



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

FEWO



NUMBER 025



1st SESSION



41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Monday, March 26, 2012



Chair

Ms. Irene Mathysen

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Monday, March 26, 2012

• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP)): Welcome, committee members.

It is our distinct pleasure and privilege to welcome Leanne Nicolle, director of community engagement, and by video conference, Cara Coté, the first vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women.

We are delighted that you are here. We will begin with Madam Nicolle.

You will have 10 minutes to present.

Ms. Leanne Nicolle (Director, Community Engagement, Plan International Canada Inc.): Thank you very much for having me today. It's my pleasure to participate, and I appreciate the fact that our work at Plan Canada is being recognized by this group as being relevant and insightful.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to say thank you for your support in proclaiming October 11 as the International Day of the Girl. Our inaugural Day of the Girl this year will be something to watch for and be excited about. Thank you for supporting us in that.

I'd like to pose the insight that education is an articulated priority for the Government of Canada to ensure that all girls, especially those in marginalized communities, can realize their right to a quality education and to provide the most direct route out of the cycle of poverty.

As a complement to the government's efforts to support sustainable benefits to girls over the long term, we strongly believe that there needs to be life skills programming to support girls outside of their academic training. From the work we are doing with girls in Canada and globally, we know that life skills are what keep girls out of the cycle of poverty, and help them reach their full potential.

The issues that affect girls are the same regardless of where they live. It's the need state that differs, and it's up to us to provide for the need state.

Plan International Canada is a global movement for change, mobilizing millions of people around the world to support social justice for children. We have one agenda: to improve the lives of children. Although the core work that we do is in the developing world, we have learned many lessons from the communities that we serve, especially in the area of girls. Our extensive work globally has proved that investing in girls is key to the social and economic well-being not only of the communities in which these girls live but of the

entire country. We firmly believe that this concept applies to Canada as well.

In Canada we are seeing great success in girls' education. They are staying in school, and where appropriate and attainable, they are moving on to complete post-secondary education. Girls face unique challenges, however, and are often victims of double-discrimination because they are young and they are female. The gender discrimination is prevalent globally. We see it in Canada manifested in the types of employment that women are participating in. Two-thirds of minimum-wage earners are female. Men continue to earn approximately 20% more than women do in this country. There are fewer women in executive jobs, governance positions, and in government in Canada.

In our work with school boards and other agencies focused on girls, such as Girls Action Foundation, as well as Girl Guides of Canada, we are seeing massive gaps in life skills. Our Because I am a Girl club initiative, which is supported by the Status of Women, is a life skills program designed to provide educators, student leaders, and community group leaders with a turnkey tool kit to address the issues that girls are presented with as they grow into women. This program addresses issues that girls face and provides activities, discussion points, resources, and tools that girls can use to be empowered to work through the issue and gain that life skill. Once the issue is worked on from a domestic point of view, girls are then presented with the same issue as it manifests globally, providing them with thought-provoking content so that they can make the local-global connection.

By making the global connection, girls are then empowered to make a difference in the lives of others simply by understanding a more global perspective.

One theme we work on is gender-based analysis. Here in Canada it manifests as understanding gender—the difference between boys and girls. Globally, we work on gender and development.

The second is nutrition. Here in Canada it manifests as healthy eating and food preparation, and globally we talk about food security.

On physical literacy, we talk about activity and how important it is to be active, and we talk about females in sport. Globally, we talk about sport for development.

We talk about the environment. Right now we are talking about water conservation and preservation. Globally, we talk about the importance of clean water and sanitation, and the impact that has on the lives of girls.

• (1535)

The fifth theme is rights and advocacy. Here we talk about understanding your rights as a girl in Canada, while globally we talk about a community-based approach to rights.

Next is conflict resolution, manifesting here in Canada as bullying. Globally, we talk about peace-building.

Next is economic empowerment. Canadian youth here are given skills around financial literacy, and that gives them the lens to talk about programs such as microfinance, and village savings and loans.

The theme of self-esteem is manifested here in poor body image and other issues that affect girls here in Canada, while globally we talk about self-expression and the importance of harmful cultural practices that affect girls' self-esteem.

The next theme is media and information communications technology. Here it's Internet security, social media, and Internet safety; globally, we talk about ICTs as a means to empowerment for girls.

In terms of the work and career theme, here we talk about career planning tips, interview tips, etc. Globally, we talk about the work of girls and women in developing countries.

In the last theme, relationships, we talk about what a healthy girl-and-girl relationship looks like here in Canada, and also boy-and-girl relationships. Globally, it's about the role of boys and men in gender equality.

The environment in which these programs exist is very important. Girls need a safe place in a positive environment so that they can learn these skills, which are typically not taught at school or at home. Creating safe spaces for girls to work through these themes is critical to the success of the program. The standard school environment does not necessarily provide girls with the security they need to address these gaps. Violence, bullying, and gender and ethnic discrimination create a sometimes toxic place where girls feel too vulnerable to ask for help. The girl club model is designed for girls to work on issues together in a safe environment to champion each other to reach their full potential.

