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Ms. Marie-Claude Morin

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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• (1100)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP)): Good morning and welcome to the 56th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are continuing our study on sexual harassment in the federal workplace.

We are pleased to have with us Canada Post representatives. I want to welcome Ann Therese MacEachern, Vice-President of Human Resources, and Amanda Maltby, General Manager.

I invite you to make your presentation. You have 10 minutes. I will let you know when you have one minute remaining. Afterwards, we will have a question period.

Go ahead.

[English]

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern (Vice-President, Human Resources, Canada Post): Madam Chair and members of the committee, good morning. We welcome this opportunity to appear.

Sexual harassment in the federal workplace is an important issue. We hope you'll find our practices at Canada Post serve as helpful examples of how to manage it. Our practices are an important part of our broader effort to create a workplace where people feel safe, respected, and productive.

First, for some context about our workplace, at Canada Post, not counting our subsidiaries such as Purolator, we employ about 65,000 people. This includes full-time, part-time, and term employees. Our people work in every community in Canada, including isolated posts and neighbourhoods of every kind. We have thousands of delivery agents who are on the street and at the doorstep. They have countless direct interactions with Canadians, as we deliver to more than 15 million addresses each business day. This context matters. While sexual harassment can occur in our workplace, it can also happen on the street.

Our commitment is to a safe, respectful, and fair workplace. We strive to achieve these things by focusing on a number of areas, such as: committed leadership; a focus on prevention, and when an incident occurs, responding promptly, appropriately, and effectively; the positive influence of a diverse workforce; the positive impact of training, which closely involves our unions; and the expertise of our human rights team, which has been recognized by both the Canadian Human Rights Commission and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

I will speak first to leadership, which sets the tone.

I've worked at Canada Post for more than 23 years, and I can assure you that our company does not tolerate sexual harassment. If any executive were to learn that a team leader had failed to take the right action in response to a complaint of sexual harassment, there would be consequences both for the team leader and for the employee who committed the harassment. Our policies don't merely exist on paper. We're not perfect, but we walk the walk.

Our leaders know that they're expected to uphold our corporate values. This is reinforced in our hiring, performance management, talent management, and training processes.

I speak with the confidence that comes from experience. I've been involved in decisions to fire people for serious violations of our no harassment policy. Our workforce is a microcosm of the Canadian population. As a result, unfortunately, some incidents do occur, but when they do, they're investigated and addressed. Depending on the circumstances, a range of consequences can apply. Some incidents are resolved with a frank conversation and warning, while others involve more in-depth intervention. For serious violations, nothing short of dismissing an employee is the right thing to do.

I'll now ask Amanda to speak to the diversity of our workforce, an overview of our no-harassment policy, how it's communicated and reinforced, and the vehicles for employees to speak up about harassment.

• (1105)

Ms. Amanda Maltby (General Manager, Compliance, Canada Post): Thanks, Ann Therese.

We believe having both men and women equally represented in our workforce contributes to the culture of respect we work hard to foster. Women make up half our workforce, which is slightly higher than the national average. Women are increasingly being promoted into more senior positions. We continue to work towards increasing the representation rates in areas such as operations. We believe this balance helps tens of thousands of men and women work productively and professionally side by side while enjoying respectful relationships.

At Canada Post sexual harassment is part of our no harassment policy. In turn, the policy is part of a larger holistic approach to creating a workplace that is safe and respectful.

This holistic approach is reflected in our values, our code of conduct, our violence in the workplace policy, and our human rights training. We believe every employee has the right to a workplace free of any form of harassment, including those prohibited under the Canadian Human Rights Act.

At Canada Post it is the obligation of our team leaders and officers of the company to report any incidents of harassment that they witness or they become aware of.

Our no harassment policy is included in the orientation package that's given to every new hire, no matter their role, together with our code of conduct. It's also available on our internal website, which is accessible to all of our employees. It's embedded in our training, which reflects a respectful relationship with the leaders of our unions.

We've worked closely with our unions on our no harassment policy, our human rights training, and to educate employees about workplace violence prevention and protection. Our ongoing training programs are delivered in classrooms, in self-study guides, and through e-learning.

For example, supervisors attend a mandatory course, which we call CORE, in which they receive in-class training on the theme of a workplace free of discrimination and harassment. For several years, new hires represented by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Public Service Alliance of Canada have received training on human rights and conflict in the workplace. This is taught in a classroom. It's co-facilitated with trainers from our unions, and it takes three and a half hours. These training sessions are well received.

Our employees have several ways to report incidents of sexual harassment. These include reporting it to their supervisor or a member of management; reporting it to their local human rights representative; reporting it to their local union or association representative; contacting our employee assistance program; reporting it to our anonymous whistle-blowing program, which is run by an independent third party that takes reports via a toll-free telephone number, the Internet, or mail; filing a grievance; or making a formal complaint to the Canadian Human Rights Commission or under the Canada Labour Code.

