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Chair

Ms. Irene Mathysen

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP)): I call this meeting of the status of women committee to order.

I'll begin by telling committee members that we do have materials from Plan Canada. Does the committee wish to circulate the material? It's only in English, but I've asked the official opposition if there is any concern about it not being translated into French.

Is it the wish of the committee to have that material distributed? Yes? Are there any objections? Seeing none, our clerk will make sure that you receive it electronically.

Second, each member of the committee has received a calendar for the months of April and May and for some things in June. Would you please take time to review the calendar? We have a very busy schedule planned for the next couple of months. I would appreciate it if you were to be familiar with the calendar.

At this point, it's my pleasure to welcome Tracy Redies, the president and chief executive officer of Coast Capital Savings Credit Union, and Ellen Moore, president and chief executive officer of Chubb Insurance Company of Canada.

It's wonderful to have you here. We appreciate very much your agreeing to be part of the work of this committee.

Let's begin with Ms. Redies, please, for 10 minutes.

Ms. Tracy Redies (President and Chief Executive Officer, Coast Capital Savings Credit Union): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide my comments on the subject of improving economic prospects for Canadian girls. I hope my comments will be helpful as you continue the study of this important issue.

Although I'm not an expert in the field, as a woman and a mother of three girls and one boy and a business leader, I have some experience to draw from. As CEO of Canada's second-largest credit union, where 72% of our workforce is made up of women, I feel strongly that all levels of our organization should reflect the composition of our workforce and our community.

Last year Coast Capital was named the top organization in Canada by Catalyst for the highest percentage of women in senior executive roles in Canada, with 70% of our executives being women. It's also worth noting that 40% of our board directors and 45% of our leaders below the senior executive are women. We've done this not only

because it's the right thing to do, but also because it makes good business sense to have diverse teams.

With that context in mind, I'd like to focus on four areas that I believe are important in improving the prospects of young women in Canada, namely education, financial literacy, internships, and business leadership. Again, coming from an organization that values all types of diversity, I believe my suggestions are applicable not only for young women but also young men in Canadian society.

Starting with education and my own experience, having lived and been educated in three countries, I can say that there is nothing more vital than a strong education for the advancement of young women. While our education system has done great things for our country, I believe strongly that we need to do more to position our young women for success in the 21st century.

Much has been said about the need for greater focus on math and sciences, particularly for young women in high school, and I agree with this position. That said, I believe we're also missing an opportunity to prepare our youth to compete in what will be a radically changed world economic order.

The rise of east and south Asia and Latin America as global economic powerhouses is no longer a possibility; it is a given. Canada, with its rich cultural heritage and historical and increasing ties to Asia, has huge potential to thrive in this new world order, yet our education system, in my experience, has not been sufficiently flexible to recognize and capitalize on this changing tide.

With four children in the school system, I have been concerned that our curriculum, at least in B.C., has not changed substantially in 30 years. History and languages are still oriented toward our European heritage, yet more than 27% of British Columbians were born outside Canada, and more than half of those came from Asia or the Middle East.

We are competing against countries like Australia, where children have the ability to learn Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, and Japanese starting at much earlier ages than when Canadian children typically start to learn a second language. Our history courses typically focus on Europe, and while *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a wonderful novel, which most people in this room probably studied in grade 10, why are we not looking at the rich cultural and historical literature of countries like China, India, and Japan?

In short, our education system, which should offer the perfect opportunity for young women to learn and think globally, is too narrow in its focus. If we are to prepare Canadian youth to capitalize on the new global realities, our curricula will have to change to reflect those realities. We need to encourage and offer more opportunities for young people to live and learn abroad, we need Canadian curricula to be broader and offer second-language opportunities earlier, and we need to comprehensively expose our children to the history, culture, and economies of the new world. As Canada's population changes and becomes more diverse, this type of education will benefit our children at home and abroad.

I'd like to turn now to my second area of focus, which is again in the realm of education, but in the arena of financial literacy. I was very pleased to see the federal government's focus on financial literacy for Canadians. Given the historical debt loads of Canadians and a volatile world, this is an important topic, and one that all Canadians should be concerned about.

Today we should be educating both women and men to be financially literate at younger ages and to understand the opportunities and pitfalls of finance. They should understand the benefits of saving early, budgeting, and the appropriate use of credit. While financial institutions and other worthy organizations, such as Junior Achievement, have provided some support, given Canadian debt loads and our generally inadequate preparation for retirement, my sense is we're not consistently teaching financial literacy at an early enough age.

•(1535)

As women still tend to be secondary income earners in general, it is crucial that we teach them how to be financially literate and financially independent from an early age.

Turning to youth internship and leadership experiences, I believe this is also a vital way that businesses and governments can help young women develop the leadership, team-playing, networking, and public speaking skills that are critical tools in whatever career paths they choose.

At Coast, our community leadership strategy is to build a richer future for youth in our communities, and this targets youth aged 13 to 24. It's not just about donating money to non-profits; we believe we have an obligation to help the youth in our communities gain leadership and business experience.

We have a wonderful program that I believe is unique in Canada. It annually gives 25 to 30 grade 11 and grade 12 students training in financial services and leadership experience. Through the Coast community youth team program, these students train and work in our branches, but they also help organize and participate in Coast community events. This gives them not only valuable work skills, but also public speaking and leadership experience at an early age.

We have had over 300 students graduate from the program. Several alumni are now full-time employees at Coast in various roles, while others have gone on to pursue careers that require strong financial knowledge and skills. We've also recently introduced a youth advisory council to help deliberate on and allocate a portion of our Community Giving dollars. At Coast we donate 7% of our budgeted pre-tax profit to the communities in which we operate;

over \$22 million has been invested by Coast over the last five years, so the dollars that are being allocated are quite significant.

The youth council has to carefully analyze proposals to ensure they fit with our giving objectives. Even though this program is new, the feedback on it has been overwhelmingly positive. The participants gain knowledge on business philanthropy and the important role it plays in developing communities. They also gain critical thinking and analysis skills.

Other companies and governments can also help support young girls and boys by sponsoring youth programs or developing their own in-house youth initiatives.

Finally, my fourth area of focus is business leadership. It's important that we help young girls build their self-esteem, encourage them to aim higher in their career choices, and pursue higher education, but we also need to change so that women can better thrive in the workplace. If we don't make significant changes now and help remove the barriers many young women face in the workplace, they will see a disconnect between their expectations and reality and end up being discouraged early in their careers.

Today, as I think we all know, it's still very hard for women to reach the C-suite. While women have made some progress, we still have a long way to go in reaching parity with men. According to a Catalyst survey, women head up only 6% of Canada's Financial Post 500 companies, and, astoundingly, more than 30% of Canadian companies had zero female officers in 2010.

This may be partly due to the continuance of the glass ceiling; however, more and more I honestly believe that many capable young women are opting out before reaching their full potential in their careers because the workplace is not meeting their expectations, either in terms of providing stimulating, meaningful work environments or in enabling them to balance other important aspects of their lives. Business leaders need to change this.

As an industry that employs a large female cohort, credit unions have been very supportive in developing women. While the large Canadian banks have yet to have a woman in their top position, three of the largest five credit unions in Canada have a female CEO, and the CEO of Canada's largest cooperative financial institution is also a very capable woman.

Why is this? Credit unions were created on the principle of members helping members, with a deep-rooted belief in inclusiveness and diversity in the workplace. At Coast this is certainly true. Our employee commitment is to change the way employees feel about work forever, just as our business purpose is to change the way Canadians feel about banking forever. We are very committed to fostering an innovative work environment where everyone can achieve success, regardless of gender, culture, or age.

We also offer very supportive programs to make it easier for our staff to balance work and life challenges. Such programs include wellness programs, flexible work schedules, and return-to-work schedules for those coming back from parental or personal leaves. All of these initiatives are necessary to ensure a diverse workforce that will be engaged and able to do their best.

• (1540)

I'd like to close with the following comments: as government and business leaders, it's important that we create environments where young women can gain the necessary skill sets for the 21st century and thrive in this new economic order. We can do more to help support young women through earlier, creative internships and business experiences that help build self-confidence and skills. Finally, we must look at ways to remove barriers that prevent women from contributing at all levels of our society.

I'd like to thank the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for the opportunity to comment on the economic prosperity of young women, and I look forward to reading the final report when it's completed.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Redies. I must say thank you to credit unions across this country for the support they've given to women. It's very important.

Now we will go to Ms. Moore for 10 minutes.

Ms. Ellen Moore (Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer, Chubb Insurance Company of Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon. It's an honour to be before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. As indicated, I am the chair, president, and CEO of the Chubb Insurance Company of Canada. In Canada, Chubb is a private property and casualty insurance company. We have four offices across the country and we employ 420 staff in those offices.