I would like to point out that while the work we are doing is supported by the ministry for the status of women, we have also consulted with companies in the private sector to create these modules so that our resources were not consumed in reinventing the wheel. Some examples include Visa, which provided the expertise for financial literacy modules; Dove and Unilever, which provided the expertise for the self-esteem body image module; IBM, which provided for the ICTs and Internet safety module; Kraft Foods, which provided the expertise on nutrition; and Coca-Cola, which provided expertise on women in business. This provided us with not only expertise but additional financial resources to ensure that these materials are provided to educators free of charge.

When we originally designed this program, it was directed towards girls aged 12-plus; what we are experiencing is that it must start earlier. It's critical to plant these skills as early as grade 3, or eight years old, due to the incredible influence of society through the media, Internet, and peer groups. The content of the program must be age appropriate, but the seeds for positive self-esteem, financial literacy, food and nutrition, and the other themes that I've talked about must be planted early on, so that when decisions are made, these girls have the knowledge and understanding to make good life choices.

Role models play an enormous part in the lives of girls who are economically successful. We need to start building these skills at an early age. However, educators, parents, and mentors do not have access to turnkey resources to help guide and mentor our girls. In fact, one of the insights that led us to create this program came from women who were trying to mentor girls but did not have a comprehensive resource to draw from or rely on. We need to start building these skills early on in the girls' lives so they are confident in themselves to reach their full potential. Girls are extremely powerful and are, by nature, agents of change—to invest in girls provides a positive return on investment for all.

With that, I have four recommendations.

The first is to provide educators, parents, mentors, and role models with the resources to build these skills early on in the life of a girl. By raising awareness on these gaps early on, adults can share their skills to supplement traditional academic education, and prepare girls for life once graduation has been achieved.

• (1540)

The tools must be current, free of charge, and easily accessible. School boards have incredible influence, and as with the delivery and implementation of Canada's Food Guide that we have from Health Canada, it would be appropriate to apply this type of resource to other areas of life skills development.

The Chair: Ms. Nicolle, could you wrap up quickly, please?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Yes.

Second is to adapt life skills programming to aboriginal and other marginalized youth. This is critical to keeping girls who are raised in these communities out of the cycle of poverty.

The third recommendation is to engage the private sector. Companies have extensive resources on these issues. It's important to mine their expertise, research, and funding.

The fourth is to bring boys and men into the equation, but not by diluting the feminine skill-building requirements. Don't make it coed, for example.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now, for 10 minutes, we will hear from Madam Coté.

Welcome, Madam.

Ms. Cara Coté (First Vice-President, Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs): Thank you very much for having me.

I am Cara Coté, first vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women, or BPW Canada for short.

I would like to apologize; it sounds as though the topics I'll be talking briefly on today overlap what Ms. Nicolle discussed earlier.

BPW Canada's mission is to develop the professional and leadership potential of women in Canada through education, awareness, advocacy, and mentoring within a supportive network.

I have selected four key issues that I believe need to be addressed to improve the economic status of Canadian girls.

First is rising unemployment rates for Canadian youth. It's getting harder and harder for young people to find available jobs, as the older generation is staying in the workforce longer than anticipated. Young people constantly find themselves in the vicious circle of not being able to get a job because they don't have experience, and not having experience because they can't get a job.

As a business owner in the technology industry, I was surprised to see the lack of programs that would encourage hiring youth. In the last few years I've seen only one internship program that would pay a portion of wages for a new youth employee, and only on the condition he or she would be returning to full-time studies.

Second is being paid equal wages for the same work as men. This is definitely not a new subject, and since this is a status of women committee meeting, I'm likely preaching to the choir on this one. Today women in Canada, on average, are required to work fourteen and a half months to earn the same income that a male would earn in twelve months. If a girl is already having trouble finding a job, imagine how frustrating it must be to receive a lower wage than an equal counterpart. We do have March 18 recognized as Equal Pay Day, but with little progress being done to narrow the wage gap—more needs to be done.

This also boils down to negotiating salary. Salary negotiation needs to be included in the curriculum for students, at least in secondary school. Also, it is difficult for any young person to think about negotiating a salary when that person feels lucky just to get a job in the first place. That barrier needs to be removed.

Third is supporting girls who get non-traditional jobs in keeping them. Girls successfully acquiring jobs in trades and technology have yet another hurdle—keeping up with the boys' club. If a girl has to fight to get a job and constantly has to deal with harassment and discrimination, there is no reason for her to stay. Companies need to address the fact that the workforce is changing and that serious

policy changes need to be made. With just a small percentage of women in management roles within these companies, change will be very slow on its own.

