



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

FEWO



NUMBER 034



1st SESSION



41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Monday, May 14, 2012



Chair

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin

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• (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP)): Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the 34th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Today, we are continuing our study of improving economic prospects for Canadian girls.

With us by videoconference today, we have Ms. Coline Camier and Ms. Marilyn Ouellet from Action travail des femmes, as well as Ms. Siham Chakrouni and Ms. Regine Cirondeye from the Ontario Movement for Francophone Immigrant Women. You will each have 10 minutes in which to make your presentations and then we will move to questions from the committee.

I will give the floor first to Ms. Camier and Ms. Ouellet.

You have 10 minutes. Thank you.

Ms. Coline Camier (Assistant Coordinator, Action travail des femmes): Good afternoon, everyone. I am Coline Camier, Assistant Coordinator. With me is Marilyn Ouellet, who is responsible for equal access services. Thank you for inviting us to speak to you today. Let me start right away.

Action travail des femmes, or ATF, is an independent, not-for-profit organization working to support underprivileged women of all ages and of all origins in their desire to obtain decent employment, especially in non-traditional areas. Our expertise lies in helping women to enter the labour market with complete equality of rights and opportunities, not only between men and women, but also between all women. We can in fact see that all women are not equal in access to employment and that some are confronted with more obstacles. That is why we operate on two levels: we help individual women to obtain access to work and we seek to eliminate discrimination in the workplace.

For more than 30 years, ATF has been helping to establish equality programs in Quebec, the latest of which is the precedent-setting *Gaz Métro* case before the Quebec Human Rights Tribunal. Our remarks today will deal with improving economic prosperity for girls and women, because, as you know, those women are in the poorest segments of the population. They often find themselves in very difficult positions because of systemic discrimination, by which we mean a number of elements that accumulate in life and interact correspondingly.

Let us begin with education. We no longer have to make the case for the feminization of poverty today; it is the result of a number of factors, including the school dropout rate for girls. The statistics for

boys may still be higher, but, in the light of the socio-economic inequalities that continue to be obstacles in girls' lives, it is important that we do not conceal the same phenomenon that affects them.

Let me give you some figures. In 2008, women without a high-school diploma earned an average of \$16,414 per year, while men without a high-school diploma earned \$24,434. The difference between men and women is clear. Complex dynamics in gender relationships continue to influence the lives of boys and girls and bring with them still more situations of inequality. The government must guarantee access to education.

To further illustrate our point, let us not forget the current tuition fee debate in Quebec. Today, we would like to stress the fact that tuition fees often have a more adverse effect on women. That is why the issue deserves even more detailed attention. For example, immigrant women, single mothers, women with disabilities and aboriginal women often experience this kind of situation to a significantly greater extent. Education remains the key that gives women access to interesting jobs in areas other than the service industry and the decent incomes and economic autonomy that will get them out of poverty.

Finally, I am going to talk about the gender divisions in labour. In the labour market, atypical jobs, that is, those that are temporary and have no job security, are largely taken by women, especially young women. Most of the people who are paid minimum wage are women. In Quebec, the figure is almost 60%. On May 1, the minimum wage in Quebec was increased to \$9.90 from its previous level of \$9.60. But it is still not enough to allow a life above the poverty line. Our recommendation is to raise it to \$11.20, and we have already made the Quebec department of labour aware of that as part of the *Front de défense des non-syndiqué-e-s*, of which we are a member.

In terms of pay equity, women receive an average of 75% of the salary of men because the lowest salary levels in our society are mostly found in the employment sectors occupied by women. Traditionally female occupations are mostly in health care, education and services, where more than 80% are women. A brief analysis shows that, historically, all these occupations are an extension of domestic work. They are valued and paid at a lower level than traditionally male sectors.

To reach actual equality, it is important to give new value to womens' work as caregivers, which continues to form the basis of social, family and intergenerational ties.

The promotion of so-called non-traditional sectors remains a priority for us at Action travail des femmes, a response to the inequality between men and women in the workplace. Those predominantly male sectors represent an overlooked and undervalued opportunity for women.

• (1535)

Of the 520 occupations listed in the National Occupational Classification, 269 are those in which women are in a significant minority. Those jobs provide very favourable compensation situations and the rate of employment is high. So it is essential to promote more diverse educational and career paths for girls.

In that regard, Status of Women Canada has given us the responsibility for a pilot project in the Montreal region. The objective is to promote and facilitate women's access to training and employment in traditionally male sectors and other sectors in which they are underrepresented.

Hiring women in non-traditional sectors has a number of advantages. I am not sure if you are aware of this, but, as well as providing a better economic situation for women, it also helps to address the labour shortage that the major growth sectors in Quebec now have to deal with.

In workplace safety too, women are known to bring better conditions for all employees, men and women alike. The mix also creates dynamic teams. Businesses see productivity increasing and employee commitment becoming stronger.

Promoting equality implies a change in the organizational culture of these environments. Establishing a concerted strategy for the various players is essential. The Government of Canada's leadership and desire to see the Employment Equity Act enforced are crucial. This therefore implies federal contracting and access to employment programs in Quebec specifically.

For Action travail des femmes, defending rights is essential and it is critical to fight against all forms of discrimination against women in the workforce, especially in so-called non-traditional sectors, where psychological and discriminatory harassment based on gender is a huge obstacle to women becoming and staying employed.

I will now turn things over to my colleague Marilyn.

• (1540)

Mrs. Marilyn Ouellet (Responsible for Equal Access Services, Action travail des femmes): I am now going to deal with the matter of the devalued skills of immigrant women. For us, the situation of immigrant women specifically is important to discuss.

These women represent a growing population; however, they are underrepresented in the labour market and their rate of employment is much lower. Salaries are also lower and work conditions are less stable compared to immigrant men or women born in Canada.

The practices, rules and behaviours of the major players—the state, businesses, professional associations and universities—create these dynamics of exclusion.

The systemic discrimination we mentioned at the outset also affects young women in racialized groups who come to Canada in large numbers. For us, it is important to pay particular attention not

only to sexism, but also to racism. Too often, racism and sexism intertwine to create major employment access obstacles for immigrant and racialized women.

The last aspect, though not the least, is the balance of work and family life. Establishing and maintaining a balance between work and family life remains critical in providing and maintaining access to employment for women. At the Université de Sherbrooke for example, a study conducted by the Research Chair in Taxation and Public Finance estimates that, in 2008, the subsidized daycare program in Quebec made it possible for at least 69,700 mothers to enter the job market. That is a considerable number.

So the program helps women to enter the job market, specifically young mothers and single mothers. This also contributes to the economic growth of the province. It is the kind of initiative that could inspire others, thereby increasing the equality of opportunity in terms of access to employment for all Canadians.