Reports are confidential. When investigating complaints, management will not disclose the complainant's identity unless doing so is essential to resolving the complaint. This is important to the integrity of the process.

While sexual harassment may arise in some fashion and to some degree, it is never acceptable. In 2012 we had one formal and 48 informal human rights complaints based on sex. This is out of 25 formal and 137 informal human rights complaints.

Formal human rights complaints are based on the 11 prohibited grounds of discrimination that are submitted directly to the Human Rights Commission for investigation.

Most of these incidents involved one employee harassing another, but several involved one of our employees being harassed by members of the public.

We do believe our policies are effective, and we stand behind them. We believe our practices, our people, and our record reflect our commitment to preventing sexual harassment.

I want to bring your attention to an example of one of our transgender situations, when just recently an employee transitioned from male to female. As you can appreciate, this involves incredible sensitivities. We worked hard and in close collaboration with the first employee, and we've had others since then, to ensure a smooth, safe, and respectful transition in their workplace.

We're very proud that we met that objective. The fact that others followed the first individual in the same location tells us that transgendered individuals feel safe and supported in transitioning in our workplace. The Canadian Human Rights Commission has asked us to share our experience with other employers and to help develop best practices.

I'll now ask Ann Therese to conclude our remarks.

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: On behalf of Canada Post, I'd like to thank the committee for having invited us to appear.

We believe the prevention and protection initiatives we have taken are working. As I'm sure you realize, these are challenging times for Canada Post. Canadians are increasingly leading digital lives, and letter mail volumes are declining sharply, but I can assure you that our business challenges don't undermine our commitment to be a progressive employer. In tough times, our commitment to a workplace free of harassment is as strong as ever, and we're always looking for areas to improve in this domain.

When the committee issues its report, we will review it with interest.

We welcome your questions.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you. That was very interesting.

We will now begin the question period. We will proceed in the same manner, so I will let you know when you have one minute left.

We will begin with Ms. Truppe.

Ms. Truppe, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

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

I'd like to welcome our guests.

Thank you for your report. It was really good. I was thinking about what great examples you had on how you manage harassment in general, as well as sexual harassment.

We've had a lot of different witnesses in here, so it's nice to hear the different things organizations are doing and how seriously they take it. I especially like the home mailer that you do. Was that the first time you did that?

Ms. Amanda Maltby: I'm going to say that certainly, as long as I've been involved with the program, it's the most comprehensive home mailer that I've seen us do. This is the one we did at the end of 2011.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Yes.

I've never heard of doing a home mailer before. That went to all the employees. When they sent that, you had an increase in general complaints, but some of the other ones went down.

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Yes, what we saw was a shift. It's been interesting looking at the numbers, because as a result of that... I think that when any organization engages in an awareness campaign with employees, they're going to see some kind of an increase. We capture incidents of workplace violence, human rights, and also in the area of harassment. The shift we saw was from harassment to some of the workplace violence complaints, particularly complaints as they relate to threats of violence.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: You think the increase in the general complaints of harassment was due to violence as opposed to sexual harassment?

Ms. Amanda Maltby: No, I don't know if I'd say that. I would say that it's interesting as we work through the regulations associated with workplace violence and defining the terms "bullying" in particular and "harassment", how in the mind of the complainant, which is obviously very important when you're looking at a complaint and conducting an investigation, they perceive the unwelcome behaviour or gesture or comment that's made to them.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Have you noticed overall any trends, any increase or decrease in sexual harassment? How are you measuring that?

Ms. Amanda Maltby: I'll comment on that just to say that overall we capture general harassment numbers. Where it is that we delineate based on sex is when we would move to the definition under the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Actually, if I look year over year, even beyond that, the trend is actually downward as it relates to cases regarding sex.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Do you have any alternate methods of determining how many employees have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace?

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Yes, we have a series of programs in place that are certainly supportive of the policies we have.

I would point more specifically to some of the other avenues employees can use, where it is they would indicate complaints. I'd caution in terms of saying that's an indicator of higher numbers, because often we see employees using multiple channels to make their case known or to put their complaint forward. An example would be our whistle-blowing line, where we do capture harassment.

In looking at the numbers, and again, they've gone down year over year, but comparing 2011 and 2012, I would say we probably already capture those numbers as part of some of the other incidents of harassment.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Okay, thank you.

You seem to provide a lot of training too. Can you walk me through the training that a supervisor would have as soon as they get there, versus the training that an employee would have when they get there. What are the different methods?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: There are different methods. The supervisors receive training as part of a supervisor orientation program, if you will, for team leaders. They receive about three and a half hours of training. Last year we put approximately 400 people through that training.