We usually fall around 350th on the Financial Post 500 list. We have about \$2.5 billion under asset management, and our top-line revenue was \$670 million at the end of last year, so that gives you a little perspective on the size of the firm.

We serve clients through a broker distribution channel, and it's in three specialty areas: the higher net worth personal lines business; executive liability products, which are things like directors' and officers' insurance; and commercial property and casualty business. We're part of the Chubb Corporation, which is one of the world's largest property and casualty organizations. As Ms. Redies mentioned, we're also a proud recipient of the Catalyst Award, which we received several years ago for our work in the advancement of executive female talent within the organization.

To also give you a little perspective about what I'm sharing with you and hoping to contribute, I am currently a permanent resident in Canada, having arrived in 2004 to assume the job of just president and CEO; the chairmanship was added two years later. I'm in the process of applying for Canadian citizenship, which I'm very hopeful of obtaining.

I began working with Chubb while I was still in university. At that time probably about 10% of the university population were women in my training class. The company, as an insurance company, has a reputation for fairness, integrity, and inclusion, all of which are attributes that serve a diverse set of constituents at the staff, client, and importantly, community service level, so my comments to the

committee are around my leadership positions within my company and my community.

My experiences involving the development of women are varied, and they also include being the mother of two young adult daughters.

I have been a past member of our corporation's women's development council, which is now 25 years old. It was established to be certain that women at Chubb were receiving the right developmental opportunities to advance into senior positions at the firm. Our company has been an early adopter of the idea of improving business results through the engagement of all talent available, so we found it very logical to retain, develop, and promote the best talent in our industry by creating development programs specifically geared toward women so that we would have them ready in equal numbers to their male counterparts to enter into management ranks.

Management at Chubb is encouraging the promotion of the current mission of the council, which exists today, and I'm now an adviser to that council. The mission is "reach up, reach out, and reach down", and to work with women within the company, within our industry, and with the communities we serve to support women at all levels.

In addition to our internal organizations, I have had the opportunity in various capacities to work with women's leadership groups across Canada and the U.S. A hallmark of our company is to be an active participant in the communities we serve through philanthropy and charitable giving. I've had the distinct pleasure of being personally involved in, and involving others in, leadership in important Canadian organizations. Some of these are specific to the development of young women leaders. They include Junior Achievement, which is in the classroom at the middle and high school level, and I've been involved in the development of executive talent in other organizations as well.

Each organization continues to be concerned that not enough progress has been made to have women positioned for larger jobs in the area of their expertise. Women are not advancing at numbers anywhere close to those of men, leaving us with less diverse management across all sectors of academia, business, and government.

• (1545)

There is research that suggests initiatives have stalled or reached a plateau. It is particularly acute in industry: women are graduating in equal percentages from commerce and MBA programs at university, but by the time they should be ready for executive or senior positions in their area, there still appears to be a pipeline issue.

Both our corporation in Canada and the global corporation, as I have indicated, have been very active with Catalyst, the global research firm, for many years. I sit on the Canadian advisory board of Catalyst, and as I believe Ms. Redies was suggesting, on March 8 of this year the most recent consensus on women's positioning on boards and in senior leadership was released, indicating little positive movement has been attained in the advancement of female representation. Catalyst is one of several organizations, including government agencies, reviewing how to produce better outcomes, so I'm quite pleased that this is on the status of women committee's agenda.

My work with the Women's Leadership Board at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University suggests some progress is being made in academia and in governments across the globe, but is still surprisingly low, considering it is 2012. Chubb is also a supporter of Carleton University's women in public policy initiative and its leadership curriculum for improving skills for public service. While this program is gender neutral, there are advocacy and development initiatives for women in public service that are specific.

In Toronto I am currently chairing the International Women's Forum. This is a global network of women across practices, geographies, and demographics who support one another. It has an annual fellowship program for the development of mid-level women for the next big position in their field, and the Toronto chapter is also piloting work in the area of pipeline creation for women on boards of directors.

While I do not have the same level of prescription that Ms. Redies offered, I certainly support the four areas she identifies. I do believe we have to continue to improve education in our elementary and secondary school systems in both genders. Financial literacy is a key of one of the organizations that I'm a part of, Junior Achievement, and it is bringing that curriculum into the classroom.

I also believe we need programming for young girls and high school-level and university-level women that is specific to the unique positions in their careers as they balance family and other choices that are unique to them as a gender.

In sum, while the statistics are not yet showing in the corporate executive suite or the boardroom, I think a great number of areas in education and government are continuing to look at this issue, and much optimism is to be expected.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today; I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

● (1550)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Moore, and thank you for the work you do to help and support women.

We'll begin our first round of seven minutes.

Ms. Truppe, go ahead, please.

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Thank you very much.

I would like to thank you both for taking time out of your busy schedules today to visit with us to give us these very insightful

presentations. I'd also like to commend you for the work you do with both youth and women.

I was also happy to hear both of you mention Junior Achievement. I am a former Junior Achiever, so I think it's a great program for youth.

I have a two-part question for both of you. The focus of our committee's study is prospects for Canadian girls with regard to economic prosperity, economic participation, and economic leadership, as well as to determine what changes can be made by Status of Women to its approach in improving them.

Tracy and Ellen, you've both accomplished so much to get where you are. You must have had to clear a lot of hurdles to be where you are. Could each of you tell us what you had to overcome to get to the positions that you're in, and what focus Status of Women should be trying in order to improve the economic participation, prosperity, and leadership of girls in Canada?

We could start with you, Tracy.

Ms. Tracy Redies: Thank you. Can everyone hear me all right?

Let me think. I've been in financial services for about 23 years now, and it's hard to believe it's been that long. I said to one of the members that it's not the years but the mileage that gets you.

I obviously have worked in a very male-dominated industry. I was with HSBC for 20 years prior to coming to the credit unions. People ask me this question of what challenges I've faced, but in general, I've had a fairly supportive career in my life. HSBC was very good in terms of providing mentorship, I think recognizing at an early age that I had a lot of drive and desire to continue to move up in the organization. I was quite fortunate in that regard.

I was also brought up in a family in which both my brother and my sisters were told they could do anything they wanted as long as we worked hard, so I really never had the mentality that I couldn't get ahead.

That said, I think men and women do things differently in the workplace. I think one of the challenges a lot of women have—I experienced this too, learning—is that they have a tendency to believe that if they do something and they do well, these things will be noticed and they'll get ahead. The reality is that's not always the case.

I think probably most of us have learned in our careers that networking is a very important aspect of corporate advancement. I don't know how to teach that; I think it's something you start to learn over time.

The other thing, too, that was helpful for me is that I did work on some very important initiatives with the bank at an early age—the diversity committee, etc. I took on projects nobody else wanted to do, so I guess that helped. I do believe I probably worked harder; I probably had to make more trade-offs in many respects.

I think that's actually an important point that gets missed here. For any man or woman today to get to the C-suite, to be successful in a career, you're talking about trade-offs of time with family or other pursuits, etc. I mentioned in my comments—and I've really seen this in my last three years with the credit union—that part of the challenge today is that a lot of capable women are opting out earlier than their potential should suggest. Frankly, they don't think it's worth it to put in the time and to make the trade-offs.

At the end of the day, you work hard and you work long hours in whatever field you choose to do. You have to believe that what you're doing is meaningful; it makes sense for you, and you're part of something larger, part of a purpose.

This was one of the reasons we at Coast took on a purpose to change the way Canadians feel about banking forever. It was something lofty and aspirational that all of our staff could get behind, something about which they could feel that they could make a difference. I think that's actually one of the keys for progressive organizations going forward.

We don't have any special diversity programs at Coast, yet we have one of the best, most diverse workforces in terms of women and boards in the country. Again, there are no special diversity programs; what we have is a desire to make sure we have an inclusive environment where everybody can bring their best to work and be part of something they believe in. I think progressive organizations going forward have to think like this if they are going to try to attract more women at the top.

Women, I think, actually have more to give up, whether it's family or other things. There are more expectations that they will give that up.

It's a bit of a convoluted answer. Again, I've made trade-offs over my life that I felt were appropriate. I had two daughters early on—three daughters now—and I want to make sure they understand that you can have a family and a career at the same time. I worked very hard for it, but I'm not sure if every woman would do what I did.

● (1555)

At the end of the day, if we want to continue to attract women and retain top talent, we need to provide workplaces that make it easy for them both to contribute and to manage family and other personal interests.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you very much.

Ellen, could you answer the same question on the hurdles you faced?

Ms. Ellen Moore: Thank you.

I certainly would second just about everything Tracy said. Along the way there's a lot of hard work and a lot of trade-offs.

