said, that we will be providing support for activities falling within those terms and conditions within the same level of budget. So there are no changes from a budget perspective, in terms of the impact of the cut.

Hon. Anita Neville: Have you done an analysis of the programs you currently fund that will no longer be eligible under the changing mandate of the program? Before you answer, let me just preface this by saying that I met this week with, quite literally, several dozen women in my community about the impact of the changes to their organizations. We are gathering information at the moment, but I'm wondering if you have done an analysis of what the changed criteria are going to mean.

Ms. Florence Ievers: Jackie.

Ms. Jackie Claxton: We haven't done an analysis per se. I think the focus, from our perspective, is on looking at the submissions that groups will be coming forward with and determining what fits into the activities we support. I think we have a very broad framework; there are many things we will continue to be able to fund. There may well be groups who have received support in the past and for whom certain components of their activities may no longer be eligible, but I would expect that in many cases there will be other aspects of the work being done by the groups, keeping in mind the emphasis on the direct participation of women, the direct impact on women. I think this is something that has always been at the forefront of the approach the program has taken. So as I say, given the scope of the work being done by groups, I would anticipate there will continue to be activities.

Perhaps I can take this opportunity to go back to a comment made by one of the other members with respect to research. I just want to underscore the fact that we're not interested in research for the sake of research. If women are working on an issue and some work needs to be done that is relevant to the issue and will contribute to achieving a concrete result related to the issue, it will be considered as part of the global strategy the groups are carrying out.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Stanton.

By the way, can I say, Mr. Sweet, welcome. I should have welcomed you earlier.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Thank you.

The Chair: It's hard to miss you, but I didn't mean to miss you.

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Did that cut into my time?

The Chair: No, it didn't.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Just as an aside, when we hear witnesses in this room, I always find it ominous to sit here right across from the leaders of the New Democratic Party and the CCF, going right back to the early days, and deliberate on policies that affect certain segments of our society. I don't know whether it is by design or not that we sit across from these men and women who have been champions for the most vulnerable in our society.

My first question is a specific one. In appendix III, and I presume on the votes today, the total funding is \$24.6 million, of which \$11.8 million is specifically for designated core programs, including the \$1 million for Sisters in Spirit, leaving about \$12.8 million in funding. But on the vote sheet today, under vote 110, the vote amount is \$11.489 million, or approximately \$11.5 million.

Could you explain the difference between the \$11.489 million and the \$12.856 million? Is it anticipated that between now and March there will be some savings? I'm sorry to have you scurrying for details; I've had the chance to sit here and get this ready and you have not.

• (1150)

Ms. Florence Ievers: I think the difference between \$11.5 million and \$12 million something—I can't find it in my papers—is the

employee benefit plan. That's something that everyone must fund, but it does not count in our operations, per se.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: It is part of the \$12.8 million, with respect to total funding?

Ms. Florence Ievers: Yes, that's how you get the \$12.8 million.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: We're still on track, then, to keep program spending at \$12.8 million.

Ms. Florence Ievers: The \$12.8 million is a total number, but the real number of our real operations is \$11.5 million. The difference, the \$1.3 million, the employee benefit plan, is something we have no control over. We cannot change it. Reducing our workforce, though, would have an impact on it.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: But it still forms part of the overall budget for Status of Women Canada.

Ms. Florence Ievers: It's an amount calculated in the total budget.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Correct.

With the impending cuts and reduction in expenditures mandated by Treasury Board and the government, as we move forward with six more months to go in this fiscal year, is there some capacity to realize some of these savings between now and March? In other words, even though the \$5 million was intended to be over two years, we're halfway through the current fiscal year. Is there any capacity to begin to accommodate some of these savings between now and March, as opposed to rolling it all into the next fiscal year?

Ms. Florence Ievers: Treasury Board has indicated to us that the cuts don't apply to this fiscal year. They only apply next fiscal year. This year the budget remains intact. That will give us the flexibility to make the adjustments that will be needed to meet the requirements of Treasury Board.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: In all of the documentation we have received, we don't have any of the historic numbers. If we go back to fiscal year 2003-04 and 2004-05, say, in the last three or four years, what has the historic level of funding been for Status of Women Canada?