To conclude, we would like to remind you of our recommendations, in eight specific points.

First, to guarantee access to education for all, from kindergarten to university.

Second, to recognize and value the work of women in female occupations, in cooperation with public and private sectors, in order to achieve a genuine wage parity between men and women.

Third, we recommend promoting non-traditional occupations, gender-diverse workplaces and expanding career choices for girls, through, for example, awareness campaigns in high schools.

Fourth, for all businesses, the government must establish programs providing equality of access in employment and in federal contracts.

It must also support the Human Rights Commission in its role of monitoring those measures and doing more promotion of that program with entrepreneurs and businesses.

Next, the qualifications and skills of immigrant women must be recognized.

The involvement of fathers in domestic activities must also be promoted as a way to achieve a work-life balance; women must have access to employment specifically as the result of subsidized and accessible daycare services.

Lastly, the government must support organizations that stand up for the rights of women.

Thank you for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now move to Ms. Cirondeye and Ms. Chakrouni.

You have 10 minutes.

Ms. Siham Chakrouni (Provincial Coordinator, Community Services, Ontario Movement for Francophone Immigrant Women): Good afternoon. Thank you for having us here today to talk about this topic, which is really close to our hearts. I am Siham Chakrouni, provincial coordinator of the Ontario Movement for Francophone Immigrant Women (MOFIF).

Let me talk a little about MOFIF. It was officially founded on March 31, 2001, but it traces its origins to a 1996 meeting headed by the Table féministe francophone de concertation provinciale de l'Ontario. The meeting discussed the major issues surrounding the sponsorship of immigrant women.

At the beginning of this century, MOFIF continued to mobilize in order to work on specific matters of concern to the community of francophone women in Ontario with decision-making and community bodies. In 2004, MOFIF published a study on the impact of armed conflict on the integration of immigrant and refugee women in Ontario. It also developed an awareness and education package intended for those working with immigrant women.

In the years thereafter, MOFIF entered into more and more partnerships with community organizations, particularly those that advocate for women. For several years, MOFIF has also been investing in a popular education program in order to update its mission and to encourage the active participation of immigrant women in all spheres of society.

MOFIF is at the intersection of school and community life. The organization is unique to Ontario; its programs are tailored to and based on our knowledge of our environment. The women who work at MOFIF are immigrants themselves and are well aware of the challenges women face. Our offices are located in Toronto, but we have partnerships all over Ontario, such as in Ottawa, Windsor, Sudbury, London and elsewhere. Our staff, our members and our volunteers work on the ground and are ideally placed to know the concerns and the needs of women and girls.

We work together with organizations that provide direct services, such as the Oasis centre des femmes, the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions, and Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, as well as other partners and organizations. We organize workshops, we undertake studies to meet the needs of women and girls and, above all, to foster their economic development both directly and indirectly.

In the first years of its existence, MOFIF focused on women's welfare. For some years, we have turned our attention to the needs or challenges faced by girls because of the growing demand. After a community consultation and with the Trillium Foundation's financial support for MOFIF's strategic planning for 2011-2014, MOFIF has dedicated an entirely separate section of its mandate to girls.

Today, MOFIF's mandate is to work with the aim of improving the life conditions of francophone immigrant women and girls and to encourage their integration and active participation in all aspects of society.

Let me share with you some facts and figures. They come from a document called "Girls in Canada Today: National Opinion Poll and Report on the Status of Girls". The poll was conducted in 2011 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. The

Girls Action Foundation made the report public in order to raise awareness of the struggles still facing girls today and to empower more Canadians to make a difference for the next generation.

So here are the facts and figures. In terms of leadership, men outnumber women four to one among Canada's elected representatives. Only 4% of CEOs in Canada's top 500 companies are women. Two-thirds of minimum wage workers are women. Young immigrant females are more likely to be unemployed than their older or Canadian-born counterparts.

In 2001, 14.9% of foreign-born female labour force participants aged 15 to 24 were unemployed. The experiences of young immigrant women vary, but can include culture shock, peer pressure, a lack of resources focusing on their needs, conflicts with their cultural background, discrimination, underemployment and racism.

Our project "Viser haut" received funding from Status of Women Canada. The aim of the project is to encourage women to get involved in decision-making positions such as boards of directors. The project was a real success. Women were given tools, through a comprehensive two-day training session on governance, including pre-training orientation and post-training placement.

● (1545)

We held a conference-debate day on March 31, 2012. We invited all the women who had participated in the projects. We heard their testimony and we had discussions afterwards. The women were grateful for being able to start getting involved in school boards and, for example, in organizations such as MOFIF. In fact, some of the women who took our training have already joined boards of directors.

I am going to name some of the projects MOFIF has done. In 2004, we did a project called "The impact of armed conflict on the integration of francophone immigrant women". In 2008, a research action project was carried out, called "The analysis of francophone immigrant and refugee women living in Ontario away from their children". There was also another research action project on adapting French-language services to combat domestic violence against women, members of francophone ethnocultural and racial minorities. The next project was called "Young francophone immigrant and refugee women in action" and the last one was on understanding the causes of domestic violence in ethnocultural and racial minority communities and some of the ensuing legal consequences.

Thank you for your attention.

● (1550)

The Chair: And we thank you.

We will now move to the question period.

Ms. Truppe, you have seven minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank everyone for their time in coming to the status of women committee. We really appreciate it.

This question is for ATF. My understanding is that your organization provides information sessions on entering non-traditional occupations. I was very happy to hear you say that Status of Women Canada gave you some money for one of your projects. I think it was around \$205,000, if I'm not mistaken.

What did you do with the money to help the girls?

[Translation]

Ms. Coline Camier: Thank you.

Status of Women Canada did give us funding of \$200,000 for a two-year project. The project has several different components. We have to work with women to raise their awareness of non-traditional sectors, and we also have to work with employers. Actually, raising awareness among employers as to the integration of women in those sectors is a major part of this project.

To date, we have been in contact with a lot of women. Lastly, we organized a job fair. Approximately 200 people participated. We had 25 exhibitors. And we received great feedback. We provided the women at the fair with new opportunities. Employers, adult training school representatives and sectoral committees were present, and everyone really appreciated the event, especially since it was an opportunity to recognize the current needs.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Coline Camier: Does that answer your question?

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Yes, it does. Thank you.

Most of the funding was to raise awareness for both the applicants and the businesses.

[Translation]

Ms. Coline Camier: Yes. Two weeks ago, we submitted a report that goes into a little more detail. If you wish, we can forward it to you.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That would be great. Thank you.

What information are girls looking for at your sessions? When they attend the conference, what are they looking for? Do you speak to them and get some feedback?