The front-line employees would receive it as part of an orientation to the company, and that's a three and a half hour program that is co-designed and co-delivered with our unions.

In one case the content is specifically on human rights, in the latter case. In the former case it's part of a broader orientation that covers many different subject areas. There are three and a half hours, again, in that segment over a number of days that are specifically on human rights, and there's a specific segment in the training on sexual harassment.

•(1115)

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Okay, so there's a specific segment on sexual harassment for each of those, for the supervisor role and for the other role.

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: That's correct.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I understand the gist of when the harasser is on the same level as the person being harassed, but what happens when it's a superior or the supervisor who's harassing the employee? What happens to that person?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: What happens to that person?

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Obviously, the person who is being harassed can't go to the supervisor. They would have to skirt around them and use one of those other alternate methods.

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: Amanda talked about a number of avenues.

Certainly we have human rights coordinators right across the country in different facilities, and that's an avenue for people to go through. Those are the people who would be responsible for looking into the complaint, investigating the complaint, and dealing with it.

If people are not comfortable with that avenue, there's our whistle-blowing line. They can certainly go to their union affiliate and get support that way. There are a number of different mechanisms in place to support them if, in fact, the situation relates to a team leader.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Is the training mandatory for everyone?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Do the new hires go through that training?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: All the new hires go through the training.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Okay.

Finally, would you recommend any additional measures that would prevent and resolve sexual harassment in the workplace for Canada Post employees? Is there anything else you think you could improve on?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: That question might take longer than a minute to answer.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: And you're probably down to 40 seconds.

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: If I can give a 30-second answer I will say that the piece around leadership is probably critical, and it permeates a number of areas in a business. That's an area we have focused on and will continue to focus on.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Great. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Truppe.

We will now give the floor to a member of the official opposition, Mrs. Day.

Mrs. Day, you have seven minutes.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome and thank you for joining us. It's not always easy to get witnesses to come testify. I commend and thank you.

I would like to ask you a few questions about the data you have gathered. You may have already provided those figures during your presentation, but I may have missed that, since I have no copy with me.

Did you collect data on harassment complaints at Canada Post in general, and in particular on sexual harassment? As I said, you have possibly already talked about that during your testimony.

[*English*]

Ms. Amanda Maltby: We gather complaints related to general harassment, and those are further broken down into those defined by sex. We don't have a category per se for sexual harassment, but we do have categories in our data gathering that capture harassment complaints and then we can further define them based on whether or not there is discriminatory practice as defined under the Canadian Human Rights Act.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Can you tell me how the sexual harassment complaints you receive are processed in particular?

[*English*]

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Absolutely. When we receive a complaint, at the first level we ask the employee to engage with the other individual who has brought forward the unwelcome behaviour or gesture, and we see if they can resolve that between themselves. If that's not sufficient or if they're not comfortable doing so, then they have recourse to the other avenues.

As Ann Therese mentioned, across the country we have human rights representatives who are specialists in conducting investigations in this area. They'll look at the incident and after speaking to the individual affected will make a determination. They'll also do an investigation and speak to any witnesses, if there were any. They'll

speak to the parties involved, and then they will issue a determination, a finding, to the complainant.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Unless I'm mistaken, the victim files a complaint, and the person against whom the complaint is made is also informed. Do you think that can have a deterrent effect?

[*English*]

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Just so I can understand the premise of your question, we do have the ability for individuals, if they feel uncomfortable coming forward with an allegation of sexual harassment in particular, to do so in confidence. I think the comfort level, if I'm understanding the point of your question, is there for individuals who feel they have been harassed, to be able to do so in a safe and respectful environment. We certainly build that into the process and through the investigation we do to determine whether a complaint is founded or unfounded.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: When a complaint is made, the person against whom it is made will not be informed if the victim of sexual harassment has requested confidentiality. So that person will not be told about the complaint against them while the allegation is being substantiated. Is that correct?

[*English*]

Ms. Amanda Maltby: I think it really depends on the situation case by case. If there are allegations brought forward about an individual over the course of the investigation, they may have to be brought in to the investigation obviously to address the allegations. It's case by case depending on the situation. Oftentimes what we find in some of our workplaces, if it's in a plant setting, for instance, where there are numerous people around, there may have been people who witnessed some gesture, comments or unwelcomed behaviour.

It really would depend on the nature of the incident whether or not the individual who had been accused of the harassment would be brought into the picture. I would say that probably more likely than not that would have to be the case in order to do a thorough investigation.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: In their line of work, your employees are faced with both internal and external interactions, since their job involves two separate aspects. As we know, they also work with the public. How do you ensure protection when it comes to sexual harassment they may potentially suffer in their interactions with the public? What kind of measures are in place?

