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Chair

Ms. Marilyn Gladu

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Seeing it is 3:30 p.m., I would like to welcome everybody and get this committee meeting started.

I want to welcome Mr. Sarai, who is on our Liberal friends' side today, and our witnesses from Status of Women Canada. We have Justine Akman and Vaughn Charlton to help us today.

Before we begin, we have a brief bit of committee business to take care of. You will recall that at the last meeting we had some changes made to the brief we're going to send out to invite public input to our process, so the changes that were requested have been made and sent to you. I am therefore looking for a motion to send the briefing out post-haste, immediately.

Ms. Malcolmson.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Is the submission date still May 12? If so, is it not impossible for our constituents to read about it in the newspaper and think about the topic and then write their letter and give us meaningful input?

The Chair: Yes, the date is still intended to be May 12. Yes, it is difficult but not impossible, and the reason for the May 12 date is that in order to release a report by the deadline we've planned, we need to have the input by then.

Ms. Malcolmson.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: The last draft we saw was April 15, I think, so I wonder why.... It feels cumbersome to approve a press release by committee, and I'm hoping we can set up a different process or just say, "Here's the draft; does anybody have terrible objections to it?" Look, we're sitting for more than two weeks.

The Chair: For the future, I would agree. It was the NDP replacement who made the recommendation to amend, so certainly in the future—

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Touché.

The Chair: —we shall be more expedient, but that's what was decided at the last meeting.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you. Understood. We'll try to be more flexible so we can give people more time.

Thank you for filling me in on the background.

The Chair: Do we have a motion to approve?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): I so move.

The Chair: Ms. Vandenberg—

All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: It is carried.

Very good. I believe Ms. Vandenberg has a motion.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Yes, thank you. I have a motion:

That in relation to Orders of Reference from the House respecting bills:

(a) the Clerk of the Committee shall, upon the Committee receiving such an Order of Reference, write to each Member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the Committee to invite those Members to file with the Clerk of the Committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the Bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the Committee consider;

(b) suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a), at least 48 hours prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill to which the amendments relate shall be deemed to be proposed during the said consideration, provided that the Committee may, by motion, vary this deadline in respect of a given Bill; and

(c) during the clause-by-clause consideration of a Bill, the Chair shall allow a Member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them

The Chair: Excellent. Now to discussion of the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Excellent. That is carried.

We shall begin then with Justine Akman, who is here from Status of Women Canada. She is going to bring some introductory remarks.

Go ahead. You have 10 minutes.

Ms. Justine Akman (Director General, Policy and External Relations, Policy and External Relations Directorate, Status of Women Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the committee for inviting Status of Women Canada back on an issue so near and dear to our hearts.

[Translation]

So I will discuss Status of Women's role in promoting gender-based analysis, or GBA.

Gender-based analysis has been a Government of Canada commitment since 1995, but as the committee knows, through its own previous study of the issue and through two Auditor General reports, it has been unevenly applied.

[English]

As an agency, Status of Women has a central role in supporting the use of GBA across federal organizations. As a centre of excellence on GBA, this includes providing departments and agencies with the tools, training, and guidance they need to effectively incorporate GBA in the development of policies, programs, and legislation.

In recent years we've made important progress in promoting GBA as a competency for all federal officials. For example, we've done this through developing and launching the introduction to GBA online course on the Status of Women website and making basic GBA training available to all federal officials. Since 2012, over 6,000 federal employees from over 50 departments and agencies have completed the course.

We know, however, that there's much more to be done. The recommendations provided by the Auditor General and the government's recent commitments on gender equality present us with an important opportunity.

This government's support for GBA as a priority is reflected in our minister's mandate letter, which asks her to ensure that gender considerations are incorporated into cabinet decision-making. The commitment was further underscored by budget 2016, which provided increased investments in Status of Women Canada over the next five years, including for GBA.

These new resources will increase the agency's capacity to support departments in carrying out the government's GBA commitment. We've provided the committee with copies of the action plan that has been developed by Status of Women Canada, the Privy Council Office, and the Treasury Board Secretariat in response to the Auditor General's report. It covers the next four years, from 2016 to 2020, and sets out enhanced actions in key areas to ensure deeper integration of GBA in government work.

I'd like to briefly highlight the action plan's components for you.

The first is barriers. The Auditor General's first recommendation asked that we identify barriers to GBA implementation and develop concrete measures to address them. This first step is critical. While some of the barriers are known and have been highlighted by the AG, we have not systematically reached out to departments directly on the internal barriers they face.

Since the release of the AG's report, Status of Women has worked with PCO and Treasury Board Secretariat to refine a detailed GBA survey that has been sent to all deputies. It's meant to capture not only their internal resources and capacities for GBA but also, importantly, to identify barriers preventing the consistent use of GBA in the development of government initiatives. This information will be critical to determining how we can focus additional supports.

With that said, we are currently able to identify some of the broad areas for enhanced action.

The first is enhanced tools and training. Although basic training, as I mentioned before, is available online, through all of the work that we have done with 30 departments over the last five years, we've also learned that GBA training is most effective when tailored to

specific audiences and when developed and delivered in partnership with experts from the sector that is receiving the training.

Under the action plan, we'll work with partners to enhance and expand the available GBA training suite. This will include developing new in-depth training for different sectors—for example, in science and technology or in the security sector. We'll also be doing it for special functional communities, such as in the areas of research or evaluation. This will also include updating and modernizing our online tools and resources, including our GBA training course, to leverage new learning technologies.