Ms. Florence Ievers: If you look at the last five or six years, there has been a considerable change. In 2000, the government approved the agenda for gender equality. With that, Status of Women's budget was increased. I'll give you the final year. These were incremental increases, and I don't have the details with me today. At the end of the five years, which was in 2005, it meant that the granting program had \$2.5 million more than it had in 1999. For its operations, Status of Women had \$2.5 million more than it had in 1999. There was an incremental increase in the total program of Status of Women of \$5 million. The amount put into Status of Women in that agenda has gone into our A-base and is part of the \$24.6 million we now have. There was over the years an increase in the women's program of \$2.5 million together with \$2.5 million in the operations.

• (1155)

The Chair: Ms. Deschamps.

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): I believe it is Ms. Mourani's turn.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Mourani, you'll be the last questioner.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I would like to know how many employees you have at the present time.

Ms. Florence Ievers: One hundred and thirty-one.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Do you believe that once \$5 million has been cut, you will have to cut back the number of employees?

Ms. Florence Ievers: Yes.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: By how many, in your opinion?

Ms. Florence Ievers: It's difficult to say at this time. We will clearly try to maintain all the gains we have made, but considering the size of the cuts, we will have to reduce our staff.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: There is one thing that bothers me. Earlier, you said that the Minister and you had met various women's groups during the summer and since early fall. Let's say there were meetings that began in the fall of 2005, as well as consultations on funding mechanisms and eligibility criteria for the Women's Program, among other things. Then there was an election in 2006. As a result, the Minister had meetings with people. You talked about different groups.

Can you name some of those groups? Do you know them? Could we have a list of these groups? I requested that the last time. Who are the people you met with?

Ms. Florence Ievers: The Minister has met with a great many people since she took up her post. I can tell you that she has met with Aboriginal women, people representing various national groups, some individuals, and people from various constituencies that are interested in the status of women.

I can't tell you that I have any lists, but she continues to do that on a regular basis.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Do you believe that this change in direction is the result of those consultations? Did certain women's groups make it known to the Minister that there are structures within Status of Women Canada that are totally useless or that changes needed to be made in the criteria for the Women's Program? Was it following those consultations that the philosophy or direction changed?

Ms. Florence Ievers: That is a question that you should put to the Minister.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: It's quite intriguing, because there were consultations beginning in the fall of 2005, and there was even some talk at one point of increasing the program funding. Then, all of a sudden, everything changed and the Minister had consulted people. So, maybe she was given another opinion that we are unaware of. But you're right: I should put the question to the Minister.

Earlier, Ms. Claxton, you said that some groups would not be eligible under the Women's Program. Could you give me an example and tell me why?

Ms. Jackie Claxton: I appreciate your giving me an opportunity to explain. We are talking about activities. Following these changes, the process, as I see it, will involve continuing to work with groups and assessing which parts of their activities will continue to be eligible.

So, it's more a matter of the activities of certain groups no longer being eligible.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: That would mean that funding for certain groups would be reduced; in other words, they would be entitled to funding, but not the same amount, given that some of their activities would no longer be eligible. Is that right?

● (1200)

Ms. Jackie Claxton: It isn't operating funding *per se*. We finance strategies, group activities. That is the way we've been operating for some time now: we review their activities, analyze budgets and determine what groups need to pursue those activities.

As Ms. Ievers mentioned, because the focus is on results, for some years now, we've been working with groups to ensure that, as part of the budgets we allocate them, they have resources set aside for activities such as evaluation. In terms of achieving results, we start working on that as soon as the activities begin, because projects and initiatives have to be submitted with an action plan, outcome indicators, and an assessment plan.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We are out of time, but I want to thank the witnesses.

I am going to move now that we deal with votes 110 and 115, and do them separately.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Status of Women—Office of the Co-ordinator

Vote 110—Operating expenditures.....\$11,489,000

(Vote 110 agreed to)

The Chair: We will now deal with vote 115.

Status of Women—Office of the Co-ordinator

Vote 115—Grants and contributions.....\$11,750,000

(Vote 115 agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much to the witnesses for giving us all this information. It was very helpful, and I wish you luck with the challenges you have. I'm sure you'll do well and do a good job of balancing those things.

Ms. Florence Ievers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll suspend for a moment while the witnesses leave.

•(1200) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1205)

The Chair: I will call the meeting back to order.

Our witnesses are Ms. Morency, who is senior counsel, criminal law policy section for the Department of Justice, and Adèle Dion, director general, human security and human rights, Department of Foreign Affairs.

Thank you very much for coming this morning. We appreciate your patience as we start on a very important subject.

I am going to turn the floor over to Ms. Dion, if you would like to start.