[Translation]

Ms. Coline Camier: There is certainly a lack of information on the wide range of existing opportunities. Salaries are what gets their attention. As I said earlier, we can see a clear difference between traditionally female and traditionally male sectors. In addition, we demystify stereotypes. For example, some jobs are said to be more physically demanding, but that is not necessarily the case. Nor are those jobs anymore dangerous. We let women know that some jobs

are not necessarily just for men or just for women. If they want and feel the need to go into less conventional sectors, they can.

Perhaps Marilyn would like to add something.

Mrs. Marilyn Ouellet: I would like to share some comments that I have heard. In most cases, the women didn't actually know that those sectors even existed. So the goal is really to broaden the job opportunities. That means going beyond the jobs we often hear about in schools. It is really about opening the door and showing them the job opportunities they have.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That sounds like a really great program and that it was very helpful for a lot of girls.

Can you provide any insight into what attracts or doesn't attract girls toward non-traditional occupations?

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilyn Ouellet: Actually, most of the time, they don't even know that those job sectors exist. We have brought the list of occupations with us. I think that the list of non-traditional jobs is four pages long. They are usually quite specific jobs. Take Bombardier, for example, which can offer some 30 manual jobs. People often have no idea that those jobs exist. So the forum opened up those opportunities for women.

•(1555)

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you.

Is there a specific group of girls you are working with right now, or is it just for any girls?

[Translation]

Ms. Coline Camier: Our mission is to work with socio-economically disadvantaged women. About 80% of women who come to us are immigrant women. A great deal of our work focuses on immigrant women, even in terms of changing careers; unfortunately, they often have to go into other sectors. So that is something we are trying to work on.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you.

How much time do I have left?

[Translation]

The Chair: You have one minute and 15 seconds.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you.

This question is for Siham. I was happy to hear that you received funding from Status of Women and Heritage Canada, and that you had a conference with some of the funding. You said it was very successful.

What was the most successful aspect of that conference?

We probably have only 50 seconds left.

Thanks.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Siham Chakrouni: Across Ontario, we have offered training to help women get involved in organizations and make decisions without being afraid to make a commitment. Over 120 women were trained, and it snowballed. We received requests from women who also want to get involved in that type of training.

On March 31, when we had to close this project, we invited all the women who participated in the training and they really thanked us. We also invited women who had already been integrated, who had their own companies, for example, or who are already members on boards of directors. We did that to show the other women that they too can get those kinds of jobs. They were really happy about that and they felt optimistic.

The Chair: I have to interrupt you.

Thank you very much.

We are going to continue the question period with a representative from the official opposition.

Ms. Ashton, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to share my time with my colleague Anne-Marie Day.

First, I would like to thank all the witnesses from Action travail des femmes and from Ontario Movement for Francophone Immigrant Women.

My first question is for Ms. Chakrouni or Ms. Cirondeye. I will then yield the floor to my colleague.

We know that there have been cuts to organizations offering services to immigrants, especially in Ontario. Could you tell me if those cuts will have a negative impact on the living conditions of the immigrant women with whom you work or even an impact in general?

Ms. Regine Cirondeye (Board Member, Ontario Movement for Francophone Immigrant Women): Yes, as a matter of fact. The cuts affecting Status of Women Canada, which has always been by our side, will definitely have a strong impact on us. They will deeply affect us because we are required to cut our staff and, as a result, we are not going to be able to apply for more funding and get more money.

As you know, the difference between MOFIF and service organizations is that we are trying to turn women into real leaders. Leadership is our motto, and the cuts are a major setback for immigrant women. All immigrant women agree. At our meetings with them, they want to be leaders, they want to help themselves and they want us to help them help themselves.

• (1600)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you very much for your answer.

I have another question for you. You have told us about the socio-economic reality of immigrant women in Ontario, for example. If we had a national affordable housing program and a national daycare program, could their standard of living go up?

Ms. Regine Cirondeye: As my colleague said, we are focusing more on university, research, and leadership than on affordable housing and daycare. We really don't work in that area. It is true that people cannot come to our training unless they have housing and their basic needs are already met. That prevents immigrant girls, especially immigrant women, from becoming well integrated into Canadian society. Although we do not work in that area, we feel that those two factors prevent immigrant girls and women from getting ahead.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I will let my colleague have the floor.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Good afternoon. Ladies, I would like to congratulate you on your victory over Gaz Métro in 2011. It really is a major victory that can give hope to women in terms of equal opportunity.

I have questions about something else. In your view, is the right of women to employment respected everywhere? Do all women have a right to employment, or are some discriminated against?

Mrs. Marilyn Ouellet: No. For example, it is extremely difficult to report cases of sexual, psychological or other harassment. The timelines are very short. For that reason alone, there should really be a reform of labour law. If we do a gender-based analysis, we can see that women are primarily affected. As discussed, it is still very difficult for women to have access to a wider range of sectors.

Those who use our services are often on welfare. It is very difficult for them to have access to employment because they are in extremely vulnerable situations. By getting non-standard, part-time or low-paying jobs, working 20 hours a week at \$9.90 per hour, they cannot pay for rent and food. All those factors discourage women from rejoining the labour force.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: I know and I understand...

Mrs. Marilyn Ouellet: The answer is no.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: I know and I understand how important it is for your group and many other organizations across Canada to get the infamous funding from Status of Women Canada to be able to provide services. Your services are particularly directed at women living in poverty. You have talked about holding multiple jobs and their efforts to enter a non-traditional world, where jobs are likely to be better paid. We are talking about women who are getting poorer by the day. That is what I see, but you deal with those women on a daily basis. In your view, are poor women getting even poorer?

The Chair: You have 50 seconds left to answer.

Ms. Coline Camier: That is a major question.

Yes, there is a reason we talk about the feminization of poverty. I feel that even the poorest segments of the population are getting poorer, but women are even more affected, single mothers and immigrant women in particular. There are a lot of obstacles that make life increasingly tough, especially for women.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Thank you.

The Chair: We are now going to hear from a member on the government side.

Ms. James, you have seven minutes.

[English]

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

Thank you to both of the organizations here today as witnesses before this committee.

I want to direct my first set of questions to the Ontario Movement for Francophone Immigrant Women. I heard in a previous answer that you were concerned about cuts to Status of Women and how they were going to affect immigrant women in Canada. I just wonder where you heard there were going to be cuts to Status of Women.

I ask that question because the minister appeared before this committee and confirmed that there were no cuts to Status of Women. In fact, Status of Women has had the most funding ever. So where did you hear that Status of Women was going to be cutting its budget?

