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Chair

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order, ladies and gentlemen. We have quorum.

We have a witness from South Africa who's already on the audio waiting for us. Madame Budlender is from the Community Agency for Social Enquiry, and she's a specialist researcher from South Africa. As we know, South Africa is at the forefront in gender budgeting, and we would really like to hear from our international expert.

Ms. Budlender, I hope you can hear me.

Mrs. Debbie Budlender (Specialist Researcher, Community Agency for Social Enquiry): Yes, I can hear very well, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Normally we have 10 minutes for witnesses. So please time yourself by your watch and speak for 10 minutes. Then we will listen to other witnesses. Afterwards committee members will have an opportunity to ask you questions, and they will be very specific that the question is for you.

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: That's fine.

The Chair: With that, I would like to start with you, Ms. Budlender, please. Thank you.

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: I'm going to talk this evening as both a South African and someone who has assisted over 20 countries, as well as international agencies, with gender-responsive budgeting. Some of what I say will be about South Africa, and some will be what I think I've learned from working in other countries, mainly developing countries like Africa and Asia, but also some other parts of the world.

I have seen the notes from some previous sessions, so I will try to respond to some of the issues that have been raised and not duplicate too much what you've heard already.

I was responsible for helping the Commonwealth Secretariat pull together the responses to a questionnaire that went out to all the finance ministries of Commonwealth countries in preparation for the finance ministers meeting. This was a questionnaire that the finance ministers had decided to send to check what had happened two years after they had all taken a commitment to do gender-responsive budgeting.

There was a response from the Canadian Department of Finance in there, and that response said clearly that the Canadian government felt it was doing gender-responsive budgeting. I think it's important

for the committee to know that your government believes it is doing gender-responsive budgeting. It feels it's not something new, so that is something to ask it about. It referred in particular to the gender-based analysis that is done throughout federal departments and agencies, in line with the 1995 federal plan for gender equality.

Several of the developed countries, when we ask about gender budgeting, refer to general gender audits. In my mind, gender budgeting is a specialized form of gender audit that adds an extra budget punch to a gender audit. So gender budgeting for me is almost broader than gender audit, in that it does all the other stages but asks the important question about the money.

The Canadian government response was that where appropriate and where data exists, Department of Finance branches can do GBA when they are developing policies. It didn't really go further to say for which policies it had done this. It also talked about distributional impacts of the policies on Canadians from an income, regional, and gender lens that it does whenever possible or relevant. There are perhaps questions for the committee there about when it thinks it is possible and when it thinks it is relevant, because those qualifying words leave a lot of room for manoeuvring.

It also mentioned the pre-budget consultations as an important input into the analysis to ensure policies don't have unintended consequences on our "segment of the population including women". So it sees that both its own analyses and what women say are important in forming what policies should be given budgets.

Finally, from what I know about Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency has supported gender-responsive budgeting in several countries. I personally have done work that was funded by CIDA in Malawi, the Philippines, and Bangladesh. Other countries where this has happened are Tanzania, Vietnam, Pakistan, and perhaps others.

So there is a sense that the Canadian government is saying it believes in gender-responsive budgeting. That's my first area.

The second area consists of some international lessons, and some of these echo what you've heard already.

The first is that gender-responsive budgeting is always easier to do when countries are using some form of performance- or results-based budgeting. It's easier to do it with that than with line item budgeting, because the performance- or results-based budgeting looks at physical outputs and outcomes rather than treating budgeting as a bookkeeping exercise, which is what used to happen in the old days. That lesson says Canada is in an excellent position to do gender-responsive budget, because you have your management resources and results structure policy, your reports on plans and priorities, and your department performance reports. Those allow you to ask what you're giving money for and how you measure physically what that money has delivered, which for me is an important part of gender-responsive budgeting.

When we started this exercise, everybody thought only of the money, but the money is a promise, the budget is a promise, and we have to check that this promise gets followed through, and we do that through monitoring. You have the reports to do that monitoring if they're presented in the correct way.

The third area I'd like to go on to is South Africa, because it was mentioned in the previous hearings as a country in the lead, and there have been questions in your previous hearings, I know, about what has happened to South Africa.

We started the work in 1995, soon after the post-apartheid elections, and the work was done by a parliamentary committee, initially the finance committee, together with two NGOs. The idea was that the NGOs would do the research, and the parliamentarians would be able to take the facts and figures and use them to push things further because of their political power.

Over a period of three, four, or five years, we analyzed the budgets of every single department, as well as local governments' donor money into governmental fiscal relations revenues. We were there to prove an ideological point: you could find gender everywhere, not just in health and welfare. But we also felt it wasn't our task to do this on a regular basis. That was the task of governments, because there should be an accountability exercise whereby governments should be reporting to us and to Parliament what they are doing with our money.

For two years or so, the National Treasury did include gender-responsive budgeting in its annual budget report, but by about 1999-2000, they became a little bit more reluctant. I put it down to two reasons. First, it was no longer so easy to blame apartheid for anything that was wrong, because they had been in power for five years or so. And secondly, they were saying they'd get on to gender later; for the moment they'd got important budget reforms like performance budgeting, and they must get the important things right first.

At the national level, nothing consolidated is being done, but two of the provinces have institutionalized gender budgeting. Gauteng Province, which is where Johannesburg is, has been doing it every year since 2002—their report's in the annual budget—and my province of Western Cape, which is around Cape Town, has just started doing a gender- and youth-responsive budget. That'll be reported in the budget that gets published and tabled in February/March next year.

Every department is asked to show the allocations they think contribute the most to gender equality and youth development. It's similar in some ways to the South Australian approach, but the important innovation we've made is that they must include a report on what the subprogram that gets the largest amount of money is doing. We made that instruction so they wouldn't just focus on the crumbs they were giving to youth and gender, but they would tell us where the big money was going.

We have a parliamentary committee on women in the national Parliament that is, I think, similar to your own committee. One interesting development over the last three years is that twice a year that parliamentary committee commissions me and pays me out of their budget to assist them in analyzing the budget and preparing their report on the budget and sharing other skills with them. We have a committee that is probably a lot less formally educated than you are, and this sort of support is necessary because of the intimidation of the larger number of documents related to the budget.

• (1540)

That's really all I'd like to say for a start, except to say that something I've learned in working in many countries is that gender-responsive budgeting is not something that happens overnight. You need to persevere. You need to adapt the approach to suit a particular country's budgeting. There's no single recipe with the approach to budgeting. I think you need to keep it simple and unburdensome if you expect civil servants to continue to do it with some attention. The exception in that respect is France, which I think hasn't been mentioned in your committee. Every year France produces a large report related to gender-responsive budgeting; it is tabled together with their budget.

I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'd like to mention to the committee that it is close to midnight your time, and I really appreciate that you have stayed awake to talk to us. You are committed.

We'll start off, then, with the next round of witnesses.

We have Ms. Beckton from Status of Women Canada. Ms. Beckton, are you the only one doing the presentation?

Ms. Clare Beckton (Coordinator, Office of the Coordinator, Status of Women Canada): Yes, that's correct. I'll do the presentation, and then Hélène will answer questions too.

The Chair: You will be followed by Nancy Peckford from the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action.

Go ahead, Ms. Beckton, for 10 minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Excuse me, Madam Chair. Out of respect for Ms. Budlender and given that it is midnight, would it be possible for us to ask our questions right now? We could proceed with the presentations later.

[English]

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: It's 10:45 p.m. It's not midnight. I'm fine.

The Chair: It's 10:45 p.m., so if you want, we can do the presentation and then ask her the questions. It's only 10 more minutes.

Merci, madame.

Ms. Clare Beckton: Today we have a deck that we've prepared. It provides a little bit more of an overview; it's not a particular point of view.

[Translation]

What is gender budgeting? It is not a separate budget for women. It is an analysis of how a government finds revenues and how it spends public monies from a gender perspective. This takes into account the effects on the different groups of men and women and deals with their reality. It requires participation not only at the budget implementation stage, but also throughout the entire budgetary cycle and the policy development cycle.

We should now discuss the context. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work for everyone.

[English]

We're really saying various approaches exist around the world—you've just heard one—of which none has emerged as the defining one. Some approaches are more suitable to developing countries and economies in transition and are not appropriate for Canada.

[Translation]

Obviously, the political process is influenced by the broader country and government context. In Canada, the budget forms part of the policy planning cycle. Canada focuses on accountability for results.

[English]

In Canada we've been focusing on accountability for results, and that particularly came about as a result of some of the continuing work of this parliamentary committee around gender-based analysis—that is, if line departments ensure a solid gender-based analysis of their activities and initiatives, their policy and program objectives, and their resource allocations, it should produce concrete results for women and be reflected in the budget.