Ms. Adèle Dion (Director General, Human Security and Human Rights, Department of Foreign Affairs): Thank you.

[*Translation*]

I wish to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Committee for inviting us to discuss the Government of Canada's efforts to combat human trafficking. There can be no question that human trafficking constitutes a criminal violation of the most fundamental of human rights: the right to life, liberty and security of the person.

I would like to begin by giving you an overview of the situation, then talk a little bit about the interdepartmental working group, and finally, say a few words about our international activities and our bilateral cooperation with the United States.

[*English*]

Collaboration is integral to the fight against this global scourge. Canada continues to support the efforts of other countries and organizations to eradicate trafficking in persons at both regional and global levels.

At the same time, we recognize that more can and must be done to address this phenomenon, which we know disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable members of our societies, predominantly women and children, and in particular girls.

The clandestine nature of trafficking in persons makes it difficult to ascertain its true magnitude. We know that no country is immune to this crime. The UN estimates that more than 700,000 persons are trafficked globally each year and that human trafficking now constitutes the third most lucrative illicit trade, after drugs and arms smuggling.

While we continue to grapple with identifying reliable data on the extent of trafficking within our own boundaries, we know that Canada is primarily a country of destination for trafficked victims as well as a transit country for trafficking to the U.S.

Asia, Africa, and eastern Europe tend to be primary source regions for persons being trafficked to our country.

In May 2002 we ratified the United Nations protocol against trafficking in persons, which lays the groundwork for international collaboration against human trafficking and also provides an international definition for trafficking in persons. Canada took a lead role in the elaboration of the protocol. The protocol is still relatively new, and Canada's own anti-trafficking objectives are

guided by the international, multi-pronged response to trafficking referred to as the three Ps: prevention of trafficking, protection of victims, and prosecution of offenders.

Canada has also ratified other relevant instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and, more recently, the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which addresses the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography.

I'll say a few words about the federal interdepartmental working group. A complex and multi-faceted problem such as this requires a multi-sectoral response. The federal interdepartmental working group on trafficking in persons was established first in 1999 to coordinate Canada's negotiating positions on the text of the trafficking and smuggling protocols. In 2004 the working group's mandate was expanded so that it could act as the focal point within the federal government to coordinate responses for combatting trafficking in persons.

The working group brings together seventeen different departments and agencies. It's co-chaired by me and Carole Morency. Some of our key partners include the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Human Resources Development Canada, RCMP, CBSA, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Status of Women, and CIDA.

The working group provides a forum for information exchange between government departments and agencies, fosters a whole-of-government approach, and ensures that the Government of Canada has a coordinated domestic and international approach to this issue. The group is also committed to collaborating with the provinces, territories, and civil society.

•(1210)

I have a couple of quick examples.

In May 2005, the Government of Canada organized the Pacific Northwest conference on human trafficking in Vancouver, which brought together policing organizations, victim service agencies, government officials from federal, municipal, and provincial levels, and NGOs to talk about solutions to the problem. A similar conference is being planned for Atlantic Canada from November 6 to 8 in Halifax.

I might also mention that a representative from the Government of B.C. joined a federal delegation to Venezuela in March 2006 to share provincial experiences and best practices on how to combat human trafficking within OAS member states.

With regard to international activities, as I mentioned earlier, in recognizing the importance of collective global action, Canada actively encourages countries to ratify the convention I mentioned earlier, the UN convention against transnational organized crime and its trafficking protocol, and the optional protocol to the convention on the rights of the child that I mentioned concerning the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography.

We also participate in multilateral and regional fora, such as the OAS, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the regional conference on migration, the UN, and the G-8, of course, to negotiate resolutions that will reinforce international commitments. We also work within those groups to develop and respond to questionnaires on activities to combat trafficking and to develop guidelines with a goal of improving regional cooperation and improving the understanding of the extent of this problem.

I might also mention that since 1996 Canada has been a donor to the International Labour Organization's international program for the elimination of child labour. This program operates in over 75 countries.

We support efforts to raise awareness among source countries abroad in an effort to prevent trafficking from happening in the first place. In this regard, my own department provides program support to combat trafficking internationally through the human security program as well as through our \$2 million annual contribution agreement with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, which is located in Vienna. They support the implementation of international legal instruments covering this crime. They also do a lot in terms of raising awareness.

I have a couple of other examples.