[*English*]

Ms. Amanda Maltby: One of the things we've done recently as a result of the workplace violence requirements under the occupational health and safety code is we've brought in brand new training for our employees, and our front-line employees specifically, to address situations they may encounter external to the workplace. We see this. Customers may be making unwanted advances towards our employees. We have women delivery agents who have been followed on their routes.

First of all, we make them aware that these situations are going occur. At the local level there are conversations with the individuals about taking precautions to protect themselves. That's very much in the training. It's being done in phases. We started the first phase last fall and it will go out more fulsome to all of the employees in 2013. It's very much about understanding the risks that exist in the workplace as they relate to sexual harassment and workplace violence, but also the means they can undertake to protect themselves.

The other thing we do when these incidents occur is we bring the police into the situation as well.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: I have one last question for you.

Do you have programs for equity access to help women reach management positions?

[English]

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: I'm not certain if I understand the question, but I can tell you that we're certainly subject to the Employment Equity Act. As part of our hiring practices we certainly look at encouraging not just women but other diversity in our workplace. In the case of women per se—

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Pardon me, but could you tell me how many people are members of the management? What percentage of Canada Post management do women account for?

[English]

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: Twenty-eight per cent.

• (1125)

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Okay, thanks.

The Chair: I have to stop you there, unfortunately. Thank you.

We'll now go to the other side. Ms. O'Neill Gordon, you have seven minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and welcome to the witnesses. We're happy that you are here today.

Of course, we all come in contact with postal workers, and you're much appreciated for the job that you do. That's for sure. It's nice to hear of another department like yours which is striving for a safe and productive workplace with no harassment, even though in your situation the jobs are in different areas. They can be in a building or they can be on the street. This would definitely make it much more difficult to control.

You mentioned that you often speak to other groups on many of your best practices. You spoke about whistle-blowing and the home mailer, both of which are really good practices.

Do you have any other practices on which you would like to elaborate that you consider to be best practices, and which other people are always happy to learn about?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: There's one that we were recognized for just yesterday. In fact, I received an e-mail that we were recognized for our work in domestic violence in the community. This is in southern Ontario. We were speaking to the domestic violence arm of the London police in the fall, as well as the university. Just yesterday I received an e-mail that one of our human rights officers was recognized for this work.

I think Amanda can elaborate on some interesting work we've done with respect to transgender employees. People have reached out to us to understand how to manage an issue like that in the workplace. I'll let Amanda elaborate on that.

Ms. Amanda Maltby: There are a few other examples actually. Over the last two to three years we've done quite a bit, which is pretty exciting, in the workplace.

As it relates to transgender, we have five individuals now who we've successfully transitioned into the workplace. Hats off to our human resources manager out in the Pacific region because she took a real lead in this in terms of working with external groups within the community and also putting in place a program that we've now been recognized for by the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Our colleagues at Purolator are very interested in knowing more about it as well.

Really, it was a program by which we directly engaged the individual who was transitioning and wanted to transition back into the workplace. We worked with them around what were their needs and spent a lot of time working with the local employees and the direct individuals these folks would come into contact with to sensitize them about these issues and to really define transgenderism. I think there was a lot of confusion in the minds of people in even understanding. As you know, the effectiveness of any policy is really contingent on what it is you do to support these things in terms of creating awareness, in terms of creating a better understanding of these types of situations.

We're very pleased that we were able to put that program in place and be recognized for it.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Madam, before I go on, I want to congratulate you on your news yesterday and hats off to you for all of the work that you're doing.

What would you say would be the definition if you were to give a brief definition of transgenderism?

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Of transgenderism?

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Yes.

Ms. Amanda Maltby: In our policies, I won't do this justice, but I will say it is where for an individual there has certainly been a birth confusion about their sexuality, and once that is defined, it is where a person is moving from one gender to another. In the cases in our workplace, we've dealt with more cases where it's male to female in terms of helping transition individuals into their new self into the workplace.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: It would certainly be a difficult task to deal with and deal with in the proper way.

We also talked about training. What is the content of the training that you provide and what is cost? Who pays for it?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: In terms of content, there's a range of elements to it, and Amanda could probably speak to the details, that really deal with the highlights of the 11 grounds of discrimination including, as I said, a piece on sexual orientation. It was co-designed and is co-delivered with members of our union.

In terms of the cost of training, I don't have the cost of that particular program per se, but we have put a number of employees through it. Last year we put about 1,800 front-line employees and 400 supervisors through that particular program. It's really extensive.

• (1130)

Ms. Amanda Maltby: I would start by saying many thanks to our colleagues at CUPW and PSAC for helping develop the content. They are very actively involved and we benefit from their knowledge certainly of the workplace but of the issues as well.