It sounds as though we have both had the benefit of working for some good organizations that are important to women. Women like to marry their careers with something that has an extended purpose, if you will. Certainly insurance is a great career path for women. About 40% of the executive talent in Canada across companies in the insurance sector is female. It's a matter of feeling part of a community, and I sense that with Coast as well.

The challenges are still there, quite frankly. I am often astonished and somewhat disappointed to be one of two or three women in a room attending any level of industry meeting or trade association meeting, so I believe there are still quite a few challenges. As Tracy suggests, women are opting out early because it's just too difficult for them to run a house, support a husband's or significant other's career, and raise children.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Moore. I'm sorry to cut you off, but we have to move on. I hope you will take time to elaborate further.

Ms. Brosseau, you have seven minutes, please.

● (1600)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank you both for being with us and sharing your experiences.

I would like to ask a few questions of you, Ms. Redies. I read an article stating that for over 20 years you've held a variety of positions with HSBC all over the world. You've had the chance to work in Chicago, London, Hong Kong, and India.

Ms. Tracy Redies: I had a team in India. I didn't actually work there.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Okay.

I wonder if you can comment on how women are doing in Canada compared to the other countries you've had experiences in.

Ms. Tracy Redies: I would say that places like Hong Kong or the U.S. are not dissimilar to Canada. I'm not as familiar with India, so I probably can't comment too much on that.

The reality is that with the exception of some countries in Scandinavia, female participation at the senior executive level or on boards doesn't seem to have made much ground anywhere, frankly. That's why I think it's a bigger problem than just the whole thing around diversity programs and mentorship, etc. There are bigger problems, and it really comes down whether it's worth it to do it.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: I know exactly what you're talking about. I've been here for about a year and I'm a single mom. You always have to work hard and you know it's always that time-work balance, but you see the bigger picture. You want to be a good role model and give it 110%. There are choices you make.

You touched on four areas we have to concentrate on—education, financial literacy, community leadership, and business leadership. Is that right?

Ms. Tracy Redies: Yes.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Can you give us direction, concrete steps, on how we as the federal government can make improvements?

Ms. Tracy Redies: Yes. I recognize that the linkage between my comments and federal public policy was perhaps not as clear as we would wish. I do appreciate that.

If I had one thing, it would be using federal public policy to influence education. I think that would be it, because frankly, that's the great leveller. I was very fortunate at an early age to do part of my undergraduate degree in Japan. I went to school with 90 foreign students from around the world, representing 36 countries, and it was amazing how similar we were. It taught me at a very early age that education is the great leveller.

I do worry—at least from what I've seen in B.C., and I think I hear this in other jurisdictions where I go—that our education system is not keeping up with what we need it to do. There's no country on earth that has more opportunity to participate in this new world economic order, from my perspective, than Canada. It's not just about the riches of our mineral wealth; it's the riches of our people and the cultural diversity and the tolerance we bring to the table. I just worry that we're not giving our children a broad enough exposure to these cultures of the new world.

It's not that the old world isn't important, but this new world is taking on an increasing importance. If the federal government could think about that, it would benefit all of our children.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: It would also be making it more accessible, because a lot of us in the NDP... We were lucky this year. There are 40% women in our caucus, which is very historic, but we're also very young, so we're all coming off with heavy debt loads, so we know. We want to go to school. Some of us who take out loans are coming out thousands of dollars in debt, so it's taking us years to get more comfortable.

I was wondering if you could elaborate on the role you think companies have to play in the economic prospects of women and girls in Canada. Do they have responsibility?

Ms. Tracy Redies: Absolutely. Again, I mentioned the participation of women at the various levels of our organization. We do this because it's the right thing, but also it makes perfect business sense.

If you look at the communities we serve and you look at who makes a lot of the consumer decisions in the households, you will see that women are a very important component of our society, and I think that businesses... To me, as I said, the astounding piece is the number of companies in Canada with no female officers. I find it, as I said, astounding that in this day and age and with the importance of women in our society, businesses aren't getting the importance of women as income earners and as consumers.

I absolutely believe businesses have a role to play. I find actually, in talking to a lot of my male colleagues who would like to see more women come up, that it's not because men don't want to see this happen. I do believe that. I just think it's hard, again, to create those types of environments where women feel they are part of something important and that it's worth the trade-off of the hours and hours you have to put in to be good at what you do.

• (1605)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Yes, but it's also finding good child care.

Ms. Tracy Redies: Yes. That's actually something we have tried to help with in Vancouver. We've worked with the YMCA to create child care spaces in Vancouver, because this is a really big issue. Going through that process, I didn't realize how expensive it was to

provide child care, but it is a huge problem. The particular niche I was speaking to has about 30 places, I think, and within a day of its being available, there were already three times that number on the waiting list.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: As soon as you get pregnant, you have to get on a waiting list to have your child in child care, almost.

Ms. Tracy Redies: Yes. It's very difficult.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: That's what it was like, as far as I remember, when I had my baby.

I was also wondering if you could touch on some barriers you see that women or girls have nowadays that maybe you've witnessed personally—maybe the inequality in pay we see between women and men, women being paid less for fair work.

The Chair: Please be very quick.

Ms. Tracy Redies: I'll be very quick.

In the financial services, it's fairly even now. I don't really have any experience with any other industry, so I probably can't comment.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Ambler is next. You have seven minutes, please.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our guests today for their very informative and interesting presentations.

I listened with interest, Ms. Redies, when you spoke about financial literacy and starting girls and boys young in education and financial literacy.

This morning my 17-year-old daughter was showing me an assignment that she had done on the weekend. They were asked to choose a car online and figure out how much it would cost to lease depending on what down payment was put on the car, and what their payments would be.

Of course my child picked some sort of Lexus, with payments of \$3,000 a month. Then I asked what she did for a living in this project of hers.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): She was a politician.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Right. Definitely not a politician.

She said, "Oh, I don't know. We didn't have to do that as part of the project." I said, "Well, whatever it is, I hope you're making at least \$1 million a year, because that's pretty much the only way you'll be able to afford a car that costs \$3,000 a month."

Ms. Tracy Redies: That's after tax.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Right. That's going to be after-tax money on your paycheque.

I appreciated your words on the importance of educating them young. I started working in a family business at the age of 12, filing and answering phones in a small business. I would absolutely agree with you that starting young is very important, and also following your passion. You're almost guaranteed to be successful if you really want it badly enough.

I want to talk to you about a few things. First of all, could you tell us a bit about mentorship programs, specifically the one that the Coast credit union has? I thought it was great that you have that, as opposed to a specific diversity program. It sounds like a more natural way to have women involved than forcing it.

I'll let you speak to that program, please.

• (1610)

Ms. Tracy Redies: We have a couple of mentorship programs. The one I was referring to earlier is our community youth team. It's mentorship, but it's more of a business experience and leadership development program, and as I said, I think it's unique in its industry. There are a lot of financial services organizations that do co-op programs with university students, but you don't see it happening typically at the grade 11 or 12 level.

We've found it to be a wonderful program. These kids, first off, have to go through quite a process to become one of our 25 or 30 successful candidates. They have to submit resumé's. They have to go through interviews. There's quite a bit of competition for it.

What we find with these women and young men is that they are very enthusiastic. That's why we've made the connection. If we can give them not just the business training but also put them in the community events we sponsor—and we do a lot of this at Coast Capital—that enthusiasm for the organization comes through.

It gives them public speaking opportunities as well. They actually have to organize a lot of the events. They're getting business training in the branches; they get to work as customer service representatives, and they get some shadow training on other jobs. They also get this wonderful public speaking and organizational experience. I think it is really good. A number of these kids have gone on to work with us on a full-time basis.

In our other mentorship program—and I'm sure Ms. Moore has this at Chubb as well—we identify high-potential individuals. In our organization they are as likely to be women as they are to be men, just because of the nature of our organization today. They are mentored. They're given special leadership training and leadership assignments on projects that are important to the organization. I think that's a really great way of developing female talent within the organization. When they work on important projects and bring those to fruition, it raises the profile of these individuals, and everybody wants them on their team.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: I can see that.

I would imagine too that the opportunity to put that program, including the public speaking and the community involvement aspects of it, onto a resumé would really help a young person.

Ms. Tracy Redies: It really does.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Yes. Often after young people graduate from university, they've learned a lot and they're very bright, but they have nothing behind them in terms of concrete experience to offer to an employer, so I think it's great for so many reasons.

I really like the idea of mentorship programs, but both the Coast credit union and Chubb are large companies. Do you think there's a way that smaller companies could possibly adapt a bit of what you're doing?

Ms. Tracy Redies: Yes. I work with a number of women's organizations that try to help identify young women of talent and have them meet other women leaders in the organization. I'm sure Ms. Moore does the same thing. In my lifetime, I've mentored probably at least 10 or 12 young women through organizations like this. The Women's Executive Network, for example, is one that I've probably done three with.

