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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)): I ask people to please take their seats.

We're going to begin, because we are under a time constraint.

I want to welcome the minister here today to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We are looking at the main estimates 2012-2013, votes 30 and 35, under the human resources and skills development ministry.

Minister, you have ten minutes for your opening statement. Please begin.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister for Status of Women): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the committee members for inviting me to discuss the main estimates for the status of women program. I'm very happy to be here.

I trust you all celebrated International Women's Week last week and International Women's Day. I hope you had a good one.

Before I proceed, I would like to introduce my officials from the department who are here today. I'm joined today by Suzanne Clément, the head of agency at Status of Women Canada; Linda Savoie, who is our director general of the women's program; and Johanne Tremblay, who is our chief financial officer. I want to thank them for joining us at the committee and making time to be here with us.

In addition to discussing the main estimates, Madam Chair, I'd like to update you—because it's been a little while since I've had a chance to see all of you—on some of our current work and also highlight some of our recent achievements, particularly in the areas of recognizing the International Day of the Girl, which all political parties were involved in; gender-based analysis, which we've been working on with other government departments; and supporting grassroots projects through our women's program.

[Translation]

First, let me congratulate the committee for undertaking its current study on improving the economic prospects for Canadian girls. It is an important issue and I look forward to your report.

[English]

The main estimates, of course, for Status of Women Canada, you know from the report, will be \$29.4 million for the 2012-2013 fiscal year, and of this amount \$18.9 million will be allocated for grants

and contributions under the women's program. As you know, our government support for community-based women's projects has almost doubled since we took office, and it's at its highest level ever.

Status of Women Canada's work remains focused on three priority areas: increasing women's economic security and prosperity; encouraging women's leadership and democratic participation; and of course ending violence against women and girls. With these priorities, Status of Women Canada is acting in a very targeted and efficient way. Our government is committed to responding to the needs of Canadians in a prudent and also fiscally responsible way.

As you know, internationally the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women is Status of Women Canada's primary focus. Last year I, along with Plan Canada, led the call for an international day of the girl to help raise awareness of girls' rights and to focus attention on the fact—of course, which we all know—that girls' rights are human rights. I was pleased that the House of Commons unanimously supported having Canada lead this international campaign, and I thank all political parties and members here for their support of this initiative.

After much hard work, the resolution designating the International Day of the Girl was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 19 of last year. Canada will celebrate the first International Day of the Girl Child on October 11 this year, 2012. So 10-11-12—mark it in your calendars—will be the first of many days to come where we can focus on the issues that uniquely affect girls.

I've recently returned from this year's meeting at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and I recount to you that everyone is very excited about celebrating this day. I was very proud that Canada was recognized as the leader in this initiative, and also inspired to hear what other countries were planning on doing for their day of celebration to highlight challenges in their own countries that girls face when it comes to human rights. This day is being seen around the world as an opportunity to highlight the positive contributions and leadership roles girls play in their communities, and of course to bring to light some of these most challenging issues.

Girls have plans. We heard from girls who are going to use this day as a way to raise awareness about their right to an education, access to health care, and their fight to stop.... Some of the very difficult challenges they face are in harmful cultural practices, such as honour-motivated violence, female genital mutilation, and forced marriages.

Status of Women Canada, as you know, plays a lead role in the implementation of gender-based analysis across government, otherwise known as GBA to many members on this committee. As you know, this is a tool that assists us in systematically integrating gender considerations—that is, of course, the unique attributes of men and women and how their circumstances may differ—into the decision-making process of government, and it helps us develop better policies.

As an example, officials from Status of Women Canada, at my request, recently met with the commissioner of the RCMP to offer our assistance, advice, and encouragement to conduct a gender-based analysis of its policies to support the RCMP in finding solutions to the issue of sexual harassment. Of course an essential element of conducting gender-based analysis is the availability of reliable information.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

To meet this objective, 18 federal organizations were engaged to support the release of the sixth edition of Statistics Canada's Women in Canada, copies of which I am pleased to table with you today.

[*English*]

We're happy to be sharing that with you today. This is the work that Status of Women Canada did with Statistics Canada in compiling some excellent gender-based statistical information that can be used, of course, not only by the government but by NGOs and provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to understand better the situation of women across the country and to help them develop more responsive policies and programs. We'll be sharing a copy of that with all of you today.

The women's program continues to play a critical role in supporting the work of Canadian organizations at the local, regional, and national level to tackle the challenging issues of violence, economic security, and of course democratic participation. Through Status of Women Canada, we have supported now 500 new projects since 2007, again in three priority areas: improving women's economic security and prosperity, ending violence against women and girls, and advancing women in leadership roles and decision-making.

These projects invest where the need is greatest and where there is clear potential for making a difference in the lives of women and girls. Through targeted calls for proposals, Status of Women Canada has been able to support new organizations and expand its reach across the country.

This targeted approach has also provided Status of Women Canada with flexibility, which is key in responding to new and emerging issues facing Canadian women and girls. For instance, last fall we issued two new calls for proposals. One involved the engagement of young people, in particular students and student groups, to prevent violence against women on university and college campuses. This was a very innovative idea because we turned to students themselves and student organizations to ask them what they thought would work to address the issue of safety on campuses.

Just last week we were also able to announce the results of another call for proposals that we did last year that supports the advancement

of women and girls living in rural and remote areas and small urban centres. We were able to announce 48 projects that will support the economic security and safety of women and girls in rural and remote communities. We believe, of course, that women's safety goes hand in hand with their economic security.

These projects are as diverse as the communities they will serve and the women and girls who live in them as well. A one-size-fits-all solution does not work, given the many different realities of rural, remote, and northern communities. For example, there is a local project in British Columbia that's going to develop a community response plan for support services, and to make their support services more accessible to women, while at the same time working on issues of violence.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

In a project in Quebec, young women will work with stakeholders to develop a new economic plan that addresses the barriers they face. In Nova Scotia, Aboriginal women will be linked through a community plan that shares knowledge and helps address violence against women.