Fourth is to start mentorship at an early enough age. Providing role models and opportunities at a young age can make a big impact. We have a perfect example right in Canada of an incredibly successful program: hockey. They start very young, and they have skilled coaches and superstar role models to look up to. Instead of waiting until high school to approach girls to think about their careers, we should be starting when they are learning to read and write. Maybe it's time to promote those unsung females who make big changes. These mentors could help encourage young girls to get involved in sports or club activities, and to be mentored to take on leadership roles in these areas. This would also combat the decline in social skills in the younger generations who are becoming so dependent on technology.

These four issues are definitely not the only challenges for girls in Canada, but I chose to speak on them today because of how BPW is involved with them. BPW Canada has taken up the challenge to advance and empower women in the workplace, marketplace, and civil society through the women's empowerment principles project, or WEPs.

Originally launched by the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations Global Compact on March 8, 2010, the WEPs program is finally starting to get its footing internationally.

The seven WEPs principles, and subsequently our recommendations, are as follows: establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality; treat all women and men fairly at work; respect and support human rights and non-discrimination; ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all women and men workers; promote education, training, and professional development for women; implement enterprise development, supply chain, and marketing practices that empower women; promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy; and measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

● (1545)

We think implementing these WEPs principles would solve the four key issues that I discussed. Promoting awareness with our government representatives, and business and civil society leaders, and having them sign the statement of support would be a great start. This statement can be found on our website at bpwcanada.com.

That's it from me. I appreciate the time you gave me to speak to you today. Again, on behalf of BPW Canada, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Coté. You were very succinct, and we appreciate what you had to offer.

We'll begin our first round of questioning, a seven-minute round, with Madam Truppe.

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

I'm actually just going to ask one question, and then split my time with Madam James.

Thank you, Madam Nicolle, for coming today and discussing everything you did. We were very excited about the International Day of the Girl as well, so we were very happy to do that.

As you know, the focus of our committee study is prospects for Canadian girls with regard to economic prosperity, economic participation, and economic leadership. What recommendations would Plan International Canada offer the committee on how Status of Women Canada could improve the economic participation, prosperity, and leadership of girls in Canada?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: As per my comments, which I didn't get to, there is an interesting opportunity to really involve the private sector for girls at an early age. Speaking candidly, we tend to reject the private sector for programs around young people. However, if it's done in a way that leverages the expertise of the private sector, I do think there is a very big opportunity. That brings them into the cycle early on, and potentially provides employment opportunities for girls who have already benefited from the private sector investment as an opportunity early on. That would be one, definitely.

The other would be making sure that life skills training is offered to marginalized communities, such as the aboriginal community, and those who are living below the poverty line in priority neighbourhoods.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you.

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you to both of our guests.

My first question is directed to Ms. Nicolle, and thank you very much for being here.

You talked throughout your 10-minute speech about life skills programming. Could you elaborate more on what you mean exactly by what the life skills would be? You skirted around and talked about the issue in generalities, but when you're talking specifically about life skills, what are those life skills that we're trying to make sure young girls get at an early age?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: As I listed in my comments, we believe that life skills are understanding your rights as a girl, and advocacy; understanding the environment and how that affects the life you live; physical literacy, so being active; financial literacy; conflict resolution; self-esteem and confidence-building; media and information communications technology; work and career—everything from interview skills to planning your career—and relationship management.

● (1550)

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you very much.

You probably already know this, but recently the Status of Women actually did a call for proposals focusing on women and girls in remote and rural areas. I wonder, when we talk about that and the economic prosperity of girls, do you think there is a difference between young girls who are within urban communities versus those in rural or remote areas?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: I do. Yes, definitely there is a difference and we see it in the work we're doing. We have examples of programs in urban centres as well as in rural areas.

I think that technology provides different access to rural communities. They are brought into the issues much more effectively than they have been in the past, but definitely, opportunity for employment in rural communities differs. We're seeing a lot of urbanization of girls, who are moving from rural communities into urban centres in order to get jobs, so the employment opportunities are definitely different.

From a life skills perspective, there is definitely opportunity, whether you're rural or urban. It's just the outcome at the end that is different.

Ms. Roxanne James: Regardless of whether they are rural or urban communities, do you think there's a difference between different cultures, ethnicities, or even religious beliefs in Canada?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Yes. We are definitely seeing it through our programs.

Ms. Roxanne James: Which cultures or beliefs do you believe are the biggest obstacles to young girls in Canada?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: I think there are definitely communities that honour girls differently from boys. Those are the communities we're finding are the most challenging to penetrate. However, our firm belief is that educating the community is equally as important as educating the girl. We always say that teaching a girl her rights, without being in a community where she can exercise them, is actually a liability.

We are working very hard on presenting the community with options and education, so the girl has an environment in which she can exercise her rights.