Going forward, the second thing that we'll be doing is giving greater focus to providing gender advice on some key government initiatives through what we're calling strategic interventions. This will include working with central agencies to identify areas in which the application of GBA is especially relevant. For example, this might take place where an initiative has a potentially significant impact on women and/or diverse groups, where it's related to our agency's priorities, or when it's a particularly high priority for the government.

We'll also work across government with senior officials to determine priority areas for collaboration and support.

● (1535)

We're planning on augmenting our ability within the agency to develop internal expertise in more areas so that our analysts can provide direct advice in relation to specific departments, portfolios, or issues. We're already playing this role, and I'd like to give you a couple of quick examples.

Our recent engagement on the federal social infrastructure strategy resulted in the identification of the need for greater investment in shelters and transition housing to better meet the needs of women and children. We were able to bring our Status of Women expertise to this file.

We've also been engaged in work being undertaken by the Canadian Armed Forces related to integrating gender perspectives into military planning and operations. These are early examples of the type of concrete, collaborative work we hope to continue to engage in.

The Auditor General has also highlighted the need to do more to monitor GBA performance and to report out. Under the action plan, we'll work to design structures, which for the first time will allow us to systematically monitor, report, and reflect on our progress, and to modify our course when necessary.

Actions to support this will include the surveying of deputies on an annual basis, as I mentioned earlier, to collect information on GBA implementation. We'll be working with other government departments and agencies to explore the development of gender equality indicators in key areas, so we can better track progress. We'll be establishing a more formal evaluation structure for the GBA function across government, and we'll also identify ways to periodically report out on the implementation across government, including lessons learned, sharing of best practices, and strategic directions moving forward.

Improving our ability to report progress on the application of GBA will allow us to demonstrate to Canadians how it has enhanced the policies, programs, and services they've received. Better monitoring and reporting will also provide us with practical examples of the impact of GBA that we can share with provinces, territories, and our international partners, many of whom look to Canada for leadership in this area.

We appreciate the work to be undertaken by the committee to inform a whole-of-government approach to GBA implementation.

I now welcome any questions you may have.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your excellent presentation.

We're going to begin our first round of questioning with Ms. Damoff, who is splitting her time with Ms. Ludwig.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): I am. Thank you.

Thank you very much for your presentations, and thank you especially for all the work you have done on this for so many years. I think all of us share a frustration that it hasn't been implemented by all of government at this point.

One of the things I want to ask—and perhaps you could share any feedback you have on it—is whether you think people understand what the term “gender-based analysis plus” means. Is there a disconnect between what it is, what people think it is, and what it can deliver for them?

Ms. Justine Akman: We do get a lot of questions about the plus, which is to ensure people take into consideration full diversity. It becomes clear when people go through our training. The training is developed for adult education. It's extremely accessible. I'm hoping that most of your members have done it, and I would really encourage you to do so. Once people have taken the training, we have had feedback that it becomes much clearer.

Where our challenge has been in the past is being clear to Canadians, and even within the public service, about what difference GBA can make to a policy or program, and that's what we're intending on addressing.

Ms. Pam Damoff: If it was clear what it was, everyone would be doing it. The only one that does it right now on a regular basis is immigration, where it's mandated. I have to worry that even though people understand... Maybe people don't understand, within the government, why it's good for them to be developing policy through a gender lens.

Do you get any feedback on that? I'm not trying to be argumentative at all. I'm just saying if people truly understood it, they'd be doing it.

Ms. Justine Akman: It has to do with leadership and with time. There are a number of barriers that may have also got in the way of doing good GBA in the past. The 30 departments that were part of our action plan had gender focal points, and they've had gender champions in their departments who are there to explain and to help different analysts within departments understand how to conduct GBA and the kind of difference it can make.

It's not that it hasn't been done at all; it just hasn't been done to the extent that we would have liked it to have been done in the past.

My colleague would like to add something.

Ms. Vaughn Charlton (Manager, Gender-Based Analysis, Status of Women Canada): Thanks.

I wanted to add that I think the misconception about GBA is that it's an add-on, something you do after you've done all of your work.

I think people who do it understand it's part of good policy-making. I'm not sure it would be correct to say only CIC is doing it; it's more that only CIC is mandated to report it. There are a lot of analysts in government who know that doing gender analysis is simply part of doing a full analysis of any issue. Some are doing it intuitively without calling it GBA. Sometimes it's drawing people's attention to practices they're already engaged in, as opposed to having them feel this is some extra thing they need to do at the end, or that it's extra work.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Actually, I have done it, and so has all my staff.

I'll pass it over to you.

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I'm going to go along the same lines as my colleague for questioning.

Do you know if there are any public policy programs that actually would integrate the concept of GBA or GBA+ into the curriculum?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: We are working with the Canada School of Public Service to make our course a part of the core curriculum for policy analysts. That's an ongoing discussion, but the CSPS itself is reorganizing itself and taking advantage of many online resources that exist, including our course. That's the example I can think of.

I know that as part of foreign service development programs at Global Affairs Canada, for example, they have a mandatory gender-based analysis course. Those are ones off the top of my head, but we could certainly look into that further.

• (1545)

Ms. Justine Akman: I would just add that most or many universities offer very good women's studies programs. It's a very good foundational kind of training for gender-based analysis going forward, if you're asking about formal university and college settings.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: When you think of a women's studies program, it's something quite separate from public policy. My question was more about...That was one thing you had mentioned when you were responding to my colleague's question.

