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Chair

Ms. Irene Mathysen

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP)): Thank you very much. We'll commence.

Thank you to our witnesses: Suzanne Clément, Sébastien Goupil, Nanci-Jean Waugh, and Erin Leigh. Many of you are not strangers to this committee, and we certainly welcome you.

We're not sure of the timing of the vote. There will be bells today, so we'll play it by ear in terms of that vote.

You have 20 minutes, and then we'll begin our questions and answers. Would you please begin.

Ms. Suzanne Clément (Coordinator and Head of Agency, Office of the Coordinator, Status of Women Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to start by apologizing to the committee for not being able to appear when I was invited in December, due to a death in the family. I thank the committee for its understanding.

I'm pleased to appear here before you today, particularly on the subject of improving the economic situation of Canadian girls. It's a very timely area of study as we approach, as you know, the first International Day of the Girl Child on October 11, 2012. It will give Canadians a unique opportunity to focus on the needs of girls. The committee's work will certainly contribute to that understanding.

The committee's study on the designation of a unique day for girls reflects the growing recognition in Canada, as well as around the world, that in addition to a focus on children's issues and women's issues, the intersection of age and gender in girls gives rise to a unique set of circumstances and issues that require special attention.

We've circulated a deck that we will use during our presentation.

[Translation]

We are in the exploratory phase of these issues, so increasing awareness of them and identifying the tools we need to address them are important next steps.

[English]

I'm at the slide on page 2.

[Translation]

Officials from Status of Women Canada briefed your committee on the Women's Program last week and focused in particular on how the program can address the needs of girls.

[English]

I was not able to attend the first part of the briefing last week, as I was attending the 56th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women with the minister. I'm pleased that the committee has agreed to receive us today to finish the presentation and to speak about additional levers that are available to Status of Women Canada to do our work.

Today I'm joined by Sébastien Goupil, who is the director general responsible for strategic policy, gender-based analysis support, and international relations, which are three very important levers for Status of Women Canada, as well as Nanci-Jean Waugh, who is director general of communications and public affairs, to speak specifically to our role in commemorative events.

Status of Women Canada promotes equality for women and their full participation in the economic, social, and democratic life of Canada. However, the agency does not act alone. We collaborate with federal, provincial, and territorial governments; international organizations; academia; as well as non-profit, voluntary, and for-profit organizations to achieve tangible results for women and girls.

We focus our efforts on three priority areas: women's economic security and prosperity, women in leadership and democratic participation, and ending violence against women. When it comes to girls, our goal is to create the conditions for their future success, including economic success.

• (1535)

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Excuse me, Madam Chair.

You mentioned three areas that you're focusing your work on. Which page is that on?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: I'm just doing an opening introduction. You had those last week on the deck for the programs.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Oh, okay. I was just trying to follow you and—

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Sébastien will begin in just a moment on page 4.

[Translation]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: My apologies, Ms. Clément.

[English]

Ms. Suzanne Clément: No, no, that's okay.

[Translation]

I will now ask Sébastien Goupil to provide the committee members with an overview of our strategic policy activities, including international as well as gender-based analysis efforts. Nanci-Jean will then make a short presentation.

Thank you.

Mr. Sébastien Goupil (Director General, Policy and External Relations, Status of Women Canada): Thank you. I am very pleased to be here today and to have an opportunity to speak to you about the work being done at the Policy and External Relations branch.

[English]

Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility, and we promote gender as a cross-cutting theme that needs to be looked at by all federal organizations.

The work in my directorate is generally divided into the areas of strategic policy advice, leadership and guidance on gender-based analysis, and international external relations.

The bulk of the work on the policy front is to advise federal organizations on longstanding and emerging issues, opportunities, and best practices for advancing gender equality and responding to the particular and diverse needs of women and girls.

We participate actively in the interdepartmental working group and consultations, including when memoranda to cabinet are being developed. In our work, as you can see on the slide at page 4, we engage with multiple partners and stakeholders, such as the provinces and territories.