Frankly, the interesting thing is that it's a two-way learning experience. It's not just you providing them with your insight; they provide you with a lot of insight as well. As a result, those programs are very beneficial. I've always found them very rewarding.

The Chair: Now we're going to Ms. Sgro for seven minutes, please.

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

Thank you so much, Ms. Moore and Ms. Redies. It has been fabulous listening to both of you. From a female perspective, it's fabulous to see you both in such successful positions.

Ms. Redies, when Coast was initially formed, was it put together by a woman at that time, or at what point did Coast seem to be going in the direction of showing some real leadership when it came to providing opportunities for women?

• (1615)

Ms. Tracy Redies: That's an interesting question. No, Coast is the product of three credit union mergers just after the start of the last decade in 2000.

I have been CEO for almost three years. If I'm brutally honest, our organization would probably have looked like a lot of other organizations prior to my coming in. I was fortunate in that a number of executives were retiring and I've always worked on diverse teams. I can tell you that in my experience, again particularly with the challenges in financial services and the problems we face, the more diverse your teams and the broader the perspectives you bring to those problems, the better the thinking and the outcome. I've always believed in diverse teams, so I had an opportunity to make some changes. As I said, we don't have specific diversity programs, but I think I brought a different lens to the credit union, and boy, we've got a lot done in the last three years too. That's one thing about women: they get a lot of things done.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Have you been out there specifically targeting women or marketing the credit union in a way that would be very appealing to women? I'm frankly quite happy to join the credit union.

Ms. Tracy Redies: Please do.

Hon. Judy Sgro: I used to be a member of credit unions throughout various parts of my career.

Ms. Tracy Redies: While I look for diverse teams, diversity has to cross cultures and increasingly take age into account now too, because we have almost four generations in the workplace. We didn't do anything specifically, but at the end of the day, from my perspective, I chose the best talent, and women were the best talent. I'm very happy with the group I have.

We also hired some men. If I can share a bit of a joke with the committee, if you don't mind, with Catalyst we found out that we were number one in November of 2010. The survey was conducted in June of 2010. Between June and November I hired a man to run our commercial banking, and I had the great pleasure of bringing him into my office and telling him that he'd blown my numbers, which was probably the first time in my career.

I had the opportunity to change things. I wanted a diverse team, and for a number of the positions, the best people who came forward were women.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Ms. Moore, would you like to comment on the same?

Ms. Ellen Moore: Certainly.

Chubb is also an organization in which 45% of our executive talent in Canada is female and 30% of our board membership is female. I actively recruit female talent, but certainly you want the best talent possible.

We do have a bias as we're filling a board slot at the moment. We told our recruiting company to target women. I think it takes that level of focus sometimes to really get to the balance. It clearly allows us to get talent across industry into the board positions, because we'll look at women from various areas of banking and accounting and so forth. I think there will be plenty of talent out there.

The one comment I wanted to offer that hasn't come up yet is that I'm often asked, as an American, if the year-long maternity leave makes a difference in the development of female talent at all levels. Does it take women off their career tracks? I would suggest that if there is an opportunity for governments at social service levels and so forth to do an even better job of integrating the opportunities for women to understand what their career and return-to-work programs are within that year's timeframe, it would be helpful in retaining women.

I think on-ramping women after a career absence is critical. I think good companies do a really good job of it, but to someone's point earlier, there are smaller companies that don't have quite that benefit. I think local government might be able to play a part in that respect.

I personally think the year of maternity leave is a very rewarding and important experience for Canadian women. I think some women struggle with it when they're at executive levels, but in general it really is helpful.

• (1620)

Hon. Judy Sgro: How do we get our various companies in Canada to be more women-friendly? I don't think anyone's suggesting that women don't have the capacity and all the rest of it, but women always end up having to fill in the gaps, whether it's for aging parents or in-laws or sick children or whatever. Is there anything in particular we can be doing as a federal government to make our businesses more open to accepting the fact that women are going to have these challenges and that they should make every effort to facilitate what's necessary?

Ms. Moore, maybe you could answer that first.

Ms. Ellen Moore: I would suggest, if we're talking about business and industry, that it's usually pretty competitive out there, so find a

way to endorse—that might be too strong a word—or showcase organizations or industries that are doing it well. I know that Catalyst is quite concerned about a recent census that's been distributed. Clearly business and Catalyst and other organizations are not in the mood for having any sort of quorum, as some governments in the Netherlands are doing. We've talked about how you could almost shame some level of industry or other enterprise into recognizing what is good practice or what might allow them a level of competitive advantage. I'm not exactly sure how government can get behind that, but recognizing what's done well in a more visible way might be one way.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Go ahead, Ms. Ambler.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thank you.

Ms. Moore, I noticed online that you won an award in 2006. It has a great title: Women Worth Watching. Congratulations.

Ms. Ellen Moore: Thank you.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: You wrote a bit about successful leaders and their qualities. I was inspired by what you wrote about what it takes to be a successful leader, so if you wouldn't mind, I'll just let the others here in the committee know about your suggestions.

There were 11 points: set a clear course; make sure everyone you lead understands where they contributed and how; commit to being a lifelong learner; be humble; have a personal coach; trust your instincts; build alliances; show compassion; treasure your children; nurture your relationships; play with your girlfriends; and give back to the community.

I thought that was a great list, and I want to thank you. I'm so glad I found it.

I'd like to ask you two questions. First, what advice would you give young women if you were speaking at a graduation ceremony? Second, could you speak autobiographically as to what made the difference for you personally in achieving your success?

Ms. Ellen Moore: Thank you.

To answer the first question—and it's already been said this afternoon—finding your passion, being able to work at something that you truly enjoy, is great advice. It's not always the most practical advice, but I've certainly had that benefit. We say at Chubb that you spend the vast majority of your waking day with us and with your colleagues, so we want to make that as important and as enjoyable and as accomplished an experience as it possibly can be.

So find your passion. Also, make sure that passion allows you to use all of your talents and engage all of your interests. In particular for women, it is not just about the destination but about the journey, and having an opportunity to do multiple things during the course of your day and your career is pretty important.

To answer the second part of your question, that, I would suggest, is what's kept me at my company for 33 years. Certainly there have been opportunities to go other places, but I've been a part of an organization that has the same intrinsic values I have and that allows me, therefore, to follow my passion, not only in creating business opportunity but also in community service.

•(1625)

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thank you.

I think some high school graduates are worried sometimes that they're graduating from grade 12 in Ontario and they're 17 or 18 years old and they don't know what their passion is yet. It's a troubling time sometimes for young people, because although they want to follow their passion, they just don't know what it is. Sometimes when I've spoken at graduations, my advice is to just show up. I absolutely believe the old adage that 99% of success is just showing up, so I tell them to go to everything that they possibly can, whether it's at university or in their communities, because the more things you do, the more likely you are to stumble on your passion. It's better than sitting at home and watching television.

I congratulate you on being a woman worth watching. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ambler.

I don't want to shortchange the next panel, but I would like to give Ms. Freeman a few minutes until our time is up.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to congratulate both of our witnesses for being such champions of women in business. It's really inspiring, of course, and I know it's probably not an easy feat.

I would like to ask Ms. Moore a question.

I know with all that you've been doing in terms of the advisory board of Catalyst Canada, the Women's Leadership Board at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, and the advisory board at Carleton University's Centre for Women in Politics and Public Leadership, you must have a fair amount of understanding of the different practices in business environments, in education environments, and in government in order to promote women's empowerment.

I believe that we need proactive policies in order to get more women involved. Can you speak to this committee essentially about what kinds of difference a company or a business or a school, etc., can have by taking proactive measures towards women's empowerment within leadership roles, versus more passive measures? Could you speak to your experience on that?

The Chair: Be very quick, please.

Ms. Ellen Moore: I can. I think the one thing we haven't spoken about this afternoon is.... We've talked about education and we've talked about gender-neutral education. I am a believer in and a proponent of single-gender education as well, both for young girls through high school and also for women in executive development.

About 20 years ago, Chubb created the first executive women's education program at an already-existing university in the U.S., Smith College, because we found that the programs at Harvard and Queens and other places that were promoting executive education were really not dealing effectively with engaging women in the classroom. There has certainly been an awful lot of research over the course of time that women and men, boys and girls, learn different things. We attribute that as the reason girls are not as strong potentially in the maths and sciences: it's because the teacher is

telling Suzie not to get her dress dirty while the boys are begging the teacher to please pick them so they can light the propane tank on fire.

I think the concern in how we're educating women is that it is something we could and should continue to do differently. Even today when we send women—and we still send 10 women from Canada to that program in Massachusetts every year, and we use a lot of other executive curriculum—they come back feeling empowered. There's nothing like being part of the Judy Project at Rotman School of Management or this program of which I speak.