These can be tracked through departmental performance reports, such as the management resources and results structure and the management accountability framework. In response to the standing committee's recommendations, the three central agencies are engaged in training activities and the institutionalizing of gender-based analysis in their processes—that's really important—and practices to ensure that departments produce better public policy that will contribute to closing the gender gap.

[Translation]

The advantage of gender budgeting is that it reduces the socio-economic disparity between the sexes. It is not just a question of equality. Gender budgeting may also improve effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and transparency of government budgets.

[English]

And so to integrate a gender-based analysis into economic policy the following questions could be asked. Who are the recipients through sex-disaggregated data? How is spending and revenue distributed between men and women? And this would require expenditure and revenue statistics disaggregated by sex. What are some of the long- and short-term implications for gender distribution of resources? Are the provisions adequate for the needs of both men and women?

International experience shows that a combination of tools are used to create analytical models to analyze income distribution, among other things. Examples of some of these tools are the gender audits and gender impact assessments, gender-disaggregated beneficiary assessments, gender-disaggregated policy expenditure incident analysis, and gender-disaggregated tax incidents.

• (1550)

Les bénéfices of gender budgeting—we've just talked about that.

Next is approaches.

[Translation]

There are three fundamental approaches.

First there is the women's budget. This is comprised of some combination of audits of expenditures specifically targeting women (also known as women's budget statements) and recommendations to advance women's equality.

Then there is the gender budget or the gender-sensitive budget. This is not a separate budget for women, but a gender-based analysis of the overall budget to determine differential impacts, with possible recommendations for changes to advance gender equality.

Last, there is gender mainstreaming, a gender responsive budget or engendering the budget process.

As you know, there are various models. We will first talk about Australia and the United Kingdom.

[English]

I'm not going to read that part of the deck, but it's there.

I'll focus for a few minutes on Canada.

[Translation]

The three central agencies have committed to integrating gender-based analysis, GBA, into their practices and processes. This will ensure that departments take into account gender considerations in developing policies and programs submitted to the agencies.

[English]

As for the government response to the standing committee on GBA, each central agency has appointed a senior official as a GBA champion and the overall goal is to enhance their horizontal policy coordination and challenge functions relative to GBA.

All three central agencies are also pursuing training of all of their analysts, and to ensure, for example, with the Privy Council Office, that the MCs coming before them reflect that the department has done a gender-based analysis. The Department of Finance has conducted a gender-based analysis on policy measures, particularly on tax policy, where data permitted, on tax proposals presented to the Minister of Finance in both the budgets in 2006 and 2007, and training is to be offered to everyone in the department now. That's following the commitment that the deputy made here at the committee.

[Translation]

The departments responsible must ensure that gender-based considerations are included in the budget presentation and provide for allocations of pertinent resources.

[English]

So on the line departments, Treasury Board submissions are used by departments, as you know, to obtain programming funds, and now the Treasury Board has required that all of these contain a gender-based analysis. They will be asking questions to ensure that the gender-based analysis was done. The Status of Women also provides gender expertise and gender-based analysis training to departments and central agencies.

Il y a aussi les divers modèles, other models in Canada, and again, I'm not going to go through those because I know you've heard it.

[Translation]

Some headway has been made in Canada. There is close cooperation between the three central agencies.

[English]

And by focusing its study on GBA, the work done by this committee presented the opportunity for Status of Women Canada and the central agencies to develop an active partnership approach in addressing accountability issues. And I think we have made considerable progress in that regard.

There is an increased linkage among central agencies, line departments, and accountabilities as a result of the measures we've been working on. And we think that as a result of the training—and also training that will be provided to the parliamentary library's research branch—parliamentarians and parliamentary committees will also be able to play a greater role in respect of gender-based analysis and accountability.

• (1555)

[Translation]

Some challenges have yet to be taken up, among them the collection of sex-disaggregated data.

[English]

We know that without accurate and relevant data it's not possible to integrate a gender perspective in the budget process. And also, the data needs to reflect the diversity among men and women.

[Translation]

There is also the assessment of priority areas.

[English]

Again, when we're looking, there has been a lot of work internationally on the expenditure side and less done on the revenue side, which includes tax policies. As you've already heard from some of the witnesses, it is more difficult to look at taxation policies.

On the expenditure side in Canada, there may be areas of opportunity that could be explored, such as income support for parents, some of the economic policies, and mental health policies, etc.

[Translation]

We have to successfully move from analysis to changes in policies and budgets.

There are also the limitations of legislative intervention.

[English]

We know that legislatures in partnership with gender experts and civil society groups have sometimes played an important role for advocacy, particularly, for example, in South Africa, where our witness is from today. And I think the standing committee should be commended for looking at the issue you're looking at now and for bringing all of the people before you.

We also have the institutionalizing of gender budget tools, and that is one of the things we have been working on in Canada.

[Translation]

In conclusion, international experience highlights certain best practices and certain shared elements. However, Canada must choose what works in its specific context.

[English]

We need to look at tools and gender-based analysis training, recognition of gender-based analysis and how it can be instrumental in achieving effective policy implementation—and this is one of the things we continue to work on—political and legislative support, institutional arrangements and funding for government machinery,

[Translation]

dialogue, oversight, reporting of progress, and the establishment of new priorities rather than an increase in public expenditures.

[English]

I think it's important to note that it doesn't always mean spending more money when you do the analysis. It may be simply a reorganization of priorities to place the money in a different place after you've determined the impact of where the spending occurs—the time commitment—and initially maybe reveal more gaps and solutions.

[Translation]

There you are. I have finished.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Ms. Nancy Peckford, who is the director of programs with the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action, who has provided an analysis of the national finance for some 10 years.

We look forward to hearing from you, for 10 minutes. Thank you.

Ms. Nancy Peckford (Program Director, Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action): Thank you so much.

It's a real pleasure to be here, and I'm delighted that the members of this committee have taken on the opportunity to study gender budgeting.

We have been a keen and long-term advocate of gender budgeting, for a variety of reasons. We understand gender budgeting much like Ms. Beckton does here. It doesn't mean a separate budget for women, it is not limited to budgetary allocations targeting equal opportunity policies or promoting women, but it encompasses the entire budget. I think that's why your task is so important today, because you're looking at the global federal budget and how it is undertaken and how to ensure equitable outcomes for women.

We identified gender budgeting as a priority in 2005 after we commissioned a retrospective federal budget analysis going 10 years back. So we looked at the year during which Canada signed the Beijing *Platform for Action*, in 1995, up to 2004. We hired a researcher, who has appeared before your committee, an economist, Armine Yalnizyan, to do an analysis of key priority areas for women and how they were funded during that period.

Essentially, what Armine has told you and what she found for us is that areas that women relied on for the well-being of themselves, their families, and their communities tended to be dramatically underfunded and, in some cases, cut during the deficit-cutting years. During the surplus years, those moneys were never restored. So what we were left with was a situation in which women weren't able to reliably count on programs and services that were very, very important for the stability of themselves and their families.

During this period when we were doing the study, we attempted to find information about what was being done at the federal level on gender-based analysis—this was in 2005. Sadly, we didn't have a lot to work with. There was no information available. We were able to get a commitment in the House at that time from Minister Ralph Goodale that a rigorous GBA would be done of forthcoming federal budgets, but there was no evidence suggesting to us that a rigorous or high-calibre gender-based analysis was being done.

So we've been, in fact, on an exploratory mission over the last couple of years to better discern what's actually happening within the federal government. We recognize that Status of Women Canada has funded some research that has looked specifically at the impacts of tax policy and other budgetary measures, but we were unable to find any meaningful coordinated effort within the federal government,

and particularly within the finance department, around gender budgeting and gender budgeting outcomes.

I'll tell you a bit more a little later about what we understand to be happening now, and I'm sure Clare would be happy to elaborate as well.

We understand gender budgeting to be necessary for several reasons. The United Nations has identified what we call equality gaps in a variety of areas in Canada that really impact upon women's daily lives. These include poverty, violence against women, employment, child care, housing, legal aid, discrimination against aboriginal women, immigrant and refugee women, and their access to employment insurance.

We also understand, and no doubt you've done a very long-term study on women's economic security, that women are located differently in the economy, in particular because of their caregiving responsibilities, and those caregiving responsibilities have an impact on their participation in the labour force. I think it's helpful to recognize for the purposes of this committee that 70% of Canada's part-time work force is female. Women consistently share with Statistics Canada that they take more time out of the work force for caregiving, they take more sick days, they take more family days; and in many cases they're opting for part-time work, if their financial situation allows it, so that they can better balance family and employment.

We should also recognize, and I'm sure you've heard this, that nearly 40% of women tax filers don't actually pay tax in Canada. They don't earn enough revenue to pay tax. This is really important when examining federal budget trends over the last decade, which increasingly rely on the tax system to deliver social policy.