[*English*]

These projects also reflect Canada's theme for this year's International Women's Week, which is "Strong Women, Strong Canada—Women in Rural, Remote and Northern Communities: Key to Canada's Economic Prosperity". This theme, of course, reminds us that Canada is a very vast country where nearly one in five women lives outside of large urban centres. We also brought along, to share with you—if you haven't received it yet—a compilation of all of the work we've done in regard to women and girls in rural and remote and northern communities, which outlines some of the projects that are happening across the country. We'll make sure we share that with you as well.

We do hope that this theme inspires Canadians to celebrate the unique lives of the more than three million women who live in over 5,000 rural, remote, and northern communities across this country. Together, all of these efforts provide women and girls with the knowledge, the skills, and the tools and resources that can and do facilitate their full participation in the economic, social, and democratic life of Canada.

I should also add that by using targeted calls for proposals it has allowed us more flexibility and it has responded directly to the government's objective of streamlining our practices and addressing some of the long-standing concerns about reducing the administrative burden that NGOs and community organizations had. We've had very good response about using these kinds of targeted calls for proposals from groups themselves.

Of course violence against women is an issue that cuts across communities, regions, provinces, and territories. Aboriginal women and girls are particularly vulnerable. The Government of Canada is committed to addressing this serious issue and is working with organizations across Canada toward this common goal.

Since 2007 the women's program alone—

The Chair: Excuse me, Minister. We're well over time now. Could you wrap up in five seconds?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Sure, I'd be happy to.

I'd like to highlight that the women's program alone has now funded over 60 projects to support aboriginal women, and more than 60% of those have gone directly to address the issue of violence.

All that to say that of the 500 projects that the status of women program has funded over the last few years, many of those go toward ending violence against women, in particular, supporting our three priorities.

We're happy to be here to answer questions on the estimates or on any other questions the committee may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister. We certainly appreciate your being here.

We are now going into a seven-minute round. Unfortunately, we only have time for one round.

We'll begin with Madam Truppe.

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Minister Ambrose and the officials for coming today. I think I speak for everyone on the committee that everyone has been looking forward to hearing you today. Thank you for being here and taking the time.

I have a question for Minister Ambrose. Why did you make International Day of the Girl a priority, and can you tell us the reaction from some of the other countries on the establishment of the day?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: We made it a priority because we met with a number of girls from around the world who worked through Plan Canada on a project called "Because I'm a Girl". They talked about some of the challenges they face, whether it's forced marriages, access to education, access to health care, female genital mutilation. They said these are issues they face as girls, not as women. When we talked about International Women's Day, their clear and honest response was that they don't connect with that and they want to talk about things at school that affect them. It occurred to me that this was a great idea. They asked if Canada would champion this resolution through the United Nations, and we did.

It was a lot of work, but we got a great reception from a number of countries, particularly Turkey and Peru, which came on very early to help champion this through the United Nations. We ended up with 110 co-sponsoring countries.

Every country will celebrate this in a different way, but we've met with a number of countries that are going to be focusing their celebration on challenging issues for girls, particularly some controversial issues, like forced marriage. It allows governments themselves, and advocates within those governments, to champion some of these issues that are a little more difficult to tackle.

Again, if girls know their rights at a very young age, they're more willing to exercise them. We think it's a great initiative and we're happy to have championed it.

● (1545)

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you.

In your opening remarks you mentioned you were at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. Can you tell us what you were able to do while you were there?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: We were there with a delegation. The theme this year was a spotlight on women and girls in rural and remote northern communities and the challenges they face. We thought it was an excellent theme for Canada as well, so we chose it as our own theme for International Women's Week in Canada.

I mentioned in my opening remarks that there are three million Canadian women living in about 5,000 rural and remote communities. They experience a different reality from women who live in cities. They're more isolated and they have less access to services. Because of that they can sometimes experience more difficulty in getting the support they need, especially when it comes to economic security, and physical safety, of course, if they're experiencing violence.

It was a good opportunity to highlight what we can do in Canada. I was really glad that this was the theme. It gave us an opportunity at Status of Women Canada, through the women's program, to make connections with groups across the country that we hadn't made connections with before.

We put out a targeted call for proposals, and we had almost 250 responses from groups in small towns that have never really contacted us before. Now we have a connection with them. If we can't help them, we can get them the information that may help them. I think it was a win-win situation all around.

Of course at the UN a lot of countries were focused on the issue of poverty that women are facing in third world countries. As I said, here in Canada we're dealing more with issues of isolation that women face in rural and remote communities.

It was a good meeting for Canada, and we participated in a number of different round tables while we were there. I co-chaired a round table with some organizations that are doing work to involve men and boys in a dialogue to end violence against women and girls. That was very fruitful.

Beyond that, of course, we had bilateral meetings with some ministers from other countries to discuss some of the initiatives they're working on and share some of the things Canada is working on.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you.

Am I still good?

The Chair: Yes, you have about three minutes.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Okay, good.

I have a question for Suzanne Clément. I know it has been stated many times that the government is committed to ensuring that gender-based analysis is used by all departments and agencies. The former Auditor General pointed out in her spring 2009 report that ultimately the responsibility for performing gender-based analysis rests with departments and agencies. Is GBA really being used in the departments? Can you explain maybe a little bit about that?

Ms. Suzanne Clément (Coordinator and Head of Agency, Office of the Coordinator, Status of Women Canada): Yes.

Departments were asked as part of the departmental action plan on gender-based analysis to implement structures, procedures, processes, and policies within their own departments in order to ensure that they institutionalize GBA as an ongoing and sustainable practice within their organizations. Much of the work that is done in this area is to input into the development process for memorandums to cabinet and TB submissions. We know that the central agencies are playing a role in ensuring that the departments have undertaken a GBA as they develop the processes, core policies, and new programs. All TB submissions and policies are subject to that analysis.

Although we don't have access to information that would be available to the department on the development of an MC, we know they are making great efforts in the department in order to implement GBA as a sustainable practice, just from the many calls we get and the many interactions we have with the departments in helping them implement it.