•(1605)

[Translation]

Ms. Regine Cirondéye: No, no one told us that there would be budget cuts, but if that was the case, we would be affected.

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you. Perhaps I didn't hear the word "if". What I heard was that the Status of Women cuts would definitely hurt your community, so I just wanted to clarify that and get it on the record. Thank you very much.

I want to direct my next set of questions to ATF. In your opening remarks I believe you talked about high school dropouts and said that the average salary for a girl who's a high school dropout was \$16,000. For a boy with the same level of education, a high school dropout, it was \$24,000.

Why do you think that is?

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilyn Ouellet: Actually, it has to do with the job sectors where women and girls who drop out find themselves. For example, those women work in hair salons, spas and any home-care jobs, as well as beneficiary attendants. Those sectors are very poorly paid. By comparison, boys who drop out can get a vocational diploma in construction, mechanics and welding.

So those two job sectors are really underpaid. That is mainly why they earn less. It is also because they have children and often work part time.

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James: I think I got the answer. I wanted to confirm what you said, because when I think about the differences, a lot can be attributed to young boys having—though I don't want to say—"physical strength" that women don't have. But when we take a look at a lot of the jobs for people who do not have a high level of education, men can get into jobs such as warehouse work and so forth, where there's heavy lifting.

How would a woman who is a high school dropout get into those types of employment if they don't have the same physical strength that a young boy might have? What can be done to help them out in that area?

[Translation]

Ms. Coline Camier: Yes, when we say that women going into non-traditional occupations has considerably improved working conditions and workplace safety, it is because some tasks have been mechanized. For example, in the past, letter carriers had to carry the mail on their backs. But since there have been more and more women, mail is carried in a cart. So as a result, even male letter carriers have significantly fewer back problems.

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James: Sorry, do mail carriers usually not have a high school education? You used that as an example. I was talking about people who have not finished high school. I'm just curious whether that's a fact or not.

[Translation]

Ms. Coline Camier: That was just an example to show how it can work. So jobs that are more manual do not necessarily prevent women from entering those fields. Even in dropout cases, young women could go into those sectors, but they don't because they run up against a series of obstacles standing in their way.

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

The Girls Action Foundation appeared previously before our committee, and they mentioned a number of things that they believe are good initiatives. One of them I really want to focus on is educating boys and young men to think critically about gender expectations and to promote equality between the sexes.

How important do you think it is that we engage young men, boys, and older men and really get them to support and appreciate equality in both sexes? How important do you feel that is?

•(1610)

[Translation]

Ms. Coline Camier: It is important to get everyone involved in this type of process, since we are really talking about a change in the way of thinking. We cannot stop at raising awareness among women and girls when they are integrated. We have to raise awareness among all players, be they individuals or organizations. To that end, I feel that the participation of young men is vital.

I am not sure if my colleague wants to add something.

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James: Sorry, but I'd like to add a second part to that question.

How do we get to different minority groups or cultures within Canada that traditionally may not see women as being equal? I know it's difficult, because we respect religious freedoms and cultural differences and so on. What can the Status of Women do to really get the message across to these young men that women need to be treated equally and deserve the same rights? What can the Status of Women do to really promote that? What is the message we need to deliver?

[Translation]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mrs. Marilyn Ouellet: Yes. It might be public education when those people take francization courses in Quebec. It would be a question of making it clear that equality between men and women falls under the core values of Quebecers, for example. That could be done in francization courses, but also by example. They could be integrated in the process without necessarily forcing things on them. We could work with them so that they can see how to reach this equality. It is important to include them in the process and to empower them so that they carry those values with them later on, rather than try to force it down on them from on high, so to speak.

The Chair: Thank you.

A voice: You also have to raise awareness among all family members.

The Chair: I am sorry, but Ms. James's time is up.

We are now going to start another round of questions.

Ms. Sgro, you have seven minutes.

[English]

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

Thank you to all for being here. We very much appreciate your comments and advice to the committee.

In particular to Ms. Chakrouni and Ms. Cirondeye, in what capacity do you think that family violence, when it comes to immigrant francophone communities, is holding women back from being able to pursue jobs and education and so on? How much is the family violence—which we know often occurs—preventing them from moving forward?

[Translation]

Ms. Regine Cirondeye: Not only does it prevent them from moving forward, but it also prevents their children from doing so. This is really a paramount concern, and we need to tackle it at its core, because those who are now young girls—that could even include young girls who were born here—cannot fly on their own, for all the reasons you just mentioned. They have seen a lot and they are stuck in their situations because, unlike girls from here, they are restricted by their families. That is the difference. In cases where girls are restricted to their homes, we absolutely have to take stronger action. Violence is always at the root, violence in all forms, for that matter.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: Well, it certainly is not only—

[Translation]

Ms. Siham Chakrouni: I would add—

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: Please, go ahead.

[Translation]

Ms. Siham Chakrouni: I would add that women aren't informed when it comes to their rights. In fact, it might be advisable to use somewhat plainer language and simpler ways to educate immigrant women about legal aspects, because they are not able to access the information. For the most part, they are extremely isolated. One solution would be to provide mentoring or training to the associations doing the hands-on work so they can give these women guidance and assistance. That education can start at the beginning of the process, from when they file a complaint to what happens after. In my experience working with these women, they are scared. They don't know what will happen to them, and they fear losing their children. They are scared of a lot of things, and that significantly limits them.

I just wanted to make that clear. It was a finding in our last study. Women don't know their rights, but would like to assert them and have that information.

• (1615)

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you very much. I agree wholeheartedly. Whether it's immigrant women or women and girls born in Canada, it's often a question of getting the information out to them on what services are available.

You had a project you did that was funded by Justice Canada. Through that project what steps have you been able to take to try to curb the whole issue of violence, and what method did you find was successful? What was effective?

[Translation]

Ms. Siham Chakrouni: The study was conducted. We are going to start sending it out to our partners and donors. We posted it on our website so as many people as possible could see it.

The study led to some findings, which I mentioned. Now we have to put certain measures in place. It's a lot of work. It will require the help of our partners so we can educate people about violence in easy-to-understand language, as I said. We must make sure these women know they are not alone and we must help them. It may be a good idea to train the agencies already in place. That way, as soon as a woman comes in, at least one person would be there to help. Efforts must be made to simplify things. We can certainly talk about solutions going forward, but as for right now, the study really shone the spotlight on certain realities. Now, we have to find solutions to help these women and the agencies in place.

Ms. Regine Cirondéye: Some approaches have been successful and have been used in multicultural communities. You should know that we approached prominent community figures: priests, imams and all those who represent something significant within the community. We didn't want the information to remain solely with us, with the agencies. We shared it with everyone, men and women alike. Some men beat their wives, and they would not want us to know that they are violent towards their wives at home. So we tackled the problem at the community level. By informing everyone, we can have a greater impact than if we target only women.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: It certainly sounds like you've made good use of that money from Justice Canada. I applaud the work that you're doing.

