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—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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• (0850)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP)): Good morning. I'd like to begin. We welcome our witnesses, and we're very grateful that you've taken the time to be here to answer our questions.

With the indulgence of the committee, since I am the only New Democratic Party member, I would like to be able to ask my questions as usual, in the usual time slot. As always, I will be very strict with all members of the committee regarding time, particularly the member for the New Democratic Party.

Again, thank you for being here. You have 10 minutes. We'll begin our first round of questions after you're finished. It's seven minutes for each caucus, and that includes both the question and the answer.

Mr. Kessel.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel (Legal Adviser, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My name is Alan Kessel. I am the assistant deputy minister, legal, for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. I don't have a presentation this morning. We are certainly available to take any questions the committee may have.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you very much. That will certainly allow for substantive questions.

We'll begin our questioning with the Liberal Party, Madam Simson, please.

Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for appearing today with respect to the language changes as they relate to women in our foreign affairs policy.

The briefing notes we were given by the committee clerks and analysts say that there's a rather significant change in two areas, particularly with respect to how they could potentially affect women. I'm really curious as to what you think the impact will have.

The term "gender equality" and the term "child soldiers" are going to be stricken from the language employed by Canada's foreign service.

First off, is there any country that has deviated from these terms?

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Maybe we could just go back a little bit, because I think I'm at a disadvantage here. I'm not aware of a change of policy. You've expressed that you're basing your position on the work done by Laura Munn-Rivard. Is that the document that I have as well, which is the analysis that you have before you?

I note that the analysis is based entirely on the *Embassy* magazine/newspaper.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: You're saying that's not going to occur?

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: No. What I'm saying is that I'm unaware of.... You phrased your question as if there is an actual change in policy in the Government of Canada.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: No, a change in the terms.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: No, there are no changes in terms.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: So "gender equality" and "child soldiers" are in fact not going to be stricken from the language?

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Nothing has been stricken.

In trying to prepare for this, I read what you had before you. I just try to put myself, or maybe you put yourself, in the position of, say, a professor at university. There seems to be only one reference in your analysis that you have before you.

I don't see any reference to a review of speeches by ministers or positions the Government of Canada has taken internationally. I don't see anything with reference to our website. I don't see reference to any Government of Canada expressions, other than a reference to a newspaper article.

I can certainly help you build on what we are doing. I would suggest that this is not entirely adequate. I can leave you with the documents that I'll be chatting to you about this morning. If you like, I can certainly follow up on those questions.

But the simple answer to your question is no.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: So there is going to be no change or rebranding in those terms?

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: There is no rebranding. There's no change. The government—

Mrs. Michelle Simson: No, there isn't going to be? They're not contemplating it? I guess I'm at a loss as to where this would come out of thin air without any basis. Why would *Embassy* magazine print such an article if the government wasn't contemplating, in some respect, changes to those terms?

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: I'm a public official, not a politician. I wouldn't base my entire analysis on what a newspaper says. I'm sure that newspaper articles get written about each member in this room. I'm sure you found some of it valid and some of it not. I'm telling you that the article you based your entire meeting upon is inadequate.

I can help you. I'll run through the areas of what we do, if that would be helpful.

• (0855)

Mrs. Michelle Simson: That would be helpful.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: The answer to your question is no.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: The committee would probably have to call witnesses from the magazine to find out where they got this information.

If you could just go over what you offered to do, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Of course, it's entirely up to the committee to decide if it wishes to analyze the magazine further. I would simply state that there has been no change in the terminology that the Government of Canada has used. It hasn't changed since the terminology was used under the Liberal government, and it certainly hasn't changed under this government.

The language we use is based on international instruments, and it's those international instruments that dictate our terminology. We don't create our own terminology. When you're talking to individuals in a colloquial setting, you will use different kinds of language. For instance, you just raised the issue of child soldiers. "Child soldiers" is not a concept that appears in an international instrument. It's "children in armed conflict" in the international instruments. "Child soldiers" is just a colloquial term. We tend to use the accurate terms used in the international systems. These are the terms that we negotiated on behalf of Canada. We use those terms, and we use them diligently. Those terms are hard fought for. Those terms have strong meaning, and we stick with them. Any watering down of those terms would be undermining what we had negotiated.

We use all those terms. We use "gender equality". We use "children in armed conflict". Minister Guergis, at the 54th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in Beijing, the Beijing Plus Fifteen, said that:

...as we celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform of Action, let me stress Canada's unequivocal continued commitment to gender equality. We view gender equality and the empowerment of women not only as a goal in itself but also as a fundamental step in achieving all the Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations has an important role to play in accelerating global progress towards achieving gender equality...

Clearly, a minister of the crown has referred to that. There were some suggestions that perhaps we weren't as keen on bringing individuals to justice on crimes against humanity. I would point to an August 2010 note from our minister, the Hon. Lawrence Cannon. In part of this note, expressing deep concern over the safety of eastern Congolese civilians, he said:

Canada once again urges the government of the DRC, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to take concerted measures to prevent such criminal acts and to ensure that those who commit serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law are brought to justice.

Two of the points in the article, for instance, the suggestion that humanitarian international law will not be used, are absolutely wrong. I'm going to leave these with the clerk. These can go into the record. In fact, I would ask that they go into the record so there is some accuracy.

The term "international law"—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you. I'm sorry, but we are out of time.

Perhaps we can move on. We would, of course, like to see the tabling of those documents that you've offered.

Madame Deschamps.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, sir. Good morning, madam.

I am not a member of this committee. I am a member of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights, and we have undertaken a study on sexual violence against children and women in countries in conflict.

We had two experts before our committee last week, Ms. Joanne Lebert from the Human Rights Research and Education Centre at the University of Ottawa, and a female researcher and analyst from the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre. One of the things they both mentioned was that the concept of "gender-specific" has been eliminated, and that we no longer talk about gender equality, but rather about equality between men and women.

This really has an impact. The notion of gender-specific can no longer be used as a measure and indicator to assess programs that show whether or not they have met the targets or objectives set by the government.

I would just like to quote Ms. Lebert on this topic. She said that she was really worried about this because it was not only a question of equality. Equality is important. But the question of gender is also really important because it is a question of identity. If we take out the concept of identity from analyses, we cannot understand the power relationships that exist between the members of a community. Without this type of in-depth analysis, it is very difficult. We need good analytical tools, so that we can get information and better understand the situation.

Along the same lines, in the action plan proposed by the government to follow up on the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on sexual violence, we can again see the same thing happening. Nowhere in the action plan is there any reference to gender-specific. It is a bit worrisome.

As I said earlier, this is a vital measuring tool. Eliminating or taking out this concept is problematic for the Department of Foreign Affairs.

• (0900)

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Thank you, madam.

I will try to explain the position of the Canadian government.

[English]

I would suggest that the committee...and I'll table this too, the resolution that Canada leads, and has led in the past, in the Human Rights Council, which is accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, ensuring due diligence and prevention. Of course, this is signed onto by many countries. Maybe I'll just quote from one of the paragraphs. It specifically refers to:

Recognizing that power imbalances and structural inequality between men and women are among the root causes of violence against women, and that effective prevention of violence against women and girls requires action at all levels of government, the engagement of civil society, the involvement of men and boys and the adoption and implementation of multifaceted and comprehensive approaches that promote gender equality and empowerment of women, and integrate awareness, education, training, political will, legislation, accountability, targeted policies and programmes, specific measures to reduce vulnerability, data collection and analysis, monitoring and evaluation, and protection, support and redress for women who have experienced violence.