Some of the things we do to assist them would be helping to institutionalize the process within their organization. Each department is structured differently, so we talk with them, we provide them with advice on how to best ensure its implementation. We also provide them with training—in particular, access to trainers. We provide them with training tools, checklists, and information on the use of GBA, and how to understand GBA. We're also in the final stages of developing an online training session for GBA. Departments have shown a very keen interest in obtaining those. We also have an interdepartmental table of online GBA.

• (1550)

The Chair: Madame, I'm awfully sorry; we're at time. Perhaps you could continue with other questions.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Certainly.

The Chair: Madame Boivin, for seven minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for joining us. We apologize to the witnesses who were here last week. We had to cut our meeting short because of the votes, while the presentation sounded like it was going to be rather interesting.

I am very happy to finally see you at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, Madam Minister. I am saying this nicely because I feel that your being here is necessary. For all those who believe in the importance of the status of women, it is extremely important to see the leadership of the minister. We know that you have huge responsibilities with Public Works and Government Services, but Status of Women Canada should not be the department's poor cousin.

Having said that, we are here to talk about the estimates and all that. We know that the budget will be tabled on March 29. I would really like to know if we can expect to see you again. We can always learn from the past, but I am often more interested in the future. The past still helps me understand the future. Actually, I feel that

40 minutes before the committee in an entire year does not show sufficient leadership on the minister's part. That is even more true in light of what is coming up and the things we hear about the budget.

I know there is a lot of concern at Status of Women Canada and in organizations that are working in that area. We know that, when there are budget cuts, women are often the first ones to be affected.

Can we expect to see you back soon, after the budget is tabled, at least for one session, in order to see what is in store for the Status of Women Canada's budget in 2012-2013?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Sure, I would be happy to come back. Of course the votes are not in any of our control. I wish we had more time today. I would be happy to come back.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Excellent, thank you. I will take your word for it. So that's great.

The Chair: Madame Truppe.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I just wanted to say that the committee can decide among ourselves on another time when the minister can come back.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: At least we know the minister is quite willing to come.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Yes.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I'd be surprised that the committee wouldn't want the minister to come back.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's up to the committee.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Okay. I won't start a debate on that.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Excellent, thank you.

Madam Minister, on the one hand, I hear the people from Status of Women Canada talk about the status of women. On the other hand, I hear a different story when I am on the ground, in Canada or even in New York. I would actually like to thank you for allowing me to join you and the Canadian delegation at the UN conference on the status of women. But I feel I am hearing two completely different things. I am saying this in all innocence and naiveté, given that it is my first time as the official oppositions critic for the status of women. There are two completely different messages. I hear what you are saying. I am able to do the math and see that, financially, Status of Women Canada does make investments, even more than it did under the Liberals on occasion, I am not embarrassed to say that.

Having said that, there are major shortcomings in various areas. Many organizations that work for the status of women in Canada say that the pay equity issue has still not been resolved. We are also talking about violence against women and Sisters in Spirit. First Nations delegations often come to meet with me.

How do you explain the fact that we have two messages that are so different? It might all look good from where you are standing, but it does not look so good from where they are standing.

•(1555)

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose: I think there are always improvements that can be made in any government departments and programs, but I think, you know, kudos to the status of women program for responding very well to some of the concerns that women's organizations had about flexibility. And we did this with the blueprint projects, and Suzanne might want to speak more to that, and also with our targeted call for proposals. We are making it much easier for groups to apply, in terms of the paperwork burden, because a lot of women's organizations, as you know, have many volunteers, few paid employees, and usually are on shoestring budgets.

We're making it easier for them to apply. We also have a continuous intake process so that if organizations do not have a project that is ready for funding, we can work with them to try to improve that because they don't always have the capacity within their organization, but we do in our regional offices and at Status of Women Canada here in Ottawa.

We are trying very hard to be very flexible, because we do understand. The majority of organizations we work with are working on shoestring budgets. Even so, in the last four to five years we've been able to fund 500 projects from many different parts of the country. As I said in my opening remarks, these projects really do respond to those who are most in need, whether it's in our aboriginal women's community or in our immigrant community.

Projects have been groundbreaking, working with cultural communities on issues like honour crimes, working in other areas on human trafficking. All of these are very worthy projects, and I think Status of Women Canada has done an excellent job making the application process more accessible, more flexible, and giving us the opportunity to reach out to groups we've never been able to access before.

I think the record is a good one.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I am sure you will agree with me that the poverty rate for women has not really improved in Canada, and there is still a lot of violence against women. I sometimes wonder if we are using the right approach.

My time is limited, but I would still like to briefly talk about the gender-based analysis. The model is there and everyone agrees with it.

[English]

Everybody talks about gender-based analysis, but nobody really evaluates if it's doing anything. Nobody is really going to the departments. Even the finance department—with the budget coming down, is it going to be done based on gender-based analysis? Will we be able to evaluate it? Do we have the tools through Status of Women Canada to really take them to task and say no, they didn't do it? Don't just put a little box down—done the analysis—but show if we have a tool to evaluate if they do it.

The Chair: Please be quick, Minister.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: As Suzanne mentioned, all the central agencies are making efforts to do gender-based analysis when they're

bringing forward any programs, memorandums to cabinet, and of course one of the things we can do at Status of Women Canada is that we've worked with 18 different organizations across government to compile with Statistics Canada useful information regarding the position of women across the country.

This is also something we can do as a resource for government departments, municipalities, and NGOs—use this as a policy tool. We're doing our best to provide the information and the support Suzanne was speaking so enthusiastically about, but she ran out of time to work with the departments to make this happen.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: So there's a lot of effort being made.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Ambler, for seven minutes, please.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for coming to speak to us today, and also the officials.