I'm skipping to page 5.

[Translation]

With the next slide, I would like to discuss two key projects that we have supported and that are intended to provide useful information to federal institutions. First, in December 2011, we completed the most recent update of the *Women in Canada* publication, in partnership with Statistics Canada and 18 federal agencies. *Women in Canada* is the largest compilation of gender-disaggregated data. It also contains some age-disaggregated data, helping to further our understanding of issues that affect girls. *Women in Canada* is an important publication because not only does it show areas where the status of women has improved, but more importantly, it sheds light on those areas where more work is needed to advance equality.

The second project you see on the slide is currently under way. It is a collaboration between our federal-provincial-territorial forum on the status of women and other federal partners. The project will help make up-to-date data and indicators available, as well as help identify trends in violence against women in Canada. This collection of indicators will also provide valuable data on the status of girls.

[English]

I'm skipping to page 6.

Another key area of responsibility and expertise for my directorate is to promote the government-wide and sustainable use of gender-

based analysis that you will often hear referred to as GBA, or *ACS, en français, analyse comparative entre les sexes*. GBA is the tool the government uses to advance gender equality in Canada, and the work we do on GBA is not different from what the corporate sector does when it goes about understanding its market or audience. Gender and age are, for example, key elements that auto insurance companies will consider when they establish insurance premiums. We know, for example, and for those who have sons, that young single men face the highest insurance rates because of their increased likelihood of being in an accident.

GBA is exactly about analyzing a specific issue using gender as the main starting point. It involves asking key questions and looking at data about how women and men, girls and boys, would experience or benefit from legislation, policy, and program initiatives.

One of the main principles behind GBA is that there is no such thing as a typical Canadian citizen, that the realities and experiences of women and men in all their diversity are not the same. GBA reminds us—and it is important to flag—that males are often treated as the default population and that policies and programs are designed around their realities and needs. Although gender is the entry point, it's also important to stress that GBA goes beyond gender. We know that women and men, girls and boys, are not homogeneous groups, and GBA brings us to look at the diversity within these groups.

In the context of your current study, you will be paying attention, as Suzanne mentioned, to how gender interacts with age to shape realities and experiences of girls.

Let's go to slide number 7.

With this slide I wanted to remind you that GBA is not new to government. The Government of Canada committed to its application on legislation, programs, and policies in 1995, but our current efforts are guided by what we call the departmental action plan on gender-based analysis, which we developed in collaboration with the Privy Council Office and Treasury Board Secretariat following a report tabled by the Auditor General in 2009. This particular audit found uneven implementation of GBA and little evidence of its influence on decision-making. So this GBA action plan provides a framework to strengthen the capacity of federal organizations to apply GBA, and, most important, the action makes clear that the commitment to GBA is a shared responsibility across all federal organizations.

Our main role at Status of Women Canada, as you can see in the box below, is to support federal organizations through providing advice, training, and tools. You may be interested in hearing that we are currently working on a new online training tool. The central agencies also play a very important challenge function and are there to ensure GBA is captured in memoranda to cabinet and Treasury Board submissions.

While the Department of Finance, on its side, includes GBA in its budget development process, departments and agencies are ultimately responsible and accountable for building a sustainable GBA capacity, using GBA, and showing how it impacts decision-making.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: One moment, please.

[*English*]

With the indulgence of the committee, we could stay until the presentation is finished and then go to the vote. I'm in your hands.

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): We can go to the vote and then see how much time we have after.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: It is our duty.

Mr. Sébastien Goupil: We understand.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right. We'll adjourn and then return immediately.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): I have just a quick question. Will you be able to be here after our vote to extend your participation so that we can have the benefit of asking you a few questions?

Excellent. Thank you.

The Chair: All right. We'll be back as soon as the vote is over.

We're adjourned.

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