Women around each other have a little more power and engagement in the learning process. That's what I would recommend.

•(1630)

The Chair: If you wanted to ask one more question, we only have one speaker in the second panel, so I'll give you your full five.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I wasn't expecting that, so I'm not sure what to ask yet.

On the Catalyst website, I saw that a lot of research has been done. I saw a certain pyramid graph that shows how staggeringly few women are in positions of upper management, which is really shocking and gives a clear image of the glass ceiling we're fighting against.

I wanted to ask you about the value of this research and this data specifically tailored to women in the workforce. How does this relate to our ability to advocate for best practices for women in business?

Ms. Ellen Moore: Is that to me?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Yes.

Ms. Ellen Moore: I think what's even more compelling is that when you look at the census year over year or every several years, you see it's not getting any better, really. The census is also done in other countries. Canada actually is more flat, while the U.S. is actually going negative. In any case, it is pretty alarming.

As I mentioned in my opening comments, I think a lot of initiatives, both within government and within private industry, have stalled a little bit. We were making enough progress and we've plateaued. It is discouraging.

The Globe and Mail released the census for Catalyst on March 8, which was International Women's Day, and that was done on purpose. The article, for those of you who didn't have the opportunity to read it, suggested that more needs to be done and that while we're not ready to ask government for legislation that suggests diversity is a better way to run business and academia and government and so forth, it could be out there in the next few years.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to say thank you to both our guests, Ms. Redies and Ms. Moore, for contributing so much to our understanding of the things we need to do to promote the economic security and understanding of young women. I thank you.

We will suspend for a minute and allow our second panel to come to the table. Thank you.

- _____ (Pause) _____
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- (1635)

The Chair: I'd like the committee to reconvene, please.

I would like to welcome our guests from Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne. This afternoon we have Geneviève Latour, the programming manager, and Jocelyne Coulibaly, the representative for the Ottawa region.

Welcome to both of you. Thank you very much. You have 10 minutes for your presentation, and then we'll move to questions and answers.

[Translation]

Ms. Jocelyne Michelle Coulibaly (Representative for the Ottawa Region, Board of Representatives, Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne): Good afternoon, everyone. I would first like to thank you for inviting us to appear before this committee. My name is Jocelyne Michelle Coulibaly and I am a grade 12 student at the Collège catholique Franco-Ouest in Ottawa. I am currently completing a specialist high skills major in justice, and I am also an elected member of the Conseil de représentation de la Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne, the FESFO. I would also like to introduce Geneviève Latour, who is the manager of the programming team at the FESFO and is in charge of social justice programs.

The FESFO was created in 1975 to call for Franco-Ontario youth to be given a place and resources. The FESFO is the representative organization for 25,000 francophone youth who attend one of the 92 French-language secondary schools in Ontario. It is led by a provincial youth council elected by students, and provides youth with information, raises their awareness and mobilizes them so their voices and needs are heard by the various decision-makers.

Every year, nearly 11,000 young leaders participate in a variety of training placements or cultural animation days in the schools organized by the FESFO. Some of the FESFO's activities are designed to help young people discover their Franco-Ontarian identity and combat assimilation, while providing young leaders from all over Ontario with the tools they need.

The FESFO takes a feminist approach, which is recognized as a winning practice by everyone who works with youth and women. In fact, the FESFO has been approached by the UN to develop a series of manuals as part of the "A World of Difference" project. The manuals deal with issues that include violence, sexism, racism, communication and conflict resolution.

As well, this inclusive and welcoming approach means that girls who belong to the FESFO feel involved, and participate in large numbers in cultural activities and benefit from the political opportunities offered by the federation. Girls represent 60 per cent of participants, on average, both at activities and events and in positions of responsibility within the federation.

The mission of the FESFO is to ensure that Franco-Ontarian youth participate fully in the development of their community. To achieve this, young people have to be able to take advantage of opportunities that enable them to discover their identity; to realize the role that

girls need to play in their community in order to define, evaluate and improve it; to have memorable positive experiences in French with other young people so they will be more open to the world; to play their role as francophones in their community; to engage in self-affirmation as Franco-Ontarians; and to take a position by engaging in self-affirming acts as francophones.

As well, and in particular when it comes to the status of women, the FESFO believes that investing in girls is investing in the economic and social well-being of society. Today, with the necessary skills, in their language, they are in a position to exercise leadership and to contribute to initiatives that are developed by and for them and that reflect their lives and their needs.

In 2004, for example, the FESFO created a tool to help girls position themselves and exercise leadership, after participating in a general assembly on the development of services in French relating to violence against women. One of the things the charter of rights for Franco-Ontarian students calls for is equality, the right of girls to be respected and to receive services in French. It also sets out, for example, the need to have and be an accessible model, the need to have access to self-affirmation workshops, and the need to know that boys are also part of the solution.

- (1640)

Ms. Geneviève Latour (Programming Manager, Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne): To provide for the well-being of its members, the FESFO also organizes a number of activities in French on self-awareness, which help to create a safe environment at school and in the community. Workshops on subjects like self-affirmation or the need to talk to one another encourage an open and honest dialogue among students, and this leads to a healthy and positive community in the school.

The FESFO's statement of principle on violence against women cites the fact that young women face a variety of challenges. Without appropriate tools to overcome them, they can feel alone or inadequate.

This is the situation they may find themselves in, in dependent and unhealthy relationships that too often lead to violence. We have to work with them to create spaces where they can talk about choices, rights, decision-making and influences at this precise point in their lives. It is especially important that resources be offered to them in their language, in French, in our case.

The way they will succeed in having positive, healthy relationships, with everyone they meet, is if they are supported in making choices, informed about their rights and equipped with a network of friends who have a common vocabulary they can use to name, to try and to act.

While the federation's expertise lies in community and identity development for Franco-Ontarian youth, the FESFO sees a direct link between the well-being of girls, their relationships with their peers and their commitment and economic prosperity.

For 20 years, to support girls in their identity development and help them exercise leadership, the FESFO has offered awareness-raising workshops in French such as the one on self-affirmation, which was developed by and for Franco-Ontarian girls, and whose objective is to create a positive climate of trust that encourages discussions about the various things experienced by adolescents.

These workshops help participants to better determine and formulate their personal limits, by equipping them with various affirmation techniques, in addition to creating a network of young women who will be able to raise awareness among their friends and help to establish a helping culture. The workshops also validate the unique experiences of each participant, and provide them with resources for making concrete changes in their personal lives.

The workshops are led by facilitators from the network of facilitators who are experienced and sensitive to the issues involved in the status of women, including violence against women. These facilitators in fact provide accessible francophone models for the girls who take part in the workshops.

The girls who attend the self-affirmation workshops have quickly realized the need to work with boys to combat violence against women and ensure that there women have their fair place in society. To meet this need, the FESFO has developed workshops about the need to talk to one another, whose objective is to have students spend a day in a mixed group to discuss violence against women in their community and promote healthy, equal relationships between men and women.

The participants ultimately become part of the solution rather than part of the problem. They work together as a group to prepare a presentation for the other students in the school, to explain the challenge that violence in their environment presents and the possible solutions the group has identified over the course of the day. The workshop provides the boys and girls with an opportunity to discuss healthy relationships and meets the need to include boys in the discussion about girls exercising leadership.

● (1645)

Ms. Jocelyne Michelle Coulibaly: In the activities described by Geneviève, the consultations and the general programming of the FESFO in recent years, certain messages have rung out clearly. These are the five recommendations that the FESFO is making to the committee today.

First, we have to provide a space for girls to come together. Those are the times when they have a chance to talk in confidence about the issues that matter to them, to share the challenges they encounter in their everyday lives, and to develop support networks they will be able to turn to later on.

All of this helps girls to take a leadership role, by offering them an opportunity to understand the role they must play in their environment and providing them with support so they are better able to define, evaluate and improve it. It also ensures that the solutions and future avenues that are imagined are truly by and for the girls.

Second, it is important to present accessible models of women who can inspire girls to believe in themselves, to value the various aspects of the people they are, and to want to participate actively in

the world around them. By being exposed to a variety of women who are active in various fields, showing how they exercise leadership and contribute to the well-being of society, girls can become aware of their potential by taking responsibility for their personal well-being, but also of their role as agents of change today.

Third, it is important to recognize that boys are part of the equation and the solution. While it is essential to have spaces that are set aside for girls, girls themselves recognize the need to know that the boys among their fellow students are part of the solution.

In the spirit of the Charte des droits des élèves franco-ontariennes, some authors said that there needed to be times for awareness-raising, discussion and joint action with boys. In fact, in the mixed workshops on healthy relationships, the girls are very glad to have an opportunity to talk about violence against women with the boys, to make them see how they feel and what they consider to be violence, and to find solutions together. It is important for them to talk about solutions by and for young people.