I want to ask you about involving boys in our fight to eliminate violence against women. Perhaps it seems unorthodox to be talking about boys in the status of women committee, but I've heard you talk about the importance of getting boys involved in this conversation. As the mother of a boy who will be 13 years old next month, I think it's important to involve boys in talking about how we can make life better for everyone, how being fair and understanding about equality at a young age is eventually going to help us all as a society. I remember hearing what you said about that, and I'd like you to talk to us a bit about that this afternoon.

•(1600)

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Sure.

I think it is a very healthy dialogue that Status of Women Canada has begun with organizations and groups across the country over the last year or so. We worked with the White Ribbon Campaign and the Public Health Agency of Canada, and funded a brief that the White Ribbon Campaign put out for us, because we asked them about this. They do work all over the world now, on ending violence against women by including men in the dialogue.

Their brief is really interesting, and I encourage people to read it. Basically, they say we can't move forward without including men and boys, because they are the perpetrators of violence against women and girls and they have to be part of the solution. We believe this is key to the next step in the conversation. I think this was fairly well received. There are a lot of organizations that want to do more work to include men and boys. I think education is a big part of it. We've seen the school system really embrace issues of anti-bullying and harassment, and some of those go hand-in-hand with these kinds of issues of respect and dignity and equality. I think that's just the next step: talking to young people about healthy relationships and equality and respect.

One project we funded this year was called “Be More Than a Bystander”, with the B.C. Lions and EVA B.C., which is Ending Violence Association of British Columbia. It's a groundbreaking idea: they have men as role models—of course they're iconic football players—doing public awareness campaigns, TV ads, YouTube videos, and speaking to young boys in school, in front of the girls, of course, because they're in schools, about respecting girls and women.

The idea is that we find men—and there are many, many men who are great role models—to speak about this issue and talk to boys about respect for women and healthy relationships. Their message about “Be More Than a Bystander” is that if you see something like this happen, speak up, and that it's not uncool to talk about this kind of stuff when you're a young boy or young man. We think that's a great project, and we'd like to see more of them. We put the message out there to organizations that we'd like to see greater participation and a healthier dialogue with men and boys.

A lot of men I talk to want to get involved. In Alberta, we have the mayors of both Calgary and Edmonton throw breakfasts called “Breakfast With the Boys”. All the top business leaders and political leaders in the community get together and have a breakfast. It's just the boys, and all the money goes toward the women's shelters. It's a huge fundraiser. They've been doing this for years. They just applaud this kind of idea and say that we need to do more of this, that many need to get more involved and step up.

I think it's a great initiative, and I think more schools are interested in doing this kind of programming. Of course the provinces are starting to talk about this too, so I think it's all positive.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Wonderful. Thank you.

I'm sure you're aware that we're studying the economic participation of women and leadership, and that's what we're working on. I'm very excited about this study, which we just began. We're hearing from a cross-section of witnesses, including women CEOs and a few in non-traditional fields. I was wondering about your thoughts. You mentioned that we have three priorities for funding programs in Status of Women Canada—violence, leadership, and economic prosperity. Our study speaks to two of those. How can our study complement what your ministry is doing?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Well, I think your topic is a great one, and I'm sure it will complement the work we've done. The work we've done to date shows that physical safety goes hand in hand with economic security, so tackling both those things in parallel is very important, because women who are living in poverty are more apt to experience violence because they just don't have access to the same kinds of options.

We have a number of projects across the country dealing with economic security, and a lot of these are helping women, whether it's financial literacy programs or programs to help them learn to start a new business. Those have been very successful.

We just announced one recently with *l'Union culturelle des Franco-Ontariennes*, and they have thousands of members in rural Ontario. They thought it would be a success if they had one new business that they helped created. I think there were at 23 at that point, and they were overwhelmed, because women don't feel they

need \$1 million to start a business, as some men do. I'm just saying that women are happy to sort of scrape together what they have and they'll start a business right out of their own kitchen; they're more apt to do that than men. We know that two-thirds of new small businesses are started by women, and that's why, because it's just the nature of women.

We find that these projects have been very successful. Especially in rural and remote areas, where women don't have the same economic opportunities, if women can start a home business or start a business over the Internet, we want to help them with that. It's been a good success.

• (1605)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

Now to Madam Sgro, for seven minutes.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Minister Ambrose, it's great to see you here, and I applaud the work you did at the UN recently. I would like to have been there with you. I heard only positive things, so congratulations on the work you're doing there.

I have a couple of questions. On the women's partnership fund, that funding has now run out of the period of time that it was operating. There will be a decrease of \$400,000 in departmental funding. How are you going to decide what is going to be cut to meet the cut in your budget, as far as priorities?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: I'll ask Suzanne to comment on the partnership.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: There has been no change on the partnership fund. There is still a community fund and a partnership fund.

I would need more clarification on the reduction in budgets, because there has not been a reduction in the budget.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Tentatively, a \$400,000 reduction in departmental spending is coming, I understand.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: No.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Since all departments will have to make some degree of cuts, given the austerity budget we're expecting, how do you decide what are your priorities when it comes to program spending, and where those kinds of cuts will be? What are your priorities?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: We have engaged to review our programs to see where we can streamline and find efficiencies, but our actual programming for the women's program is not going to be impacted.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Good. Well, again, we know where your priorities are.

Some of the programs you have invested in, like the “Be More Than a Bystander” and some of those other programs, were excellent investments. Clearly we need to engage the men as part of trying to solve the problem of violence against women.

I have a question for you. When legislation is coming forward, is it being subject to gender-based analysis?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Yes.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Was the gun registry subjected to gender-based analysis?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: I take your point. Of course there are many statistics on either side of that debate, but obviously the views of many women's organizations were well represented.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you.

I appreciate the fact that you're doing some work with the RCMP on the issue of sexual harassment, and so on, among women. I think that was a wonderful partnership for you to be able to use gender-based analysis and to be able to do some work in that department. I think we're all going to look for the kind of success and the leadership that I know you're going to show on those issues, as a department.

Have you been able to communicate directly to the department and to the commissioner your concerns with some of the reports of sexual harassment that have surfaced in the last few years?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Of course all of us were troubled, and of course the commissioner himself was very troubled. He's been very vocal about addressing this issue. Internally he's already taken a number of measures.