We have partnered with the International Organization for Migration, which is disseminating an animated drama video, called *Shattered Dreams*, that is aimed at raising awareness among vulnerable adolescents to the risks associated with trafficking. The video is being used in local communities in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

We've also funded anti-human trafficking workshops through the OAS in Haiti, where our RCMP colleagues made a presentation on investigative techniques to the Haitian police force.

We supported the IOM to organize a workshop for government and private media partners, with the objective of sensitizing the media to report the reality of trafficking in persons in Central America and Mexico.

• (1215)

Our Canadian embassies abroad are also active proponents in this fight. For example, I might just mention that over the past year our embassy in the Ukraine hosted and provided financial and logistical support for two training seminars on human trafficking. They did this in cooperation with the OSCE, Ukrainian NGOs, and Ukrainian government officials.

Our embassy also supported training by the IOM's newly established centres for migrant advice. This training was for call centre operators across the Ukraine regarding requirements for legally working in and immigrating to Canada; thereby, again, increasing knowledge and awareness and supporting the prevention of trafficking to Canada.

CIDA supports the prevention of trafficking by addressing many of the factors that contribute to the vulnerability of people to being trafficked or involved in commercial sexual exploitation by addressing causes such as poverty; gender inequality; children's

rights and protection; discrimination; and other factors, such as poor governance.

In the last decade, CIDA has funded and supported significant anti-trafficking initiatives using bilateral, multilateral, and local mechanisms in all regions—eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Finally, I'll say a few words concerning bilateral cooperation with the United States.

Government officials cooperate very closely with our U.S. counterparts, and we are currently developing a joint assessment to better understand the cross-border nature of human trafficking and identify areas for potential future collaboration.

The assessment is due to be presented at the cross-border crime forum in November of this year—next month—that is taking place in North Carolina. It is also a component of the security and prosperity partnership between the U.S., Mexico, and Canada that calls for enhancement of efforts to combat smuggling and trafficking.

I think I'll stop there and turn to my colleague from the Department of Justice to talk about Canada's accomplishments from a domestic perspective.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Dion.

Ms. Morency.

Mrs. Carole Morency (Senior Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section, Department of Justice): Good morning.

Trafficking in persons has often been described by many as a modern-day form of slavery. To understand that, we need to have a clear understanding of what kind of conduct we're actually talking about.

Human trafficking involves three key elements.

First, it involves a physical act; namely, the recruitment, transportation, or harbouring of a person across international borders, or within borders.

Second, it involves the use of such means as threats, force, coercion, or deception. With respect to children, although it's irrelevant whether any such means are used, they nonetheless often involve the abuse of power or position of authority over the child or the giving or receiving of consideration to obtain the consent of the person who has authority over that child.

The third key element is that it's carried out for the specific purpose of exploiting its victims, usually for sexual exploitation or for forced labour.

It is the means—principally coercion—and the exploitative purpose that distinguishes trafficking from similar crimes such as human smuggling and makes it so abhorrent, whether a person is forced to work in a garment factory, on a farm, or as a domestic servant or to perform sexual services. No matter the form of human trafficking, it's always an affront to human dignity and a fundamental violation of their human rights.

There are many different types of exploitation involved in human trafficking, such that it has been linked to other issues, for example, prostitution. And although there are some linkages between human trafficking and prostitution, particularly when we're dealing with child prostitution, there are differences that warrant treating the issues separately.

Adèle has already outlined the magnitude of human trafficking as we understand it domestically and internationally, which makes us appreciate even more the importance of having a strong, coordinated domestic response in place.

Canada recently strengthened its criminal justice response to trafficking. In November 2005 Parliament enacted the former Bill C-49. These new Criminal Code offences created an important step towards strengthening our ability to protect victims of human trafficking by ensuring that Canada's legal framework clearly recognizes and strongly denounces and deters this terrible crime.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

It does this by creating three new indictable offences to better address human trafficking—in whatever form it may manifest itself.

To begin with, the main offence of trafficking in persons prohibits anyone from engaging in specified acts, such as recruiting, transporting, harbouring or controlling the movements of another person for the purpose of exploiting or facilitating the exploitation of that person. This offence is punishable by up to life imprisonment, reflecting its severity and its harmful consequences for its victims and Canadian society.

[*English*]

Secondly, Bill C-49 deters those who seek to profit from the exploitation of others by making it an offence to receive a financial or material benefit knowing that it results from the trafficking of persons. This offence is punishable by up to ten years' imprisonment.

[*Translation*]

Thirdly, Bill C-49 prohibits the withholding or destroying of travel or identity documents in order to commit or facilitate the trafficking of persons. This offence is punishable by a maximum of five years imprisonment.