To Ms. Camier and Ms. Ouellet, have you been intervening on behalf of any cases in the last while with regard to women's equal access?

[Translation]

The Chair: You have one minute to respond.

Mrs. Marilyn Ouellet: We have intervened in some equal access cases. Actually, our agency is currently in the middle of a reorganization. We haven't been on the job long. We haven't had time to review any cases since the *Gaz Métro* affair. We do a lot more one-on-one work and general awareness training for women's groups. For instance, we target women's groups such as the Haitian women's shelter, *Maison des femmes haïtiennes*, and other sizeable communities. We visit anyone who wants to see us. We go on site and speak to their members. We are doing a lot more field work right now.

Ms. Coline Camier: We also field a lot of calls from women inquiring about their rights and, in some cases, about possible discrimination in the workplace because they are immigrant women. We regularly receive calls about that. We explain what their options are in such cases. We advise them on how to obtain and keep evidence, and on how they should behave in the workplace in terms of the appropriate attitude. We look at how the situation could be resolved.

The Chair: I must cut you off as we are out of time.

I want to thank you for accepting our invitation and appearing before our committee today. It was extremely informative. Enjoy the rest of your day.

We will now take a two-minute break to sort out some technical issues before we proceed with our next witnesses.

- _____ (Pause) _____
-
- (1625)

The Chair: We are now resuming the 34th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We are continuing our study with the help of our other witnesses.

Here with us today we have Shellie Bird and Katie Arnup, who is joining us from Toronto. They are both from the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada.

We will also be hearing from Linda Hasenfratz, from Linamar Corporation. She will be joining us by telephone as our videoconferencing system doesn't seem to be working.

You each have 10 minutes, and then we will move on to questions.

The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada will start us off. Ms. Bird or Ms. Arnup, you have 10 minutes.

[English]

Ms. Shellie Bird (Board of Directors Member, Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada): Thank you.

I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to present today. My colleague Katie Arnup and I represent the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. The CCAAC is dedicated to promoting publicly funded, inclusive, quality, public, and non-profit child care in Canada. Our organization is a non-profit, membership-based, and regionally representative organization. We have been advocating for better child care for the past 25 years.

I want to start on a personal note about my own experience as a parent and early childhood educator from working for over 20 years with toddlers and infants in a licensed non-profit child care centre here in the city of Ottawa. I have provided care and education to hundreds of young children, so I can speak first-hand about what is needed to ensure that they are given what they need to thrive and grow while their parents work or study.

Thirty-two years ago I was a young parent struggling, along with my partner, to provide for our young son. We, like many families living on modest incomes—and I can tell you that a child care worker's wage is very modest—struggled to find affordable child care that we could feel good about, that in using it we could feel we were being good parents and that our son was receiving the kind of care that would support him while we were working to put a roof over our heads and food on our table.

I also sat on the board of directors of my son's day care centre. I know how difficult it is for community-based child care centres to keep up their facilities, meet the daily needs of children, and recruit and retain a well-skilled and professional workforce, all on a shoestring budget. I have witnessed the desperation of countless parents needing access to affordable child care so they can work and provide for their children. I can tell you stories about parents dropping to their knees to implore the centre's director to give them a space so they can take an available job opportunity. I can tell you stories about young sole-support moms wanting to get off social assistance but being unable to find child care they could afford when they themselves worked for slightly above minimum wage.

These stories stretch back 30 years and continue to this day. This is wrong: Canadian children and families should not have to endure this in our country. The generation raising kids today is squeezed for time at home. They are squeezed for income because of the downward pressure on wages and the rising cost of housing and basic amenities. They are squeezed for services like early learning and child care that will help them to better balance raising children and earning a living.

Canadian women with young children have pursued higher education and joined the paid labour force in ever-increasing numbers over the past three decades. The majority of young families cannot survive on one income in today's economy. By 2009, the labour force participation rate of women with preschool children was 77%, a higher rate than in most European countries.

Canada's child care lags far behind not only western European countries but in some ways also Anglo-American countries. The most recent UNICEF report card, using 10 indicators of child care access and quality, ranked Canada at the bottom of the 25 wealthiest nations. While child care availability has crept up marginally over the decades, fundamentally the Canadian situation isn't any better than it was in the 1980s when a smaller proportion of women with young children were in the paid labour force.

What, you may ask, does this have to do with improving the economic prospects of girls? The reality is that the responsibility of bearing and caring for children continues to rest largely on women. Today's girls are tomorrow's mothers, and some of them will be tomorrow's child care providers.

If Canada is going to support a new generation of young girls and women to meet the new realities of the Canadian economy, one that requires their participation in the paid workforce, then Canada must make access to high-quality affordable child care a priority.

•(1630)

There is no turning back the clock. Women's contribution to family income is vital. Women's contribution to the Canadian economy is vital. Child care not only supports those women and families, but it makes good economic sense as well. We have seen the reports from Quebec that demonstrate that government investment in child care not only pays for itself, but brings in additional tax revenues by increasing women's labour-market participation.

I am here today to ask you to act in our interests and in our country's interest. It's time we took action on child care.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Arnup, do you have anything to add? You still have four minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Katie Arnup (Board of Directors Member, Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada): Thank you.

I am a second-generation child care advocate. I work for the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, Ontario's advocacy

organization for policy and funding, with the aim to secure a universal, high-quality, not-for-profit early learning and child care system. I'm excited now to be one of the directors of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada.

In the 1980s, before and after I was born, my parents were part of the young movement fighting for affordable, accessible child care. Access to quality child care allowed my parents to pursue higher education and employment. My mother completed her Ph.D. and moved on to a career as a university professor. Beyond that, access to child care gave me quality early learning opportunities, socialization, and exposure to the amazing diversity of downtown Toronto.

My parents were part of the strong movement that has grown over the last 30 years of advocacy organizations, building from the grassroots across the country, united with labour unions and social justice groups, with the CCAAC at the lead. We have known for decades that the economic prosperity of not only women but our country as a whole depends on the creation of a national child care system.

It has been 25 years since the director of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment called child care "the ramp that provides equal access to the workforce for mothers". We even have domestic proof of this ramp. In Quebec, 70,000 more mothers are in the paid workforce as a result of their universal, affordable child care system.

In Quebec, child care for all families is just \$7 a day, compared with fees upwards of \$40 to \$60 a day in Ontario. Yet here I am today, starting my career and looking forward to my future, and Canada is ranked last among the OECD nations on accessibility to early learning programs. I am ashamed and afraid of what the future will bring for young women like me.