Suzanne and other officials met with him to offer our advice, support, and encouragement. I have written to him directly, telling him that I look forward to the results of the complaints commission and also to again offer our support, advice, and encouragement. I plan on meeting with him as well.

•(1610)

Hon. Judy Sgro: I would think that you would be the appropriate person and the appropriate department to help a department that clearly has some significant issues to deal with.

Do you often get the opportunity to work on the culture of an area that is male-dominated, such as the RCMP, the military, and so on? We have to change the culture of certain organizations if they are to truly make a difference in the opportunities for women to work in them. That ties in with the study we are doing as well. Do you get opportunities to do that, to sit down with other areas and talk about not just the GBA issue but about the bigger culture of a male-dominated organization?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Sure. Those kinds of conversations happen, as you know, all the time. Gender-based analysis is one tool.

For instance, this year we chose as our theme for Women's History Month, in October, women in the Canadian armed forces. The Minister of Defence and the Minister of Veterans Affairs were present to honour women, and from that came other initiatives through the Department of Veterans Affairs. All of those kinds of initiatives highlight the role of women and I think help facilitate conversations that might address some of the cultural issues.

I see a lot of goodwill, particularly on the part of the Commissioner of the RCMP, to tackle these issues. We're there to support. We're all on the same team, and we want to see solutions to these tough challenges they're facing.

Hon. Judy Sgro: The point is that I think it is very helpful for the department to work with them. I was very pleased to hear earlier about gender-based analysis and a variety of other things being done. I think it's the only way we're going to deal with our own internal issues. It doesn't matter who's in government; there are issues that need to be dealt with. I thank you for doing some of the work you're doing.

How do you target the departments for a gender-based analysis?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: In terms of working with them to institutionalize the practice, the report from the OAG and the departmental action plan indicated that we should be working with approximately six departments per year. Some years we go beyond the six. The first year we had seven or eight. Beyond that, other departments have started on their own.

We're moving into year three, so we've already worked with 15 departments. They self-select in some cases. In other cases we will go to the department and say that we believe that the policies they develop are key to being subjected to GBA. It's done in collaboration with them. So far, everybody we've approached has been open to working with us.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Congratulations on what you're doing. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's the time.

I'd like to say thank you to the minister for this opportunity to have this dialogue. I'm sure the committee appreciates it very much. Minister, we would be delighted to have you back at any time, and we look forward to a future visit.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Thank you. Thank you for your questions.

The Chair: At this point, before we proceed to a vote, I would like to say to the committee that the deadline for reporting the main estimates back to the House is May 31, so we have some time. I'll ask the committee if the members wish to leave the study regarding the estimates open for further hearings. Or do you wish to proceed to a vote?

Go ahead, Madam Truppe.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to proceed to a vote on the main estimates today, before we start our study afterwards.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I don't see a problem.

[English]

The Chair: All right. Then pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013, were referred to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, Human Resources and Skills Development, votes 30 and 35.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women
Vote 30—Operating expenditures.....\$9,246,000
Vote 35—Grants and contributions.....\$18,950,000

(Votes 30 and 35 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I report votes 30 and 35 under Human Resources and Skills Development to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will suspend for two minutes and allow our next panel to move forward.

• (1610) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1615)

The Chair: I would like to resume now.

I want to thank our guests for returning. Madame Savoie, Madame Waugh, Madame Clément, and Monsieur Goupil, thank you very much for your indulgence.

You have whatever time you need, under ten minutes.

• (1620)

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. We're happy to return to finish what we had begun last week.

In terms of the presentations, I will ask Sébastien Goupil to
[*Translation*]

continue the presentation from slide 7. I hope that everyone kept the copies that we had distributed. We will then ask Nanci-Jean Waugh to close with commemorative initiatives.

[*English*]

Mr. Sébastien Goupil (Director General, Policy and External Relations, Status of Women Canada): I was almost done with page 7 of my presentation, and one of the points I wanted to make was that in fulfilling our obligation under the departmental action plan of gender-based analysis, Suzanne had mentioned we have worked directly with 15 federal organizations so far over the past two years, those who are asked to implement in a phased-in approach the different elements of the action plan. In addition to that, we've been continuing to support a wide range of organizations. In fact, we've worked with almost 30 additional organizations that asked for our support in moving forward with gender-based analysis.

I wanted to stress, in more practical terms, how GBA can inform the work of your committee, because I had mentioned earlier in my presentation that in order to do proper GBA it's critical to look at how gender intersects with other factors, which we know as intersectional analysis.

In the context of your current study, your committee is focusing on gender and age to look at the situation of girls. But you will no doubt look at other intersecting factors—for example, whether a girl is based in the south or in the north or has aboriginal identity, ethnicity, etc. Other important additional factors to consider may be family situation and income with the understanding that girls' economic security will be tied to the income of their families.

The diagram on slide 8 shows the different intersecting factors that will interact with gender to inform a meaningful gender-based analysis.

[*Translation*]

Slide 9 is another example of how we can use the gender-based analysis to contribute to developing policies or programs that take into consideration the reality that girls are facing.

You received a copy of the “Women in Canada” report that has useful data on girls and education. The data can help shed some light on factors that can compromise girls' security in the future.

For example, the performance of girls and boys in school and the courses they take can influence the choices they will be making all through school. Ultimately, those choices will determine their career paths and their incomes in the future. For example, even if girls and boys perform equally well in math when they are young, we know that, when they reach 15 years of age or so, boys start to differentiate themselves from girls in that subject. So the course choices of girls and boys at the post-secondary level might partly explain that difference.

We see that, over the years, girls will continue to study and form the majority in areas recognized as being traditionally female, such as teaching and nursing. They make choices that can lead them to careers where their incomes will be lower compared to some professions where men are in a majority.

I wanted to use that example to show you how the gender-based analysis does not only look at gender, but also at the interaction between gender and age. So the relationship between being a girl and other factors can help us better understand future opportunities for girls from an economic perspective.