In particular, we note the use of tax credits. This has been a long-term—long-term in the last decade and a bit—way in which the federal government has opted to deliver income relief, but in some cases it doesn't work for women if their tax liability is so limited that the tax credit means nothing to them.

● (1600)

So I think this is an important context in which we're working, and you're working, in terms of the gender budgeting study that is currently under way.

Because of these realities, we have endeavoured to better understand what's happening within Finance. One of the issues is that I think there's a profound lack of transparency within the federal government and the finance department. I think that's because the measures have been so modest to date. It's very difficult to be publicly forthcoming about what you're doing when for the most part, I believe, it has been ad hoc and somewhat arbitrary.

We do understand that there has been some gender-based analysis of federal budget measures since 2005. We haven't looked at whether anything preceded that. Our evidence suggests that it has been extremely limited. Perhaps it has been done; we haven't been able to access that information. We believe, and gender budgeting experts worldwide will tell you, that transparency is a really important part of the process.

To better understand what the finance department is doing, we've filed access to information requests. We've discovered that there has been some gender-based analysis, but often it's very superficial and it's not necessarily taking place within an equality rights framework.

I would refer you to a report by Diane Elson, who is a UN-recognized expert on gender budgeting. She has written a document called *Budgeting for Women's Rights: Monitoring Government Budgets for Compliance with CEDAW*, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. I don't know why Ms. Elson hasn't been here with you, but I believe she would be of enormous assistance.

This report suggests that gender budgeting needs to be done within a context that recognizes the ways in which women are disadvantaged in the economy, and particularly in their communities. It may be that you have to zero in on specific constituencies of women.

We're aware that Canada did file a report to the Commonwealth finance ministers meeting, as per their commitment to do gender budgeting. We were able to access a copy of that report, again through an access to information request because we simply haven't been able to get the information any other way. The report suggests that GBA in Canada tends to be limited to analysis and is less focused on outcomes. I think we have to have a shift within the federal government so we also look at performance indicators.

I believe that Debbie is correct in saying that Canada is well positioned to look more specifically at performance-based budgeting. We understand—and I look to Clare to clarify if this is true—that the analysis is not in-depth enough. It does not look specifically at women's location. It's not specific to any government, but without that analysis what you risk getting is a public relations exercise. I think no one wants that kind of analysis. It's not helpful, and it doesn't necessarily advance women's interests. I would strongly encourage the committee to look very specifically at performance-based indicators based upon Canada's equality commitments, both internationally and domestically.

I brought a copy of the 23 recommendations that were made by the UN CEDAW committee on discrimination against women. I believe this set of recommendations is a useful place to start in terms of thinking about what you want to achieve with gender budgeting.

I would conclude with two points. One is that I don't think there has been sufficient leadership. I think Status of Women Canada has certainly done what it's been able to in terms of encouraging the finance department; however, I think the finance department to date hasn't embodied the leadership required to take this to the next level. I think it requires collaboration with Status of Women Canada, but I don't think they're there yet.

●(1605)

I recognize that the tax policy unit at the finance department appears to be undertaking a gender-based analysis, but I don't think that analysis is sufficient in terms of what it's identifying as useful to women. I think if the analysis were sufficient, we would see different measures in federal budgets, and we're not seeing them. We're still seeing a heavy reliance on tax credits, for example, and other kinds of tax cuts, which, I don't think, recognize the way in which women rely on public spending and notions of the public good. So I think that we need a different kind of leadership and a different context.

I would also say that I don't think civil society organizations have been adequately consulted. It's partly a capacity issue, and we all recognize that. Women's organizations in Canada are not well versed in gender budgeting, in part because we don't believe that Canada has been doing it in a very public way. So our inputting into the process has been limited by the fact that it appears to be somewhat obscure.

I would note that last year, only two groups were invited to the ministerial round tables with the Minister of Finance in the pre-budget lead-up, and those were REAL Women of Canada and the Native Women's Association of Canada. That's according to the information provided by the finance department. This suggests to me that the consultations are not broad enough, and you're not speaking to enough organizations that can actually tell you about women's economic and social circumstances. If you're not having those conversations, in my view your gender budgeting work will not succeed. It will not be meaningful, and I don't believe it will necessarily produce good outcomes.

I would also note—and this is my last point—that I believe Parliament should have some oversight here. We see it in other areas. For example, there's an environment commissioner who looks at how departments do their sustainable development planning. I don't see any reason why we wouldn't want to consider something like that for the purposes of gender equality and gender budgeting. Finally—I'm sorry, I'll just make this last point—while Canada has made a good start in having departments submit their gender-based analyses to the finance department, I think we need to go a step further. I don't think relying exclusively on departments to do that GBA is sufficient. In some cases, we don't have existing or functional GBA units within those departments. So I don't think we have enough capacity in Canada, and I don't think we have enough oversight.

I'll stop there.

●(1610)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you all for such a full presentation.

We did contact Ms. Elson, and the timing was not working for us.

With that, I would like to start off with round one of our questioning, with Ms. Minna for seven minutes.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank all of you, as well as our guest from South Africa. It's good information. It's good to see where we need to go, and so on.

Let me start with our guest from South Africa, just because the timing is a bit difficult.

Thank you for your input. I wanted to ask you a particular question with respect to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in South Africa having commissioned you to do an analysis on the budget, I think you said, twice a year. I'm intrigued by that, because for the first time in our country, the Department of Finance, a couple of years back, actually did exactly that, took a look, using an independent body that was paid for by the committee, which would advise the committee on the budget surpluses and things like that

So could you explain to us just a bit more how that works and exactly what your relationship would be with the committee, and maybe give us an example of how that worked?

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: It is required by Parliament that after the budget is tabled, all the committees discuss the budget. This committee, like all the other committees, is meant to submit a report on their views on the budget.

The complication for this committee is that all the other committees are sectoral committees, so they concentrate on the health budget or whatever budget. This one has the whole budget to look at.

What I do is draft a report for them. We then have a workshop where we go through that report. They make the changes they want, and then it gets submitted under their name.

Over the last four or five years, the committee has focused its attention on what it sees as the biggest problems facing women in South Africa—HIV/AIDS, poverty, unemployment, and violence against women. So what I do for them at first glance is look through all the departments that could have an impact on those three issues and pull out what they are promising to do and what budget report they did the previous year.

With regard to the biannual aspect, they usually call me in at the end of the year. This year—in fact, last month—I tried to show them how they could use the annual reports of the committees that get tabled in September to monitor what happened with the budget of the previous year.

It really goes back to what I was saying and what Nancy was saying, that you have you to do this by saying not only what is allocated but also what actually happens to that money and the results that come from it.

Hon. Maria Minna: Thank you. That's an intriguing way of doing it. I think the parliamentary oversight that was mentioned by Ms. Peckford would go well in hand with that. It would be extending that kind of work from this committee into parliamentary oversight on how we do.

To Ms. Beckton, you mentioned that one of the challenges is getting disaggregated data. But we had a witness just last week who didn't seem to think this was an issue. She thought it was quite accessible; this kind of data is available, it's just a matter of getting it and talking about it.

I wonder if you could clarify that for us a little bit. At the same time, could you tell us if any gender analysis was done on the pension splitting that was part of the last budget?

● (1615)

Ms. Clare Beckton: I don't know if I'd be able to tell you specifically about any item in the budget. I think that's something you would have to ask the Department of Finance.

Hon. Maria Minna: We'll probably ask the minister when she gets here, then.

Ms. Clare Beckton: I think it would have to be the Department of Finance, actually.

There is a fair bit of disaggregated data in Canada. It is a challenge in other places, but sometimes it's a challenge getting access to it and being able to put it in the right place or ascertaining whether that data is consistent with other data you have.

Hon. Maria Minna: Since you couldn't answer on pension splitting, to what extent was the expertise of Status of Women utilized in the last budget, if at all, and if so, on what items?

Ms. Clare Beckton: Ms. Dwyer-Renaud, one of the experts in this area, will answer that.

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud (Director, Gender-Based Analysis and Accountability Directorate and Research Directorate, Status of Women Canada): I would preface my comments by saying that the role of Status of Women is really in supporting the departments, such as the Department of Finance. Our expertise is much more in terms of capacity building, in terms of their ability to do a better job at developing their policies and their tools.

We have been able to give the Department of Finance training and support, but really, they have to do the job. They go and get the information, they interpret the information, they provide it. They are very willing and are learning how to do this better, but as I think many of your witnesses have said, this will take a long time.

So we are in a very good relationship with the Department of Finance. They have now committed to having the entire department trained in gender-based analysis.

Hon. Maria Minna: Okay.

Madam Peckford, you have a report on the last budget. That's what you were referring to just a little while ago. We have in the system now what's called results-based management or outcomes. But you're saying that we don't have results or outcomes on the budget; you just received the information through access.