So I appreciate the concern—

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Sir, what are you referring to?

[English]

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: What I'm saying is that the language and terminology that is being used by the international community and that Canada continues to use includes both of those concepts. So I think the Government of Canada is encompassing all of the concepts that we have traditionally used and that the international community uses. This is a resolution that is passed by consensus every year. I'll table that as well for the committee.

In terms of the concern that you expressed with respect to that language, we have an example of where Canada does use them. I think that is perhaps the best example of the international community using the same language to express concerns about this issue.

• (0905)

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I am a little worried about this. I have been in Parliament for six years. But I am wondering whether, over the past three years, there has been a global dialogue in order to suddenly change, reform and eliminate concepts we have always worked with and have been sensitive to. When we fiddle around with semantics, we sometimes change the whole meaning of the words and make them weaker. We even change the essence of the debate.

For example, in the action plan proposed by the government with respect to resolution 1325, there are many principles and wishes. Yet the people from the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, who are specifically trying to implement policies to combat violence against women, to ensure safety, and to send trained people on the ground, told us that they would no longer receive funding in 2012 and that the program would no longer be extended. We also realized that there was no funding anticipated in the action plan for this purpose.

It looks like the government is increasingly changing the rules in the things it is proposing to us. We want to look good, but, at the same time, we no longer have the tools required to turn words into action.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Madame, we're over seven minutes. Could you wrap up, please?

We'll have a very, very, brief response from Mr. Kessel or Ms. Bejzyk.

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: To conclude, I would just like to say a few words, Madam Chair.

I would just like to point out the disturbing nature of these changes: for the past few years, “child soldiers” is no longer a recognized term internationally, just like “gender equality” and the concept of “gender-specific”. More basic terms are being used, which ends up depriving us of our resources to fight for human rights.

[English]

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Thank you. I think the concern you're expressing is something that's always in our minds. It's to ensure that the language we use is as clear as possible, to indicate the interest that Canada has had in the past, continues to have, and will have in the future, with respect to protection of the rights of women and girls. I don't think anything in the performance of the government—either past governments or the current government—would lead you to believe that has changed in any way.

I know the objective of the discussion here has been about terminology. My objective is to show you that the terminology hasn't changed; the policy hasn't changed. The terminology we use is carefully negotiated language that came out of many years of negotiation in international fora.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you. I hate to cut you off, but we've gone well over. As a reminder, too, we do need the documents you refer to in French and English, please

Madame Brown.

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank you both for being here today and for sharing this with us. I guess I'm a little bit flabbergasted. First of all, you've said emphatically that there is no change in policy, there is no change in the direction the government is going in with the use of the language, and that we are abiding by the same language that is used on the international front to use the terms that are common for this. I think what I'm hearing today is you saying, “What part of 'no' don't you understand?” That's really what you're saying.

I find it somewhat an affront when there's this constant push, an underlying attempt at ideology to be presented, and obviously what you're saying is that the Conservative government has not done anything to undermine the language that is used, and the language that has been used by previous governments as well.

I guess my question would be, because this committee does have a history of basing recommendations and motions on one opinion, can you speak to the wisdom of a motion being made on one article or one opinion? Would you make a recommendation based on one article or one opinion? You review documents on a regular basis. Would you make a recommendation to the government based on one opinion, to change language that the foreign affairs department is currently using?

● (0910)

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: I appreciate the question, and I think you also appreciate that it strays awfully close to the difference between political and public officials' roles. I don't do ideology; I simply don't do that. It's not what our public service is about. We provide advice to the government of the day.

What I can tell you is that if I were a professor—I am not a professor, but I certainly went through university—I would not base my entire analysis on one article or one newspaper. I would probably get a failing grade if that were the case. Put yourselves in the mind of a professor at a university getting a paper like that. I'm not questioning what the analysts had to work with. What I would say, though, is that if I only had one thing, I would use my best efforts to find out what else was going on. I would usually go to the very voices I was looking at, and if the voices you're looking at are the current government—ministers, press releases, positions in international fora, positions on websites—that would give you a better idea about what is going on.

So I think the simple answer is to simply go to what people say and to look at what people do, and make your decision based on that.

Thank you.

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Kessel, I was in no way trying to put you in a position of having to make policy or justify ideology. Obviously, the minister is the person you would have to listen to and to reflect the language that he is using whenever he is speaking to international organizations or to Canadians. I appreciate the fact that you've been very clear that it is the minister's words that you reflect in the work that you do.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Absolutely. I did not mean to be as clear as I was, obviously. I'm only aware that there's a very fine line between what we as public officials can say and what ministers can say. But what I can tell you is that what I have in front of me, in terms of the words of the ministers of this government and the words of officials of this government, is that they reflect the internationally negotiated language and the policy of this government with respect to the protection of the rights of women and girls internationally.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you, Mr. Kessel.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathyssen): Thank you.

There is still two and a half minutes left, if someone else in your caucus has a question.

Ms. Lois Brown: I don't know that we have any more questions. I think that's as clear as it comes.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathyssen): Then we'll move on to the fourth party.

Again, I would like to thank you for being here. I would like to point out that this is a committee that is very careful and very thorough in terms of its research and its recommendations to the Government of Canada. In study after study, we've been very careful to garner a wide variety of views and opinions.

With that in mind, I would like to ask you if you were aware of the views and opinions of Mr. Alex Neve of Amnesty International, who expressed concern in regard to language as it pertained to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in regard to changing "international humanitarian law" to the phrase "international law"; and the concerns of the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children in regard to the changes connected with "child soldier" and "children involved in conflict"; and finally, Professor Errol Mendes of the University of Ottawa, who had concerns about the removal of the words "impunity" and "justice" in relation to DFAIT, and the anxiety over specific use of language. Of course, we know under the Rome Statute of 1998 that there was profound concern, or it was stated very clearly, that language, when it comes to international affairs, matters, and it matters significantly.

I wonder if you had been aware of the concerns expressed by those three individuals or institutions.

● (0915)

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm very familiar with Alex Neve. I have worked very closely with Amnesty. I've been on the other end of Amnesty's lawsuits against the Government of Canada as well. I'm very much aware of expressed concerns, but I would ask Alex Neve to point exactly to the language that has changed. I could express any kind of concern that I have, and as a person I could do that any day—get out of bed and express a concern. But I would like Alex Neve to actually point to that.

I've just read you language coming out of the mouth of a minister in which he uses the language that this government uses. Alex Neve knows exactly what the meaning of "international humanitarian law" is. It is the law of war. It's the corpus of law that we use, the governance structure that we use in Afghanistan and other places. The term "international law" is much more general.

So I'm very much aware of that. I would ask, if there's anybody who has a specific example to point to, then please provide it to me. But pure conjecture and hyperbole...I can't work with that.

With respect to the other issues of "child soldiers" versus "children in armed conflict", I think I expressed clearly that "child soldiers" is a colloquial term. The correct term that we use, which is in the actual international instrument, is "children in armed conflict". Maybe it's just the lawyer in me that likes to use the exact terminology that we negotiated, because everybody agreed to it, all 180 cats that we had to herd in the same direction. When you start using other terms, it makes the lawyer in me just a wee bit nervous. If you wish to use whatever term you like, please feel free. But the Government of Canada will use the language that was negotiated and that we find consistent throughout international discussions and instruments.

I'm not sure if there's another issue that I had to deal with.