[*English*]

Bill C-49 reforms will strengthen our current responses to trafficking by building upon existing provisions in the Criminal Code that already address trafficking-related conduct, such as forcible confinement, kidnapping, sexual assault, and aggravated sexual assault, and these reforms also complement the trafficking-specific offence that exists in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Bill C-49's new criminal offences, together with the existing offences, provide a broader framework for all criminal justice personnel with a significantly enhanced ability to ensure that the offence charged is the one that best responds to the facts of each trafficking case.

The federal government is also addressing human trafficking through other non-legislative measures, which is a reflection of the reality that an effective response to such a problem requires not only

a strong legal framework but also multi-sectoral collaboration to ensure that victims are protected and to enhance our awareness and understanding of the problem.

For example, in 2006 the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration introduced measures to strengthen Canada's response to the unique needs of trafficking victims who find themselves in Canada but are foreign nationals. These measures include guidelines that will assist immigration officers in issuing short-term temporary resident permits to trafficking victims for a period of reflection of up to 120 days, and this permit can be renewed. Victims are also exempted from the temporary resident permit processing fee and given access to the interim federal health program to ensure that they receive the medical attention they need, which could include emergency health services and trauma counselling.

The government has also undertaken numerous awareness-raising measures within Canada. For example, we have a website on trafficking in persons that can be accessed through the Department of Justice website. The website provides useful information for the public, describing the problem and providing related links.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Public education and awareness is being fostered through the development and broad dissemination, within Canada and through Canadian embassies, of a poster—available in 17 languages—and an information pamphlet—available in 14 languages—to help prevent human trafficking victimization.

[*English*]

We have brought with us a sampling of those materials to leave with the committee. These have been really widely disseminated and sought as materials for persons organizing conferences.

Professional training and education about human trafficking and enforcement-related issues is under way and began with a training seminar in law enforcement in March 2004, co-hosted by the Department of Justice and the International Organization for Migration. A similar seminar was held in May 2005 in Vancouver, hosted by the RCMP, and another will be held in November 2006 in Nova Scotia.

As you have already heard from Adèle, we've supported prevention and awareness efforts in source countries, and we continue to look to build partnerships here at home and abroad. The interdepartmental working group on trafficking in persons is committed to our mandate to continue to coordinate all federal anti-trafficking measures, and we continue to work with our provincial counterparts and civil society to ensure an effective, comprehensive response to this terrible crime.

With that, I will end my remarks. We will be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I expect you'll find that we have a lot.

I'd like to suggest to the committee that if we were to do five minutes each, it would give almost everybody an opportunity to ask questions. So if that's agreed by the committee, we'll not go to our usual seven minutes.

So it will be five minutes, starting with Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you very much.

Ms. Morency, in clarification, the new act on human trafficking comes into effect when? Is it November of this year?

Mrs. Carole Morency: It came into effect in November 2005.

Hon. Anita Neville: Can you tell me, if you've been following the implementation of the act, what difference it has made?

Mrs. Carole Morency: The new offences came into force on November 25, so they can only be used to address situations that have occurred after that point in time. We are not aware of any charges that have yet been laid under the new offences, but that doesn't mean that law enforcement is not currently investigating cases that have come to their attention or that other cases are not proceeding under existing Criminal Code provisions that may address trafficking-related conduct.

So, yes, we continue to monitor how Bill C-49 in particular will advance our efforts in this regard; and yes, we continue to monitor how existing Criminal Code offences and also the trafficking offence under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act continue to be used in this area.

Tracking cases, for example, between spring 2004 and February 2006, looking at the existing Criminal Code offences that are being used to address trafficking-related conduct...when we've looked at the facts in reported cases we have found or identified 25 cases where convictions have been entered and nine that are still before the courts, meaning the fact situation is a trafficking situation but not necessarily identified because of the trafficking in persons specific offence.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you for that.

Can you tell me or the committee a little about the prevalence of trafficking of Canadian-born women and children? How widespread is it, what are the manifestations of it, and where is it?

Mrs. Carole Morency: It's a difficult issue, for us in Canada and internationally, for any country to identify the dynamics and the actual numbers, whether it's totally within the borders of a country or across the border. In the context of domestic trafficking, what we have to this point in time remains primarily anecdotal types of information that we've gleaned from discussions with NGO partners or provincial partners who are active on the ground at a regional, local level.