The training, as Ann Therese said, is based on the 11 grounds for discrimination, but it actually goes a bit further. It's very interactive. Because it's in a classroom setting, there's the ability.... In looking at the sexual harassment module, just in itself, there are cases presented and individuals break into groups and they have to work through them. It involves providing a greater understanding for the participants and our employees of what sexual harassment is and what it is they can do about it.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Who is the provider for the training? Is it the Canada School of Public Service, or an external provider?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: It's our own people. We have representatives, as I said, from our unions who co-facilitate, but it's our own internal people who also deliver the training. It's one of the nice areas where there's a wonderful alignment between our unions and management on making sure that our workplace is free from discrimination.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Okay, thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Are you finished? Thank you.

I will yield the floor to Ms. Sgro for seven minutes.

[English]

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

Welcome to both of our witnesses. I have to say thank you for coming and sharing the positive stories. We're interested in the positives, not just the negatives that are facing many of the departments. We welcome you to come and share your success stories.

Of the 70,000 employees you have, you referred earlier to 48 informal complaints, and so on. Do you have the breakdown of the different areas of the postal service which the complaints were generated from?

Ms. Amanda Maltby: We do, but the context of workplace violence is where we've done our most work. We've done that because it's part of the work we've done on risk assessments. I would refine it a little bit to say that it's based certainly on the type of job people are doing, and when that brings them into greater risk as it

relates to incidents of workplace violence. You could certainly say that unwanted sexual advances could be one of those as well.

In terms of looking at the harassment numbers, we can break them down based on region. We can break them down based on employee-employee or employee-supervisor. Certainly, we can do that kind of refinement. We've recently been able to do that because we've brought in a new reporting tool within the last two years, which is fantastic. It's a new database. In that database we can look at harassment. We can look at human rights and workplace violence. Based on looking across those incidents, we can determine where it is we have common occurrences, where it is we have to do extra prevention, where it is we would have greater risk in the workplace as it relates to harassment, certainly, but sexual harassment can be delineated from looking at the data.

Hon. Judy Sgro: In order for someone to be dismissed from Canada Post as a result of harassment, whether it be sexual harassment or otherwise, how lenient are you until you reach the point where you've had enough? We've heard from other areas that employees are transferred to another division, and after two years some of these things are wiped off the record, so other people wouldn't know they have a history of harassment. What's your limit that you would cope with before you decided that enough is enough and the person would be dismissed?

Can you give examples of that?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: There are disciplinary processes that we follow with respect to our unionized employees. There are a number of steps that need to be followed, managed, and so forth with those.

I would say with our management employees the tolerance level is lower. The reason for that is, and I talked a bit about it earlier, it's around the tone that you need to set, and the leadership that's expected from that group. I have not been involved in a lot of cases, but I've been involved in a couple of cases where we've released somebody because they were at a level and the behaviour was egregious enough to warrant a dismissal. I wouldn't say this is a common problem we have or a common approach we take, but that has happened.

• (1135)

Hon. Judy Sgro: In those numbers I would suspect you have a lot more of them out in the field where you have different people operating differently. Am I wrong to suggest that would be where the majority of the complaints would come from?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: That's correct.

Ms. Amanda Maltby: You're right.

Hon. Judy Sgro: On the issue of establishing a certain culture in certain organizations, we've heard that in some of them this was acceptable and people just put up with it. Do you have any reason to suspect there's an under-reporting of complaints because of concerns about job security?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: I don't get that sense. I don't think there would be an under-reporting because of job security. As I said, there are so many different avenues for people to report those.

I also don't want to mislead the committee and say that there have been a lot of dismissals within our unionized workforce. The actions must be egregious. They must be repeated. That's when you take very serious action.

As I said, there are a number of disciplinary measures that are outlined that we follow to be fair to everybody involved in the incident and to make sure that the right corrective steps are taken.

Ms. Amanda Maltby: With regard to their under-reporting, I've been thinking about it since you asked the question. I would say no, for a number of reasons, recognizing that for some individuals, it is very difficult to come forward with allegations of sexual harassment.

I say that because we have a number of avenues for our employees to use, and they're actively using them. The avenues permit them to do so anonymously, all the way through to being able to approach individuals they feel they'd be more comfortable speaking to.

The question was asked earlier about what happens if the issue is with their direct supervisor. There's an ability for them to use alternate channels. They can speak to their union representative. We find, certainly, that union representatives will come directly to us on behalf of the employee.

The thing about our human rights representatives is that some of them have been doing this for a very long time and are very highly respected. They're respected because of their impartiality and also because of their knowledge and experience in the area.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Amanda Maltby: They're really our ears on the ground. They're actively telling us about what's happening as well.

Hon. Judy Sgro: How often does Canada Post have a training refresher as a reminder of the kinds of practices? We've heard from some departments that they do it on an annual basis. They have their management in and they go through harassment and sexual harassment as a reminder of how these things are to be handled.