On the issue of impunity, actually I'm also at a loss to see where there is a difference between language and what we're doing. I think I also read to you specific press releases and the voices of the ministers where they talk about "bringing perpetrators to justice". I think impunity and bringing perpetrators to justice are essentially the same thing. So I think yet again I'm a little bit at sea on where the difference is.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Well, thank you. I appreciate that. I do have some other questions.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Okay, sure.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): We've also heard from women's organizations, and there's a concern. It would seem that DFAIT has reorganized the unit under which women, peace, and security—that theme—falls. I wonder if you can give a brief overview of the unit—very brief—the priority areas, the human resources that have been allocated, and the funding. I wondered how many personnel specifically and how much funding specifically have been allocated to women, peace, and security.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: That's a valid question. Unfortunately, I don't have an individual who can answer it. Our understanding was that the discussion today was going to be about terminology.

I would love to be able to give you a description of the organigram of that area and how much they spend, but I am the legal adviser to the department. I don't run the human rights section. That would have to be a question directed at the human rights division.

● (0920)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Is there someone specific we should call there, or should we just have the clerk ask for someone in the human rights area?

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Well, the ADM who deals with the human rights issues and international organizations is Keith Christie. He should be able to give you a breakdown on how much is spent and how many people are in his branch.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): I have another question, and again, it relates to the concerns of women. Do you have specific gender advisers who can look at some of this terminology as it applies to women and give advice? We're very concerned about how all of this could impact women. All policy can impact women.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: I'm going to ask Melanie Bejzyk, who is one of the lawyers in our legal branch, to give you an answer on this one.

Ms. Melanie Bejzyk (Legal Officer, UN, Human Rights and Humanitarian Law Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you very much.

My name is Melanie Bejzyk. I work in the UN, human rights and humanitarian law section in the department.

Regarding the people who give advice on gender issues and the use of gender language, first of all, our division would provide that kind of advice with respect to compliance with Canada's obligations under international human rights law. That would include gender and equality issues and non-discrimination issues. So that would be me, on the legal side.

On the policy side, our human rights policy division has human rights experts who give advice with respect to all aspects of Canada's

compliance with its responsibilities with respect to human rights, and that division also develops policy. The law is the minimum bottom line, but policy can go above and beyond that if that's the choice.

Those would be the two divisions, and in each of those there would be officers assigned specifically to deal with issues of gender equality.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you.

Now we're on to our four-minute round. We have gone a little over in the first round, so it's four minutes, question and answer.

Mr. Cotler, please.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): I agree with you that one cannot presuppose a change in policy based on an article in a magazine, so my question is specific with respect to the alleged change as reported in the article, not whether it was the article itself.

I'll quote from the article of July 29, 2009, which reported that changes had been made to "a standard docket response" of Canada's position with regards to the Democratic Republic of the Congo."

The specific reference is:

In the new docket, the minister's office has removed the words "impunity" and "justice" when calling for an end to sexual violence in the DRC, and is instead calling only for efforts to "prevent" sexual violence.

Have those changes been made, as a factual matter? Forget about whether it was reported in the *Embassy* article or not. Have those changes been made?

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Well, the only thing I can refer to, as I have.... As you yourself know, as a minister who has his staff respond to letters, responding to letters is one thing, where you talk to your constituents and others who are interested in a language that is more colloquial.

We certainly advise on the specific legal aspects of it in terms of ensuring that when the minister expresses himself on the issues related to his obligations, he is absolutely within keeping with the Canadian law and the Canadian commitments to international instruments, many of which were negotiated under the previous government.

With respect to the issue of the Congolese civilians and the statement I read out earlier, I'll just read a little more of it.

The Honourable Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Foreign Affairs....

This is August 26, 2010, so when you refer to an article that was from 2009, I would suggest that maybe the committee should also take a look at reality that has gone beyond that. There seems to be a kind of frozen-in-time aspect to this discussion.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: That's why I said I'm not worried about the article, only the specific change.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: That's true, and I appreciate that.

I would then take a look at the type of language that is being used. The minister says that he expresses:

Canada's profound concern over recent reports of sexual violence against women and children in a village in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC):

Canada is deeply concerned by allegations that members of two armed rebel groups raped more than 150 women during a July 30 attack in the province of North Kivu in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. MONUSCO, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is investigating the incident.

Canada reiterates its condemnation of the ongoing violence in the eastern DRC, including sexual and gender-based violence, and remains greatly concerned for the safety of the population there, especially women and children. We call on all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of civilians.

Of course, the same line that I read earlier, which was to say that we're calling on the DRC

to take concerted measures to prevent such criminal acts and to ensure that those who commit serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law are brought to justice.

I think the various groups of concern that you expressed in your question, in terms of what is the language we're using, what is the kind of expression of concern, how does this government articulate that, are brought together in this 2010 press release. That is the position and the policy today of the Government of Canada.

• (0925)

Hon. Irwin Cotler: With all due respect, I don't think you've answered my question. Let me put another one to you, because on August 5, 2009—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): You'll have to be very quick.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: I will be very quick. I'm referring to what the minister himself said. He said:

In some circumstances it's semantics. In other circumstances...we're going to be changing policies so that they reflect what Canada's values are and what Canadians said when they supported us during the last election.

I don't regard foreign-policy specific justice-related concerns were a matter at issue in the elections. I'd like you to tell me what the minister said, when he said we are making changes to reflect changed policies that are based on what Canadians were telling us in the last election.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: I know that you wouldn't expect me to interpret the words of the minister—they would be in his head—but I can suggest that you take a look at what the minister has said subsequent to that, and if you take a look at what the Government of Canada is doing—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): I'm sorry, I'm going to have to cut you off.

Thank you.

Madame Boucher—sorry, she's not here.

Madame Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Good morning, Madam Chair.

Good morning, sir. Good morning, madam.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Sorry, I'm going the wrong way.

It is Madame Boucher.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Good morning, Mrs. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good morning, Ms. Demers. How are you?

Good morning, sir. Good morning, madam. You said earlier that the terminology has not changed. That's what you said in the beginning. You also said that our committee relied on an article from *Embassy*.

I would like you to explain this to me. The article was written a year ago. If the words have not changed, if nothing has changed, since we are still using the international terminology, what brought this article forward and why is it so important for people to talk about it now? Before we heard from the opposition, I personally had not seen this article. Could you tell me whether it's true that the terminology has not changed?

[English]

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: It's a strange kind of dialogue we're having. In one respect, I'm being asked to explain if the language has changed, and I said it really hasn't, and the engagement hasn't changed. Then I'm also being referred to this article that says certain things, as press articles may. You know, I have to say that after 27 years of providing advice to government, we note newspaper articles with great interest. We look for the valid points and the accuracies in the ones that we can. My view in this case, as a suggestion to this committee, is not to be stuck on the article, as Mr. Cotler has suggested, but to really look at the actions of the government. I don't think any of us can rely entirely on newspaper articles. I think we have to rely on actual facts, and I think we have actual facts in front of us. I will leave those actual facts for the committee, for its record.

• (0930)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: That's all. I have no other questions.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): No other questions?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Do we have some questions?

Ms. Nicole Demers: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Okay, thank you.

Madam Demers, it is indeed your turn now.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Kessel and Ms. Bejzyk.

I will not refer to any other *Embassy* articles from 2009. Instead I will refer to a 2010 report by the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action and the Canadian Labour Congress, which still represents a few million people. So I think they have some credibility, you will agree.

These two organizations stated that the changes in the terminology of foreign policy could indicate “a wilful disengagement to implement international standards, including international humanitarian law and women's rights standards”.

Even Mr. Stephen Brown, who is a professor at the University of Ottawa, believes that terminological changes show the evolution of government policy, since they apply to one department and one government agency—DFAIT and CIDA.