Certainly there's an identification of a gap. We have public policy graduate programs, but in order to understand the concept and the real integration of GBA, they would have to take maybe a women's studies program. It could be better implemented by putting it into the curriculum of all public policy programs.

Ms. Justine Akman: Perhaps. I don't think that we can give a complete answer right now about whether or not GBA itself is part of public policy programs. If you like, we could do the research and get back to the committee.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: I'll just give you a scenario. I had a call earlier today from a lawyer. The lawyer was interested in talking with me about gender equity, gender parity in the recruitment or the hiring of judges in Canada. When I'm looking at the list of government departments, I don't see the justice department.

Was there an option of how you selected the different departments?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: Actually, the Department of Justice has been engaged in GBA for quite a long time. Of the 25 original action plan departments that were part of our 2009 action plan, the Department of Justice was a part of it. They're actually very engaged in GBA and have, actually, a GBA unit.

The committee might want to hear from them. Certainly they've developed some important tools, especially in relation to GBA and research. They've developed some tools that are actually on our website now. In fact, the Department of Justice is quite engaged in GBA.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Did they introduce GBA in terms of recruitment of lawyers from the bar to the bench?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: It wouldn't be something I'd be familiar with, unfortunately.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Harder.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you.

Can you summarize for me the chief objective of GBA?

Ms. Justine Akman: Go ahead.

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: Obviously, it's to ensure that as we're developing policies and programs, that we've taken men and women and their diverse experiences into account.

For me, and I do a lot of speaking on GBA with diverse audiences. I try to highlight that gender-based analysis is really about challenging your personal assumptions as a policy-maker. We all walk around the world with a lot of assumptions based on how our lives have gone or the people we know, without pausing to think whether we might be accidentally—unintentionally, not because we want to do this—replicating our own norms into our policies and programs as federal officials.

It's really about taking a moment to ask these few questions. Have I consulted numerous sources? Have I relied on my own personal

views, unintentionally, when making policies and programs? If I were to say what the objective of GBA is, it would be to ensure that as a government we have policies and programs that reflect the diversity of Canadians.

Ms. Rachael Harder: As of right now, how many departments are currently working with your department in order to implement GBA?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: About 30 have formally signed on to our action plan, which means that there have been agreements at the deputy minister levels that will implement a GBA framework with a set number of elements.

Above and beyond that, we have an interdepartmental committee that has about 35 members. That number goes up and down at different times as different departments and agencies become engaged. Formally, I would say about 35, but in terms of practitioners, there are GBA practitioners all over.

Ms. Rachael Harder: What would you say are some of the common reasons that would cause people or departments not to engage in GBA?

Ms. Justine Akman: The Auditor General's report talked about barriers to gender-based analysis. They pointed to a number of factors. Some of it was leadership, some of it was time, some of it was resources and focus being put on that issue specifically.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, we are going to be going out to departments to see where some of the other barriers may lie. We have some hunches. Our action plan, for example, I think has been very successful. It came out of the 2009 Auditor General's report to get departments to have a gender focal point, a gender champion, and an action plan. If I were to guess, one thing that we'll find out is that it became a little bit of a ghetto, just a bit of a check mark.

Hopefully our actions going forward will also help address that, but it's definitely a time for reflection, and we're looking to senior managers across government to give us some feedback on that.

● (1550)

Ms. Rachael Harder: One thing you mentioned as a possible barrier was the resources involved. I imagine there would be a monetary resource—this would cost something—but also that there would be a resource involved in terms of an employee having to spend time doing this.

Can you comment on what the dollar figure would be and what the time requirement would be?

Ms. Justine Akman: I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to do so. It would vary enormously from initiative to initiative, so it would be impossible, because GBA affects everything from climate change to much more distinct initiatives. It would be impossible to put a time frame on that.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I guess I'm just wondering whether, if we wanted to look at the accessibility of GBA across all government departments, and if every single government department were to include GBA, we would have a dollar figure and a human resource figure. If we're going to do this, then we're going to have to budget for it.

What would that number look like and what would the man-hours look like if we were to engage in this across all government departments in Canada?

Ms. Justine Akman: We really have not looked at it in that way. It's supposed to be part of everybody's training and job descriptions, and departments have seen it that way as well.

For example, ISED, the industry department, has made it mandatory for all of their employees to take GBA training, so it's a built-in, integrated part of their daily work, not an add-on that is an added expense of departments.

Ms. Rachael Harder: That makes sense. Thank you.

All around this table, we've all done the GBA online course. One thing was that there are six GBA elements: identifying a responsibility centre, undertaking an organizational needs assessment, providing training and tools, undertaking a GBA pilot initiative, making a policy statement or statement of intent, and having an ongoing monitoring process.

As the lead of my organization, being the member of Parliament, I look at this list, and it's incredibly cumbersome for me. Could you comment with regard to that and suggest how we might be able to get the list down so that it feels less cumbersome for someone like me?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: What you're describing is our GBA framework. We talk about who is formally engaged in GBA in the 30 departments; we've engaged them to integrate those six elements department-wide.

I think we've tried not to make it too cumbersome. The idea is that you develop some expertise within your department, that you know who is responsible for it, that you have someone who is making sure that it's happening, that you've done some level of training with your staff. The pilot initiative is really not meant to be something separate or cumbersome; in fact, it's meant to make you aware of applying GBA to an existing policy or program to see how it has changed. Those are really the elements for success.