Is there any reason why you had to get it through access? You were not able to go through the department?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: There's currently no other mechanism through which to obtain the information. There is simply no other way. It's not public information yet.

I think that to improve the quality of the analysis and also to better situate why you would do gender budgeting, it's really important to make aspects of it public. I don't think it all needs to be public, but I think that critical components need to be public. Because we're speaking about women, I think it's important to be in dialogue with the constituency that is women, the organizations that represent women, so that they can contribute to the process.

One of the more frustrating aspects is that for many years we haven't had reliable access to the finance department in any sort of meaningful way. In the absence of that, the only way for us to obtain the information about what's happening—

Hon. Maria Minna: Was there any GB analysis at all done on that budget that you have seen, and if so...?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: There was a GBA done on tax policy of the 2007 budget, and the access to information request that we received demonstrates that.

Clare, you may have seen it.

What I would suggest is that the analysis is done to some degree in a vacuum. It's not done with any meaningful goal. So many of the measures indicated a negligible impact.

I have other analyses here. I'm happy to share them, if it would be beneficial to others.

Hon. Maria Minna: It would.

Ms. Nancy Peckford: Other analyses stated that the transportation, the public transit credit, for example, would be potentially useful to low-income individuals, many of whom are women, but because women have a more limited tax liability, they wouldn't benefit, in fact, to an equal degree, because they're not paying as much tax. So the tax credit, in many respects, wouldn't be all that meaningful to them. That's the kind of analysis you're getting.

What we don't have evidence of is that this analysis is actually influencing the federal budget, and I think that's the whole point of undertaking this exercise.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Madame Deschamps, *pour sept minutes*.

Merci.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: First of all, I would like to thank you for agreeing to testifying before our committee from so far away as Africa. I listened carefully and I noted that the document you submitted presents two foreign models.

We are referring to Australia and the United Kingdom, among others. At present, and unlike what is being done elsewhere, Canada is not working closely with any government agency, association or standing committee that could provide advice or assistance or ensure that there is engendering of the budget process. There is no such standing committee at present.

Contrary to what is happening in Australia— as we heard last week—or in the United Kingdom, the Canadian government works from pre-budget consultations. At this point, it only obtains information or input by consulting a few targeted groups. I do not even know how these groups are chosen, whether they have shown some interest or if they have been recommended.

This is my question. Is there a non-governmental standing committee advising the government?

If not, that means that pre-budget consultations are the only means used by the government to consult civil society and to obtain snippets of information that may or may not reflect the reality of Canadians.

• (1620)

Ms. Nancy Peckford: To our knowledge, there is no other mechanism. Consequently, there is no possibility of access to the Minister of Finance during pre-budget consultations other than at the consultations held by the Finance Committee. It is truly very difficult to establish a contact, to have some input.

We have no idea why some groups were chosen last year. Every year we have tried to have access to the Finance Committee in order to participate in pre-budget consultations. We tried this year but did not succeed.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: What were you told when you asked?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: Pardon me?

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: What were you told when you asked to participate in the consultations? Did they say, no?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: They said it was not possible. Not all groups that requested to be included were chosen. Our group was not chosen.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: And you do not even know the selection criteria?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: No, we do not know what the criteria are.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Well then, it is very transparent!

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Peckford: I think the pre-budget consultation process is perhaps a mystery to many.

[*Translation*]

That is the case for many groups.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I feel that the more we hear from the witnesses, the more of a mystery it becomes even for those of us seated around this table. It is difficult to understand.

Ms. Nancy Peckford: I understand that.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Ms. Beckton, I would like you to tell me how Status of Women Canada can exert pressure on the government. Do you have the capacity to do it? How far can you go to advance very specific measures that help women, for example within departmental budgets? Can you take very specific action to lobby the government? After all, your staff has been cut.

It is a huge job. We see that a great deal remains to be done. I believe that a fairly important core component is missing. Previously, we had the opportunity to obtain information from research supported by the women's program, for example. Groups and associations could carry out research and probably also pressure the government based on the data collected through their research. We can no longer rely on that. Associations that continue to carry out these types of studies do so on a voluntary basis.

Your staff and the operating budget of Status of Women Canada have been reduced. I wonder what kind of resources you have and how you can function with what little you do have.

• (1625)

[English]

Ms. Clare Beckton: I would probably use the word “influence” rather than “lobby” in the context of working inside the government. Of course one of the things we are doing is working with a number of the key departments, and we work with the central agencies on ensuring that people are getting training in gender-based analysis.

We've been working, as have Hélène Dwyer-Renaud and her team, with the Department of Finance in ensuring they are developing an understanding of what constitutes gender budgeting. We have, of course, been working with the other central agencies on how you ensure there is accountability with respect to the policies, programs, and evaluations that are coming in from those departments in terms of looking at gender. We can and will be continuing to have conversations with these key departments as they begin to augment their capacity and tools. I will certainly be having further discussions with the Deputy Minister of Finance in terms of advancing the work around gender-based budgeting.

Our ability is to continue to help the other departments develop the capacity to develop the tools to help them understand the kind of research they may need to do in order to get the results. As Nancy Peckford suggested, you're not simply doing an analysis, you are looking at the outcomes. Of course, the accountabilities that are required now are results based. All the government accountability mechanisms, like the management accountability framework, are results-based mechanisms, and that's what we're looking for.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Davidson, for seven minutes.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks very much to each of our presenters today. Certainly I think we're finally...at least it feels a bit more comfortable. Maybe we've just been hearing it enough times. It seems as though we're finally getting somewhere, to maybe get a bit of a framework put in place so we can understand how we can tackle this.

My first question would be for Ms. Budlender, please.

You talked about putting together some review and so on for the Commonwealth finance ministers meetings, I believe.

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: Yes.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: You talked about the Canadian response. I think you indicated the Canadian response was that we

felt we were doing it, to a certain extent. I think that was when you put in the words, “we're doing it when it's possible and relevant”. I would like you to comment a little bit more on that, whether or not there are areas we can point out to make it more possible and relevant.

There is one other thing I wanted to ask you about. Near the end of your presentation you said the one thing we really needed to keep in mind, so that it would happen, would get carried through, the ideas would come to fruition, and the exercise would be successful, was that it needed to be kept simple and not burdensome. I wonder if you could elaborate a little bit further on those words as well, please.

• (1630)

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: On the review of the Commonwealth thing, I think what Ms. Beckton added was very helpful and was what in fact I suspected. To be honest, the report from Canada, as were the reports from many of the other countries, sounded a little too rosy to me. I've learned to be a cynic over 10 or more years of doing this work.

So as to the possible relevance for me, I asked what they thought was possible or relevant. The fact that Ms. Beckton is saying that the reports from which they did this analysis aren't available is very worrying. I think what the committee has to do is say that it wants to see evidence of what your analysis showed. Where was it possible, and where did you think it wasn't possible but could have been relevant? I can't answer those questions. I think you need to ask those questions to the Department of Finance and the other departments.

It's also been worrying me a bit that there's a lot about GBA, gender-based analysis. But gender-based analysis doesn't necessarily include the budget element. So my emphasis would be on whether, when they did that GBA, they asked the money-related questions.

On being simple and not burdensome, most civil servants I've come across feel that they're working really hard, and they don't want anything extra that they need to do. So rather than having a long separate report, how do you find a way of reporting on the gender relevance of budgets that fits in with the way they are reporting anyway, adding value with limited extra effort? I also think that if you somehow build this into the existing report, it's more likely to be read by other people who are not particularly interested in gender, and maybe it gets across more.

What we've done in South Africa, with the Western Cape, is that there will be a chapter in one of the two main budget books, which is called the budget review, that will have these summary statements from every one of the departments. They say what impact their biggest subprogram, their biggest allocation, is going to have in terms of youth and gender and how it will be measured. Then they say which two or three other subprograms are contributing significantly. It is a very simple format. There is a little paragraph on the situation analysis, which gets back to why they are bothering to do this activity. What is the situation of the women and men and youth in the country that needs to be addressed? There is a little paragraph on the activities the government is going to do, how much money is being allocated, what three indicators they are going to report next year to tell us what they did with it, and any particular challenges they have been facing that could be an excuse when they don't perform next year.

It's simple and it's short, which makes it easier for the reader. It's really the basic information that would allow a committee or a civil society person to say that there is something interesting here that he or she wants to know more about.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you.

When you were working with the Commonwealth finance ministers on the report, were there other countries that you felt were more responsive than Canada?

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: The report is actually available on the Commonwealth website. I could also send it through tomorrow morning so that everybody can have it.

I think Uganda was one of the most impressive countries. India is interesting, but they are doing this in a situation where they have very old-fashioned line item budgeting. Uganda is interesting in that they have performance budgeting. They take the pre-budget consultations seriously, and they have made a real effort. It is a developing country, and yet it has done very well.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Was Australia's finance minister part of this report?