So I am not taking that from *Embassy*, but from a report that was written in 2010, not in 2009, which traced the progress made by DFAIT. So this is not just based on an article written in a magazine that you consider obscure, and an article that you would also like to define as obscure, but it is rather based on organizations that have followed the evolution of the terminology over the past four years. They really show how policies have been shaped over those few years and how words have disappeared, how words have changed, how terminology has changed, and what that actually meant on the ground.

As my colleague said earlier, by changing words, we change how policies are put into practice and how women and children are actually protected. By removing the word “impunity” in the Republic of Congo, we are taking away from women who are raped daily yet another way to protect themselves. We are taking away from these women yet another way to make themselves heard and be defended.

So, when you are telling us that we should not take this seriously because it's just an article from *Embassy* and then I read the report by the Canadian Feminist Alliance, I tell myself that we'd better listen and take it seriously before it gets out on *WikiLeaks*.

[*English*]

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Absolutely. I couldn't agree with you more. I think everything you've said is essentially how the government has been acting, based on its international obligations, how we've been trying to be very clear about what we are doing. In fact, I'm not the only person speaking to committees of Parliament or the Senate at the moment. Last night, my colleague, who's responsible for Afghanistan, was appearing before the Senate Committee on Human Rights, speaking about the human rights of women in Afghanistan. On December 2, one of my other colleagues, Elissa Goldberg, whom you may be aware of, will appear before the House Subcommittee on International Human Rights to discuss sexual violence against women and children in peace operations, fragile states, and conflict situations.

I think Canada has a good story to get out there. The narrative is one of caring and strategic application of our values, and I don't think we have anything to apologize for. The impact we've had on Afghanistan is astounding, and the impact we are having in places where we can is really worthwhile listening to.

There is no question that some people may have different views. Certainly the focus of the discussion here today in this group, very narrow as it is, is about terminology. I'm here to tell you that the terminology remains unchanged, and that the actions of Canada have not changed either. This group could have a much broader discussion about the vast plethora of discussions that come out of international

organizations, or even domestic ones, but for the narrow discussion that you have given us to look at, I would say that the story of Canada is a good one.

● (0935)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you very much.

Finally—and I hope you can help us here—is it mandatory for Canadian overseas personnel to have training on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325? If so, could you please provide the committee with those training materials? We'd appreciate having a look at them.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Melanie Bejzyk will respond to that question.

Ms. Melanie Bejzyk: I can respond in a general sense that officers, including me, not just at missions abroad but also at headquarters, receive quite extensive training. Actually one of the mandatory courses at this time is a human rights course. That includes elements of human rights policy as well as human rights law. Unfortunately, I can't speak to whether that resolution is actually specifically mentioned or not. As you can imagine, time is always a matter, and we try to include all the prominent and most important aspects of Canadian human rights policy, including those pertaining to the rights of women. That's the best I can do in terms of speaking to it. That resolution came about after I received my training, but certainly I'm well aware of it. Many individuals were consulted on that policy, and they were given not only the specific classroom training but the very awareness of what our department is doing. That resolution is well known by officers in our department.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you. Certainly the human rights piece is quite significant.

I'm wondering about gender-based analysis. Is there any other substantive form of GBA training that is mandatory for DFAIT employees? If so, what training are they provided, and how do we know that this is being done? Is there accountability? Is there follow-up in regard to gender-based analysis? Again, any documentation or training materials that are available would be very much appreciated, if you could forward those to the committee.

Ms. Melanie Bejzyk: Thank you for your question. I think it's an important one.

We'd be happy to provide you with some materials. Unfortunately, we weren't prepared with those materials today, as the focus was on terminology. Certainly if you're interested in finding out about the kind of training that officers receive, we'd be happy to provide you with that information.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): I appreciate that.

It seems to me that since it's very clear that terminology, the way we speak of issues and of situations and of people, is of profound concern, there would be more attention to it in regard to any discussion of terminology. I'm a bit disappointed, but I certainly do appreciate your commitment to forward materials to us so that we can have clarity on that.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: Madam Chair, I can certainly speak to you as long as you would like or allow me to on any of the issues you would like on terminology.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Well, we have a few minutes.

Mr. Alan H. Kessel: I've spent most of my career dealing with international law and humanitarian law. I led the delegation on the development of the International Criminal Court treaty in Rome. One of my star members of the delegation, who I stole from a feminist NGO in fact to work for us, worked on the development of rape as a war crime. I'd be delighted to speak to you for as long as you'd like on these issues, since I've been immersed in them for many years.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you. The committee certainly appreciates that, and we value the expertise that you bring. At this point we are out of time. I would again like to extend our gratitude to you.

I'll suspend for a few moments while our witnesses leave and our witnesses for Status of Women Canada take their places.

- _____ (Pause) _____
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- (0945)

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC)): Good morning. I'll call this meeting back to order.

We're heading into the second portion of the meeting. Pursuant to Standing Order 81(5), we are reviewing supplementary estimates (B), 2010-11, vote 95b, under Canadian Heritage, as referred to the committee on Tuesday, November 2, 2010.

I believe we have an opening presentation by Suzanne Clément, who's the coordinator, head of agency, with Status of Women Canada.

Welcome, and we look forward to your presentation.

Ms. Suzanne Clément (Coordinator, Head of Agency, Office of the Coordinator, Status of Women Canada): Thank you very much.

My opening statement will be taking the better part of my ten minutes, but if the committee would permit, I would like to introduce the members with me today.

I have Linda Savoie, who's the director general of the women's program; Sébastien Goupil, whom I believe some of you have met at an earlier appearance on the census; and Johanne Tremblay, who is the CFO for the organization.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to be here with you today to talk about the supplementary estimates of Status of Women Canada. As the first anniversary of my appointment as coordinator approaches, I find myself amazed at how quickly the year has gone by—and how much we have achieved!

Let me begin by noting that we are in the midst of the worldwide 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, which began on

November 25 with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. This period provides an opportunity to raise awareness of this enduring problem and to encourage Canadians to take concrete actions to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

[*English*]

Status of Women Canada works to promote equality for women in Canada. To achieve concrete and tangible results on this front is a shared responsibility. This requires strategic interventions on our part, as well as on the part of other federal organizations such as DFAIT, which you heard from today, and stakeholders at all levels, both within and outside of government.

The issues affecting women cannot be addressed by one organization alone. Over the past year, we have invested significant effort in developing partnerships. Status of Women Canada acts as an enabler, a facilitator, and a knowledge broker, starting with the federal family and federal organizations, and extending well beyond, to provincial and territorial governments, NGOs, academics, and others.

Status of Women Canada, and the women's program in particular, operates in three broad areas to advance equality for women and remove barriers to their participation in society. Those areas are: leadership; economic security and prosperity; and, very importantly, ending violence against women, with emphasis on remote, aboriginal, and immigrant communities.

Through our policy work, we seek to influence and support the efforts of our partners. We endeavour to help others understand their roles in promoting equality for women and seize the opportunities that this presents, regardless of whether their mandate deals with economic development, law enforcement, social housing, or prevention of violence.

When I last appeared in front of this committee, I indicated that I had begun discussions with Statistics Canada on the publication of the sixth edition of "Women in Canada". In fact, Status of Women Canada will receive a transfer of \$129,000 in its operating budget in the 2010-11 supplementary estimates (B) exercise for this purpose.

I'm proud to announce today that the first chapter on paid work will be released this December, with the remaining chapters published over the course of the next year. This is a fine example of the central role Status of Women Canada plays in ensuring that sex-disaggregated data is available to inform policy and program-making.