I sense that at Canada Post, which certainly looks like an example employer, this is something you make sure you're focused on. Am I wrong to draw that from your discussions this morning?

The Chair: Answer very quickly.

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: I would reposition it a little bit and say that we focus a lot on training. We put a lot of effort and spend a lot of money on training in general. A lot of that training and a lot of the issues that are linked to sexual harassment are really about.... Again, I'm going to go back to that bigger piece. There will be elements in all of the training, including the training on sexual harassment, on leadership, but that's where you'd see more of a regular repetition of the expectations we're trying to set much more broadly.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to a second round of questions.

Ms. Crockatt, you have five minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): I want to congratulate you, first of all. It sounds as though you've done an amazing job tackling a very difficult problem, a problem especially for women.

I want to be clear on the statistics. It seems you're really doing great work. Am I right that there were one formal and 25 informal reports in the last report?

Ms. Amanda Maltby: In 2012, yes there were.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: That's out of how many employees?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: We have about 65,000, and that's all in. We have a lot of term employees. We have about 56,000 permanent employees, and we have a number of temporary employees and part-time employees. That's the range.

• (1140)

Ms. Joan Crockatt: That's spectacular.

Like many of the former questioners, I'm looking to what we can learn from you. It sounds as though you've really undertaken a plan that empowers the women, or often the victims, in sexual harassment, and that prevention is a huge part of what you're doing. I just want to drill down on that a bit.

If I'm right, and please correct me if I've missed something here, one is understanding the risks. They understand that zero tolerance is a goal but that there is a probability, however small, they might come across this. Then there is training the women to handle it so that they are not victimized, that they're prepared for this situation. Is that correct?

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Yes, certainly, I would say in the external environment for our delivery agents who are out on the streets on a day-to-day basis, I think a big thing about sexual harassment, unwanted advances, is understanding what it is in the first place. That's certainly what we do with our employees.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Okay, it is proactively how to handle it. You make them aware these situations may occur. Then you educate the public they are going to be involved with through the mailers, and then you take early action when the reporting is done. Are these basically most of the steps on the front end?

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Yes. The mailer was actually to our employees.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Oh, it was to your employees. It was internal.

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Yes. It wasn't out to the public.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: That's great. That's the front end of prevention.

You said most of the incidents involve one employee harassing another. Some of the people I have spoken to in various workplaces—not yours—have suggested to me that this is often the most difficult kind of harassment to deal with because there's an inherent conflict of interest in that you're representing both people involved, and especially when unions are representing both people involved.

I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about what is actually the most effective resolution method.

Ms. Amanda Maltby: One of the things we certainly attempt to do is to engage the employees with each other, but to your point about where it can be very difficult to do so, we do use mediation. Where we have willing participants and the situation suits mediation, we will use it.

I mentioned earlier that the impartiality of our human rights representatives is crucial: their credibility of being able to go in, speak to both parties, and be seen as an impartial but also a knowledgeable individual who has had experience as it relates not only to understanding the subject matter, which is harassment or sexual harassment, but also to understanding the policy framework in which we work, and also, certainly, to understanding the workplace and being able to really deal with those situations in a way that's credible to both sides.

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: If I could add to that, often we'll go into an environment—

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern:—where it may be beyond just those two people. There may be something else that's more systemic. The human rights group has looked at creating workforce charters with the employees in that unit to try to again establish what kind of work environment we wish to create and get alignment among the parties. Again, I think that has been another good practice that we'd be happy to talk more about.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: I don't know that you have a cost to get to this point. I realize these are mostly front-end costs, but do you know how much this costs? Is there any way you could help us avoid having to repay those costs for every workplace so we can utilize what you've learned?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: I don't have a cost. There are so many ways, I guess, in which you could calculate it, but I don't have a cost to the impact of sexual harassment in the workplace.

I'm going to sound a little bit like a broken record. Again, I think it's around the tone you set. It's around the expectations you set. It's how those things get reinforced.

One of the things we do—it's interesting, as we're in the middle of our performance management process as we speak—is make sure that those expectations are reinforced through the hiring process, through the performance management process, through the talent process, and through the training process. As a young parent, I remember hearing that we need to be consistent and persistent. I think this is no different.

[Translation]

The Chair: I have to stop you there. Thank you.

I now yield the floor to Mrs. Hassainia for five minutes.

• (1145)

Mrs. Sana Hassainia (Verchères—Les Patriotes, NDP): Thank you very much.

I want to begin by thanking you for your presentation and for being here today.

To follow up on your earlier statement that the proportion of women in management positions at Canada Post was about 28%, could you tell us what the percentage of women in the field is?