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: Yes, but Australia was not as impressive as Uganda. Let me leave it at that.

•(1635)

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Do I still have some time?

The Chair: You have half a minute, if you have something very quick, or would you like to pass?

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: I'll pass.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Ms. Mathysen, for seven minutes.

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

I would like it if we could follow Ms. Budlender's suggestion that we request these reports, since there does seem to be some confusion about the availability. Ms. Peckford indicated that she had some trouble getting these reports, and if this committee has the ability, I would indeed like to see them.

The Chair: The Commonwealth report is available. It's on the website, but it is in English only.

I'm not sure what you were asking for, Ms. Mathysen. I've just stopped your time so that I can get some clarification.

Ms. Nancy Peckford: I think Ms. Mathysen is referring to the gender-based analyses that have been done on previous budgets, including 2007, which are not publicly available, or in fact even internally available, in many cases.

The Chair: We'll look into it. Thank you.

Continue, Ms. Mathysen.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, I appreciate that, because there has been some confusion about what is available and what is not, and I would like to see those.

I'd like to go back to a question that Madame Deschamps began in regard to the pre-budget analysis and the fact that last year it was the Native Women's Association and REAL Women. And we've certainly had the pleasure of hearing from the Native Women's Association in the past and, just last week, the experience of hearing from REAL Women.

Do you know who is providing information this year to the finance committee? You're not. Do you have any idea who is?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: I'll make a distinction between the pre-budget consultations that are done through the finance committee and the ministerial round tables that are led by the Minister of Finance in the pre-budget lead-up.

Our information suggests that more groups, about four to six, appeared before the finance committee in terms of its pre-budget consultations. That's helpful. In my view, it's still not enough.

At the same time, I think what has more significance are the ministerial round tables, where you have the capacity to have some dialogue directly with the minister and his senior officials. That's a separate process from the parliamentary pre-budget consultations. In that instance, there were two groups, as reported by finance. In my view, that isn't enough. I actually believe the finance department and the finance minister would benefit from a specific consultation with women's equality-seeking organizations.

The Chair: Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Chair, on a point of order, I think it's a perfectly good question on the part of Madame Mathysen. I just wonder, though, at the appropriateness of putting a question like that to a witness who is really not in a position to answer as to what witnesses might have been called before the finance committee.

Hon. Maria Minna: I'm sorry, that—

The Chair: Ms. Minna, it's okay.

If you look at the thrust of the question, I think Ms. Mathysen is within her purview of rights asking what sort of consultation. I'm sure none of us knew there were two sets of consultations. It's good to know that there's the Department of Finance consultation and ministerial consultation, and it's a clarification. But if it doesn't go beyond the clarification....

I think she can continue on.

Thank you.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you very much.

I have another question. We've heard from witnesses that the taxation side of the budget is just as important as looking at expenditures, and I believe you indicated that. One of the topics that keep coming up in terms of the taxation side is income splitting. Last year we had pension splitting, and the issue around income splitting came up a couple of weeks ago. I wonder if you'd comment on the gender implications of income splitting.

Ms. Nancy Peckford: Sure. Certainly I think other witnesses have elaborated upon income splitting.

In our view, income splitting has a number of problems attached to it. Filing a joint tax claim or, more to the point, transferring some of a higher-income earner's income symbolically for tax purposes to a low-income earner or a non-income earner is problematic in that it's a very expensive initiative. The research suggests that in fact the most significant benefits accrue to the highest income tax bracket. If you have two income earners earning about the same income, say you have one at \$35,000 and the other earning about \$50,000, the savings in terms of your tax return are somewhat negligible. It really is in the highest income tax bracket—we're looking at \$80,000 plus—where you have one income earner earning a lot of money and another income earner earning almost nothing, where the most benefits accrue. So we think it's not a cost-effective measure in terms of who it actually reaches.

But more to the point, if you believe that women should have economic autonomy, then it's very counterintuitive to allow for income splitting, in part because you're shifting tax liability but you're not shifting resources. The research demonstrates in other countries where forms of income splitting take place that it's often women who get into a situation where they're found to be owing money on income they did not earn and income that was never transferred to them.

That, in our view, is incredibly problematic. In the event of marriage dissolution, marriage breakdown, separation, if you have an instance in which someone has filed a tax claim on behalf of both individuals through an income splitting arrangement, after marriage separation one person can be left with a very hefty tax bill.

Part of our concern is that it actually compromises women's economic autonomy; it doesn't enhance it. And if you're not shifting the resources, if you're not actually shifting the income into the pocket of the woman, who tends to be the lower-income earner, you are in fact creating vulnerabilities that I think only exacerbate women's economic insecurity.

Aside from that, in our view it is a very expensive measure. The parliamentary research bureau has estimated that it would cost about \$5 billion a year. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation has said that it might even cost more because it could actually change behaviour. As a consequence, we think that forfeited revenue could be better spent on measures that all women could benefit from.

Maybe another point to make here is that it benefits two-parent families. If you are a single parent, you will get no benefit from

income splitting, and if you're two low-income earners or even middle-income earners in Canada, the amount of money you would save in terms of income splitting is very, very modest. It really is a tax measure by which the greatest benefit accrues to the highest income bracket, where you have one very high-income earner and one no-income earner or low-income earner. In our view it's not an equitable tax policy.

We recognize that it was done for pension income splitting last year. I think all of the committee has had the benefit of the analysis around the problems associated with pension income splitting. We understand it's a policy that can resonate with a lot of Canadians, but I think that when you look at the numbers and when you look at what you value in terms of women's economic autonomy, it doesn't make sense.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to the second round for five minutes. We have Ms. Minna for five minutes.

Hon. Maria Minna: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to go back to Madam Budlender.

Thank you again for staying up for us.

I want to ask you a question. You said at the very outset of your remarks that in South Africa every single department has to do a gender analysis to its programs, but also on the subprogram because that's where the bulk of the money is.

My question to you is this. Would you recommend that at this point in time, as a way to establish a foundation, we would be able to do a gender-budgeting analysis on the existing social programs at the minimum, or was that done in your case or not?

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: Yes. First, when I said that we looked at every single program, that was the analysis we did from outside, more or less, as Parliament and the NGOs. And we did everything, and that was on existing programs.

The approach I'm talking about now, which is done in the Western Cape and the Gauteng Province, is done by the civil servants themselves, and it is again every single department having to choose certain programs. And that certainly is on existing subprograms; it's not on planned. If they have a new program they could do that, but it is what we are spending our money on in an ongoing way.

• (1645)

Hon. Maria Minna: Okay, that's actually good. It will give you a clear picture of what's succeeding, what's not, and how to shift the—

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: I've done this in other countries as well. What it reveals also is the state of the government officials' understanding of gender issues. How they present what they think the problems are and what they think the solutions are that they are delivering gives you an insight into their perceptions and where maybe Status of Women needs to go in to give a little bit of assistance. So it's a stocktaking and accountability exercise.

Hon. Maria Minna: Okay, that's actually very good. Thank you. I like that. We have to start somewhere, so taking stock of what exists isn't a bad idea.

You mentioned France, and of course we've been told before that France apparently did a good job of gender budgeting. You said that every year they table a very large report together with the budget. Do you know to what extent their budget analysis changes government policy? Would that be easily accessible? I suppose not, but it's finance, so maybe....

I don't know if you have any information.

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: I certainly have one of the reports in electronic form. I think it's a public document. France, together with its budget, has a state of *documents jaunes*, yellow books, and one of these yellow books is the report on gender.

Hon. Maria Minna: Is it results based?

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: I think it's a public document. I don't know to what extent it influences policy. I think, a bit like the South African one, it's saying, this is what we are doing. But my hypothesis is that if government officials have to write these sorts of things, saying this is what we're doing and this is how it contributes to gender equality, that can influence policy because people become more aware of what they're doing. They start collecting better statistics, because the gender statistics need to come not just from Statistics Canada but also from the administrative statistics. So in a sense, by doing it you build awareness and can get change happening.

Hon. Maria Minna: Thank you very much.

I think maybe, Madam Chair, you could....

The Chair: Get that information? Sure.

Ms. Minna, you have 40 seconds. If you want to go for it, go for it, otherwise we'll go to the next.

Hon. Maria Minna: I'll just throw it out, and maybe the witnesses could kick it around and answer it at another round.

Ms. Peckford mentioned that the budget she has is not done within the equality framework, the analysis that she's seen, apart from all the other issues. I wondered whether maybe Ms. Beckton could comment as to what discussions go on between her department and that of finance.

The Chair: Do it in the wrap-up session, because I have to go to the next round now.

Madame Boucher, *cing minutes*.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Hello, everyone. I would like to thank you for participating in the committee's work.

We believe that it is very important to have input from individuals such as yourselves who have studied or worked in this area.