More than a dozen federal organizations have contributed to this initiative, both financially and in terms of advice and consultations. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them.

[Translation]

Another key lever to advance equality for women is gender-based analysis, which, as you know, has received well-deserved attention over the past year. Implementation of the GBA Action Plan is providing federal organizations with an opportunity to reflect on how to entrench the sustainable practices required to inform decision-making.

Status of Women Canada will continue to focus on making the framework and tools relevant, in particular for areas where legislation, policy and programs are often assumed to be gender-neutral. It is also important to note the growing interest of other House committees in gender-based analysis and related issues.

This year, we made changes to the Women's Community Fund. These changes will allow organizations to work more collaboratively with Status of Women Canada to create the best possible environment for advancing equality for women in our country.

As well, other federal departments are now involved in reviewing applications, which provides a broader representation of expertise and potential funding partners. As I mentioned earlier, Status of Women Canada focuses a good deal of its energies and its resources on the issue of violence against women. Why? Because today, one in two women will experience violence in her lifetime. And because, in 2008, there were 146 female victims of homicide in Canada, 45 of whom were victims of spousal homicide.

Young women experience the highest rates of violence. Girls under the age of 18 experience sexual assault by family members at a rate four times higher than for boys. And as we know, Aboriginal women continue to experience high rates of violence and homicide, a situation that remains unacceptable.

The impacts of this violence are far-reaching—not only are they devastating to the victim, but also to her family, to our society, to our economy and to our health care system. Status of Women Canada works in partnership with organizations across the federal government. For example, we are working with the RCMP to train officers to better identify and help victims of human trafficking.

We are a partner in the cross-governmental Family Violence Initiative chaired by the Public Health Agency of Canada and through which we have recently begun mapping government interventions in this area.

We also recognize that collaboration with our provincial, territorial and community-based partners is essential to success in addressing violence at every level.

● (0950)

[English]

Among our current collaborative efforts, Status of Women Canada is providing funding to the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network to implement a community crime prevention and awareness initiative that targets violence against women. This project's key strength is its recognition that lasting change requires the involvement of a full range of stakeholders in the community.

Economic security and prosperity is another area of priority. Indeed, a healthy economy for all Canadians is the government's top

priority. Women play a critical part in securing Canada's economic prosperity.

Many advances have been made with respect to women's participation in the workforce. Still, there is work to be done—for example, while we are seeing more women in fields such as human resources and business, they continue to be underrepresented in science, engineering, and trades.

Non-traditional occupations present a tremendous opportunity for women. This committee has done some important work on this issue and on how to encourage women to pursue careers in fields where labour shortages are anticipated and the remuneration is attractive.

In recent weeks, Minister Ambrose has announced some promising and innovative projects that have received funding, such as the Centre for Women in Science, Engineering, Trades and Technology, WinSETT, leadership program, which will promote women's active participation in non-traditional work and leadership and will include a particular focus on aboriginal and immigrant women.

We've made important strides in women's participation in leadership. This year's World Economic Forum gender gap report ranks Canada 20th out of 134 countries, compared to 25th in 2009. As of 2010, women hold 22% of the seats in the House of Commons, 34% of those in the Senate, and 27% in federal cabinet posts.

However, we still have a way to go, particularly in some areas—for example, while women now make up 47% of the labour force, over 40% of private companies have no women on their boards of directors. To address this issue, Status of Women Canada recently provided funding to The Jeffery Group for a project called “The Bottom Line: Gender Diversity at the Board Level”. This promising initiative aims to increase the number of women on Financial Post 500 boards of directors.

● (0955)

[Translation]

In closing, I want to stress the excellent working relationships that Status of Women has with other federal departments and agencies, other levels of government and civil society. Our work is necessarily collaborative and could not be achieved without the invaluable support of our partners.

Thank you for permitting me to make this presentation. I welcome the committee's questions.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you so much, and we're ready to start our first round of questioning.

Ms. Simson, you have seven minutes.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Clément, for appearing before the committee. In fact, the last time you were here, we were going over the supplementary estimates at that time.

I particularly appreciate your opening remarks with respect to where Status of Women is focusing its attention. You highlight particularly the area of violence against women, which you know I'm happy to hear. But as they say, the devil is in the details, because I do recall being quite distressed that the last time we went over the estimates, some \$317,000 had been stripped from the budget to fund a ballet, which would have little or no impact whatsoever. I was beginning to wonder how serious the government truly was in addressing the issue of violence against women.

So that said, I'd just like to ask you to elaborate on one of the statements you made in your opening statement, where you say, "This year, we made changes to the Women's Community Fund." Can you be more specific about what those changes are and elaborate on whether they represent more money or less money, and what was behind the changes? Thank you.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Thank you for the question. I would like to address the first point on the transfer to the Atlantic Ballet Theatre of \$317,000 last year.

At first sight, transferring money to a ballet organization may not obviously give the impression of addressing questions of violence, but I have to say it has been an extremely powerful investment in the area of addressing—

Mrs. Michelle Simson: But with due respect, in your opening statement you said that in 2008 there were 146 female victims of homicide and roughly a third of those were spousal homicides. I'm wondering to what degree a ballet would in fact address this issue. Production was just getting under way. How far along is it?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: The launch will be February 14, Valentine's Day, at the National Arts Centre—that is, the launch of the production. They have already launched a shorter version of a video that is being used in schools and in different forums across the country. It was presented at the Governor General's women's leadership conference recently. What it does is it uses the performing arts as a vehicle for passing the message on as to what the impacts of violence are, and in particular on how men, who are the aggressors, are positioned in the context of that conjugal relationship, violent—

Mrs. Michelle Simson: In other words, though, I guess my concern was that it is the arts, and I don't know...I wasn't aware that if there was a theme or a message being sent by the arts, a play, for instance.... Let's say we were having a play on the meltdown of the economy in Canada. Would that come out of Finance? I guess that was my point at the time.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: I wouldn't be able to answer that question, but I can say that—

Mrs. Michelle Simson: No, no, but you see where I'm going with it—you know, depending on the arts, what the actual subject matter was. So that was my concern.

But getting back to the Women's Community Fund, which was the question, could you please elaborate on that?

● (1000)

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Yes. Since the minister's announcement in June, women's program staff have implemented the new process for developing and assessing applications to the women's program. The staff provide advice and professional assistance to groups throughout the proposal development stage, including providing feedback on project ideas at an early stage of development.

Program officers can also assist groups and make suggestions about other partners in the community who may be interested in working with the applicant to ensure sustainability and ongoing impact. The main change there has been on the focus on the regional resources in helping the groups develop their proposals. The assessment process is now being managed at the centre in headquarters.

The first big change was that we removed the call for proposal, the one date per year that organizations had to apply by. It is a continuous intake. When I appeared here in May, I believe Madame Demers raised a comment about taking so much time to get back to organizations. The new process allows us to immediately get back to the organization, to work with them, to further develop the application if it's not complete, and it also provides us the opportunity to do the assessment process immediately and render decisions. We're very pleased to say we already have decisions in this current year that have been made on proposals. The front-line resources, the regional resources, are working with the organizations to develop the proposal.

The second big change is that we've invited departmental resources from across the federal family who would have an expertise or an interest in the area that is being pursued in a proposal. For example, if it's a proposal that is addressing issues of violence, we would ensure we have representation from Public Safety and the Department of Justice, so that we get both their expertise and input into the assessment, but also possibly get them interested in working with our organizations and ensure that a cross-pollination and cross-awareness are being built around women's issues in communities.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Next, Madame Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Clément, for being here today. My thanks also go to the people who accompanied you today.