Certainly if you look internationally at where gender is incorporated in government structures, those are the key things you need to ensure long-term success. Importantly, the key thing that you need in place is to make sure that GBA isn't one person's responsibility and if that person leaves the department there's no GBA capacity. What we have tried to do is give the elements of a structure such as you described that will make GBA sustainable for a department—not necessarily for an individual, but for a large department.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I have a quick comment on that.

I see the point in terms of its becoming a way of thinking—I guess I would describe it as that—and for me it's probably something I am fairly aware of, but when I look at a list of requirements, it appears intimidating at first glance.

The Chair: All right.

We'll go to Ms. Malcolmson for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for your work and for being here and for being the lead on this important issue. I think there's lots of common cause around the table. We want this to work well.

I'll express my slight despair or cynicism around how long we've had.... There have been two Auditor General's reports. In both cases Status of Women has said they agreed with all the AG recommendations. They were going to establish a plan. That was in 2009.

Then in 2015, they said they were going to establish a five-year progress report and they were going to report in 2020.

I'm wondering what will be different in 2020. I don't want us to be like *Groundhog Day* here. I think the thing we just keep talking about is what if it were mandatory? We have some good results from Immigration Canada, where it's written right into their act. What would that look like for Status of Women as sort of an enforcer, someone to ensure that a mandatory requirement to conduct GBA across all departments was a recommendation of this committee?

• (1555)

Ms. Justine Akman: It is mandatory in IRCC's legislation, and that means they do a good job reporting back to Parliament on GBA. One thing we have also talked about extensively is that even if it becomes mandatory, that would not be enough.

You definitely still need the leadership, the monitoring and reporting, the analysis of barriers, the checking back in, the improving of the situation, and really the dedication to doing that kind of analysis.

Whether or not it becomes mandatory will be a decision of this government. It's something that was raised in the public accounts committee as well. There are different ways in which that could happen, but it's something I'm not really in a position to comment on with this committee right now. There are a variety of ways. I suppose it could be in distinct departments' acts as it is for IRCC, but there are other mechanisms and ways of going about that.

In other countries, a range of different things have been done. Canada would have to analyze those. All the lawyers would have to get involved and analyze the pros and cons of implementing legislation similar to what we see in some other countries.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I think that's very much what we're talking about here. Can we convince Parliament to take some steps that would actually mean we're going to get a different result the next time the AG looks at this issue?

I guess a parallel to the Official Languages Act would be something that also has more teeth. That was a commitment by Parliament at that time, and it's something that then carries on, and there's an agency that is responsible for being the particular watchdog on that issue. It has had good impact. That just means it happens. It's just automatic, along with, of course, all the training and support and education and encouragement that naturally your group would be doing.

Have there been any conversations internally around that? Are there any barriers within the department to being that sort of enforcer or having someone to ensure that it happens?

Ms. Justine Akman: Do you mean to ensure that the GBA happens or that...?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I mean to ensure that the requirement is met.

Ms. Justine Akman: If I understand your question correctly, do you mean are there barriers to Status of Women being the enforcer for gender-based analysis?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Is there a budget issue or a...?

Ms. Justine Akman: The model we've always used is that we are there as facilitators. We're there to provide the training, but our goal has been to enable other departments, because whether we dedicated all resources within Status of Women to gender-based analysis or just the existing ones, we couldn't possibly do gender-based analysis for all of government.

As to whether we could play that monitoring role that you're discussing for all of government, we really need to empower the experts within the departments to do their gender-based analysis.

We can give a helping hand and, as I discussed, we're planning on doing that going forward with our strategic initiatives, but we haven't traditionally played that really strong enforcement role in the way you're speaking about it.

Of course, we're not alone in this either. It's also the role of the Privy Council Office and Treasury Board Secretariat to play that kind of coordinating role for gender-based analysis and to ensure that it is followed in memorandums to cabinet and also in Treasury Board submissions and regulations and evaluations and other things that they look at.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Moving to the list of which departments and agencies have committed to the departmental action plan, do we have on record already who has committed and who hasn't?

• (1600)

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: We certainly know who they are and we could provide that list to the committee.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: That would be helpful, because I think there's quite a sizeable separation, isn't there? I can't remember what the number is, but it's something like out of 110—I won't try to make up the figure.

Ms. Justine Akman: Thirty departments have formally signed on, and part of that had to do with our own capacity to reach out to all of them. That's not to say that no gender-based analysis is happening in other departments. It is a government policy and has been for some time. I wouldn't want people to think that one is completely exclusive of the other—that if you're not part of our 30 action plan departments, you're not doing any gender-based analysis. All departments and agencies are supposed to be doing it.

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: When we selected the 25 initial departments, we did it keeping in mind where most of the program spending was, trying to reach out to those departments that have the biggest direct impact. Accounting for our small size and our limited capacity to be working one-on-one with departments, which is extremely limited, we tried to get the most value for our efforts, so

they were selected. A lot of the 110 would probably be small agencies, some of them subsumed under larger agencies that probably do have a GBA policy, so it's a bit of a misleading figure.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I appreciate that you would identify the ones that you intuitively felt would have the biggest impact. That's a smart way to operate.

Have you identified any other barriers that would—

The Chair: I'm sorry. That's your time.