There are several expressions to designate the process of integrating a gender approach into government budgets. We have heard the terms women's budget, gender-responsive budget, gender mainstreaming of budgets, and gender-sensitive budgets.

Can you explain the differences between these expressions and perhaps provide a definition for each?

[English]

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: I don't think there are real differences between the terms. Usually people are using these terms to refer to the same thing.

In South Africa we use the term "women's budget" because we have 11 official languages, and only one of those languages, which is English, has the word "gender" in it. So to make things simpler and clearer to everybody, we called it a women's budget. In retrospect, it was probably a mistake in that it made people think it was a separate budget for women.

My own preference is "gender-responsive budget", because that's what we're aiming at. But I don't think the different terms are all that important.

• (1650)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Should other points of view or perspectives be included in the budgets? We are speaking of gender and a number of other things. When preparing a gender responsive budget, where should any government start? It has to start somewhere. How can we ensure that the process will be instituted permanently in spite of changes in government? Does anyone have some ideas about this?

[English]

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: One way of doing that is to include it in the budget format. So in the budget format you need to have sex-disaggregated data, certain tables, and a special section that considers the gender issues. Several countries, in their budgets, have circulars that go out each year with specific instructions about including gender and how it must be done to fit into their format.

Ms. Clare Beckton: It's important that all departments are also doing gender-based analysis on their policies and that there is accountability around that. Those are the kinds of mechanisms we've been working on with the Treasury Board to ensure it's in the reporting mechanisms. Of course, some of that is used in the creation of the budget as well. So you need both processes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Do you want to give it to Bruce?

Mr. Bruce Stanton: How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have one minute, but you can always come back to it.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: There were some excellent presentations here, by the way. All three presentations today were very insightful.

I have one quick question for Madame Peckford.

In the course of your presentation you mentioned that the budget measures were ad hoc and arbitrary. Could you explore deeper just what you mean by that?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: I mean there's no coherent analysis or framework that's guiding the gender-based analysis done within the finance department. The tax policy people are doing what they can, but I don't think they're necessarily doing it...and it may not be their job. It may be the job of the senior leadership within the finance department, in conjunction with Status of Women Canada, to say these are our priorities, and this is what we want to achieve in an equitable budget for women. We want to tackle these three priorities, therefore our analysis must guide and inform these outcomes.

What I see, in terms of the gender-based analysis to which we've been able to gain access, is that a lot of measures are analyzed, but these measures in some cases are entirely irrelevant to most women's lives and really have no bearing on their equality status, their engagement in the economy, or the ways in which they support their families. So it appears to me to be ad hoc and arbitrary, in that there is no performance indicator, no guiding framework, and no coherence as to how the analysis is done.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: So you really want a stronger connection between the—

Ms. Nancy Peckford: Absolutely. I think what Debbie said is correct, and you need a performance indicator.

We were sad to see that Canada's report to the Commonwealth finance ministers association emphasized analysis and not indicators. Internationally, Canada claims to do gender budgeting on the strength of its gender-based analysis.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: This is a new process, and that's one of the reasons the committee is studying this. We know it's difficult.

You're going to cut me off.

The Chair: I don't want to cut you off, but you can always respond in the next round.

[Translation]

Ms. Demers, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, ladies, thank you, Ms. Budlender for joining us today.

Ms. Dwyer-Renaud, for how many years have you been providing Finance Department staff with information and training.

Ms. Peckford, you have been analyzing budgets for ten years already. Can you be sure that the information you provide is well understood and used appropriately? Can you be sure that your

students are not dunces? There were no changes in previous years' budgets in terms of measures taken to advance the equality of men and women or to improve living conditions for women. Some measures, such as the \$100 per child, were introduced. This is a useful measure for some, but it is completely useless for most of the population.

I do not understand how you can give them information and they do not use it properly or even at all. Do you make recommendations after these analyses? Are you in a position to tell us if they listen to these recommendations and subsequently implement them?

● (1655)

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: I thought you were going to ask me how many years I have been doing this work. I would have found that depressing.

Some members: Ha ha!

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: There was light at the end of the tunnel only about two years ago, and not just in Canada. It is a global movement. When we send our reports to the United Nations, we realize that people are actually going to make a difference in accountability.

For several years, we have been transferring data concepts throughout the world, but we have yet to begin retracing the results. We need a mechanism to do that. The departments have only been required to prove that their programs produce real results for about two or perhaps five years. Two years ago, we began asking how a program takes into consideration gender differences.

This is something new for the central agencies. They should be congratulated: they are interested and curious, and they want to know how it works. Every department must prepare reports about planned activities and then discuss the results obtained. We are currently working with the departments to establish a cycle that will integrate gender-based considerations throughout this cycle. The central agencies will then begin a sort of challenge at the departments because, in effect, the Department of Finance will tell you that the departments are responsible for taking gender into account in their processes and their programs.

These people are in agreement. They have started asking questions, pushing the envelope with these departments and even telling them that if they do not prove that they accept this type of responsibility, they could find it difficult to obtain the money from them.

Since September, the Treasury Board has required all departments making submissions—that is, asking for money from Treasury Board—to prove that they have used gender-based analysis in preparing their submission. That is quite new. The departments are just becoming aware of this fact. It is a lot of work for us but that may be the way to go about it rather than pushing the concept on the public service as a whole, which could give results in the very long term.

Ms. Nicole Demers: It is about making connections, as Mr. Stanton said earlier. That is what you are doing.

I would also like to know, Ms. Peckford...

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Demers, your five minutes are up.

Ms. Mathysen is next, for five minutes.

• (1700)

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madame Demers. I understand your frustration.

I wanted to ask a question and certainly seek an answer wherever.

Ms. Peckford, you talked about our 23 obligations under CEDAW. Quite frankly, it feels like forever since those recommendations came forward and pointed towards a need to change the way we looked at money allocation and how it's spent, and in fact since they seemed to be leading towards gender budgeting. I guess it feels like we're going on this very slow track.

We heard that the Department of Finance is being fully trained in GBA and that at some point down the road we'll get to gender budgeting. What on earth is taking us so long? Why is there this glacial pace?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: I would have to agree, but I actually do think there's progress.

I need to clarify. We began work on this in 2005. There were other efforts made prior to 2005 to get gender budgeting, or forms of gender budgeting, on the table. I think there is progress. What I began to say before is that Canada has always claimed a really high level of gender budgeting without doing it. They relied on the strength of their gender-based analysis. I think they've often claimed that within the Department of Finance GBA was being done to a greater extent than it was being done. In fact, I don't have evidence that it was being done at all on budgetary measures pre-2005. I think there is progress, but I think it's modest.

If you don't want the progress to be glacial in future years, I think you need civil servants and leadership at the cabinet level to set priorities in terms of women's equality and to recognize the ways in which women are again located differently in the economy, in their communities, and in their families. That's what I would strongly recommend.

In terms of these recommendations from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, they were issued in 2003. I remain convinced that they provide a very good template in terms of starting points to address particular equality gaps. Many of them have financial or budgetary implications. I think Parliament and the Minister of Finance would do very well to incorporate them into the gender budgeting exercises currently under way.

Ms. Clare Beckton: I would have to share what Nancy said about the need to have leadership. You need to have the training, you need to have the understanding within the bureaucracy, but you also need to have leadership at all levels to ensure that this happens.

The Chair: You have one and a half minutes.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: It's been brought up in the committee that the family unit may be another useful lens to look through in terms

of gender budgeting. I'm concerned that could hide some of the inequalities that women face in the family unit. I wonder if you could comment on that.

Ms. Nancy Peckford: I'd say that one of the fundamental principles in CEDAW, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which we are a party, states that women should be recognized independently within the family. It's not to say that you don't recognize or understand their contribution to the family, but you should recognize them as an independent entity within the family.

Again, I think measures like income splitting are worrisome because they begin to blur those lines. I believe it's important to recognize the ways in which women work and contribute to their families, but I would strongly advise against our consolidating gendered interests into a generalized family unit as if women don't have a distinct experience within that, or as if they all live in a particular family unit, which is obviously not the case. There are many single-parent families in Canada, and most of them are led by women. Often women are the most acutely vulnerable when they are living in alternative family structures for a variety of reasons, and that needs to be recognized.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go for five minutes to Ms. Grewal.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all for your presentations.

On gender analysis and gender budgeting, most Canadians would be hard pressed to find the difference between the two. If certain government departments, including Finance, were to fully buy in to gender analysis, would that alleviate the need for gender budgeting?

My second question is—and you can answer them all together—over the last two decades, have we witnessed any marked improvement in how federal government policies impact on the lives of women?

I think everyone will agree with me that the lot of Canadian women has been improving. While more maybe needs to be done, progress has occurred, and I think all of you agree with me. Women are better educated, wages are higher, and poverty is down.

My third question is, how much of this can be attributed to government policies and how much to women themselves?