Fourth, in the many consultations the federation holds, Franco-Ontarian youth have reiterated the need for training about financial literacy in French. It is important for them to feel that they have the tools and they have access to the resources that will enable them to continue to contribute at their full potential outside the four walls of the school, and once they leave secondary school. They are aware that financial matters are crucial, to enable them to achieve full democratic, social and economic participation.

And last, it is essential to expand and develop programs to reduce sexual harassment. Full participation by girls in democratic, social and economic life is closely tied to their ability to exercise leadership and to the obstacles that violence against women creates.

To do that, it is important to recognize and—

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would like to move to questions and answers now, but I appreciate the presentation very much. Perhaps we'll be able to get more information during the next question and answer session, but I thank both of you very much.

We go to Mr. Albas for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank our guests for being here today to present on behalf of their organizations. Can Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne provide any insight into what unique challenges girls face with regard to economic participation, prosperity, and leadership?

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: There are comments that often come up when the members of the federation are consulted. Of course, there is violence against women. Sexual harassment and violence are often mentioned. So it is a matter of knowing what violence is and how to deal with it.

It is also a matter of recognizing that girls are the experts when it comes to their own situation. So when you want to make changes or integrate them into economic life, it is important for them to be part of the solution and that the solutions be by and for girls. So this means ensuring that they have opportunities to take a leadership role that are developed by and for them. That role has to be played by the girls. We often talk about youth as being in the future, but we forget to think about them in the present. I think this is another obstacle they may face.

• (1650)

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair.

When the Girls Action Foundation appeared before us, their first recommendation was to provide mentorship and diverse role models for girls growing up. Number two was to educate boys and young men to think critically about their gender expectations and to promote equality between the sexes; number three was to implement and expand programs that reduce gender harassment, especially in educational institutions.

Since then, a number of witnesses have expressed support for these recommendations. I'd like your thoughts on this approach. Are there any other factors of these recommendations that your organization would find to be of value?

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: I wholeheartedly support the Girls Action Foundation: I think those are three necessary recommendations. It is important that there be diversity in the accessible mentor models presented. Of course, we are talking about girls' economic prosperity. But we have to be sure we understand that girls are not just a single body; really, we have to see that the body is made up of many individuals exhibiting a fantastic diversity.

As well, we have to be sure we also talk about francophone girls who can become models for Franco-Ontarian youth, in our case. At the same time, we have talked about diversity, culture, age, and so on. I think I expanded a little on that point.

We talk about integrating boys into the equation and the solution, and it is very important to believe in that. Like the Girls Action Foundation, we think it is still important to have spaces created by and for girls, places for discussion that are between them, a safe and healthy environment for girls.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have about three and a half minutes.

Mr. Dan Albas: Okay. Thank you.

A couple of points have been brought up through this report. Women's earnings have been increasing significantly and steadily over time. Hourly wages have shown a steady increase, with women earning approximately 83¢ to a dollar earned by a man in 2008, an increase from approximately 76¢ in 1988. There has been a lot of talk in this committee about the need to make sure there is more parity in wages, but there does seem to be some progress being made.

What does your organization think of the progress that's being made? Canada is doing comparatively rather well in this area. I'd like to hear your thoughts on that.

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: I think we have to recognize the progress made. However, we have not yet achieved the equity that we advocate and the feminist approach recognizes. So we have to move ahead, be proactive and ensure there is active offer.

There has to be the will, but there also has to be action, when we talk about parity. In my opinion, that is what we think is important. We have to take action and ensure that girls are part of the solution. When programs or initiatives are decided on, it has to be done in consultation with girls, or women.

It is all very well to recognize the progress made. But it cannot stop there. We have to move ahead toward achieving total parity.

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have any further questions.

I'd like to thank both witnesses for being today. I believe this study and their contributions will be rather helpful moving forward.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Our witnesses are indeed very poised and have been very gracious.

We'll go to Madame Boutin-Sweet for seven minutes, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, ladies.

First, I want to make an editorial comment: I think we are a long way from pay equity for women. But that will be a subject for discussion another day, or even on several other days.

I understood that some of the workshops you organize are for girls and others are for girls and boys together. In general, however, are there a lot of workshops that are just for girls?

Ms. Geneviève Latour: Those are the only workshops we have as part of our programming, and that is in response to a lack of workshops reserved for girls in the schools. So our members asked us to offer this kind of workshop because there was a gap in the resources available to them.

In the case of the FESFO, we do some activities under what we call self-affirmation. These are workshops addressed specifically, for example, to youth in grades 9 and 10 or in grades 11 and 12. For example, we have talked about the social economy and what it means for women. Various initiatives affect women generally.

However, the members of the federation include both boys and girls, so a majority of the workshops are addressed to both genders.

• (1655)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: You said they could not find these workshops anywhere else. Do you mean other workshops in the schools themselves? I don't really understand this.

Ms. Geneviève Latour: These workshops have been held for about 20 years. At the time when we were asked to do them, it was to fill a gap that the young people had observed in their classrooms.

When I say these workshops did not exist, I mean they did not exist in French in Ontario. That was the source of the need to create them, and at the same time to have them led by young women.

We often talk about experts who meet with the girls. But they need a space where they feel free, where they can establish an atmosphere of trust that fosters discussion. The facilitators at our workshops are all from the post-secondary level. They have recently been through what girls in secondary school are experiencing. That is what makes our programming perhaps somewhat different.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: How do you go about deciding the programming? You said "by and for girls". What groups meet to decide the subjects, for example?

Ms. Geneviève Latour: In fact, FESFO's general programming is decided by and for the young people. Jocelyne is a member of the representation council, which guides all of the programming. For the workshops I described to you, they were all first created by girls. They were the ones who decided what they wanted to see on the schedule, the subjects they wanted to discuss. Since then, there have been feedback from the girls and evaluations to ensure that the subjects addressed are still current.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: You made several recommendations. We are talking here about the schools, so this is provincial, but are there ways the federal government can help you fill the gaps? One of the witnesses we heard earlier said that in education, and I imagine she was talking about secondary school in general, the cultural aspect was somewhat limited.

With respect to the consultations, training or programs to reduce sexual harassment, for example, would it be useful for the federal government, in this instance Status of Women Canada, to provide support?

Ms. Geneviève Latour: Certainly. I think Jocelyne wanted to say, at the end of her presentation, that it is important to recognize the work that women are already doing on the ground. So there are experts already. Women get together and organize among themselves. They have resources. We simply need to recognize them and give them the resources, the tools they need to continue their work. Women have organized, and girls have known what they need, for a long time. We simply have to give them their place and recognize them, and also ensure, when some of them work on behalf of women, that they do not necessarily do so without pay or because they believe in the cause, but because we think it is important and their work is recognized in the government. I think the tools are in place and we just have to use them, or perhaps maximize them.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Some witnesses have also said that women and men work differently. One witness who spoke earlier talked about the equivalent of a cooperative.

Do you think that developing cooperative movements might be a good way of integrating women into the work world?

Ms. Geneviève Latour: This is one of the subjects we emphasized last year, in our consultations. It is often easy to get involved in the cooperative movement. I think that in Franco-

Ontarians' situation, that movement is more attractive and more accessible. But each girl is different. They all have their own interests. I think we have to determine what meets their specific needs.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Do you think that Franco-Ontarian girls and girls in the rest of Canada are in different situations?

Ms. Geneviève Latour: I do not think that every initiative necessarily has to be translated, but I think it must be culturally appropriate for young francophones. Of course, sexism has no borders or cultures. Sexism is sexism. But in the case of the Franco-Ontarian community, we are talking about a rural minority community, and there may be differences there. Yes, the needs are different.

When it comes to equity, it means ensuring that each person has what they need. It has to be fair, not just equal to what is offered to the other side, in this case the anglophone population.

• (1700)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: In your workshops, or your placements, have you noticed other cultural barriers, for example relating to minority cultural groups, women with disabilities or the first nations?

Ms. Geneviève Latour: As I have already spoken a lot, I am going to let Jocelyne answer that question.

Ms. Jocelyne Michelle Coulibaly: In the activities for girls that I have attended, there were no real barriers. Among ourselves, girls forget our differences. We try to bring something we have in common, to try to solve the problem. So there are no real barriers in that regard.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: So some barriers fall when you are together as girls, but what happens when the boys are present?

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, we're at the end. Perhaps we'll have a moment or two at the end of the session to get in some final words.

Madam Bateman, you have seven minutes, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

Thank you very much for being here.

You're in a unique position because you're following two extraordinary women who are in a different age bracket from you and have accomplished a great deal in perhaps a less friendly world, because things have in fact changed. From your presentation it's clear that you don't think they're perfect, but that things have changed.