[English]

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: That 28% was with respect to women in senior leadership positions, at what we call the director level and above. I'd have to get back to you with the stats. I don't have them off the top of my head as we go down, but again, we've made very, very good progress over the last number of years in going from 40 to 50. Again, a lot of that is about being very deliberate about what you want and what you expect and integrating that into the hiring processes. We can get back to you with the specifics at the more junior levels.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sana Hassainia: Thank you.

Ms. Maltby, you talked about information sessions on harassment. Do you provide information sessions on sexual harassment specifically? Could you tell us how many hours of training you provide and whether that's sufficient? Do you know if other departments provide more training?

[English]

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Yes, that's a great question.

First off, I don't know if other departments are offering longer training. The e-learning course that we offer is an hour long. We estimate that it takes about an hour. The classroom training that we offer to the new hires of CUPW and PSAC is part of the collective agreement, actually, too, and of our obligation with those bargaining agents. That's a session of three and a half hours, a half-day session within a classroom setting, which is ideal, really, if you want to engage people on this subject and allow them to do exercises.

As Ann Therese has said and as I've said, that training is jointly developed with the unions. We work within that timeframe and we work together in terms of developing the content. I think it's sufficient. We get feedback from the participants and typically it's positive.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sana Hassainia: That training is mandatory for all employees, correct?

[English]

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Yes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sana Hassainia: That's great, thank you.

You mentioned earlier that human rights experts were on site to process harassment complaints submitted by employees. Are those people also experts on sexual harassment, in particular?

[English]

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Yes. I would say the types of training they received.... Actually some of these employees we have are now at the point of training other individuals. They are engaged by the Human Rights Commission. They are trained in particular in harassment. Certainly when you have training or expertise in harassment, sexual harassment is an important component of that as well.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sana Hassainia: Thank you.

Can you tell us in what way the services provided by Canada Post to victims or potential victims of sexual harassment have been improved? What specific measures have you taken?

[English]

Ms. Amanda Maltby: I will answer that by way of saying that when an allegation comes forward and it's founded, obviously there are measures taken as it relates to the workplace and as it relates to the individual who is the harasser.

For those individuals who are impacted, and again I'll go to our human rights representatives, there is follow-up. I would say we don't have a specific program we would use with these individuals, but certainly I know there is follow-up and there is sensitivity as it relates to what it is they have been through. I think in terms of the conversations that take place locally, that's where it would happen.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sana Hassainia: This week, a witness told us that some women did not dare tell their employer they were pregnant from fear of losing their job because of cuts.

Do you think that could explain the drop in the number of complaints?

[English]

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: There are two answers to that I guess. Most of our employees have job security so while we have seen reductions in our workforce as the end result of declines in mail volume, they have been handled or managed through attrition. From that perspective no, and quite frankly within the management ranks, again I haven't seen this. First of all, the level of complaints within that group, as you folks have rightly pointed out, is minimal, and I have not seen that raised as an issue.

• (1150)

Ms. Amanda Maltby: I agree.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now go to the other side.

Ms. Young, you have five minutes.

[English]

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Thank you so much for that.

I want to ask if you could recommend to other departments what they could do to have your outcomes, because we're hearing these terrific figures and everything. You mentioned persistence and

consistency, which I thought was really good, but surely there are other steps, because we've heard from other departments that they are not having your outcomes.

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: I am going to sound a bit repetitive, but I think it goes back to culture, which I think is not going to come as a surprise to any of you folks.

As I said in my remarks, we're not perfect, and Canada Post has been working on improving the culture in our workplace. We've done a number of things in that regard to move the dial.

For example, we've instituted town halls with front-line employees. In 2011 about 100 executives went out across the country and met with about 23,000 of our front-line employees. That's unusual. We got out of our offices, and we went to our plants and our depots. We talked to people. We talked to people about the business, but I think we also showed the human side of the senior team. That's a little bit unusual. I'm not sure how practical that is for other people, but I think the point of it is are you accessible, are you setting the standard, are you listening. That's part of what we were trying to do.

We have regular business updates with our CEOs. In 2012 what our CEO and members of the senior team did is they took it up a level. They went out and met with about 3,300 of our front-line leaders. In the first instance we went right to the front line, and then we went to the people who led the front line. Again, the nature of those conversations was not harassment. It was really around the business. It's opening up that dialogue that I think is important. That's something I would say.

We have established values, a code of conduct, and some very good policies. You have heard that from many others, I'm sure. I think the key to making those stick is to reinforce them. As I mentioned a few moments ago, we're in the middle of our performance management process, and I happen to be privy to the conversations that are happening and, in fact, provide input. Where people are not necessarily following or respecting the values, that gets reinforced in those conversations, and the expectation gets reset. It's those types of things. I could go on at length about this, but I think it's those types of things that allow the expectations with respect to establishing a workplace free of harassment. That's what helps make it stick.