Ms. Roxanne James: Near the end of your speech you talked about four different things: one was education; one was life skills programming; one was using the private sector; and the last one was engaging boys and men into this conversation. You also mentioned that we need to get to the younger girls, starting in grade 3, or 8 years old, and we also need to include boys.

That is in line with what Status of Women believes. We need to engage not only the females in this discussion, but we need to get young boys actively involved.

Do you think that will help in the areas where there are cultural barriers, ethnicities, or religious beliefs? Do you think that getting to the younger boys in these groups, as well, will help women in the long run, as they grow up and become prosperous?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Absolutely. Boys and men have an incredible influence on girls, whether we like to believe that or not, and I do think that educating them from an early age.... There are various programs that we do, for example, through sport. Having boys and girls participate through sport can actually provide conflict resolution skills.

We take the issue and give them activities that are age appropriate in order for them to work through the life skill together. Bringing boys and men into the equation at an early age is critical.

The Chair: You have about a minute left.

Ms. Roxanne James: I'll ask this last question very quickly. With regard to the study we're doing on the economic participation, economic leadership, and prosperity of girls, can you provide specific or unique challenges—some very specific things with regard to economic participation—that face Canadian girls?

Can you think of the three things that are the most challenging for girls, and not necessarily a specific region or culture or whatever, but the top three things in general?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Self-esteem and confidence, along with financial literacy, I would say are the two top ones, and then gender—the role of boys and men.

Ms. Roxanne James: I probably don't have much time left, but I want to comment on the Because I am a Girl. I believe that during the campaign we all had buttons on that day, and I still have mine.

So thank you very much.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you.

Now to Madame Boutin-Sweet for seven minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelega, NDP): Good afternoon, ladies.

I will ask my questions in French. Ms. Côté, can you hear the simultaneous interpretation?

[English]

Ms. Cara Coté: I wish. Sorry, just English.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: You have no translation? Well then, I guess I'll ask my question in English.

An hon. member: They do have translation.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Okay.

[Translation]

During your second annual campaign, which took place very recently, in March, you talked about pay equity. You also mentioned it earlier. What kind of progress do you think has been made so far in terms of pay equity for women in Canada?

[English]

Ms. Cara Coté: To clarify, are you addressing me?

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Yes, I am.

Because of the campaign you had recently, what do you think has actually been accomplished as far as salary equity for women is concerned?

Ms. Cara Coté: I don't have any specific numbers. I'm actually fairly new to the national board of BPW Canada.

I do know that one change that has happened is the awareness of the wage gap. Here in Saskatchewan, every time we brought it up with somebody new, they had no idea about it. Now that has started to spread to people who are not really involved in politics.

From my own experience, the change I've seen is the actual awareness of the wage gap.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: I assume that you are very well aware of the salary equity law in Quebec. Are you?

Ms. Cara Coté: I'm sorry, I'm not.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: There was a law passed in Quebec that equivalent work will get equal pay. We've been trying to pass that in Canada, as well. How do you think that would be advantageous to the status of women, economically speaking?

Ms. Cara Coté: Actually, I think that is a fantastic program. I'm actually really happy Quebec is taking leadership on that and is being a role model. Everyone else can follow in their footsteps and implement the same program.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Are there other economic difficulties you see for young women who are working?

Ms. Cara Coté: As I briefly touched on with regard to the social skills among young women right now, I find that they are having issues negotiating a proper salary. It comes down to confidence, as well. Just in the last, say, 10 years that I've been involved with hiring and managing employees I have noticed that there is almost no negotiation for wages when they first start. And that will follow them throughout their careers. They start at a lower wage, and each time they get an increase, it's still lower than what a male counterpart would have. That follows them until they retire, pretty much.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: You mentioned also that the unemployment rate for young people, and that includes, obviously, young women, is a lot higher than it is for other people. In fact, it was mentioned today in the House that it's 14%, so it is a fair bit higher. Yet the government has decided not to reopen the centres for youth employment this year. Do you think centres like that could help young women learn how to, first of all, find a job, and second, give them skills, such as negotiating wages, as well?

Ms. Cara Coté: Yes, I think that's a fantastic program, which we should have, and it's a shame that it's not going to be continued. I know that in Saskatoon, there are a few private organizations that try to do mentorship in that area, and they are very successful, although it is funded by large corporations. For example, potash is huge here, so they have quite a bit of money to start hiring in that area, especially in the aboriginal area.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Would you say that just a website is sufficient for that kind of information?

Ms. Cara Coté: Well, it's better than nothing, but it's always nice to have that hands-on help. Then again, it kind of boils down to the social skills and getting out there and talking to people, instead of being on the computer all day.

• (1600)

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Ms. Nicole, can you hear the interpretation?

[English]

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Where is it?

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: That's okay, I can ask it in English.