We'll go over to our Liberal friends. Ms. Sahota, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Thank you again for being with us here today.

I wanted to turn this into a positive perspective on what we have achieved so far. I'd like to get a few solid examples from you, other than immigration; I know that's been coming up.

How have other departments or agencies applied GBA to any particular policy, and what was the outcome? Did it change that policy for the better? Could you elaborate on that to give me a better idea?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: Sure. Thanks for the question.

We have a lot of examples. Certainly the departments themselves are the best ones to speak to their own policies. We won't know them in as much depth, but we certainly get feedback from departments quite a bit. The health portfolio has a lot of excellent examples. It was certainly surprising to me to learn how little medical research still is based on a male model and uses male lab animals and things like that.

The health portfolio has done quite a bit of work in developing sex- and gender-based analysis tools. The example that comes to mind, and it's in our course, is research on heart disease. By using SGBA, it was determined that the symptoms of heart disease were very different for men and women. Something that we might assume is the same for everyone turned out not to be at all. I can also think of programs at employment and skills development dealing with engaging indigenous communities in economic programming and things like that.

A really interesting one that we've been working on recently comes from dealing more and more with operational agencies. As Justine was just mentioning, we've been working with the Canadian Armed Forces, and if the committee hasn't seen this document, we'd encourage you to look at it. The Chief of the Defence Staff has issued a directive on the implementation of the women, peace, and security resolutions, which are UN Security Council resolutions. This document, which was released in January, commits the Canadian Armed Forces to conducting GBA in all their operational military planning. I certainly don't know of anything like this internationally, so it'll be very interesting to see its progress.

So it isn't about women in the military, and yes, it is about women in the military. What they're looking at is that their operational effectiveness is increased when they're looking at gender and diversity going into an operation. That came from General Vance's experiences in Afghanistan, where they realized we could have been much more effective if they had been engaging other parts of the population. That's an ongoing example of looking at GBA not simply about the people in your workforce but as something that can enhance your work internationally.

Those are just a few. We encourage you to be asking the departments you're going to see about their examples of GBA.

• (1605)

Ms. Ruby Sahota: We definitely will be. Thank you for sharing that, because it gives me some insight as to which departments to ask what questions.

We've been hearing around the table that there hasn't been implementation everywhere, but it seems to me that a lot of departments have started implementing it. If we can get these positive stories out about how it's actually made their policies or programs more effective... What is your department doing in terms of publicizing the work that other departments and agencies have been doing in regard to GBA?

Ms. Justine Akman: This is a part of the action plan that I personally am very excited about, because I think we really need to do a better job of explaining to ourselves as federal officials, but more importantly to Canadians, why gender-based analysis is so important. I don't believe that we need to have some formal exercise called "gender-based analysis", but we do need to ensure that gender considerations are taken into account in all of our programming and policies.

An example is work done last year with ISED, the industry department, in ensuring that women owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and women entrepreneurs were being fully considered in the programs to support SMEs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and in the programming and policies of ISED. It wasn't actually called a formal GBA, but by focusing in on the gender aspect, the department was able to identify gaps and realized they needed more research. They worked with StatsCan to start developing that research and then on going forward with changes to policies and programs.

Going forward, we will be focusing on that part of GBA: how do we tell the story better? As I mentioned in my opening remarks, we'll be developing indicators. We'll be thinking about an evaluation strategy of some sort, whether it's formal or informal. We're not quite

sure yet, because it's quite daunting. We'll also be thinking about what kinds of reports we can issue to show people that, yes, it has made a difference to Canadians.

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: I wonder if I could add a bit.

The Chair: You have one minute and 30 seconds. Go ahead.

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: I think your question was about what we do to promote the best practices of others. I have a few probably very concrete examples of the ways we do that.

The first is that we have a very robust interdepartmental committee on GBA. As I said, there are 35 members, and it's a very active forum. Departments talk to one another about the work they're doing, and they learn from each other.

As Justine mentioned earlier, we've sent out a GBA survey to all deputies. We're going to ask them for examples of where GBA was used so that we can use those as best practices going forward. Our training is always augmented and enhanced when we have those real examples of where it was applied. We've gone out to ask deputies in order to have best practices.

As part of our upcoming GBA awareness week, which is happening from May 16 to 20—just a plug there—we have been collecting from departments some of their success stories. We'll be putting those on our website. They're just small things, but it's just to be inspiring in terms of where there have been successes. We do collect anecdotal evidence, and we hope to get more through our survey.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Thank you.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Thank you very much.

The Chair: All right. I'll go over to my Conservative colleague, Ms. Vecchio.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thanks for being here today.

You've talked about a couple of things. As we've all said, we've done the GBA+ online. What other tools and training are available for departments so that we can move forward on this?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: In terms of the training we provide at Status of Women, we're a small agency, and what we've tried to do over the past couple of years is partner with other parts of government that have adult learning specialists, in particular the Centre for Intercultural Learning at Global Affairs Canada. I mentioned earlier that they would be involved in training foreign service officers on GBA, so they have some internal expertise.

We've entered into a memorandum of understanding with them for the delivery of advanced GBA training. I know that recently a number of departments took them up on that. In terms of what we're encouraging departments to do, we're working on a cluster approach. For example, we're saying to departments, "Natural Resources Canada and Environment Canada, work together, and hire the CIL to develop this training for you." It's something that we think is working really well and that we'd like to continue.