As well, from the reported case law that we've seen under the existing Criminal Code cases, they tend to be, for example, younger persons who are more vulnerable. They're usually young teenage girls, often below the age of eighteen, who just choose to move to another place or run away from home, or they've hooked up with somebody who has basically taken them under control, either under the guise of a friendly situation or has actually taken them in under a trafficking situation and moved them perhaps from one urban area to another or from a rural area to an urban area.

So we don't have numbers on how it is actually occurring. We understand that those who would be at greatest risk, based on what we've seen in the reported case law, are the younger teenagers, who tend to be more vulnerable to being exploited. They don't have the means. They're running away from violence at home or other forms of violence.

Of course, within the aboriginal community, there would be a greater risk. That is our understanding to this point, that there may be greater exposure there.

• (1230)

Hon. Anita Neville: Actually, you anticipated where I was going with that. I appreciate the distinction you made between prostitution and trafficking. I know anecdotally some of what is happening in my own community—and it's really only anecdotally—but I'm concerned about that transition that takes place from prostitution to trafficking internally in the country. But you're telling me that you have no way of tracking it.

Mrs. Carole Morency: To be clear, for anyone under the age of eighteen, there's no question of consent, that a young person is choosing to prostitute themselves. That's not on the table.

Hon. Anita Neville: That's right.

Mrs. Carole Morency: When you're dealing with an adult, an adult can choose or can consent, but the difference between prostitution and trafficking is that it's not a question of consent; it's irrelevant. The person is being forced to provide their services, whether it's sexual or other labour, for an exploitative purpose, and they fear for their own safety or that of someone in their family if they don't provide those services. That's the distinction from prostitution. Prostitution is not illegal in Canada currently; it's the activities around prostitution that tend to be addressed through the Criminal Code. But there is that distinction.

I would emphasize the distinction in particular in dealing with children under the age of eighteen—which is what we've seen in the reported criminal cases, that they tend to be more under the age of eighteen—that it's never a question of consent.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome, ladies, and thank you for being here today.

I would like to pursue the same line of questioning as my colleague. According to the UNODC, 92% of victims of human trafficking are used for prostitution, and 48% of them are children.

Bill C-49, which includes a number of variables that I intend to list, criminalizes trafficking in persons. You said earlier that you make a distinction between human trafficking and prostitution.

Do you not think that drawing a distinction between human trafficking and prostitution ultimately makes no sense, in a way? Ninety-two per cent of the victims of human trafficking are used for prostitution. If Canada were to legalize procuring, would that distinction not conflict with Bill C-49? Also, would it not help to open up a market where organized crime already plays a prominent role? Would this not allow organized crime to operate even more freely, since Canada would harbour individuals engaged in procuring? Prostitution has not yet been criminalized, but procuring has. The average age of people getting into prostitution is 14. Do you believe that consent could ever be given under these conditions?

I read that 92% of women who engage in prostitution want to get out of it. Do you not think this sends a strange message, both nationally and internationally? Experts in the field have often said that a distinction has to be made between human trafficking and prostitution. I think this sends a strange message.

• (1235)

Mrs. Carole Morency: Thank you for your questions.

First of all, this is a matter that is currently before the committee examining solicitation, whose report we are awaiting.

I recognize that there is a connection between prostitution and human trafficking. We do not support prostitution, but it is important to distinguish between the two. With human trafficking, consent is never the issue. The same does not apply to prostitution. It happens that some adults engage in prostitution by choice, but children can never make such a choice.

I heard the testimony of Mr. Dandurand before this Committee. He said that even in countries where prostitution is not illegal, human trafficking is still a problem. We need a number of responses, because prostitution is a complex and difficult problem. We are awaiting the report.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: As you said, nothing is either all black or all white. Some women may make a choice. But can you really choose when you're living in poverty? Do you really have a choice when you're a victim of violence and you're practically forced into prostitution? Of course, there are some women who just want to make a little extra money, and that is what they do.

Ultimately, is prostitution not a social or moral issue? Society may not be interested in seeing a woman exposed in a shop window like a piece of meat, because she is not an object. Do you not think it's more of a social issue?

Mrs. Carole Morency: Vulnerable people do not have social and legal equality, and are therefore even more likely to be abused.

It is clear to us that the victims of trafficking are even more vulnerable. That is where we are trying to make improvements. As prostitution *per se*, it is currently before another committee. Human trafficking is a legal matter relating to the security of the person, and has to do with social and health services. It is a very complex problem.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you for coming today. We're really glad you're here.