You mentioned several things. You talked about nutrition, food security, and so on. You have a lot of experience internationally with those kinds of problems. In my own riding of Hochelaga,

[Translation]

there are food deserts, which

[English]

are the areas where people do not have easy access to good, affordable food. A mother, for example, with her two kids and a stroller, would have to walk a fair distance to get food that is decent for her kids. First of all, she has to be able to afford it.

Is there anything your group has done internationally that might help that kind of situation in Canada?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Most of our work globally on food security is such that it's typically an emergency crisis. The Horn of Africa, for example, is the most recent crisis we have.

Agricultural skills, animal husbandry, basic agricultural skills, and having a local vegetable garden is typically how we make the system sustainable. In most of the work we do globally it's not so much going to market; it's actually providing your own food security within your community.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Obviously, I don't think you'd have too many farms in Hochelaga, but there are some communal gardens, for example. You were saying that helping with basic food like that would help women and girls in general.

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Yes, it's definitely sustainable, which I think is important. One of the things that happens is that community gardens, typically run by women, tend to turn into profit centres, because they sell the excess—what they don't consume—in the marketplace. That can be everything from milk to vegetables and fruits to wheat.

Most of the work we do is around creating these sustainable solutions and building them out through almost micro-loan/micro-finance types of programs whereby they can actually grow excess food and then sell or trade it for a profit.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to Mr. Albas for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to both of our guests for being here today.

I have a few questions for Ms. Coté.

There have been a number of reports that one of the most pressing issues facing executives across the country is a shortage of skilled labour. According to a *Globe and Mail* C-suite survey, two-thirds of executives say they're having difficulty finding qualified employees, and one-third say the labour shortage is so severe that it's preventing their companies from growing as quickly as they could.

Have you been able to identify in any of your work if today's girls are more or less likely to be interested in skilled trades or more non-traditional fields?

The Chair: Madam Coté.

Ms. Cara Coté: I believe they are more interested now. The market is changing for girls. Before we didn't have any role models at all, or information to direct them into the non-traditional jobs. Now that is becoming more apparent.

We are also finding with the job shortage that we are able to start outsourcing to other areas. For example, I believe the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce president recently went to Ireland to recruit people and bring them back here. That is just one of the programs we're doing locally that way.

As far as the technology, we are able to reach a broader base of qualified female applicants online, and bring them to locations where we need them.

• (1605)

Mr. Dan Albas: Do your members also share the concerns of other executives about finding skilled labour and not being able to grow as a result of that?

Ms. Cara Coté: That is a huge issue, especially here in Saskatchewan, where we are having a bit of a boom. For example, we need more programs, more desk space really, to produce those people, whereas that's fairly limited right now.

Mr. Dan Albas: As far as skilled labour and focusing specifically on trades, are more girls pursuing these opportunities, and if not, why not?

Ms. Cara Coté: I believe they are starting to pursue them more. There's the GETT, or girls entering trades and technologies program. I believe it's a program in grades 7 and 8 where girls are taken to a technical college. They spend a week there learning about the different trades available to them. They get to speak with the instructors and other successful females going through that program. I believe it is actually improving.

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you.

When the Girls Action Foundation appeared before us they made a series of recommendations. The first was to provide mentorship and diverse role models for girls growing up. The second was to educate boys and young men to think critically about gender expectations and promote more equality between the sexes. The third was to implement and expand programs that reduced gender harassment, especially in the educational institutions.

I'd like to hear the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's thoughts on these recommendations.

Ms. Cara Coté: Those are fantastic recommendations. BPW International has come out with a program. My apologies that I can't remember the exact name off the top of my head. I believe it's called "I will teach them how to respect her". It's aimed at young men, and how they can teach their peers how to be more respectful to young women and girls, starting at a very young age. That is a program that would help support those recommendations.

Mr. Dan Albas: That would be number three, the implementing and expanding of programs that reduce gender harassment. Would you say that's the recommendation your organization would probably support the most?

Ms. Cara Coté: Yes, that's true.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chair, I am done. Again, I thank the witnesses for their appearance today.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now over to Madam Sgro for seven minutes.

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

Welcome, to both of our guests. It's always very informative when we have witnesses such as you.

Ms. Nicole, what would your total budget be for the organization?

Ms. Leanne Nicole: For Plan International Canada?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Yes.

Ms. Leanne Nicole: Or, to clarify, on this program?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Plan International Canada first and then the program second.

Ms. Leanne Nicole: Plan International Canada is an approximately \$130 million organization.

This program is quite small. It's a pilot project, and over three years it will cost about \$300,000.

Hon. Judy Sgro: You were very fortunate to get such good sponsors for many of those segments of the program.

Ms. Leanne Nicole: Yes. The private sector has been very helpful.

Hon. Judy Sgro: That's the kind of the thing I would somehow expect them to be automatically. It sounds like an appealing initiative. So many people are looking for funding, it's not always easy to be successful. Congratulations

Of the \$130 million, where does your funding come from?