Many countries have decided to invest in high-quality child care and early learning, acknowledging that it is fundamental to women's equality, and the best start for kids. They have also benefited from the huge economic returns, both immediate and long-term, that are achieved from investing in the early years.

I, along with my friends and colleagues, am part of the generation bearing the brunt of years of government cutbacks and a recent recession that has decimated the job market. We struggle to find employment and are left with huge student debt. Yet how can we do either if we cannot find high-quality child care? How are we supposed to afford it?

My darling niece Charlotte is a year old and one of the four out of five Canadian children without access to a licensed child care space. I do not want her to be fighting for affordable child care when she's grown up and thinking about her future.

At work I talk to countless parents, and the stories are all the same. Child care is too expensive, there's not enough of it, and despite the hard work and training, the staff working in the field—mostly women—are often underpaid and undervalued.

Twenty-six years ago the task force from this very committee declared child care a fundamental support service. It is time for progress. The lack of support for and from Status of Women Canada for research and advocacy has made it difficult for organizations like the CCAAC to maintain strong networks, do the kind of extensive research necessary for good policy-making, and build capacity to give voice to the needs of parents.

This committee can and should play a leadership role in calling for a closer examination of the crisis in child care and its impact on Canadian women, children, and families.

• (1635)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move on to Ms. Hasenfratz, joining us by telephone.

Can you hear me clearly, Ms. Hasenfratz?

[English]

Ms. Linda Hasenfratz (Chief Executive Officer, Linamar Corporation): Yes, I do.

Can you hear me?

The Chair: Yes.

[Translation]

I can hear you very clearly.

[English]

You have 10 minutes.

Ms. Linda Hasenfratz: Perfect.

My name is Linda Hasenfratz. I am CEO of Linamar Corporation, and I'm very pleased to have been given the opportunity to speak to the committee this afternoon.

For those of you who aren't familiar with it, we are a diverse manufacturing company. We do a lot of business in the automotive sector, in commercial vehicles, energy, access equipment, construction equipment, and the like. Our sales last year were \$2.8 billion. We have about 16,000 employees around the world. About 9,000 of them are in Canada.

We are very focused on growing our business. If I look back over the last several years, we've more than doubled our employee base. We've added 8,000 people since 2009, and actually 1,500 since the end of last year. More than half of them are right here in Canada.

We're a company that is very much focused on prosperity and growth and finding opportunities. So I thought this was a great opportunity to talk a little bit about what I think is important to allow

that to happen and particularly about how we try to create that kind of future for our young women and girls.

When I think about prosperity and what makes us prosperous, as a person or as a country or as a company, I think it is driven by three key areas. One is competitiveness. We need to be competitive to win business. Another is opportunity, so we need to have the opportunity to pursue. Finally, we need to have a strong culture that supports our growth as a company.

All of those things are equally true for people. We all need to be competitive, so we need to have the right skill set. We need to be given opportunities. And we need to live in a culture and a society that values us so that we can grow.

If I look at those different areas, at competitiveness, what's that all about? Really, it's all about innovation. It's about efficiency. It's about product innovation and process innovation and continuous improvement in both of those things: productivity and efficiency. All of that really is driven by having very skilled, capable people, particularly technically skilled people, to enable that growth.

Great innovation is driven by great scientists, great engineers, great tradespeople, and great technology. A recent study by the World Economic Forum noted that “[t]he most important determinant of a country's competitiveness is its human talent – the skills, education and productivity of its workforce”.

Women represent half of our population. Engaging women in innovation by building their skills dramatically increases our talent pool and therefore our global competitiveness.

When I look at what we're doing here in Canada in terms of our education broadly, and more specifically, in terms of our education of women, I think there is more we could be doing. We need to be acting in a more collaborative way and a more coordinated way. We have a lot of great schools in this country, maybe too many in some areas. We have a lot of repetition. All of them are doing things individually. Some of them are doing some great things. I wonder what we can do to better coordinate their efforts. How can we challenge them to make us the best?

When I look specifically at women in these fields, I think that there are just not enough. There are not enough girls and young women engaged in the areas of science, engineering, trades, and technology from which, as I've just discussed, our competitiveness is driven.

I think we need to start very young in the primary years to build an interest in these areas for our young girls and our young women and then build on that in a secondary school system to encourage young women to choose those careers.

There are things we're doing here at Linamar to try to encourage that. Again, we're trying to start young. For instance, we hold a summer skills camp for young girls, aged 10, 11, or 12, to try to introduce them to the idea of skills and trades as a potential career.

• (1640)

Last year we held the first of a six-year commitment for those camps. We had a great turnout and the girls really enjoyed themselves.

So just trying to get some interest in it, to get young girls interested in these areas of science, trade, technology, and engineering, is really critical. We've also held several workshops, at which we bring together high school students with female tradespeople within our own company and in other companies to learn about these careers. We've had more than 300 young women attend these workshops. They get to learn about all kinds of different careers in skilled trades, science, and technology and hopefully get inspired to head that way in their education.

We're running a program here in Guelph. We're headquartered in Guelph and have a large percentage of our Canadian employment right here in town. We're working with local schools in terms of interactive programs, again reaching out with our own tradespeople, who teach them about careers in manufacturing. More than 1,000 young people have been reached through these programs.

Finally, we again are working with local school systems to sponsor female apprenticeships. We've committed to five female apprentices per year for the next five years. We have two signed up in our first year, so we're not at our goal, but we're close to halfway there. We're glad to see the interest starting to bud.

I think the key is trying to interest and encourage our young people to get into these fields, and particularly to encourage our young women to get into these fields, where there are great opportunities to build a career that can be so satisfying and so lucrative for them. You can take a skilled trade or take your engineering degree and end up as an entrepreneur building a business and creating something really fantastic.

So first you get the interest going. Then, I think, we need to really work with our education system and try to prioritize our education system in these fields. I would love to see us in Canada setting a goal to be the best in the world in terms of an education system that's going to create the smartest, the most innovative, and the most successful scientists and engineers in the world, with the highest percentage of female grads.

You see a lot of examples of making a commitment like that, of being bold and putting a statement out there that we want to be the best in the world in terms of generating tradespeople, scientists, and engineers, and also that we want to graduate the most females. Let's make that a goal. Let's challenge our schools to come up with programs and to find ways to work together to make that happen.

Let's own the scientific podium. We've seen the results when you do get a focus, make a commitment, and set a goal for yourself.