I am now going to move on to slide 10.

[*English*]

I will now conclude my presentation by saying a few words about our international role, which is mainly one of strategic advice and support based on domestic expertise.

I want to stress that we work in partnership with key federal departments responsible for international affairs to help advance overall government priorities on the international stage; deliver on international treaty obligations and voluntary commitments; develop strategic relationships with key Canadian partner countries and international organizations; and, importantly, learn from international experiences and expertise.

You heard in the presentation earlier that Status of Women Canada was co-leading with Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada on preparations for the annual session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. It is the premier international forum for highlighting our achievements in advancing gender equality. The meeting ended last week. In my next slide I will talk very briefly about that, because the minister alluded to it in her presentation.

The International Day of the Girl Child is one of the key accomplishments we can celebrate this year. Under the leadership of Minister Ambrose, and with the unanimous consent of the House, we were able to bring this to the United Nations with the success we note today. It will allow us to raise awareness and foster action on the realities of girls, looking at the specific barriers they may face in their future success.

● (1625)

[*Translation*]

I am now going to give the floor to Nanci-Jean.

[*English*]

Ms. Nanci-Jean Waugh (Director General, Communications and Public Affairs, Status of Women Canada): Thank you.

For Status of Women Canada, the international and national days of commemoration are important levers we have to increase awareness of the significant events and milestones for women in Canada, and on the last page we have a number of them.

One we'll be celebrating this year, which will be of interest to the committee, is the first International Day of the Girl, on October 11. We're in a period now for developing materials and trying to increase the awareness across Canada. Minister Ambrose, when she was in New York, was also talking about the International Day of the Girl to increase awareness of this day at the international level as well. But we also have other commemorative dates that assist in terms of commemorating and have a component that could relate to girls. There's International Women's Day on March 8, which we have just had, and we see a number of events that take place across Canada from the government side, from provincial governments, from the private sector as well as public non-governmental organizations, that do take International Women's Day but also use it to promote activities that relate to girls.

The number of those activities has increased over the course of the last number of years. I had, during International Women's Week, a list of probably over 500 I know of that took place across Canada, but there were probably more that we were not able to document.

The International Day of the Girl this year will take place in October, which is in the context of women's history month. It will be also in the same month as Persons Day, which is October 18, which is also the period when we have the Governor General's awards in which five women are nominated by organizations or individuals from across Canada for an award in commemoration of the Persons case.

There was also put in place a number of years ago a youth award where youth, girls under the age of 25, are eligible to be nominated for an award to commemorate their work but also to encourage them to continue with their work towards equality for girls and for women.

The last one of the year is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Each commemorative date creates unique opportunities for stakeholders to reflect on the particular date, identify issues and concerns that require action, review progress that has been achieved, and identify areas where further work is required.

I think I will leave it at that point.

The Chair: Thanks, and that is time.

We will now proceed to a seven-minute round, and begin with Madame Bateman.

● (1630)

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

It's interesting. You get to ask more in-depth questions to people such as yourself. And building on some of the things that Minister Ambrose said, I have to confess that it's exciting to hear about some of the work you are doing, and the way you're doing it, the flexibility you're demonstrating with that work.

Minister Ambrose did comment on International Women's Week, and announced at the time that the government would support new projects addressing to a greater extent the issues of violence and economic security affecting both women and girls, particularly those living in rural and remote communities and small urban centres. I would very much appreciate hearing what kinds of organizations have received funding under that policy direction, how they're doing it, and how you're reaching out to these organizations.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Yes, we were really excited with that call, as the minister said. We weren't sure what kind of response rate we would get, because often in small communities there isn't a lot of NGO capacity to be able to develop proposals and access government funding. So that's why we used the simplified approach of the call where we're telling groups to create partnerships in the communities and come and see us with commitments from all those partners, tell us what the issues are in your communities with some valid rationale around those issues. And we are providing funding, including that initial planning phase that groups require to work with partners to determine how they're going to tackle the issues.

So it's allowing some of these small organizations in small communities to work with us for the first time and probably for the first time in any government program.

We had two streams in the rural and remote call for proposals. One was economic security and one was violence. I have to say that we rarely have a project that clearly is only one of our priorities. To achieve economic security, you have to live in a safe environment, so there's always an interrelation with the themes, but we look at what the predominant activity is in the projects. We received close to 250 applications. We went through the review process, an initial review process. The minister was able to announce 48 projects, I believe, last week, and there will be more to come, hopefully. We will continue to work with some of the organizations where more information was required to do the analysis. So we will be providing close to \$12 million over three years to the recipients of those projects.

To give you specific examples of what they're going to do is not really possible at this point. Because we are funding that first phase, the planning phase, we're allowing them to determine how best to approach. What I could give you is examples, such as CALACS-Abitibi, in Quebec, which received funding to work with girls between the ages of 12 and 17 who were at risk of becoming victims of sexual exploitation. So they're bringing together numbers of community groups in the Abitibi region and particularly bringing in as well leaders and representatives of the aboriginal communities around there, to talk about the issue and what the best approach would be to help these girls and prevent their becoming at risk of sexual exploitation.

In New Brunswick we're working with an organization that is going to work with the schools in their communities and service providers and community partners to look at gender-based violence, and in particular to the more vulnerable girls. Aboriginal girls are identified as the most vulnerable population in those communities. We have quite a series—

Ms. Joyce Bateman: And it's wonderful. I appreciate that you're excited about what you're doing.

• (1635)

Ms. Suzanne Clément: And we do have projects across the country, which is wonderful.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Yes.

When you spoke about the B.C. schools that are reaching out, it's really just if a school or a school division seeks this out. There's not a systemic approach. I'm just thinking, is there an approach?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Actually, we don't work directly with schools or school boards. You have to have a non-governmental organization within the community that works with the school. One of the things we've also implemented with our calls is a requirement for the organizations to share the work they're doing, both with us and with other organizations we identify that are doing similar work.