Ms. Leanne Nicole: We have 180,000 individual donors across the country, so a majority of our funding is from individual Canadian donors.

To be clear, this is under our international program. Our entire youth programming, which is what this is considered to be, is self-sufficient. We operate on zero fundraising. We don't use fundraising funds for this program.

Hon. Judy Sgro: The whole \$130 million, as an overall budget, comes from individual donors?

Ms. Leanne Nicole: Yes. Individual donors, CIDA, and institutional donors; those are the three.

• (1610)

Hon. Judy Sgro: How much is the CIDA funding?

Ms. Leanne Nicole: I'm not sure at this point.

Hon. Judy Sgro: I realize I'm asking you—

Ms. Leanne Nicole: Yes, you're out of my scope here. I'm the director of community engagement.

Hon. Judy Sgro: That's right. You're not the budget person.

Ms. Leanne Nicole: But it is online. You can definitely go to plancanada.ca, and it's all very transparent.

Hon. Judy Sgro: You've answered very well.

With regard to the issues in and around the outreach into some of the neighbourhoods and so on, how do you get these different clubs started in some of these high-priority neighbourhoods?

Ms. Leanne Nicole: We primarily work directly with the school boards. Our number one target is to work with school boards, and we have been highly successful by working through educators. In our pilot year, we have just over 300 clubs registered. That's primarily in Ontario. However, we have club representation across the country, in seven provinces and a territory.

For year one we're very happy about it. What we have realized is that the content and the modules—I have a copy for the clerk of the modules and the materials—are definitely something educators are looking for.

I speak on an ongoing basis at teacher federation conferences, safe schools, and guidance counsellor federations. Our access has been primarily through the school system.

We also work with Girls Action Foundation, which is a complementary network to the school system. Girl Guides of Canada is another group we've been working in partnership with.

It's very much a collaboration of a variety of organizations.

Hon. Judy Sgro: That's an awful lot of groups already in a short period of time. Congratulations on doing that.

Ms. Leanne Nicole: Thank you.

Hon. Judy Sgro: If you were to go into a school, for instance, would you be speaking only to the girls, or would you be speaking to a group audience about the program?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: The program is directed towards girls, and we don't shy away from that. The content is very feminine and female directed; however, we do a lot of presentations in full group settings.

Really what we do is we try to engage youth leaders. In a high school setting, this is youth led, youth driven, and adult mentored. In a primary or grade 8 and under setting, it is an educator-driven program. We have two different target audiences who use the materials.

In the high schools, though, we rely on youth leaders. They have taken ownership of the program, and they take it to their school system. A lot of the resources we have are very much transferrable to various audiences. We have everything from the environment club to the self-esteem club for girls using the materials.

The traction has been incredible, but in a multi-faceted way. It's very much a spider chart right now, which we're doing a good job of monitoring, but it's appealing to many more audiences than we ever dreamt it would. The financial literacy one, for example, is easily transferrable into the boys' space, but it's still under the auspices of the Because I am a Girl initiative.

Hon. Judy Sgro: I think that's commendable. But it always has to go to that other half, which is the boys, and how they factor into all of this. Will you be developing a similar module as a component of Because I am a Girl?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: I'll be honest. We have been asked, especially by the school boards, to develop a gender neutral version. There are some modules we are looking at doing right now. Right now our capacity is such that our focus has to be on the Because I am a Girl initiative. However, the five-year plan is definitely to create modules.

We have a youth leadership program that is gender neutral. We also have a primary program that is gender neutral and that uses the resources we've developed. We've modified various parts of the resources, but Because I am a Girl will always be girl-centric.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you very much.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Ms. Côté, just quickly, from your perspective, what is your organization doing when it comes to doing additional training and leadership to encourage women to seek out management positions and to push themselves up that ladder?

Ms. Cara Côté: Currently we have a mentorship program, within BPW itself, within the national, provincial, and local chapters. There is also a political training program in development that is going to be coming up. I believe that it's starting in British Columbia and Ontario. That program is still in development, though, and I don't think it will be released for at least another year or two.

•(1615)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you very much, and thank you for being here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll start our five-minute round with Ms. Bateman, please.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to both of the witnesses today. I very much appreciate the information you've brought us.

I really want to start with Plan Canada, because I want to hear a little more about Because I am a Girl. I know just how struck by and supportive of it our Minister of the Status of Women, the Honourable Rona Ambrose, is.

I want you to drill a little deeper on this. First, you spoke about three essential criteria for success. You referred to self-esteem, financial literacy, and the integration or the utilization of the other 50% of the population. Can you start on the financial literacy piece first?

Certainly if you want to first speak to anything about the broader program and the importance of the broader program, that would be very helpful too.