I would first like to talk about the study done by Statistics Canada for you. One hundred and twenty-nine thousand dollars is not a lot of money. How many people were included in this sample?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: We are talking about *Women in Canada*, a guide published in 2005 and a few other times beforehand.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Yes, we were looking forward to it.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Right. The \$129,000 is the transfer received under supplementary estimates (B). Other transfers will be allocated in supplementary estimates (C).

Ms. Nicole Demers: I'd like to know how many people are represented in the sample of women in paid work.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: It isn't a number of people. Statistics Canada uses a number of information sources, including the census, the GSS and the NHS. I don't know all the terminology.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Okay. So it's combined, then...

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Yes.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Fine.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: We also ensured that we brought to the table representatives from departments that have made a financial contribution and people from Statistics Canada to make certain that the information gathered as part of the chapters will be complete and suitable. The objective is to enable the departments to work on the comparative analyses of the genders.

Ms. Nicole Demers: If I have understood correctly, there are 12 of them. That should still provide a fairly complete sample, shouldn't it?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Nicole Demers: You said that you provided funding to the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network. How many people and how much money does that represent?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: I am going to ask Linda to give us those details.

Ms. Nicole Demers: While she is looking for the information, I would like to know why the organization Sisters in Spirit was told that it would have to change its mission and how it operates if it wanted to obtain more funding.

• (1005)

Mrs. Linda Savoie (Director General, Women's Program and Regional Operations, Status of Women Canada): As for the previous question, this group receives just over \$260,000. It is a two-year project that will take place in 80 communities. It should affect the living conditions of 500 women.

I hope that answers your question.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Eighty communities?

Mrs. Linda Savoie: There will be 80 workshops in the communities, so the number could be as high as 80.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Eighty workshops and 80 communities; that's a lot.

Mrs. Linda Savoie: What we define as a community can vary. Really, there will be 80 workshops.

Ms. Nicole Demers: You also said that Minister Ambrose had announced that funding had been granted to some promising and innovative projects, such as the Women in the SETT Leadership Program, Women in Science, Engineering, Trades and Technology Centre. Are there other projects related to non-traditional occupations that will get a chance to be funded?

The committee prepared a report that should be submitted soon. It was a very interesting study. We hope to see a number of projects

like this come about. Young women want to move toward non-traditional trades, and a number of organizations want to offer them courses and support.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: We certainly encourage this type of project. We now have a few that are already at the funding stage. We are in the process of working with CanNor—the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency—to develop training for aboriginal women to work in mines.

We have also asked the regional economic development agencies to work with us, to try to target work in these areas more and more. The ACOA has worked well with us on this. There are projects in place in the Atlantic provinces, such as the Hypatia project, that are working on this.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Before my time is up, what is going on with the Sisters in Spirit?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Status of Women Canada did not ask Sisters in Spirit to change how it operates or its direction. One five-year project was signed by the Government of Canada in 2005. The purpose of this project was to research the issue of aboriginal women who have disappeared and been killed and to raise awareness about it. The work has been completed. The terms and conditions of the project provided an end date, which was March 31, 2010. The project ended then.

We began to speak with people from the organization long before that time, in 2009—the year I started—to see what would come after the project. The organization already had a project called "Evidence to Action" that was a follow-up to the first phase. It involved doing community work to tackle the situations that led these women to become victims of those situations. We told them that we were interested in working on these things.

We began to explain to them the terms and conditions of Status of Women Canada. We put aside the maximum amount of money each year, since we can use up to \$625,000 a year to work with an organization. Then we asked them to give us their plans.

They gave us an action plan that we analyzed. We told them that we wanted to break it down to see what could be done with Status of Women Canada and that we had other federal partners that could also get involved in other areas.

This takes time. We worked with them for a long time to try to develop initiatives. I feel that the organization would really like to continue to do what it had done over five years. However, the government was very clear, in that it wants to take action and concrete measures to prevent and eliminate these vulnerability factors in the communities.

I think that we now have a project that could move forward to receive funding. If everything falls into place properly, it should move through fairly quickly.

That said, we have not asked the NWAC to disrupt the activities that they want to launch. They can do what they wish with the significant funding they are receiving from other partners or other departments.

•(1010)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

Ms. Brown.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

Congratulations on your anniversary. One year!

Some hon. members: Hear, Hear!

Ms. Suzanne Clément: It's coming up soon. Thank you.

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown: I just have to make a comment. It seems like you can't win. Our government is often accused of being "anti" the arts. As a musician who supports the arts on a regular basis, I find it odd that here we are supporting the arts and you get accused of not using the money properly, when you're supporting something that is an artistic endeavour—doing the ballet. It doesn't seem to matter what project you fund, it's always going to be the wrong one.

I have a couple of comments.

First of all, I was really impressed to read the portion where you talk about other federal departments being involved in reviewing applications. There seems to be a far more collaborative attitude in getting things done, and from a whole of government.... Rather than having silos, a single set of eyes on things, we're looking at how these things impact across the spectrum. I find that a very positive statement, so thank you for that.

One comment from page 4.... With all of this information on women in non-traditional jobs, I'm assuming this would have been information that would have been available to the committee, but essentially what you're telling us here is that the government has been very proactive. We've already looked at these things, we've already made an assessment of those roles, and we are acting proactively on these things to ensure that women do have equal access.

However, my question really comes from page 5 of your opening statement. You say here that "This year's World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report ranks Canada 20th out of 134 countries, compared to 25th in 2009." I wonder if you could talk about what initiatives have specifically moved us forward. A movement of five countries—it would seem insurmountable to me that we've moved that far that quickly. I wonder if you can comment on how quickly the progress has been made in the past. Are there other countries that have done the same thing? And what specifically has Canada done to see us move forward that quickly in one year?

Hopefully, it has some reflection on the year you've just spent.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: I wish I could take credit for it, but I can't.

The assessment of the gender gap report is based on four key factors. There's economic participation and opportunities for women, there's educational attainment, political empowerment, and health and survival. The areas in which Canada has certainly made progress are in economic participation and opportunity, as well as political

empowerment. So the moving forward in those two areas has positioned Canada at a higher level.

I think we need to recognize that as a great accomplishment, but at the same time we need to be careful about how much weight we place on that. If things change from one country to another, from one year to the next, we could find ourselves 22nd next year. I guess the key point is, we need to be looking at all of the subfactors and the subindicators in those evaluations to make sure that we always keep a strong focus on all of them, because having gained an achievement doesn't necessarily promise keeping it in the future years. So we need to be looking at all of the areas even if we are doing well.

To come back to your first point on non-traditional occupations for women, I would say it has certainly been a focus of the government and it has been a focus of Status of Women Canada. A lot of the work that is being done is setting the stage, if you want, for some improvements in the coming months as well. We're working with organizations that have a potential long-term impact, like the sector councils at HRSDC, which are working directly with employers. We're finding that one of the key issues of women in non-traditional occupations is not necessarily the ability for women to be doing this work; it's the ability to retain women who have gone through the training or the academic certifications they require. But once they get employed, the environment in the employment milieu is not necessarily the most attractive or the most adapted to women.

A lot of the work we want to concentrate on is helping employers understand how they can retain women in their workforce. We're working with, for example, Joanne Stanley, from CATA WIT, on that, as well as Dr. Orser at the Telfer management school, to try to find areas that we can further explore as a government organization.

•(1015)

Ms. Lois Brown: When we have our three pillars and we do an assessment of a program under the pillar of improving women's economic opportunities, all of those would be analyzed through that lens. Is that correct?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Absolutely.