So if you're developing a good idea in a community on one project, we want to make sure that other similar organizations or regions with similar issues they want to address can access that. More and more, we're putting emphasis on the sharing of good practices and the sharing of tools and approaches that are being developed.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You received 250 project applications. The minister has just announced 48 and you're saying there are going to be a lot more. You also mentioned in your preamble comments that you're working on a planning phase. Can you expand on that, give us some illumination on how you're doing? That's very respectful to a community that's not used to applying for money.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: There's no shortage of organizations and communities that know there's an issue to be addressed. There's a problem in the community. What's difficult is trying to get the right people at the same table. It's hard to pool resources, effort, and knowledge in a way that allows us to determine the best approach, the best solution for the community. In our projects we find that if we support organizations that don't normally do this type of planning we often end up getting better projects with more partners and stronger commitments from everyone involved.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame.

Now to Madame Boivin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Clément, I would like to go back to basics and talk about your mandate. If we look at your website, it reads that the Status of Women Canada promotes the full participation of women in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada. For many people, the issue of gender equality and promoting gender equality is still not very clear.

In 2007, we were under the impression that it had been removed from your mandate, but your website still says that it is part of your mandate. Could you tell me if your organization is still doing something to address that? If so, what is it exactly, and if not, why?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: The mandate of our organization has not changed since the 1970s, when, as a result of the order in council, our organization was established. The mandate is to co-ordinate policies that relate to equality in the federal family.

The women's program has terms and conditions. Any transfer of funds from organizations outside the federal government has to be made in compliance with certain terms and conditions. Those terms and conditions usually describe the mandate of the program and the primary objectives of the program. In the women's program, the program and its terms and conditions are available and the mandate clearly indicates that the goal is equality.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Do you still have promotion programs for women's equality? Do you still fund those types of programs?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Promotion is done in a number of ways through the women's program; we have various levers. If the project does not deal with harm done specifically to women or with women's issues, it will not be funded under our program.

There are commemorative events. The purpose of commemoration is to raise awareness of this need. The minister promoted the creation of the International Day of the Girl to give us another opportunity during the year to focus on young girls who said that they could not identify with International Women's Day. We are providing them with a platform, but mainly the platform we are providing is for the media.

We talk about gender-based analysis a lot. It is a tool that has a great impact on organizations. When a team of researchers or analysts have to look at data to understand the female population in its diversity, the only thing for us to do is to promote the status of women, and those are the tools we use.

So yes, we promote equality and we use all those levers.

• (1640)

Ms. Françoise Boivin: I would like to continue talking about the gender-based analysis. I am in favour of that approach, because I think it allows for better policies. Sometimes, it is not necessarily directed at women only; it can also be directed at men. The best example is in education. Sometimes, we realize that an issue is particularly related to young men in some programs. If we do something that is reasonable and sensible in terms of the gender-based analysis, we are going to come up with a better policy.

Once again, let me go back to the question I asked the minister. I know that you are doing an outstanding job in terms of coaching, training, supporting various departments, and so on. But do we have mechanisms to measure the results? Let's take the budget from March 29 as an example. Can we say that every line in the budget was prepared with the gender-based analysis in mind? Has that been studied? In your department, you are the experts in GBA. Are you able to issue some sort of seal of approval? We have all heard of ISO 6000, ISO 9000, and so on. Can you give various departments, budgets or policies a seal of approval certifying that GBA has been done? Despite the fact that we have been talking about the GBA for almost two decades, are we still trying to make various departments in this Parliament aware of that policy?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: As a result of the work that has been done by the auditor general and by the parliamentary committees that looked into that data and the main facts of the study, we can say that this commitment was communicated in a very forceful way. The central agencies have understood their responsibilities very well.

It is not up to Status of Women to implement legislation. We don't have the power to force departments to act. Anyway, I don't think that is necessarily the best way. I think the best way is to make sure that all departmental stakeholders and players involved in policy-making—we know one is not better than the other—have factored in the gender-based analysis, all the research, all the data and all program evaluations.

Central agencies have a role to play and they agree to that. Actually, every time a brief is submitted to the cabinet or a submission is made to the Treasury Board, the issue is raised by a central agency. The Minister of Finance requires all departments that propose measures in the budget to do a gender-based analysis. The Minister of Finance does an overall review of what that means.

So we are not doing that directly and we don't have any levers to force them, but the central agencies have that responsibility and they do play that role.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: You are saying that...

[*English*]

The Chair: We are at seven minutes. Thank you.

Now we'll go to Madame Young, for seven minutes.

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Thank you so much for being here today. Some of your answers have been very detailed and quite informative. I thank you for that.

As you were speaking, I noticed that somebody was passing out this information on the latest thing, which I'm quite excited about. That is the International Day of the Girl Child. Can you tell us a bit more about who your Canadian partners are in working on this really great international initiative?

• (1645)

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Initially, one NGO in Canada was particularly involved on this file, Plan Canada International. It was part of an international movement called "Because I Am A Girl".

They had brought together the efforts and the energies of girls around the world in trying to draw attention to the specific needs of

girls, particularly in developing countries. We definitely saw the advantages of having developed countries get into that exercise.

Plan Canada continues to be a key partner with us. Now that we have the International Day of the Girl Child, we're going to be able to seek numerous partners, both in highlighting that day on October 11, but also, I hope, in developing projects in communities and in schools to be able to mark that special event and the issues that girls face.

We have started developing some of our products for October 11. We've put out the look and feel on our website. I have copies of the posters that will be distributed to all parliamentarians very shortly. We have created a visual that will be widely distributed, we hope, in schools and public locations so they will be able to give it a look.

Ms. Wai Young: Thank you so much.

In the interest of time, I'm going to ask you a couple of quick questions.

Can you tell us a little about the organization—you said Plan Canada. How big are they, where is their reach, what ages of girls do they work with?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: I don't have specifics. I'd have to come back to the committee with how large they are, but Plan Canada works predominantly on the international front. They are a long-time partner of CIDA on a number of projects in developing countries. They also work a great deal with young girls in Canada. Their reach is, on this particularly, I would say between the ages of about 12 and 17.