I was particularly struck by one of the presenters before you, who spoke about the fact that they received an award for inclusion, and inclusion of women in particular. When they were given the criteria to apply for it, they did not apply, so they were asked why. The woman touched on this in the presentation, but she spoke in more detail to me at the end.

When they were asked why they hadn't applied, she said, "We don't meet those criteria because we don't have a committee for this and we don't have a committee for that; we don't have a structure for this, and we don't have a structure for mentorship and networking." However, they do it. They just do it intuitively, and the results are the proof of the pudding. By that I mean the 40% executive component for females.

I'd like your comments. To me this was a woman who achieved results without having a special little committee for it. How do you see achieving results in your world effectively and efficiently? We're talking about integrating young women into the economy and the prosperity of the future of Canada. How do you see doing that?

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: The approach that the FESFO takes is really discussion among the girls. We say we have made progress, or often, in our workshops, we realize we are still a long way from achieving what we are aiming for: an ideal society where the spotlight is on social justice.

I think it is important, first, to be aware of what the reality is. Often, we are told we have equal opportunities, but when we talk to one another we realize that is not true, and we see what each of us can do and what solutions we can find.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: I entirely agree, but it is always the result that counts.

Ms. Geneviève Latour: Yes, but I think results are achieved by talking and finding solutions. All of the FESFO's workshops are premised on action. A small group of women meets, and at the end, the young people are given positions of responsibility. They are the ones who decide, but at the same time, they have to engage in actions in their community to create change. I think...

[English]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: I want to follow up on a question my colleague, Madam Boutin-Sweet, gave you when she asked how it is different for you as Franco-Ontarians. How is it different? What is the reality that is different in your world?

Then I want to ask you a question about networking, because you did speak in your presentation about networking. You were basically telling my colleague that it's different for you. I want to ask you about a group in Manitoba, the Parlement jeunesse franco-manitobain group. Do you work with them? I ask because I think it's different for them too, which means it's probably the same for you and them.

• (1705)

[Translation]

It is the same thing.

[English]

I'm particularly struck by that question. Do you work with them? Do you network with them? Do you find efficiencies in what they're doing? They've done some incredible and extraordinary work. Do you, in your work, reach out to other organizations who are like-minded?

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: Yes. In fact, there is a national network of francophone youth associations in minority communities in Canada, to exchange winning practices and see what has been done and how it can be adapted in Ontario, for example. Certainly living in a particular minority community means you need different projections.

Harassment and violence were mentioned as creating barriers. When we go into the classrooms—

[English]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Are those resources? Do you use similar work? Do you actually get on the phone and say, we're doing this and can we share it with you, and I understand you're doing that, can you share that with us?

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: Yes, certainly. We sit down at tables where—

[English]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Have you got an example of when you did that recently?

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: For example, we have just participated in a convention with the other youth associations in minority communities in Canada, where we talked about organizing events and exchanged winning practices, as I was saying. People explained approaches that are specific to the provinces and what works well, to make sure we take advantage of what already exists and do not start over at zero. We do this kind of thing several times a year.

[English]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You made a number of comments on networking in your presentation to us today. It's interesting, because the two ladies who came before you also made very critical comments on the importance of networking.

In different ways, both Ellen Moore and Tracy Redies indicated that networking is probably one of the single most important things you will do, no matter what career you undertake. One of them alluded to the fact that you have to be a self-starter on networking. There isn't a magic formula for a networking amount for the day.

How do you go about networking? Based on your comments, you're looking for the messiah of networking. Clearly these chief executive officers were telling us that there is no recipe for success, other than doing it yourself. Can you give us some examples of what you have done, in a very concrete, hands-on, practical way, to make yourselves more effective in the world?

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: Do you want to talk about your networking with your friends?

Ms. Jocelyne Michelle Coulibaly: When I get up in the morning, I always tell myself that I am not going to wait for my parents to do things for me. I have to get up myself and do my things.

The same is true of networking. I am not going to wait for someone to approach me and give me their contact info. I am going to approach the person and try to find the points we have in common and share things with them, so that in the years to come, or tomorrow, if I need that person, it will not be because they approached me. I am the one who got up and went over to the person.

The same is true for the FESFO. I went to those people, and now look where I am.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: I think my speaking time is up.

[English]

The Chair: *Merci.* Thank you.

Madame Sgro, you have seven minutes, please.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thanks very much, and thank you to both of you for being here.

Could I get just a bit of background on the organization itself? How long has it been in existence, and how long have you both have been participating in the organization?

[Translation]

Ms. Jocelyne Michelle Coulibaly: The FESFO has existed since 1975. I have been involved in the FESFO since the first time I took part in the Franco-Ontarian youth parliament, last year in Toronto. After that, I decided this was a good organization and I wanted to get involved. Since then, I have been thoroughly involved in the activities.

Ms. Geneviève Latour: Myself, I also had a memorable positive experience that made me want to continue. Like Jocelyne, I joined our youth representation council. I became one of the facilitators at the workshops I was talking about, and now I have been an employee of the federation for about 10 years.

• (1710)

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: How big a budget does the federation have?

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: The federation's budget is diversified. Essentially, it comes from grants. It will vary from one year to the next. Part of the budget is self-managed: we sell our services to the schools. Another part consists of finding grants so we can offer them free of charge. So it is difficult for us to give you an answer, since we are really at the mercy of the funders and clients.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: As two young women who are future leaders for Canada appearing before this standing committee, what would you say are the two most important things we as parliamentarians can do, or what you can also do?

You talked about sexual harassment. You talked about identifying the issues of violence affecting boys as well as girls. Clearly you are doing outreach to both males and females. Since you represent an organization that covers both male and female, what are the two biggest obstacles facing young people like yourselves in terms of achieving and encouraging you to aspire to the goals you must have?

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: I think that for many of us, it is not having the chance to hold positions of responsibility when we are young, not being able to be part of the decision-making and not being active in addressing your own situation.

We have to recognize that we are agents of change, here and now. As young people, we have something to say. Essentially, we are experts on our own situation. I think that situation has to be recognized and the work that is done on the ground has to be recognized.

As well, we have to recognize that women are not just passive recipients, they are active in shaping their destiny.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: Jocelyne, would you comment?

[Translation]

Ms. Jocelyne Michelle Coulibaly: I think we must not wait until young people grow up; we have to try to instil in young people the importance of every individual, from the beginning of their lives.

The sociology course I have just completed taught me that we also have to avoid gendering roles, and that means not saying that women are just made for this area and men are made for that kind of work.

March has just ended, and we should not just wait for a special day to celebrate the work women do. We have to be able to recognize the work women do everyday, not just on March 8.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: I think we should celebrate women every day. I know that our only male colleague in this group celebrates women every day and says, "Hallelujah".

In your comments you mentioned about girls feeling inadequate. Several of our presenters have mentioned that girls can do really well until about age 15, and then for some reason, hormonal or whatever, girls start to question themselves. They seem to start losing some of their self-confidence in that 15- to 18-year-old period of time. You also mentioned that in different words, but it's the same thing.

What can we do about that, and how do we help young women overcome that in those important years?

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: I think that presenting accessible models is part of the answer. These are women who have experienced success, young women, women who represent diversity. We have to provide them with a space, because often, girls think they are the only ones who experience what they experience. When they talk with other girls they realize it is common and it is a systemic problem. Together, they can tackle the problem and take action to change things and achieve the ideal world they have in mind. That is often the vision they have of the world and of reality, at that age. They are starting to understand that it can be different. They think they are the only ones who think that. So by providing a space for them to get together and talk, they can see how they can take action and be part of the solution.

Jocelyne, I don't know whether you had something to add.

Ms. Jocelyne Michelle Coulibaly: No, that's fine.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: Very good.

Thank you both very much.

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: Yes, thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madam Young is next. You have five minutes, please.

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): I also want to second what my colleague across the way has said and thank you very much for coming. There's some important information there.

I'm from B.C., and this whole sense of a Franco-Ontarian minority organization group is kind of intriguing to me. I have some questions around that.

First off, in a previous presentation the Girls Action Foundation appeared and gave us a set of recommendations. If you don't mind, I'd like to read some of them to you to see if you agree or don't agree with these recommendations.

First, they recommend that we provide mentorship and diverse role models for girls growing up. Another recommendation is to educate boys and young men to think critically about gender expectations and to promote equality between the sexes. A third is to implement and expand programs that reduce gender harassment, especially in educational institutions.

What do you think about those recommendations?

• (1715)

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: I think they are good. As I mentioned, it is important to have models and also to talk about it with the boys. When I talk about mixed workshops, with boys, we have to remember that the subject of discussion is still violence against women and the role of women in society. So when we talk about solutions, we are really talking about continuing to talk about women and what women feel.