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Because I am a Girl is an initiative launched in 2009 to raise awareness of the issues and rights around girls. It started primarily in our work, because globally, we know that investing in girls is the most direct route to social change. That has been proven over and over, and people much brighter than I am are speaking about that in various places. That's why we focused on that. To apply it to Canada, to bring this domestic point of view to the work we're doing, is critical.

Really, what we've done through the girl club program, in the life skills areas I was talking to you about, is identify that the issues that affect girls globally are the same. They just manifest differently. It's about identifying how they manifest and then providing for the needs of the girls, regardless of where we live.

This is a program that can be rolled out in any country around the world, because the issues are the same. When you look at some of the marginalized communities, such as the aboriginal community, for example, the issues that affect aboriginal girls are the same as what I've described. They are just manifesting differently. It's about identifying how they're manifesting, and then providing for the need state.

That's the premise and the hypothesis of this. We're thrilled about

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Can you talk about financial literacy?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Yes, on financial literacy, students, regardless of whether they are boys or girls, are graduating from high school without any sort of knowledge around managing a budget or credit. Financial skills in general are just not things they are taught in school or at home, so they are going into university with very limited knowledge. In fact, our baseline study showed that over 32% of young people polled in our baseline study had absolutely no knowledge of financial literacy whatsoever, zero. Over 32% had zero, and those who said they knew a little bit about financial literacy bring that number up to over 50%.

Young people are graduating from high school without any knowledge of how to manage their money. Girls are especially affected, of course, because as Ms. Coté pointed out, they are not negotiating their salaries and then when they do get their salaries, as limited as they are, they don't know how to manage them.

These are very fundamental skills that certainly would provide prosperity for girls and women across the country. It's not just girls, by the way. It's women too. Economic security relies on knowing how to manage your money. In our module on financial literacy, the information was provided to us by Visa Canada because they spent millions of dollars developing financial literacy programs, which we've leveraged—everything from understanding how to balance a budget, knowing the difference between need and want, and knowing how to get a credit rating in this country by managing credit card debt. How does one apply for a student loan and manage that loan effectively? These are all very basic, fundamental skills that young people are not graduating high school with. They are going into university with absolutely no knowledge of financial literacy.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You are going to be changing that.

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: We are working very hard to change that. In fact, one of the reasons the Toronto District School Board believes so strongly in our program is that we're bringing these life skills around conflict resolution, financial literacy, or conflict resolution and negotiating skills—knowing your conflict style so that when that comes into play, you know how to deal with co-workers, a boss, etc. You understand your own conflict style and therefore you can manage either conflict or negotiation appropriately. This is a skill that young people are not graduating with.

However, through this program and through these modules, which I'm happy to share, they will graduate with these skills. In fact, last week, on March 8, we gave the conflict resolution presentation to 500 young girls between grade 3 and grade 6 in Toronto, and it was widely accepted.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we go over to Ms. Freeman and Madam Brosseau for five minutes.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Thank you very much for being here.

I have two questions for Madam Nicolle, then I'll give the rest of my time to Ms. Brosseau.

You said that globally girls and women face the same issues and they just manifest differently. We agree on that. Experiences may differ, but the root causes of gender-based violence and general inequity for women are the same around the world.

I know that Plan International Canada does a lot aimed at developing countries, but I'm also aware that Plan Australia has begun domestic development operations in order to address the extreme poverty and inequality experienced by their aboriginal communities.

Could you talk about anything that does exist or will exist, or any discussions that are happening around developing initiatives like this in Canada, for first nations or marginalized, low-income commu-

nities in rural and remote areas, that will address the experience of high rates of violence, poverty, etc.?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: The program we have developed is a very strong skeleton and so the program is a generalist program at this point, but we do believe that these skills can be transferrable or adapted to various communities across the country, and that's our plan. It's in our plan to do various adaptations of this program for marginalized communities whether they be urban, rural, or aboriginal.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Yes, for sure, and I'd imagine this would be something that Status of Women Canada could—and you would probably appreciate this—partner with.

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: We would absolutely appreciate it. We think that we have a very strong foundation. We have relationships in the aboriginal community, one laptop per child, for example. We have various different partnerships throughout the aboriginal community.

We do believe it has to be 100% inclusive in that it's a bit of a tripartite between government, NGOs, and community-based groups, as is this program.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: How much time is left?

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I have a very quick question then.

I know that Plan is a very strong advocate of maternal health, and I was wondering if you could just speak very quickly about the fact that relative to the other OECD countries, Canada is not doing so well in terms of sexual and reproductive health and teen pregnancy in rural and remote areas. How does this affect the empowerment of our Canadian girls?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Once again, I think it's based on education. Therefore, whether it's taught in the school system or not, or at home, as an organization we are focusing on maternal health globally. Canada is part of that—especially with teens—and girls' sexual and reproductive health is one of the modules that's forthcoming.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Would you say access also?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Access for sure.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: All right.