Ms. Lois Brown: You are working with HRSDC as one of the other government departments. Can you speak about any of the other departments working with you?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: We've been doing a lot of work with Public Works and Government Services. Of course, we have a particular affiliation with them now, sharing the same minister. We're working closely with them to reach out to women business owners. They've been doing some outreach sessions to women-owned businesses across the country to help them access public contracts.

What we're finding is that women in the business sectors are predominantly in smaller businesses, the small and medium-sized enterprises. They often can't access public contracts directly, because of the size of them. What we're trying to do is convince larger Canadian companies, nationals and multinationals, to promote having women-owned businesses as part of their supplier chains.

I know my time is up, but I'd love to speak about the WEConnect initiative.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): We'll probably have some time in future rounds.

We'll go on to Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is always lovely to see you, and we appreciate your expertise.

But I have to say that I am disappointed that the minister wasn't able to come. I hope that we will encourage her to come at the earliest possible time.

December 7 is coming up quickly. It is the 40th anniversary of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women being tabled in the House of Commons. Is Status of Women Canada doing anything to mark the anniversary? Are there any plans?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: We marked the 25th anniversary. The 40th anniversary isn't seen as a particular landmark. The 50th anniversary would be the next opportunity for us to put a light on it.

We will definitely be marking it on our website. It was an extremely important milestone in the work on gender equality, and we will certainly make sure that information about it is posted on the website.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: So there will be an acknowledgement of it.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Absolutely.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Sabia addressed the whole issue of inequality of wages. Women receive far less than men. It is a watershed that we cannot forget.

In your remarks, you talked about Status of Women receiving money to fund the first chapter on unpaid work. It's very important. You go on to say that sex-disaggregated data are available to inform policy and program making. That is very important. I'm concerned, and we heard it in this committee, about the cancellation of the long-form census and eliminating questions on unpaid work. Witnesses told us this would significantly diminish the quality of data on groups of vulnerable women.

Does Status of Women Canada have any plans to conduct an evaluation, after the census has been completed, on the impact of these very important data?

• (1020)

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Certainly, Status of Women Canada believes that capturing data and having relevant information on unpaid work is extremely important. We have worked with Statistics Canada, and they have assured us that the general social survey on time use cycle will be able to provide us with accurate and relevant information in order for us to be able to continue the work with "Women in Canada". One of the chapters in "Women in Canada" will be on unpaid work.

As to evaluating the impact of the census, I would turn to the experts, Statistics Canada, to do that evaluation. The information they provide us in "Women in Canada" will be coming from four different sources. They will need to see if they've compromised the quality of information they've given us. But we have to rely on the experts to do that.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I understand that, but I do have to say that what we heard very clearly was that the long-form census was the

gold standard, and that those supplementary assessments can be skewed and they can be misleading. It's only by comparing them to the long-form data that we can be assured of the quality of the data. So I have profound concerns. As you yourself have said, this data informs policy and programming, and we have heard that any compromise there is going to profoundly and negatively affect women.

In relation to the gender equality action plan, we've also heard from a number of groups that did not receive funding, who have worked consistently for equality, that the lack of funding is problematic. I suppose this is more of a comment than anything. Yes, there have been bits of funding for individual projects, but my concern is that that will not contribute to the move that former groups—groups that have been "de-funded"—provided in terms of moving along the equality of women. We'll see. Certainly that issue or that concern will come up again, I'm sure, when the minister arrives to meet with the committee.

The government responded to report number two from the public accounts committee, stating that Status of Women Canada would provide that committee with an interim status report with regard to the implementation of the GBA action plan. I'm wondering if it would be possible for you to provide this committee with that update and a copy of the original action plan.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Absolutely. We can certainly provide copies of the original action plan to the clerk of the committee. It is also on the Status of Women Canada website.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: How am I doing for time, Madam Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): You have 45 seconds.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I'll be very quick. It's been four years since the cancellation of the independent policy research fund, and I'm just looking through the 164 publications we pulled from the web, including information from Mr. Leroy Stone that we found very valuable with regard to the long-form census, and *Women and Employment* by Kathleen Lahey. All of this has been vital to our discussions here in the committee. I'm wondering if Status of Women Canada has undertaken an evaluation of the effect and impact of the cancellation of this program with regard to your work. Certainly it has and will impact our work.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): If you have a one-line answer, because we're over time....

Ms. Suzanne Clément: I dealt with that question when I appeared in May, I believe. But definitely the source of information and data we work with come from a multitude of sources. We continue to work with many of the authors of previous research that was done through that program. We continue to have the ability to fund research within Status of Women, not as a program but as an operating expenditure within our organization, and we have been getting other departments to join in on that. Some very interesting work is coming with updating our trends on measuring violence against women that other departments, PHAC and Justice, are providing the funding for.

• (1025)

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

We're now on to our second round. It's five minutes, and we should be able to squeeze in at least four people.

We'll start with Mr. Cotler.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In your remarks, you noted on page 5 that women currently hold 22.2% of the seats in the House of Commons, which is a datum that has not changed for decades. You then note that while women now make up 47% of the labour force, over 40% of private companies have no women on their boards of directors, and you make reference to the grant to The Jeffery Group in that regard.

Do you have any recommendations respecting any legislative or policy initiatives that can enhance, to use the term "equal voice", at both the parliamentary and the corporate level?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: I don't think it would be appropriate for me to be suggesting legislation, but many of the movements that have now begun in various sectors and from various stakeholders are certainly promising.

We're seeing it from corporations, particularly multinationals, which are being influenced by what is happening in some European countries and the U.S., on how organizations are seeing the value of increasing their representation of women on their boards. These multinationals are insisting that those organizations that they work with in Canada do the same. It is coming from those organizations.

The Jeffery Group is doing a project to try to get women to more proactively make themselves available and show interest in being on boards. What we've noticed is that many of the same women sit on a multitude of boards. We are trying to work with those women who sit on multiple boards to mentor other women to get them to be both interested and attractive for other board appointments.

Concerning the political participation, we did some work with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to help women prepare and get access to the means that will bring them to municipal politics, which is often the pillar or the first step for women moving into politics, but you would be better positioned to know what needs to be addressed within parliaments to make it more attractive for women.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Let me just ask you a short second question.

To what extent is gender-based analysis, to which you referred in your remarks, being mainstreamed in the budgetary process?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: You'd have to invite my colleagues at the Department of Finance to come in to speak to that question, but I know they have a gender-based analysis expertise that they've institutionalized within Finance. I know it is being practised as one of the special lenses the budgetary proposals would go through. But you would need to ask our colleagues at Finance that question.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Does anyone else want your last minute?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: If I have another minute, then I'll ask a question.

Have directives been given to those engaged in the budgetary process that they are to mainstream gender-based analysis in their preparation of the budget?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: I would say that the report by the public accounts committee is a very forceful mandate on the part of organizations. All central agencies, Finance, Treasury Board Secretariat, and PCO have instituted measures to ensure that gender-based analysis is mainstreamed. As part of the action plan, we had seven organizations that, as an obligation, had to participate in implementing the action plan.

We're very pleased with the advancement on that front. We will be tabling our report with the public accounts committee this coming month, in December. In fact, we're extremely pleased that we've had at least that many other departments that came to us and said they didn't want to wait until they were told by the public accounts committee to do it; they would like to voluntarily participate and work with us. We have been assisting a number of departments. Finance is one of them.

• (1030)

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Madame Boucher.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to our committee. It is always interesting to talk to you.