So that was a lot about competitiveness and trying to drive an education that can help us as a country, and about women in particular and how to be competitive and get the opportunities in terms of these types of jobs, but as I mentioned at the outset, opportunity is the second key element driving prosperity. I think the frustration here for a lot of people is that girls and young women still just aren't getting enough opportunities.

I think there's a real mixed bag out there. Some companies are great. They really do look with open eyes at all the candidates and pick based on skill, capability, enthusiasm, and work ethic. But others still don't look at male and female candidates equally.

I think a key difference in my own success is that I was always given the opportunity to try. I was always given the chance at that next job, the chance to show that I could do it and I could take it on. I had a huge champion in my own father, who encouraged me without ever undermining my authority.

So I had it easier, I think, because I had that champion. I had that mentor who wanted to make me a success and wanted to give me those opportunities, and then it was my own passion, excitement, and capability that let me step up, take on those responsibilities, and be successful at them.

My question would be, how can we get companies to give those opportunities to women? Shall we ask them to self-declare diversity goals? Are there regulations we should consider at the board level, for instance? Certainly we've seen that in other pockets in the world, where regulations have been set to enforce certain levels of diversity and female representation on boards.

But the first step is really—

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Unfortunately, I must cut you off there, Ms. Hasenfratz. Your time is up. However, you will still have an opportunity to address your points during our question period.

Ms. Bateman, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Thank you so very much. Thank you to all of the witnesses. I really appreciate the comments that have been made.

I have some specific questions for Linda Hasenfratz, because it's pretty exciting when you're talking about having 16,000 employees worldwide, and 9,000 of them are in Canada. Based on your discussion, it's clear that probably half of them are women. The target of my questions, first, is the women in non-traditional industries.

First, Madam Chair, with your permission, we had a previous witness—Action travail des femmes du Québec Inc.—who gave such interesting comments on the \$205,078 grant they had received. It's a 24-hour grant. Reference was made to my colleague, Madam Truppe, that they would provide a report. I just want to reiterate the importance of our seeing what this organization is doing with that money, because that's very important work. Their target is young dropouts, immigrant women, women with disabilities, and single mothers in the Montreal region. I'd be so very interested in that.

My question is to Linda. If somebody gave you \$205,078 tomorrow morning to help women gain employment, and perhaps target non-typical employment, how would you best use that? I'm so interested in the comments you have made.

Ms. Linda Hasenfratz: I would definitely try to focus that money on awareness and generating interest in young women in the areas of science, trade, and technology, in these non-traditional industries where we still don't have nearly the level of representation that we should.

My company is not 50% women, at any level within the organization. We're reasonably proportioned and our overall percentage of women is representative at all levels of management, all the way up to our board; however, we're frustrated by the fact that there aren't enough women out there getting an education in this area to allow us to increase our overall percentage. Only about 20% of women are graduating from engineering school, and a much smaller percentage graduate from skilled trades.

That's where I'd really try to focus.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: How can Status of Women help make that happen? Clearly, these are positions where women will have incredible careers, and they will be making a difference not only to the economy of Canada, but potentially to the economy of the world.

You spoke about collaboration and coordinated approaches. How could the Status of Women be more effective in supporting organizations such as yours?

• (1650)

Ms. Linda Hasenfratz: I think trying to create some awareness and a marketing campaign directed at girls to encourage them into these fields would be money very well spent, as well as trying to create a program across Canada engaging universities and colleges to try to work collaboratively to a broader goal of being the best in the world in terms of the calibre and the number and the success rate of engineers and scientists that we are creating, with a very specific goal of increasing the percentage of women in those areas. Being a key part of that goal would help us enormously as a country, and help women specifically.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Wow. I very much appreciate your comments about collaborating and working in a coordinated fashion with universities, but you're being much more proactive than that. You're grabbing young women when they are indeed young women of age 10, 11, and 12, and you're creating an opportunity for them to think out of the box and be exposed to career choices that are non-traditional and that would not necessarily be a part of their awareness. Can you tell me how you do that? Can you tell me who your partners are?

Perhaps that's where we should be dealing with young women, before they opt out of the math and science courses that they need to actually have these high-powered careers in the science and manufacturing sectors.

Ms. Linda Hasenfratz: Yes, exactly. I think you're absolutely right: that's a good place to focus. We've worked quite a lot with Skills Canada. It's a great organization that tries to broadly encourage people into skills and technical areas. We have worked with them for our summer skills camp for young girls and we've worked with them for the mentor workshops to which we've brought in high school students. They've been a great organization for us to work with.

We also work with local schools, colleges, and universities in general around education and education for women. I think the schools are open to it. They've been very open and excited about it. We probably need more companies to be doing this kind of thing and more encouragement from the federal and provincial levels for companies to do it.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Okay.

You also spoke—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Forty seconds remaining.

[*English*]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Okay.

I have only 40 seconds left.

You spoke about innovation, about competitiveness, and about the parallels between what we need as a country and what you need as a company and how they were basically the same things individuals need. Can you just expand on that?

Ms. Linda Hasenfratz: I said there were three things that drive prosperity: competitiveness, opportunity, and culture. If you look at a company, competitiveness is about having innovative products and processes and improving opportunities about your strategy and how you go about getting that business.

Then the culture of your company is how you want to do things and what you value. But I think the exact same parallel exists for our country, in how we make ourselves competitive and where we find opportunity in the strategy we put together. That's the culture we create as a country.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I have to interrupt, Ms. Hasenfratz.

[*English*]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Thank you so very much for your comments.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: It is now over to the official opposition.

Ms. Ashton, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you very much.

Thank you to all the witnesses for your presentations today.

I'd like to direct my questions today to both Ms. Bird and Ms. Arnup.

I'll start off with you, Ms. Bird.

Many of us have had a chance to hear about the educational benefits of early childhood education, a topic that you have alluded to. But I wonder if you could tell us a bit about the economic benefit of early childhood education, both with respect to many of the women who work in the child care sector and to what it could mean to have a national child care program, not just for Canadian women but Canadians in general.

• (1655)

Ms. Shellie Bird: Thank you.

A number of national and provincial studies have been undertaken around the economic benefits of government investment in early learning and child care. It is very clear that for every dollar invested in a system of public and non-profit high quality early learning and child care, there is a \$2 to \$6 return. This has been demonstrated in three separate studies by three separate economic researchers, so we do know.

We need only look to Quebec to see that in that province, investment in \$7 per day child care has actually brought the poverty rate down by 40%. In particular—as I also know from my own experience—women who are trying to get off social assistance and trying to get into the labour force really find the costs of child care exorbitant and a barrier to their involvement in the paid labour force. If you bring down the costs of early learning and child care and make them affordable, more women will end up in the paid labour force.

We know there are economic benefits in the tax revenue that comes from women's earnings in the paid labour force, which does benefit Canada and the provinces.