In terms of developing advanced GBA training, going forward, we're hoping for this cluster approach, whereby departments that have similar business lines can come together and hire CIL, using our resources under the memorandum of understanding, to do more in-depth training. We've had some good uptake on that.

That would be primarily the additional training that is available.

• (1610)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: How is it measured? We talk about having success stories, but when we are looking at GBA+ and then we are actually following up, how do we know whether it was actually implemented or whether it was how things rolled out in the first place? Is there a measurement of that?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: That is the million-dollar question.

Ms. Justine Akman: It gets back to what I—

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Do I get a million bucks?

Ms. Justine Akman: It gets back to what I was referring to earlier. We are planning on doing a better job of monitoring and reporting out on GBA, so that will help.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Excellent.

As you said, you are very small, but are we taking this and putting it on the road? Is it something that we are showing out to not-for-profit organizations and small businesses?

We talked about the marketing, and I mentioned that, but is it something that we are trying to promote to small businesses or to charitable organizations so that they too are having the GBA done?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: Our online training has been accessed by many civil service organizations, universities, and provinces. I think most of the Government of Alberta's deputies have taken our online course and have done training under our MoU, so it is widely used.

In terms of whether we have concertedly trotted it across the country, no, but we certainly use all the.... For example, when we fund groups through our women's program, many of them end up taking our GBA training because they need to conduct a GBA as part of their reporting back on their projects.

Yes, it is part of our civil society engagement, and it is certainly widely accessed.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: You mentioned that you don't want to make it mandatory. The AG indicated that maybe reporting and making it mandatory it might work out better. I know it is too difficult to enforce. What can we do as parliamentarians to make sure that it is being done within our Parliament and within our departments? How is it that we can move forward and do that?

Ms. Justine Akman: I wouldn't want to say that we, as an agency and as officials, have views about whether or not it should be mandatory at this point. I just wanted to make sure that was clear.

We certainly encourage all parliamentarians to take the course and to raise gender issues in the work that they are doing.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I have one more minute.

The AG report said that Status of Women had drafted a strategic plan from 2015 to 2020, in consultation with the central agencies, to enhance SWC's ability to provide advice and assistance on implementing GBA.

What are your next steps, and what do you expect to come out of this plan?

Ms. Justine Akman: I talked about the plan in my opening remarks. We are going to be looking at barriers, doing strategic initiatives, upgrading our training and tools, and improving on our monitoring and reporting. That is what we are expecting.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: What are the strategic tools, exactly? Do you have any idea what that actually looks like?

Ms. Justine Akman: Are you asking about the enhanced tools and training, or the strategic intervention?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I'm sorry. I mean the strategic intervention.

Ms. Justine Akman: We have just started a process whereby we are trying to identify what those might look like. We are going to be dedicating some of the new resources that we have through budget 2016 towards this work.

We are looking for a combination of resources. Sometimes they call it the "low-hanging fruit"; we make sure that we can explain GBA and its importance to Canadians and to federal officials. We will be looking at everything, from government priorities and initiatives that have a particular impact on women in diverse communities to some operational environments where we think GBA is really important. We are going to be looking at a variety of different initiatives and determining how we can ensure that GBA is part of the policy or program development process—not at the end of the process, as an afterthought, but all the way through, from the beginning of the development process.

The Chair: Very good. That is your time.

We'll now go over to Ms. Vandenberg for five minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much.

I want to pick up on the strategic interventions, and in particular the answer you gave to my colleague Ms. Sahota about Security Council Resolution 1325 and the work that is being done with the armed forces. Obviously, as somebody who has been in two peacekeeping missions on the civilian side, I am very interested in that.

Would there be synergies with other areas? For instance, you are working with the armed forces, but Canada also deploys a number of civilians to peacekeeping missions, either directly as a secondment or through funding different organizations.

Is part of your strategic intervention to do with the armed forces right now? If not, would that be something that you would be expanding to, because of the application that it would have if you have the best practices?

•(1615)

Ms. Justine Akman: Vaughn and her team members have been spending an awful lot of time with the Canadian Armed Forces in the past year because of the importance of this issue and the women, peace, and security initiative. It's definitely something we see continuing in terms of our operational funding going forward, not just with the Canadian Armed Forces but through using that as a model for other like-minded agencies, other security agencies. Those might include the RCMP, etc. They have to come forward and want to be part of that, but the goal is that when we have a model that's working, which we think others can learn from, we can bring this cluster of departments together so they can actually learn from each other.

Did you want to add to that?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: If I understand correctly, I think your question was about whether this would be applied to civilian personnel as well and to the DND side of the Canadian Armed Forces. It's not a question we're well equipped to answer. I know that the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence are not always totally on the same track, but certainly we've reached out to the deputy minister at DND to encourage this type of collaboration.

If we might make a suggestion, it would be great to bring DND and the Canadian Armed Forces here to ask them that question. I do know that the implementation of Resolution 1325 and this new directive are also meant to be working in tandem with a number of initiatives they have. Obviously, Operation Honour is one. They have a new diversity strategy that's being rolled out. I think the idea is that the lines of effort under the directive will be meant to organize efforts across the Canadian Armed Forces and DND.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Often when we're looking at Security Council Resolution 1325, we're talking about the blue berets and the military aspects of peacekeeping, but Canada is actually very much involved in deploying civilians to peacekeeping missions, often through Global Affairs and formerly through CIDA or even through Canadian-funded organizations like WUSC and others. For instance, the mission I was on was a UN mission in Kosovo under a deployment through CIDA through the OSCE.