I'm very pleased that trafficking in persons is a topic we're studying at the Status of Women committee. In my opinion, it's long overdue.

The significant thing about trafficking in persons is the lack of knowledge that the public, the police, and everybody in general has about it. What is happening now is a new awareness. In 2004, the Ukrainian Congress women put down a resolution at the UN saying stop the trafficking of persons.

Last week, at a homeless centre in Toronto, I was talking to a young woman. The police did not believe her when she told them she was trafficked. The pimp said she is doing this of her own volition. She had just turned eighteen.

All of these challenges are there before us as a society.

Having said this, the other element is that people who are trafficked internationally usually do not know the English or French language. They usually are threatened, and they usually don't trust police, depending on the country they come from.

You're working together with many other organizations. What do you think the most important thing is that we need to get out there? Is it a combination, maybe? It might be education or it might be more police resources. In your opinion, what do you think is very important on the street today to stop this horrific crime?

A third question is related to data gathering. Traditionally, over the past decade, money has not been put into the gathering of data on this horrific issue, although we know on the ground from NGOs, police officers, and everybody else that it's happening in more cases than we care to admit.

Could you comment on these three things?

• (1240)

Ms. Adèle Dion: Thank you for that question.

In terms of work at the international level, certainly one of the most important elements is, on the one hand, awareness raising, getting the message to particularly the most vulnerable, the young children and girls, about what to watch out for, what to be suspicious of, and, on the other hand, what their rights are, and who is available to protect and assist them.

That is why, for example, at the international level we do work quite closely with the International Organization for Migration. They have a very good track record in working with the grassroots organizations, the NGOs, in countries such as Ukraine, as I mentioned earlier, to assist civil society in helping these vulnerable victims and in awareness-raising activities. So certainly at the international level that is something we very much prioritize, including here in our own hemisphere, in the Americas.

In terms of data gathering, I'll ask my colleague to speak about the Canadian situation, but at the international level this is a very important challenge. We here in Canada have our own problems, but those problems are certainly found in every single country. It's not restricted to one. Our G-8 partners face the same difficulties and challenges we do just because of the nature of the problem—the very delicate line, as was just mentioned, between prostitution and trafficking, and how the problem is identified and addressed.

Mrs. Carole Morency: Within the context of a domestic response, just to echo what Adèle said, prevention is a huge issue for us. We have focused a lot of our preliminary efforts federally on getting that message out locally. Absolutely there's more we need to do, and will continue to do, in partnership with our partners on the ground. We do continue to work on that.

As was mentioned earlier, the three Ps—protection of victims, prevention, and prosecution of offenders—is really the international standard. Those three remain the key priorities for us domestically as well. The protection of victims, then, with the announcement by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in May of 2006 about the guidelines, was a huge step forward for us.

Again, clearly there's much more we need to do. Within the criminal justice sector we continue to work through various federal, provincial, and territorial fora to keep the issue on the table, including with heads of prosecution and directors of victims services. There's much we can do federally to keep the issue on the agenda, but there's also much we need to do very much in partnership with provinces and NGOs to make further inroads.

On data collection, what Adèle said about issues internationally is true for us here. The clandestine nature of the conduct in question makes it incredibly difficult for anyone to get real data on this. If we look to other areas where we have experience here in Canada—i.e., sexual assaults and spousal abuse—we have some statistics there, but everybody who's worked in that area will say that we all estimate those to be incredibly below the real numbers.

Bill C-49, the IRPA offence, and those types of specific offences addressing human trafficking will help us a bit in terms of trying to track those specific offences. We will continue to need to look at related types of conduct; a case that may not be identified by somebody as a trafficking case clearly is, once you look at the facts.

In terms of our law enforcement, you've heard from the RCMP already. I think the CBSA will be appearing as well, and they can speak to efforts they can and are taking domestically to enhance their ability to keep data on these numbers.

So there's a lot more we need to do, but there are huge hurdles in terms of trying to get to the real numbers that we would all like to have.

• (1245)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Mathysen, go ahead, please.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much. You have made reference to the need for data and more information, and I wonder whether the interdepartmental working group has enough resources available to look at that.

We also heard at the committee meeting last time that working with community groups and civil society is very important in order to combat human trafficking. I wondered to what degree that work has happened. Has there been consultation with these groups, and if so, what are you hearing and with whom have you had these discussions?