Often, the boys are given information and now realize that some things they were doing or some actions they did not think of as violence represent barriers for women. I think this sharing is important so that men realize, when they were not aware before, that they can be obstacles.

The guys have good ideas when it comes to solutions. So from that perspective we think the guys are part of the solution: to hear what the girls have to say.

[English]

Ms. Wai Young: I had to step out of the room for a minute, and I understand that my colleague had already asked that question.

Can you focus on.... This study is not to look on violence against women, even though that's very important, as we know. We are looking at the economic participation, prosperity, and leadership of girls.

One of things that has not been talked about very much is men's role in that. We heard a bit about it earlier. Our previous presenters talked about the corporate world, the glass ceiling, and some of the challenges there. I'm interested in your organization and what you're doing in this area.

Are you doing any programming around helping the economic future and prosperity of girls? If so, how does your organization provide services or ideas around how boys or men could help with that?

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: In fact, financial literacy is a subject we want to spend more time on. We have had an opportunity to talk about the cooperative movement in some workshops. But we are at the mercy of the funders. We have ideas, and materials, but we do not have the resources to put our programs into operation.

However, we have a financial literacy program for girls and boys. We were just talking about how to do a proper budget, and manage a line of credit, and we were saying how it is different now that the student is going to post-secondary school. These financial literacy courses have to include a gender-specific element.

[English]

Ms. Wai Young: Let me be clear. It sounds as though you would like to do programming in this area, but you don't have the resources.

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: Yes. When I talk about resources, I mean financial resources. I think our members explained to us what they want to hear. We have done the research and now we just have to be able to put the program into operation.

But we have put a program on the cooperative movement into operation, and women and participate and they play a large role at that point.

[English]

Ms. Wai Young: Are you aware that the federal government, under Human Resources and Skills Development, has a program to fund financial literacy workshops and stuff across Canada? Perhaps that's something for you to look into.

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: Yes, certainly we do research. We are awaiting replies. Our program is ready to be put in operation. We just have to have positive replies.

[English]

Ms. Wai Young: That's great. That's good to know.

The other thing I want to ask about is urban versus rural. You provide services throughout the whole province of Ontario, so have you noticed any differences between the needs of urban girls versus rural girls in this area? Because we're also talking about minority groups and Jocelyne is here, have you noticed any differences? What recommendations can you give us around providing programs and services for that target group as well?

The Chair: Be very quick.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: Yes, we hear about the different situations in rural communities and urban communities. The rural francophone community often feels isolated. So it is important to be active and to offer opportunities for experiences.

We were talking about networking. In the cities, it is often possible to meet with other girls. In rural communities, we need to be active and offer them opportunities to come in contact with other people.

In terms of diversity, I do not know whether you want to talk about how it is different.

[English]

The Chair: Could we come back to that? I'm sorry, but I have to stop you. I keep doing this and I feel terrible, but we must go over to Madame Freeman for five minutes.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

If you want to answer the question, I am open to the idea of you taking 30 seconds to do that.

Ms. Jocelyne Michelle Coulibaly: For my part, I think that diversity has an effect in the community. For example, when my mother came to Canada, she was not really informed about how it worked in the community and she did not have the information she needed in order to contribute to the community more. So I recognize that we have to provide more information so that cultural minorities are also able to make their contribution to society.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I think you are right. It is really important to do that.

I am pleased that you are here with us. I grew up as a francophone in Ontario and I remember the FESFO, the involvement and encouragement and leadership role it plays in bringing francophones in Ontario together to work together. Every time we took part in activities that brought francophones from all over this enormous province together, it must really have been a lot of work. I do not think I appreciated that for what it was really worth at the time. It really did provide a feeling of solidarity.

That is why I also recognize the barriers associated with being a minority language community. I grew up in the area around Toronto. I did not live in a francophone community; I had to travel a long way to go to school. At that time, and this is no longer the case now, the school was annexed to an anglophone school. So there was discrimination based on language.

Could you talk to us about specific barriers that girls in the francophone community in Ontario face, in terms of discrimination based on language?

Ms. Geneviève Latour: I spoke earlier about resources. It often happens that francophone women do not have information or have access to a very limited quantity of resources. Barriers to economic prosperity are a subject that generates emotional responses, and when people talk about it, they want to do it in their language. When there is no service that allows them to talk about it in their language, that is definitely an additional barrier to girls' economic prosperity. The fact that many francophone communities are isolated is also a factor. You mentioned Toronto, but in the north, isolated communities have very little or no access to resources. This is another obstacle that women may have to deal with.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Franco-Ontarians live either in very isolated communities, relatively francophone communities where they can function entirely in French, or in an anglophone community, as in my case. I am francophone by birth, but sometimes I have trouble expressing myself in French. In the past, for example, if I called the telephone company, I spoke English. That causes problems relating to language and belonging. The FESFO has done a lot of work on this and that has given some people the motivation they need to continue to live in their language, which is very important.

On the other hand, I have a lot of friends whose parents decided to move to the Toronto area for work reasons. My friends later wanted to move back to the community where they were born, for example to Sudbury or Timmins, to work there. They all became teachers. It was as if, to be able to go back home and live in the community where they were comfortable, they really had no other choice.

Do you see the lack of economic opportunities that the francophone regions of Ontario suffer from as a barrier?

Ms. Geneviève Latour: I think it is important to promote community involvement among young people. You are talking about the exodus, and that is often associated with the fact that young women do not feel there is anything for them in those places. And yet the community organization sector is very active and full of ideas. They just have to be recognized.

For example, the sexual assault crisis centres have published a study entitled "Faire autant avec si peu...". That is often the situation that community organizations find themselves in. These people want to welcome new people, but they do not have the resources they need. I think we also have to make use of the expertise that exists on the ground. When you want to have a good life and have some money, going back to your little community often isn't possible. That is really sad, because you lose a unique style. It is important to recognize the role and importance of small communities.

• (1725)

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I agree entirely.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will go over to Madam James for the time remaining.

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you especially to our two guests today. It has certainly been a pleasure to listen to both of you.

I'm going to refer to the previous two witnesses and then tie it in to a very specific question to both of you.

One of the previous witnesses indicated that in many cases women who succeed do so because they are driven to succeed or have a desire to succeed. In the same conversation, the witnesses also mentioned—I have the quote here—that in many cases women may feel the effort or sacrifice to succeed is too much, and they simply opt out.

I'm going to relate this to my personal life example. I ran three times for my political party, the Conservative Party, through three elections. I campaigned for six years straight. I made huge sacrifices. Basically, in the last 10 years, I have given up most of my time and holidays with my previous employer and devoted it to politicking. Some might say I'm driven in that particular case.

Looking at the two of you and hearing your speeches today as witnesses before this committee, it's obvious that both of you are driven young women. I'm a little bit older, but I think we have that same desire to succeed and to make a real difference in the lives of Canadian women.

My question is this. The focus of this study is economic prosperity and empowering young girls to succeed in leadership roles. What makes some women want to succeed while others simply opt out? What do you think it is? What is the message that Status of Women Canada can deliver through Status of Women Canada projects, etc., to young girls to make more of them want to succeed like us?

[Translation]

Ms. Jocelyne Michelle Coulibaly: I think that everyone has a desire to succeed. That desire is important. All that is needed is to have the resources that are necessary, to overcome the obstacles. To succeed, there have to be resources and the support of the community.

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you. That's leading to the second part of my question.

The previous witness also talked about having a supportive career or mentioned that the company she worked with was very supportive. In my particular case, I'm tied in to something you said about bringing boys and men into the equation. I was in a very fortunate situation in that I had a very supportive family. My husband, to put it bluntly, has been more or less a single father for the past six years during numerous points in my drive to succeed as a politician.

There are certain different ethnic groups or religious beliefs, etc., in Canada that may not put women at the same equality level as men. What message can Status of Women, through empowering young girls and bringing boys into the equation, deliver to children at a very young age so that women are treated as equals and end up being in supportive roles while the man or spouse is also supportive of them?

The Chair: Reply very quickly, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: You start by asking them what their specific needs are. We are talking about different needs for different populations of women. I think they have the answers based on their situations. They just have to be part of the solution.

As well, they have to be provided with models, they have to be given memorable positive experiences as leaders, so they will continue to do it.

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James: Then as mentors, are people who have lived through life experiences coming in and talking about how they were able to achieve?

[Translation]

Ms. Geneviève Latour: Yes, we have to recognize that they are the experts when it comes to their lives and they have their solutions.

● (1730)

[English]

The Chair: I'm terribly sorry that we're out of time, but I want to say thank you very much, Ms. Latour and Ms. Coulibaly. You have brought an incredible and very valued perspective to this committee, and we're very grateful. Thank you so much.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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