●(1705)

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: I think I'll try the one about, if you had gender-based analysis theoretically across the departments, would you need gender budgeting? I think that was the question.

Theoretically, and I think Ms. Beckton said that, if all departments did their gender-based analysis in terms of the design of their policies, their programs, and their resource allocation, and looked at it from a results-based position, theoretically that information should be fed to the finance department and theoretically it should go into the budget. There should be, then, a national budget that very much looks at the impacts from a gender perspective. Perhaps that's what I'm trying to do with colleagues from the different departments and the finance department. But I think that's what we're aiming for.

I think it's a cycle, and you've heard the international witnesses talk about that. You'd have to constantly still be evaluating the past to see the future. You'd have to check all the time to make sure that the departments have learned their lessons, if you like, in terms of applying their knowledge to the next cycle of budgeting based on the past cycle of budgeting. So I think there's always going to be the need to do that evaluation from a gender perspective, even though the capacity has been built inside.

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: If I could just try on that question, I think what Ms. Beckton has just said is...though the important words were, if they have done "the analysis" of the situation of this and "the resource allocation". As soon as she says "the resource allocation", she's talking about gender-responsive budgeting. Certainly in South Africa and in some other countries, the reason we went to this is that the gender lobby, the women's activists, have been very good at drawing up long lists of what we think ought to happen. But things don't happen unless you give the money to do them. So our slogan became "the budget is the most important policy of any government", because without money, no other policy works.

The gender-responsive budgeting is saying, you've done your analysis, you've designed a good policy, but are you going to give sufficient money to implement that properly? And we want to check, once you've allocated the money, that you spend it and it reaches the people it was meant to reach.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Ms. Budlender, I have a question for you.

A list of nations that have tried gender budgeting is dominated by the names of Commonwealth countries. Looking at your resumé, I can see that you have some knowledge of these initiatives. What can Canada learn from these countries? And what works and what does not work? How many of the countries that have used gender budgeting have used it to analyze every government revenue and expenditure? When it comes to gender budgeting, is there one country you could hold up as an example for all others to follow?

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: My answer to the last one is no. I don't think there's any recipe for gender budgeting. I really do think it's got to be designed to take into account the political situation in the country, the method of budgeting, what has been done before, what are the various processes.

I do think the lessons show that it's something that happens slowly; it's not something that happens overnight. But that is true about any budget reform. I'm sure with your introduction of your

resources and results, it wasn't perfect at the beginning and it's probably still not perfect now.

It's something that you grow, but the gender-responsive budgeting, the approach, has to be adapted to build into the existing budgeting system.

In terms of countries that are doing well, as I said earlier, I think Uganda is very interesting. I think Tanzania is very interesting. I think India is an interesting one to watch, because dealing with a country that has 71 ministries and a billion people and is trying to do gender budgeting with line item budgeting is very interesting. But it's certainly not a model that would be useful for Canada. I'm afraid I can't be very helpful in saying what the way for Canada is.

●(1710)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'd like to find out from the committee members as to how many more questions we want to ask. We are at 5:10. I know Ms. Neville and Ms. Minna want to ask questions.

[*Translation*]

Would you like to ask a question, Ms. Demers?

[*English*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: As many as we can, *madame la présidente*.

The Chair: Okay.

Then I need to give time. We have the last round, and that's a round of five minutes. So if, as teams, you want to share your time within your own groups, that's fine. We need to give time to the presenters to wrap up, if they don't get an opportunity to respond. So please stick to your five minutes, and I will now hit the gavel if you go over five minutes.

With that, I'd like to start off with Ms. Neville.

If you're sharing your time with Ms. Minna, that's fine.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'll try to be brief.

I'm looking at the Status of Women printout or the deck you gave, and you make some comments here in terms of context, that one size doesn't fit all. You say in particular, "The political process is influenced by broader country and government context". I raise that because you also say you're focusing on accountability for results.

As I understand from the summary of the discussions that have taken place so far, there's been much discussion of the fact that transparency is lacking in the budget and in the budget process. What I'd like to know is what needs to be done to ensure there is accountability in gender budgets and in policies. How do we make it happen?

Ms. Clare Beckton: I am not from the finance department, so I can't talk about the internal mechanisms of the finance department; you will have to ask them those kinds of questions. But I think some of the work we're doing with Treasury Board around reporting and ensuring that the mechanisms for reporting contain the accountability—and the same could be said around the budgeting process—is to ensure there are some kinds of mechanisms for accountability in those reporting mechanisms.

We also need to continue to work on indicators, and we do have a project looking at that. We'll be working with other government departments, and we're certainly interested in what's out there in terms of indicators, because we know that as part of this process you have to have indicators to know when you are successful and when you are closing the gap.

So we have to work on those kinds of elements. And our work around program activity, architecture, the management accountability framework, etc., is very important. Those are the kinds of mechanisms we can also be working on with the finance department.

Hon. Anita Neville: I have more questions, but I'll pass.

Ms. Nancy Peckford: One of the things I've identified in my presentation is how important it is to have dialogue with civil society organizations. Internationally, it is recognized that in order to have a rigorous gender budgeting process, you need dialogue, engagement, and conversation with civil society groups who are endeavouring to ensure women's full economic security.

So I think that's a piece of the pie.

Hon. Anita Neville: That's not happening now, Nancy.

Ms. Nancy Peckford: In my presentation, I did allude to the fact there are very limited consultations with women's organizations. In fact, there is no formal consultation with women's organizations. In addition, it's been very difficult to obtain the gender-based analyses of previous federal budgets, including 2005, 2006, 2007. As a consequence, we've been forced to file access to information requests. But the committee has heard that.

Public reporting of some sort from the finance department is absolutely essential.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

• (1715)

The Chair: Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna: Both questions are to Ms. Beckton, and to anyone else who wants to answer.

The first one is this. The secretariat, in its response to the Commonwealth Secretariat, has proposed that “departments be required to report on programming that relates to gender equality objectives, but approval for this proposal is still in progress”. Could you give us an update on that and what's holding that up?

And the other is, if we were to do a gender-based analysis or gender budgeting on tax structures, HRSD, and tax expenditures as a way to start to lay a base, what would that entail in terms of amount of time and money and resources?

The first question is to Ms. Beckton, with respect to the secretariat.

Ms. Clare Beckton: Hélène will answer that one.

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: This is the Department of Finance response, right, to the Commonwealth questionnaire?

Hon. Maria Minna: That's right, to the Commonwealth, yes.

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: I believe they're referring—although it would be a good idea to hear it from the Department of Finance—to the fact that they are doing this for the first time in the last two years, so lots of it is still in progress, lots of it is still innovative, which is why it hasn't been done.

Hon. Maria Minna: Sorry, but your secretariat has proposed that the departments, all of them, “be required to report on programming that relates to gender equality objectives, but approval for this proposal is still in progress”. I was wondering if you know what's holding this up.

The Chair: To be fair to everybody, can I ask you to respond to that in your summation, because I have to go to the next round.

Hon. Maria Minna: Okay, fair enough. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Grewal, for five minutes.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question goes to Ms. Peckford. I was reading the analysis of this year's federal budget by your organization, the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action, so I must admit my surprise that you even criticized the programs and policies that appear to be beneficial to women or that are, at least, gender neutral. I'm left to conclude from this report that any spending program that does not put money directly into the hands of women is a bad program.

Is this what we can expect from gender budgeting?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: Clearly, in the absence of any gender-directed spending outside of Status of Women Canada, what we have recognized over the years from federal budgets is that rarely do they speak to women's interests and women's realities. We were particularly struck in this 2007 federal budget by the use of tax credits as a way to deliver income supports. It's not our view that in every instance that's the best way to support women's needs and realities and those of their families. In addition, because we had no evidence that a gender-based analysis was done of the 2007 federal budget, it was very difficult for us to understand the logic of some of the measures that were undertaken.

I think gender budgeting is a rigorous process. I think that civil society organizations will have opinions and perspectives on how best to meet the needs of women. We have been highly critical of many budgets over the years, in part because there simply is no framework to deal specifically and systematically with women's equality interests. In the absence of that, we are often left at a loss. I would also say that if there's no meaningful dialogue with the Minister of Finance or his senior officials, it's very difficult for us to be in a position to have a positive influence over budgets. So we're often left commenting on budgets that, in our view, don't deliver.

So I would recommend that if you want this to be a more deliberative, collaborative process, it should involve some dialogue between governments and civil society organizations such as ours. To date, that really has not happened. I think that's part of the process.

The Chair: We have one and a half minutes left, if you wish to speak.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Continuing along with Madam Peckford, if I could, in your presentation you inferred that the GBA unit in the Department of Finance didn't seem to be working well—and actually, not just the one in the Department of Finance, but those in other units as well. Did you more or less reach that conclusion based on the fact that you didn't see the budget bringing forth programs it should? I was wondering what information you had that suggested that the GBA, gender-based analysis, in all the departments was somewhat dysfunctional, in your view.