I'll give the rest to Ms. Brosseau.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): I thank you both very much for being with us today.

It seems we have to really talk about the root causes here. We keep going in circles: education, financial literacy, making schools more accessible. It's very expensive now. When we graduate, we're coming out with huge student debt. It's such a disadvantage, whether you're male or female. I know from personal experience. I went to school as a single mom. I know what it's like paying \$55 a day when you're 20 years old and going to school.

I think of Attawapiskat, the motion we passed, and Shannen's Dream. The NDP passed a motion with the government hoping to ensure children do have a right to school.

I was wondering if you could maybe talk a little bit more about what you're doing in Canada for aboriginal people. You mentioned one laptop per child.

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: That's just a partner organization we've been in discussion with. Once again, this program is entirely collaborative—Girls Action Foundation, Girl Guides. We're bringing experts in because we don't need to reinvent the wheel. We want to manage our resources effectively. Bringing the experts in from other parts, other community-based groups, is part of our strategy around this program and what has made it so wildly successful. We're not working with them, but we are friends with them.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Okay.

Ms. Cara Coté, I was wondering if you could talk a little bit more about engaging women to get into political work. Do you have any recommendations for what direction our committee should go in?

• (1625)

Ms. Cara Coté: For sure.

We found an increase in political interest when we would host political forums. If there was an election coming up, then we would invite the candidates to come and speak on topics and invite our membership and the community to come and watch and ask questions. Because it is a smaller, more intimate setting, we find these particular people return and they get more involved that away. Starting at a very small level, these very intimate political question periods start growing into larger venues as well. But that would be a great starting point.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to Ms. Ambler for the time remaining.

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

And thank you both for being here today. They were very interesting presentations.

I'd like to ask Ms. Nicolle a little bit more about the International Day of the Girl. When Minister Ambrose came to the committee, she talked a little bit about the genesis of it, and the fact that, when she spoke to girls who had worked with Plan Canada about International Women's Day, many of them felt they couldn't relate to it because their problems were very much focused on girls—forced marriages, access to education, access to health care, forced genital mutilation. These are problems faced by girls, not women. She spoke very movingly, I think, about the need for that International Day of the Girl.

I want to know about the promotion of this initiative specifically. For example, you can walk along Sparks Street and see the information posters in the bus shelters, and we hear about it because we work here. But I'm wondering about how it's promoted in other areas of Canada. Also, is there anything we can do, as members of Parliament—not just those of us in this room, but all 308 members of Parliament? Is there something we can do through the promotional efforts we undertake every day? We send out flyers in our ridings. We have access, obviously, to families in our neighbourhoods. Are there things we can do or should be doing to promote this further? Or should it just be in schools?

I guess my first question is how is it promoted, and is there anything we can do to further promote it?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: This is the inaugural year, so we're busy planning for the festivities that will come on October 11. This is a Canada-wide celebration of girls. Everyone is affected by a girl in some way, shape, or form in their lives. It's really about raising awareness in the entire population—not just girls, and not just youth. It's about women, men, boys, and girls getting involved to do something important to celebrate girls and raise awareness of the unique issues they face.

As I said in my opening remarks, girls are doubly discriminated against by gender and age. That's why we felt the need for the International Day of the Girl—their own unique day outside of International Women's Day.

There will be a ton of promotion around it. We have PR efforts, school-based efforts, community group efforts, the Girl Guides, the Girls Action Foundation, and the private sector. We will have a gala evening in Toronto. There are many things going on.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Excellent.

If there is any way we as members of Parliament can participate further, please let us know.

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Thank you. Thanks for your support.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: My pleasure.

Do I have more time?

The Chair: Very quickly.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: I want to congratulate you on the private sector involvement.

I'm curious about the Coca-Cola partnership. We all know about the Dove body self-image campaign. That was very exciting, I thought. But can you tell us a bit about the women in business partnership with Coca-Cola?

Ms. Leanne Nicolle: Yes, we have a partnership with smartwater, which is one of the brands under the Coca-Cola umbrella. They have challenged Canadian girls to be proud of being smart.

It stems from the knowledge that the majority of girls would rather be called “stupid” than “fat”. From that insight they have developed a campaign, in partnership with us, to reach out to Canadian girls to write essays about why they're proud to be smart, so it's called the smartgirl contest.

From that, we have worked with the Coca-Cola company and their women executives. They have helped us and have outreached from their CFO, who is a woman, all the way down to their directors of marketing. Collaboratively, we have written the module on women in business. They sponsored the effort and created a community engagement fund under smartwater. Young people can apply for small grants to make their ideas flourish. They have sponsored that.

• (1630)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank Madam Nicolle and Madam Coté for all that you've added to our discussions and deliberations. We appreciate it very much.

We will now go into deliberations on our draft report.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:
Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

*En cas de non-livraison,
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and
Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the
following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les
Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à
l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>