We're deploying personnel who are funded and paid by the Canadian government to peacekeeping missions. It would not necessarily be through DND. It would probably be through Global Affairs. Is this something that would be applied to that?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: As I understand it, Global Affairs is the lead on the implementation of the women, peace, and security initiative, and this directive relates specifically to the implementation of Resolution 1325, so I would say yes.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: You mentioned the Centre for Intercultural Learning. Is that something that even NGOs that are deploying Canadians would be able to access?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: Yes, in theory it would be. We get a lot of questions from all over the place about training and who can access it. More recently I think it was a university that asked us whether they could access training. We directed them to CIL, and as far as I know, they were open to it. I don't want to speak for CIL, but my impression is that they are open to developing training for whoever wants to hire them.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: You mentioned that internationally there are countries looking to Canada for leadership on GBA, so if we have these models, particularly in areas like peacekeeping, would we be able to share those with intergovernmental organizations such as the UN or the OSCE so they could replicate those models?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: I know that the Department of National Defence is very involved with a nordic training facility that has some excellent GBA training. I know that there's been a lot of cross-pollination there. Again, I couldn't speak to it. It's a little bit outside our area of expertise, but I do know there's ongoing dialogue on these tools and on making sure that our tools are on par with, or better than, what is available internationally.

The Chair: That's your time.

Now we go to my friend Ms. Harder.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I don't know.... Do you have a specific question you want to ask?

•(1620)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I have some.

Is there a way that Status of Women can specifically target the senior officials of departments in promoting GBA? Have you brought them in when you've actually been doing this GBA? Have you brought them in when you've been dealing with the deputy ministers?

Ms. Justine Akman: Very recently our minister wrote to her colleagues about the importance of GBA. A letter similar to that went out at the deputy minister level. We have a network of GBA champions, and they just had a meeting yesterday and committed to meeting more often, meaning at least twice a year if not more. That is a committee made up of senior people responsible for GBA across the federal government.

There's a whole range of efforts, and they're also described in the action plan that was part of the response to the Auditor General.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: When people in these organizations come out of this discussion and ask people to get engaged, are we dealing with mostly men or mostly women? Are we finding that it's men and women in an equal balance?

Ms. Justine Akman: In terms of GBA champions across the department?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes.

Ms. Justine Akman: It's completely mixed. It's reflective of the federal public service at the senior level.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Okay.

The Chair: Okay. We're over to Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Thanks very much for being here.

I'd like to start off by building on Ms. Harder's initial line of questioning about resources.

You mentioned it's quite difficult to assess what kind of resources it would take to implement the government's GBA mandate. One of the Auditor General's recommendations that Status of Women Canada did agree to was to take steps to determine what the resources would be.

Have there been any steps taken to identify the resources or identify funds?

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes. It was part of the request that went in and part of the money that will be coming to Status of Women as part of budget 2016.

Status of Women got \$23.1 million over five years, with \$3 million in the first year and \$5 million ongoing. That will not all go to GBA-proper analysis. It's a portion of that, and we're still working that out internally. Some of it will be for the kind of training and tools that we've been talking about, but some of it will also be for working on those strategic initiatives so that we can offer gender experts to other departments to work with them on their policy and program initiatives.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Those are funds that you've identified as a starting point, but you don't know what the total size of the pie will be to fully implement GBAs, if I understand it.

Ms. Justine Akman: We're still assessing, and it's ongoing, but as I mentioned in earlier remarks we're fundamentally a facilitator. We can do some of this work, but there are many documents that go to cabinet, many documents that go to Treasury Board, etc. We need everybody to take ownership of ensuring that diversity and gender are considered in initiatives.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Excellent. On that note, I think it's a natural segue into the need to build capacity within the different departments.

Do you find the tools that you do have to be useful now, whether it's the GBA online module or the champions network you mentioned? What successes have come from those tools?

Ms. Justine Akman: I'll let Vaughn answer as well, but we get excellent feedback about the tool. I hope this committee found that as well. Especially for people just starting out, it's very accessible.

There's nothing we've done since 2009, in terms of our action plan, that we wouldn't want to continue. I think those were all great successes. It's a building process, so now we just want to take that and go further.

GBA awareness week is a great opportunity to raise awareness, and there are our gender focal points, ensuring that there are people with real expertise in their area. I can't emphasize that enough. We can do a lot of training at Status of Women Canada itself and we can recruit people from different walks of life, but we really need people who understand that particular policy or program area, as you'll soon hear from our colleague from IRCC. We simply can't develop all that expertise in Status of Women.

If I just take that as an example, it takes years sometimes to learn a policy or program area or to be an expert in supporting small businesses, etc., so we really want to keep pushing that expertise out to the departments.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Sure. Anecdotally, I agree. I found the tool helpful. I think one of the problems that we're coming across when we start talking about GBA is there's a lot of great anecdotal evidence, but we don't have a lot of objective monitoring. The Auditor General made that finding.

Are there any sorts of annual reporting mechanisms within the different departments that you say need to take ownership so we have an idea of the progress they're making before the 2020 report?

• (1625)

Ms. Justine Akman: It varies from department to department, but there's a great conversation going on in the government right now about being able to report better on its results and outcomes. We're certainly encouraging departments to consider gender and diversity as they think about their outcomes framework.