• (1720)

Ms. Nancy Peckford: There was a very comprehensive study by this committee during the last session of Parliament, chaired by Anita Neville, about the deficiencies of gender-based analysis within various departments.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Just to make a correction, you meant in the last Parliament?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: Sorry, what did I say?

Mr. Bruce Stanton: In the last session of Parliament.

Ms. Nancy Peckford: I'm sorry, in the last Parliament. Thank you very much. I appreciate that clarification.

So I think we all recognize—and I'd be happy if Ms. Beckton spoke to this as well—that GBA has not been systematically implemented in any department, or in most departments, and that there have been ebbs and flows in terms of the calibre and integration of that analysis. I don't believe there's a GBA unit in the finance department right now. What we have is a gender champion, and that is progress. What we have now is a tax policy unit doing some amount of gender-based analysis, and that certainly is progress. But that isn't sufficient, in our view, to produce an equitable federal budget.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Do I have more time, Madam Chair?

The Chair: If you don't mind, you have 20 seconds.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Of course I don't mind.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Madame Demers, are you sharing your time?

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Peckford, do you believe that, as a committee, we should ask the Department of Finance to provide a summary of the various measures that could integrate gender considerations into budget preparations? Do you believe—my colleague spoke of this earlier—that we should establish a special committee to ensure that these issues are studied properly and are monitored on an on-going basis? Could this committee have an impact on the measures taken?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: We truly agree with what you have suggested. However, I believe that it would require, as Ms. Beckton stated, leadership at a very high level. There should be a federal cabinet committee because it is truly important that leadership be exercised at the top.

[English]

I think it's incumbent upon your committee to have the finance department here, and I assume you may at some point. I think they need to be much more detailed with you, as you say, about the measures they are undertaking. I think they may be at a loss in terms of what some of those measures are, in part because there is no defined policy framework, but with time I would expect that would emerge with the support of the Status of Women Canada and others.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Where should that leadership come from?

[English]

Ms. Nancy Peckford: I think some of that leadership must be demonstrated by cabinet, and I think there has to be leadership on the part of the Department of Finance. I think the measures being undertaken by Treasury Board and the Privy Council Office are also important. I understand Treasury Board has made some recommendations that are now being incorporated, and I think those are absolutely essential. I would also argue, and this has been mentioned by this committee during the last Parliament, that leadership within the Privy Council Office is absolutely crucial to any sort of success because of their task to coordinate government functions.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Madame Demers, *trois minutes*. If you want to give it up, that's fine.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madame Budlender, are you still with us?

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: Yes. There is only one point I want to make. I've been a bit intrigued with the last few questions about the focus on the Department of Finance.

I don't understand how the Canadian system works, but I would be surprised if in Canada the line agencies don't have quite a lot of control over how their budget is framed. I think if one is really going for gender-responsive budgeting, the Department of Finance, perhaps with the support of Status of Women Canada, have to take the lead and set the framework and the rules within which it's governed, and the approach and format in which it's done.

Actually, a lot of the effort has to be put in supporting, urging, cajoling, and ensuring that all the line agencies do gender-responsive budgeting when they are planning their programs and when they are allocating the resources to do it. I think that's one of the things that have to be worked out—what is everybody's role? The focus can't be only on the Department of Finance. The Department of Finance is obviously the one that is responsible when there are taxes that have to be drawn up, but for most expenditure programs, it's not the Department of Finance that will be designing the policies.

That's all. Thank you.

• (1725)

Ms. Nancy Peckford: I would add to Debbie that in order for that to happen, I think the departments have to be better equipped to do that gender-based work, and that work needs to be prioritized within the departments.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Would you say, Ms. Budlender, that one would have to first recognize that there are still inequalities before getting into gender budgeting?

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: Certainly. I talk about the five steps of gender budgeting, and the first step is a situation analysis to say what is the position of women, men, girls, and boys in a particular country in relation to education, employment, health, or whatever you want to name it. When one does that, it's not simply women and men, girls and boys, but in my country it's black women, black men, white women, and it's rich and poor. Certainly if you can show there is no inequality in Canada, then you don't need a gender-responsive budget.

The Chair: *Merci.*

Madam Mathysen, for five minutes.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to ask a question, but I would also like to make a motion, with the indulgence of the committee.

It's been pointed out to me that I may not have received the GBA report that I previously requested because I didn't formalize it as a motion. I would like to begin with that, and simply say that the committee for the status of women secure the finance department report outlining the GBA analysis of the 2007 federal budget.

I will send that up.

My question has to do with women's unpaid work. We haven't talked about that very much today and about how important unpaid work and caregiving activities are when analyzing a budget. Has Canada developed the measures we need? What would those measures be in terms of creating a budget that did indeed take into account unpaid work and the caregiving that women provide?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: Obviously one of the greatest impediments to women's full participation in the labour force is access to quality regulated child care. Certainly the employment insurance system as we know it today is often insufficient in meeting the needs of women when they become unemployed, so that's another measure. I think, in fact, the macroeconomic analysis done at the finance department often doesn't account for unpaid caregiving.

Debbie, maybe you can speak to this. There are certain notions of a false economy in which all of the unpaid caregiving that keeps that economy going isn't factored in, and I think we need to make more explicit how that work allows our current economy to thrive as it has.

Those are simply some measures, but I'd be interested in hearing from Debbie if she has some other thoughts.

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: This is one of my pet topics, so I don't want to get started at half past midnight. But I'm really pleased that this issue has been raised, because I think it's essential if one wants a gender-responsive budget and if one wants gender equality. I think the unequal burden that women around the world bear in terms of unpaid care work underlies a whole lot of the inequalities.

I'm trained as an economist, and most budget people will be trained as economists, and economists are taught to see only money. So they simply don't see the unpaid care work, although the system of national accounts acknowledges that this is work and that it produces things. I think Canada has some policies that address this issue, but I'm sure it could do a whole lot more.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: So we do need women talking in those pre-budget sessions?

• (1730)

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: Yes.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: I'd like to thank you, Ms. Budlender. It's past midnight for you. I'd like to let you know that the clerk will get in touch with you, because you've mentioned some resources.

Before I give all of you the floor to speak for one minute to capture anything that you think you've missed out, as I understand it, the committee is trying to ask if we should go and review gender budgeting, and you've given us enough information to tell us that yes, it is important.

Time and again the witnesses have told us that we need to have a framework, because gender budgeting is really a re-prioritization or reorientation of policies, it doesn't involve a lot of money. So we'll need to ensure that we have this dialogue about whether it's tax credits or investment in social programs....

Could you give us a brief one minute on your preferences as to what we should look at, because it's too much to look at the whole government. We may look at certain specific issues.

I think that was Ms. Minna's question. Is it Human Resources? Should we look at Finance? But with Finance, the budgets grow up from different departments, so Finance is the final negotiator, saying, "I won't give you this much money." So it is the departments that will say they'll cut this program. Where is your preference in what we should do?

We'll start off with you, Ms. Budlender.

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: It's really not for me as a South African to say, but maybe the issue is to say, what are the big issues that are really contributing most to gender inequality in Canada? What I've been hearing from listening for the last little while is that one is the unpaid care work. So one might want to ask what programs do currently or could potentially lighten that burden or get that burden shared.

The other one is the income and employment-related ones. So for me it would be perhaps like we did in South Africa, when we said employment, HIV/AIDS, and violence against women. Maybe it's for Canada to say, these are the issues we think are most important for gender equality, and let's try to look at the departments and the programs that address those issues.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Peckford, do you have any last words?

Ms. Nancy Peckford: I would echo some of Debbie's comments around unpaid caregiving. I also think that there have been very few strategic social investments that have benefited women over the last decade, in the midst of a plethora of tax cuts and tax credits. Therefore the whole question of social reinvestment by the federal government needs to be revisited.

The Chair: Ms. Beckton.

Ms. Clare Beckton: I would say we just want to emphasize again that it's not just the finance department; in our view, it is all of the line departments. That is why we have been working so closely with Treasury Board and the central agencies around accountabilities and reporting, because we think that's essential to overcoming some of the challenges that were mentioned earlier about the mainstreaming of gender analysis within departments.

I think in terms of areas, certainly Status of Women's priorities have been economic security and violence against women. Those are very fundamental areas for women in Canada.

The Chair: I thank you all very much for being here.

Ms. Budlender, our great thanks to you. We can't see you, but we can hear you loud and clear. We are very much impressed by what you've told us, and we'll move forward with it. Thank you so much. Have a good night's sleep.

Mrs. Debbie Budlender: Thank you for inviting me.

The Chair: Thank you to all witnesses.

The meeting is adjourned.

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