When the minister did an event on International Women's Day last Wednesday in Toronto, it was an event that Plan Canada organized to celebrate International Women's Day. She was at a school board event with over 500 young girls. They were very happy and there was a very strong reaction to the decision on the resolution to create this international day.

Ms. Wai Young: I think it's terrific that we're doing things both within Canada as well as internationally with different countries, because we live in a very global world, and of course we're going to be working more with other countries as we expand our trade ties and cultural ties across the world.

You talked about developing products. In addition to these fabulous products that we see here, I'd like to hear what the goals and outcomes are that the department has identified or achievements of having international girls' day.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: There isn't one specific goal identified with the International Day of the Girl Child. The goals are supposed to be determined based on the issues that are most pressing in the states where they are marking that day. In a developing country, for example, the goal could be as basic as ensuring access to water for a young girl or access to education.

In a country like Canada, we're hoping to see from the results of this study as well some indications of areas Status of Women Canada could be looking at, but definitely we still know that young girls are not enrolling in IT or computer sciences or maths in post-secondary education. That's a key issue, because most of the traditional occupations that girls prefer, such as health services, are now moving into an IT world. For young girls not to be pursuing studies in that area may prevent them from achieving some of the traditional jobs that girls had normally identified. Health services are becoming more and more influenced by IT.

That's the kind of work.... We've already met with the sector council for information technology to see what we could be doing with them, how they could be doing more work to try to promote young girls in choosing that as an area of study.

There's the situation of violence. Again, what we will do for Canada is that some of our projects will be targeting younger girls. The call that we just did on campuses is an example of our giving girls a specific focus and ensuring their safety on campuses.

It's up to every state to determine what the priority and what the objectives will be, and they can change from year to year, as we do with International Women's Day.

● (1650)

Ms. Wai Young: Madam Chair, how much more time do I have?

The Chair: About 45 seconds.

Ms. Wai Young: What I'm hearing from you, then, and this is very positive, is that the International Day of the Girl Child is a national framework and that within each community or within each school or within each region, B.C. or whatever, they can identify specific projects to assist and support the girls and the issues in their community.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: It's a platform to permit organizations and individuals to focus attention and bring visibility to issues and opportunities for girls.

Ms. Wai Young: Given that we're doing the economic study, I'm very pleased to hear that you're also linking some of your work at Status of Women Canada to the gender-based analysis within all the different departments, as we heard from the minister earlier, but that you're also specifically to look at career sectors and career options for girls. So I commend you in that work.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now have seven minutes with Madame Sgro.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

It is great to have you back again. Our apologies for all the things that interrupt. So far, we've been able to keep you here for a little bit of the time.

In the planning, I recognize your comments about the International Day of the Girl. What specifically are you planning to do for the celebrations of that day?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: There are no specifics that have been identified at this point.

Hon. Judy Sgro: It's still early.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: We're speaking to organizations. We want to make sure that we will speak to young girls, so we're doing some consultations. We're going to do some work with some experts to see what would be the best approach and have some discussions with our minister on the different possibilities.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Given the fact that you're focusing on this as International Day of the Girl, and you're reaching out into some of our ethnic communities, where it's very much our young women who have some challenges, how would you reach out to them in a sense of being culturally sensitive but at the same time as letting them know what is acceptable and not acceptable?

We had a presentation from one of the organizations, in addition to the Y, the other day. They had prepared booklets and so on and so forth about what is acceptable and what isn't acceptable. In reviewing those booklets, clearly, certain communities would take real offence to some of those comments in there. Yet for us, it would just be a normal information booklet.

Are you trying to put some things together that show some of that sensitivity? We have to bring these communities along slowly sometimes. Unfortunately, our young girls often pay a price for the way some of these things are handled.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: We would not be approaching girls in those communities directly. We would not pretend to have the expertise or the knowledge of the various cultures to understand those limitations and what would be culturally sensitive. That's why all of our work is done through NGOs. We have identified NGOs that are particularly close to specific communities and that are able to best understand their needs and to be culturally sensitive with their response.

For example, in aboriginal communities we're meeting the minister. We had a round table at the first nations and crown gathering with a number of women leaders to find out what they needed in their communities to improve the situation of girls. We agreed with them that we needed to work directly with them so that they can develop the best response.

So we would not pretend to have that expertise. We identify organizations and we try to attract organizations that do have an understanding and work with that population.

● (1655)

Hon. Judy Sgro: That was where I was going. Could you give me, for instance, some of the names of some of the agencies you partnered with in the past year? You've mentioned a few already. What are some of the other agencies you've partnered with in the last year?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Linda knows them better than I do.

Ms. Linda Savoie (Director General, Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate, Status of Women Canada): Some are quite vocal about the work they do. We work with an Indo-Canadian group in Edmonton. We work with Bouclier d'Athéna in Montreal. Others, for reasons of continuing to be able to be effective in reaching out to these young girls, are not quite as open about the fact that they're working in this.

We tend to be cautious in advertising these groups so that the parents of these young girls do not prevent them from participating in activities. We have a large number of groups across the country that focus on these things, but we do it in a subtle and culturally appropriate manner.

Some of the groups are known to be doing this kind of work. For example, Bouclier d'Athéna has been addressing the issue of domestic violence in some 15 different languages in the region of Montreal. They're doing tremendous work. There are a number of groups like that, and they each adapt to the communities they are targeting.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: I would say a lot of the groups that are more mainstream and are working.... For example, groups in schools, like METRAC in Toronto, ensure they have staff on their council who are representative of the different communities so they

at least have input from individuals who come from the communities.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Okay, that's fine.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm looking at the clock, and I know we wanted to get some work done on our report, so that's fine.

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much.

I want to thank the officials, Monsieur Goupil, Madame Clément, Madame Waugh, and Madame Savoie. We appreciate your being here, and we recognize the difficulty.

I'm going to suspend. We'll take about two minutes, and then we'll move in camera to continue our study on the abuse of older women.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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