I have a number of questions, but I would like you to answer one in particular. We just did a report on the non-traditional work of women. We saw that more and more women want to have access to these occupations or fields.

In recent weeks, Minister Ambrose announced that funds would be granted to certain projects, such as the Women in SETT Leadership Program. Could you talk to me a bit about that. I see that it is mainly for aboriginal and immigrant women who want to practice trades traditionally reserved for men. It's as important for aboriginal and immigrant women as it is for us.

Could you please talk to me about this project?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Let me ask Mrs. Savoie to discuss it, since she chaired the evaluation committee.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: All right.

Mrs. Linda Savoie: It's a project submitted by the WinSETT Centre, which was created following a previous project when we had identified the need for a centre that specifically targets the issue of women in non-traditional jobs. The program will create complementary modules that will be integrated into local businesses.

So, rather than work only with women, we are using an approach that is a little more integrated to create partnerships with specific employers who have been involved since the beginning and who want to help women advance in non-traditional occupations in technology, engineering, and so on.

The interesting strength of this approach is that you don't work in isolation. We mentioned it earlier: despite the interest women have in working in non-traditional occupations, it is often difficult for them to stay in that setting. So, by creating a framework that will give them the support they need, among themselves but also within the companies, we hope to have more success in keeping them in those jobs. The group is asking us for relatively little money for this project, as you can see by reading the news release. They asked us for less than \$200,000 for a project worth close to \$1 million. The reason why it can ask us for so little money is that it has established very good partnerships with other organizations that also provide funding.

We find it reassuring because it shows that there is a strong probability that this project will continue when we are no longer a source of funding. I hope that answers your question.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes, it's great. Actually, we have talked a lot about employment of women in non-traditional occupations in recent weeks and said how important it was for them to have access to those jobs. So, it is a partnership with the employers, as well. The project also provides mentoring, if I understand it correctly. This all shows that the project is very solid, if I may say so.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: I would add that, during the federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting in June, Hon. Rona Ambrose considered it a focus area. We encouraged our colleagues in the provinces and territories to look at the initiatives taken at their level, as well. We showed that we were open to working with them to try to widen the opportunities for women in these areas. We suggested that they also look at transferred funds for labour development and whether a priority was added in the development of this program to help women in non-traditional fields.

• (1035)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Were the other levels of government open to that?

The Vice-Chair: That's all, Mrs. Boucher.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

Madame Deschamps.

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Good morning, ladies. Now it's my turn. As the song says, I'd like to talk to you of love—perhaps after a year.

In reference to a question that Mr. Cotler asked previously, I am looking at the participation of women in politics or in positions that

involve more decision making, and it is still a very small percentage, even in 2010. I am sorry to see that only 34% of the seats in the Senate and 22% in the House of Commons are held by women.

If we compare ourselves to developing countries, for example, we can see that, in some African states, many more women get involved in politics. Culture might also play a part, but I feel that in our context, it is all the more difficult, given the demands that we must face.

In fact, Mr. Cotler opened the door for me in this sense; after a year, are you still able to assess whether the work of Status of Women Canada has moved forward or back? I do not claim that you can develop bills, but you can still send signals to your senior department that something isn't working or that something is working well. In my opinion, you are kind of the channel through which you can move good information in both directions.

Do you have an attentive ear in the minister's office?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Of course.

It's certainly a priority for the minister to see more and more women in decision-making positions in Canada. Absolutely. We are working closely with Privy Council Office employees responsible for advising the Prime Minister's Office on appointments in council, to ensure that applications from women are submitted.

I would say that one of the most important aspects for the advancement of women in decision-making positions is to inspire confidence in them, to convince them that they are able to take on the responsibilities and, once that is done, to change things that they do not like. Once there is a critical mass, there is representation...

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: They are still in the minority in these positions. Even with pay equity, it is still clear today that women are paid less than men. So, I feel that it is difficult for a woman to assert herself in a minority environment and be able to demand the same treatment.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: In decision-making positions, I would say that pay equity is much more a reality. In the Public Service of Canada, for example, there is no difference between the responsibilities of men and women. There is a very high representation of women in deputy minister positions and in manager positions in the Public Service of Canada.

The representation of women can be increased. One way would be to simply encourage women to take that step, to ensure that women have the tools and networking relationships that are essential to reach the higher levels.

The old boys' network that we all know so well must be replaced with other types of networking. This is one of the initiatives, for example, that we undertook with WEConnect, which is responsible for accrediting female business owners. At the same time, within the initiative, it is important not only to accredit them, but also to create a network where women agree to help each other.

● (1040)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

I have to be really tight in order to let Ms. Mathysen have her final round. The Conservatives won't get their second one in this round, and we need one minute for a couple of quick motions at the end.

Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to come back to your presentation. You mentioned that Status of Women Canada focuses a great deal of time and energy in regard to violence against women—and that's very important—and that aboriginal women continue to experience high rates of violence, homicide.... Of course, the situation is, as you point out, quite unacceptable.

We are now in the white ribbon campaign to draw attention to violence against women, and soon we'll be marking the December 6 day of mourning. All very important.

I want to go back to the question about the ballet. You indicated that a video was being used in schools. While I absolutely acknowledge the power of the arts in terms of moving society along, I just wonder, in regard to aboriginal children and aboriginal women, if you're using that in aboriginal communities and if consideration has been given in regard to how culturally appropriate it would be.

Very often the message is lost if it doesn't fit the sense of time and place and reality. If not this video, what methods are you utilizing to reach out to aboriginal communities?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Thank you for the question.

No, the video was not designed to be used in any community, in particular aboriginal communities. It was very much developed in a context for Atlantic Canada. I think it has a much broader use than that, but it's not something I would necessarily use as a tool to address awareness building in aboriginal communities.

The cycle of violence is one in aboriginal communities that needs attention. We believe that working with, and raising awareness among, young boys and young girls in aboriginal communities is an extremely powerful tool to avoid violence in the future. It is one of the areas in which we hope to be working on with NWAC. There are also other organizations representing other aboriginal communities, like Pauktuutit, who are also interested in doing work in this area. We have a couple of projects just on the cusp of being announced that will definitely be in those areas as well.

I think aboriginal communities and aboriginal organizations are best placed to design the tools to raise awareness and deal with this situation. It is definitely with them that we want to work in doing this.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: So Status of Women will be providing the support and tangible funding to work with these communities towards that?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Yes, absolutely. We have a couple of examples.

Mrs. Linda Savoie: We are already funding a number of projects. Typically, as you mentioned, aboriginal communities need to adapt the tools or approaches used so that they're culturally appropriate. For instance, in the last call for proposals, we funded the La Ronge Native Women's Council, which is focusing on allowing women to find safe and affordable housing. We are currently funding the Niagara chapter of Native Women Inc., whose focus is literacy skills. A lot of these projects are trying to address root causes of violence and are very connected to the issue of poverty and financial difficulties on any level. Moreover, Biminaawzogin Regional Aboriginal Women's Circle is also being funded for a project that addresses the issues of economic security as a means of tackling violence within their communities. So they're focusing more on education, pre-employment skills, and things of that sort.

These are just some examples. So, yes, we are working with a number of aboriginal groups right now, developing further projects, so that—

● (1045)

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you. That's great.

We have two quick motions. I know some people have to travel to their next committee, so these motions are for our consideration now.

Shall vote 95b, under Canadian Heritage, carry?

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women

Vote 95b—Operating expenditures.....\$1

(Vote 95b agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I report the supplementary estimates to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you to the witnesses. Again, it's always very informative to hear from you what is happening.

I'll take a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Lois Brown: I move that we adjourn.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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