Ms. Adèle Dion: To answer the first part of your question, about resources, our approach has been to try to coordinate the resources that exist within each of the seventeen departments and agencies to make sure they're used as effectively as possible, and, very importantly, to make sure we all know what each other's priorities are, and which specific challenges are being targeted so we can get maximum value from the resources we have. It's a challenge. It's one that is more than likely not going to diminish over time. It's very much related to the lack of specific hard data. You have a kind of chicken and egg situation, in which it's really difficult without the data to actually know whether you're dedicating sufficient resources to each element of the problem.

In this exercise, there are many challenges. We find that civil society is absolutely essential to addressing the problem. They have contact with the victims themselves. They are very much engaged in working with several agencies and departments to provide the solutions, to identify the victims, to assist them, and to provide protection. Also, they're key partners in providing that anecdotal evidence that is so very necessary.

• (1250)

Mrs. Carole Morency: I would just like to add that in terms of specific groups, federally we've had the opportunity to participate at a local level through round tables, sometimes in partnership, for example, with the British Columbia government, which is quite active in addressing the issue. We've had an occasion to meet with umbrella organizations, in particular the Anti-Trafficking Coalition of Vancouver. There was a meeting between the Minister of Justice in August 2005 and that coalition group. The Canadian Council for Refugees has done a lot of work in this area, and we've had fairly positive discussions with them, and we have been able to learn from what they've already discovered or identified as key issues. I think we're all moving on a similar path.

The issue of resources remains an important one, but as Adèle has said, we've been able, with existing resources, to pull together within the different departments some critical first steps towards that goal.

The Chair: We have one minute left.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: I was quite interested in your discussion of Canada's efforts to reach out to women abroad, and the videos you've used. I wonder how effective has that been and whether there is any plan to utilize that further, beyond the Asian contacts you identified.

Ms. Adèle Dion: We have received reports from our embassies, and also from the NGOs who have collaborated with us on the project, that the animated video has been very effective. It's interesting that the fact it is animated, as opposed to using actors or real people, seems somehow to make it more acceptable, particularly to youth and children. They relate to it very well and seem very much to receive the underlying messages. If the video were to have been made with individuals, it somehow would become more frightening and they would miss some of the important messages.

So that has been very successful. We would, resources permitting, do perhaps a Spanish language or other language version and offer it to our partners in Central and South America and would look at doing other language versions as well. Of course, this all requires identifying further resources.

The Chair: We've run out of time at this particular point. I want to thank Ms. Dion and Ms. Morency so very much for so much information this morning.

We will be seeing the video you have mentioned, either as a group or individually. I very much look forward to seeing it.

Thank you very much for your help. We will continue to work on this very important subject.

To the committee, we have a couple of little things here that I want to bring to your attention. When we voted on votes 110 and 115, I needed to also have moved a motion that asks, shall the chair report the main estimates to the House?

Is everyone in agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right.

I wanted to bring to your attention the schedule of meetings that you all have. On Thursday we have Richard Poulin from the University of Ottawa and Leslie Ann Jeffrey from the University of New Brunswick.

There was a third individual to appear. It was Victor Malarek, who was supposed to be here, actually. He has been called to British Columbia, so he won't be here.

I wanted to bring to your attention the special meeting on GBA, which is on a Monday at 3:30. It was the extra meeting we agreed to have on gender-based analysis to which we asked the deputy

ministers of the various departments to come. We agreed to do that. It's on your schedule for November 6 at 3:30.

It will be distributed to those of you who do not have it.

When we start on Thursday, we will ensure that we all have the exact documents at the very beginning—Monday, November 6, at 3:30—to deal with the gender-based analysis.

Are there any other issues?

Ms. Smith.

• (1255)

Mrs. Joy Smith: Do you know whether Victor Malarek has rescheduled?

The Chair: On the sheet that most of you should have, the names that are in bold are of those who have confirmed, and the ones that aren't, of course, are of those from whom we're waiting for confirmation.

If there are any questions about the witnesses who are on the list, please call the clerk.

Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Could I have your paper? I don't know what you're talking about. I'm sorry. I can't follow you, because I don't have the document.

[*English*]

The Chair: We don't have it here. You will have it this afternoon, e-mailed to your offices. Please look at it. With any concerns about it, please get in touch with the clerk.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Did you say earlier that Mr. Poulin could not come? I didn't get that.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Poulin is coming this coming Thursday, along with Leslie Ann Jeffrey.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right. We'll move adjournment.

Thank you for your patience. The meeting is adjourned.

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