Ms. Wai Young: In summary, what I'm hearing is it's not just being persistent and consistent, but you're also talking about leadership and being proactive as well.

Let me ask you a question in terms of PSAC. Is this the kind of thing you share with the other unions or the other departments? Is this how you're managing this at Canada Post? For example, it sounds like you have an excellent training program. Is that shared with other departments so that they're not reinventing the wheel, so that they can be doing the same thing?

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: We're open to sharing it.

Maybe you could talk about that, Amanda.

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Yes.

Through the Human Rights Commission we sit on an employer advisory council. On the council there is a mix of private and public sector organizations. It's a great sharing forum.

What we've actually been asked to do...and this happened in I think 2011.

The Chair: You have one minute left.

Ms. Amanda Maltby: They brought in three of our senior human rights representatives—there were also representatives from the RCMP, their human rights specialists, and we work closely with the Canadian Forces as well—to help them learn from the things we're doing within our workplace.

I think there's an opportunity to do a lot more, on occasion. There are some idea-sharing forums, but I think there probably could be more.

In terms of PSAC and CUPW, through their collective agreements there are appendices just on human rights. We do have joint policy discussions with them, which are very beneficial in terms of making improvements to our policies, to our preventative programs. Also, as we said, they help us deliver the training.

• (1155)

Ms. Wai Young: Would you say that's something which through this study we could capture and make a strong recommendation on? I mean, with your excellent outcomes, it's certainly something the other departments could learn from and implement.

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Yes.

Ms. Wai Young: Okay. Thank you so much.

[Translation]

The Chair: That's great, thank you.

We have time for one last person.

Ms. Ashton, you have five minutes left.

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Merci beaucoup.

I thank the witnesses very much for joining us today.

I want to go back to the point that was raised in terms of the feeling of job insecurity.

I really appreciate the point you mentioned in terms of attrition. This was clearly not a point shared by the experience of many civil servants whose jobs have been cut. So many of them are without any job security. There's a trend where people aren't willing to come forward because they are fearful of losing their jobs—or women are, I should say, in particular.

You mentioned the challenges of a highly digital society and the challenges Canada Post is facing as a result. It's also become clear that people on the front lines have felt that perhaps the supports aren't always there on the front lines. There has been some significant labour unrest, such as the lockout last year

I speak to this in part because of the northern and rural communities I represent when it comes to not only letter carriers but also people who work in the shop at that front desk. I'm speaking

in particular not only of the kind of stress that puts on those employees but also the tension it raises with the public. I say this based on experiences I've heard about.

I'm wondering what Canada Post is doing to deal with that kind of a reality. Also, what kind of an ongoing effort are you making to understand the reality of people working in rural, remote locations where, let's be honest, the digital society doesn't actually apply the same way as it does in urban locations? People depend on their mail and also that relationship with their mail carrier and with Canada Post in a much greater way.

Ms. Amanda Maltby: Maybe I'll take a first crack at that.

We most recently tried to address it through the development of the workplace violence prevention and protection initiatives. We specifically looked at remote and rural communities in the risk assessment and identified, to answer your point, that these employees are potentially going to face particular risks associated with dealing with the public. There are also just the potential stresses of that work environment.

In the training we've put together, we do address situations in which people are working alone and they don't have the same support network that you would have in an urban setting.

I'll say that I don't know if we have completely cracked the nut. I think one of the issues we have is reaching those individuals sufficiently with the prevention or protection materials they need to have. We've moved to workbooks and some self-study guides for them to use. It's difficult for us to have the same type of training environment in those northern and remote communities as there would be in a large urban centre. We are still working that through. It's something particularly for employees in our retail network and in those communities that we have to solve.

I know that in Quebec in particular our human rights representative has spent time going to some of those northern communities with her team to try to address some of the unique situations that have come up. It's something we're still working on and seeking solutions to.

• (1200)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Perhaps that could be an approach taken across the country as well given that I believe the challenges faced by workers will only get more serious if the supports aren't there.

Obviously we are dealing here with gender and often with women facing inequality. Of course the pay equity lawsuit has meant that Canada Post needs to pay many women who weren't paid equitably for the work they were doing. I'm wondering where Canada Post is in terms of dealing with that.

Ms. Ann Therese MacEachern: We are obviously very committed to applying the pay equity ruling as efficiently as possible. It's a complex issue and it is taking time. We have about 30,000 employee files that have to be reviewed. The records go back 30 years. Many of them are paper-based and on microfiche so it's quite a daunting task. I want to assure you that we remain absolutely committed to respecting that ruling.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

That concludes today's meeting. Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with us. It was very interesting. I wish you all a good day.

However, I invite the committee members to stay, if they wish, since we do have a short informal meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.

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