I want to go to a comment that was made a little earlier about the men who drop out of high school ending up in trades or construction and women or young girls who do the same ending up in the caring professions like home child care. To go back to Linda's comments, I think valuing the work that women have historically done in their homes—the caring work, the care that goes into education, the care that goes into help—really valuing those kinds of things that women have historically done in society and valuing them through economic compensation will also improve Canada's economy. I think that instead of trying to try to get women into non-traditional jobs simply as an economic strategy, it's time that our country valued the work that women do.

Thank you.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you, Ms. Bird.

Ms. Arnup, you referenced the work of your organization in terms of advocacy and how challenging it has been. You did reference more broadly the cuts to advocacy. I'm wondering if you could tell us how women in Canada lose out when advocacy and research organizations are being cut, as they have been, in an extreme way certainly by this government?

Ms. Katie Arnup: Sure.

There was a time when my organization had funding at both the federal and provincial levels. Through that we were able to connect directly with communities. We have that capacity. We work directly

with centres and, therefore, we have staff and connections with parents.

Through that we were able to create networks across our province, and I know that other organizations were doing similar work. That's the only way we can have a really close connection with families, to know what their needs are and where the gaps are, and to go beyond just the people who have access. We know that 80% of families don't have access to a space. How do we start having those conversations and being able to be a voice for them?

We don't have federal or provincial funding any more. Our members invest in our organization because they are child care centres and they need that collective voice. If we lose capacity and we aren't able to speak on behalf of those centres, no one will be hearing about child care closing.

In Ontario we're going through a child care crisis right now. We are seeing centres close. I got a call today about a very high-quality centre in Belleville that represents about 100 families and that will be closing. That would never end up in a paper unless a parent called me, and called my co-worker, and we started trying to build some capacity around that.

The other thing is that there is no support for those families when that child care closes. Unless there is support out there to build awareness about what happens when a centre closes, what happens to those staff, what happens to those families and that community when there is no longer that hub? I think without organizations to speak up and do the work, it's frightening what the future of women will be.

It's very difficult for us to get families out when we have media events and so on. Parents are working. Parents are running from job to job, from event to event with their kids. They can't constantly be demanding more child care. They need people to represent them.

So that's what I do. I speak to parents when they have the time.

• (1700)

Ms. Niki Ashton: I have one more question, and we'll see if we have more time after this.

A recurring theme throughout the study so far has been talk of mentorship and how important mentoring and role modelling is for young women. As a young woman myself, nobody can say that this isn't the case. However, what many of us wonder is what are we doing to change the socio-economic conditions that young women face?

You spoke a bit about the challenges facing young women in Canada today. I'm wondering how you would respond to the emphasis on mentorship rather than shifting the socio-economic reality of young women.

The Chair: Be very, very quick.

Ms. Katie Arnup: Just to clarify that, were you asking how I would emphasize the importance of mentorship?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Sure. Do you think—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Unfortunately, your time is up. That was why I said you had to wrap up very quickly. Ms. Arnup may have a chance to answer that question later. I apologize, but we have to stay within the time limits.

It is now over to Ms. O'Neill Gordon.

You have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, I want to thank all of the witnesses and the contributors here today. It certainly was interesting listening to your presentations.

To Linda Hasenfratz, you certainly need to be congratulated on your achievement in your company. There is no doubt in my mind that you certainly would have experienced and seen lots of economic prosperity and economic leadership.

I also was a primary teacher, and I'm glad to hear you say that we need to introduce the ideas in the primary area. You certainly also have a great goal for the education system, and there is no doubt in my mind that the education system is where it all starts. As you say, they are certainly open to these ideas. I know that for a fact.

I would like to ask you, first, are girls entering non-traditional industries at an increasing rate? Do you see that in your jobs?

Ms. Linda Hasenfratz: I wouldn't say there has been a dramatic increase at all. There are a few more young women in skilled trades than you would have seen 10 or 15 years ago, so a little movement is happening there. On the engineering side, I don't think there has been much change. We're still sitting at only about 20%. It's been stuck there for a while, so I don't think a lot of movement is happening there; hence, that's why I'm trying to encourage some interest, get young women interested in these areas, and paint a picture of the kind of career you could have. It could be very fulfilling and exciting and interesting in a variety of areas. That might not have been the first thing that popped into their heads.

There are plenty of examples for women out there. For instance, there are hugely successful women in the engineering area within the ranks of the automakers, some at the very highest levels, who can be a great inspiration for young women. This can be a really interesting, exciting career that can lead to a lot of opportunity for them.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: What impact do role models have on girls? With your experience, you would probably see that. You're saying that lots of girls need to see women in these fields, and that would probably encourage them to join. I'm wondering how girls can be empowered to make these choices and what role models can give to girls in this situation.

• (1705)

Ms. Linda Hasenfratz: I completely agree: Role models are really important. That's why we should try to highlight the achievements of some of these women in these non-traditional fields, and show how they have been able to choose some very

prominent positions and do so while balancing work and home life. These women are not fully career women. We all have families, and we've found a way to balance and make it work.

Role models are really important, and I've heard that from young women who've said that they had seen what I or other women have done and been inspired to go into those types of careers.

Mentors are important for the same reason, people who will work actively with young women to help mould them and help teach them.

Lastly, I think the idea of the champion is really important too. It's not enough to have a mentor, but having somebody within your own organization who is actively promoting you as a woman to get that opportunity is very powerful as well.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: You certainly would have experienced lots of challenges on the way and certainly would make a great role model yourself.

Madam Chair, I know we're moving on to committee business, and I want to move that we go in camera at that time. I don't know how much time I have left.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: You have three minutes left, but we have to move on to committee business, scheduled for 5:10 p.m. So the few remaining minutes were to go to Ms. Sgro. There you have it.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Okay, but I want to move that we—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Pardon me, but the clerk is telling me that we must vote on that motion straightaway. We will now vote on Ms. O'Neill Gordon's motion that we proceed in camera for committee business.

Ms. Sgro will have her five remaining minutes so she can ask her questions.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Can we have a recorded division?

The Chair: Ms. Ashton would like a recorded division.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: We will now move in camera, and Ms. Sgro will be able to ask her questions at that point. Then, we will deal with committee business. I am sorry, but we don't have a choice on the matter. The meeting must proceed in camera.

I want to thank the witnesses for joining us today. Your remarks were very useful. The next time, we will have to stick to the agenda. What happened today was that the vote took time away from someone who wanted to ask questions. Next time, I will ask that you wait until we move on to committee business before proposing any related motions.

The meeting will now move in camera. We will break for two minutes to sort out the technical issues. Thank you.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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