As well, as I've mentioned, we ourselves are also looking at that, at doing something specific by Status of Women, whether it's an annual report or posting things online. We haven't determined it all yet, but that's the kind of idea we have in mind.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Chair, is there time left?

The Chair: You have 35 seconds.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Very quickly, if there's one missing tool that's not in the toolbox, what would it be to help departments implement GBA?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: We can't underscore enough the importance of leadership. It's one thing to have training available, and we can do that all we want, but we know that leadership is that critical piece. When we look at the departments that have been successful in implementing GBA, it's because it came from the top and was taken seriously from the top. It was seen not as something that they were doing because they were told, but because they understood the intrinsic value of doing this type of analysis and were able to translate that to the people who work for them. I think that's the critical tool.

I know I'm going over your time right now, but this is why we want to take an approach whereby we're creating training that is tailored to departments. As you say, we need things that are beyond anecdotal, that really speak to the departments in their language and show them how their own policies and programs can be improved by using GBA.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you very much.

The Chair: All right, Ms. Malcolmson. You have three minutes. Take us home.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you.

I'd like to understand more about how GBA is being applied to policy proposals that are going to cabinet. Status of Women's 2016-17 report on plans and priorities indicated that you will be developing systems to ensure that there is that checklist for policy proposals.

Could you talk a bit about your process and what you're finding?

Ms. Justine Akman: I'm not sure if you're hearing from the Privy Council Office in this committee. Yes? Okay.

They will be able to answer that with a greater level of detail, but as per the action plan following the Auditor General's report, they have committed to making a checklist. It's just to ensure a more robust GBA is done at the point of the memorandum to cabinet or the policy proposal.

At the moment, there is a paragraph in the consideration section that addresses GBA. Depending on the department, the timing of the initiative, the priorities, and so on, sometimes it was a tack-on at the end. I know that PCO is currently doing a lot of thinking to ensure that GBA is considered all the way through the policy process and is really integrated into the whole policy thinking and development process. If you are hearing from them, you'll hear more about their thinking on that.

I will just add that they have committed to ensuring that all of their staff take the GBA training by this fall, so that should also make a difference. That includes the senior management.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Excellent.

Does Status of Women still have a gender-based analysis directorate? If not, what's the equivalent?

A voice: You're looking at her.

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: Yes, you're looking at her.

We do have a GBA team. I'm the manager of that group, and I would say that it's mostly dedicated to developing those tools, delivering the training, and doing outreach and awareness raising.

Ms. Justine Akman: I would just add that the Auditor General's report did make us rethink our GBA capacity. It's really something that we need to do and support throughout the entire agency, including in all of the policy work that we do, in the support for our minister, and in memoranda to cabinet. We are definitely expanding our resources in terms of GBA and the agency.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Is it the same name? Is it still called a directorate?

Ms. Justine Akman: I'm not sure where that name came from.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: So it's probably old language.

Good, thank you. I appreciate your time and your work.

The Chair: Very good. I'd like to thank Justine and Vaughn for joining us today and for their answers, which were, as always, very helpful to us. I'm sure that as we go forward with GBA, the demands on your department for facilitation and help will only increase. Thanks again.

We're going to suspend for two minutes while we switch gears and move on to our Department of Immigration.

• (1625) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1630)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

From the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, we're very happy to have with us today Fraser Valentine,

director general, strategic policy and planning, and Maia Welbourne, director general, immigration branch.

They are going to begin with 10 minutes of shared opening comments before we begin our round of questions.

Go ahead.

Mr. Fraser Valentine (Director General, Strategic Policy and Planning, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thanks very much, Madam Chair, and thank you very much to the committee for the invitation to appear before you twice in two weeks.

My name, as the chair said, is Fraser Valentine, and I am the director general of strategic policy and planning at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. I am also the functional authority for gender-based analysis at IRCC, meaning that I am the focal point or the centre of responsibility inside the department for GBA. It is housed in my organization.

I'm joined by Maia Welbourne, who, as the chair said, is the director general of the immigration branch. It is the part of the department that is responsible for selection policy on both the permanent resident and the temporary resident side, so it's all of the business lines. Maia is also the departmental champion for GBA.

I understand that your study focuses on the application of gender-based analysis and the ways in which it's being implemented across the federal government to advance gender equality. I'm very glad to have the opportunity to speak to you about my department's approach to, and our experiences with, GBA.

In many ways, I expect that our experience with GBA is similar to that of other departments and agencies that you will hear from. It's also in line with what I know you have heard from colleagues at Status of Women Canada. However, the starting point for my presentation is the one way in which IRCC is different.

As you know, my department is the only one operating within a legislative framework that requires GBA. Section 94 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the legislation that governs most of the lines of business inside IRCC, stipulates that as part of an annual report to Parliament, the minister must include a gender-based analysis of the impact of the legislation.

We feel the application of GBA has accomplished a couple of very specific results. I would like to share them with the committee.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

The first and most obvious impact is the analysis contained in the annual report itself. Every year, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship tables a report on immigration, which includes a sizeable GBA section, drawing heavily on gender-disaggregated data about both permanent and temporary resident flows to Canada. These are broken down by immigration class and program, and specific programs and impacts are highlighted.

[English]

A second important impact of the legislative requirement in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act is that it has informed our application of GBA throughout the department. I would say that it has influenced how we have understood, how we have applied, and how we use GBA across the department. That very much applies both to the tools and the processes that we've developed internally. As well, it more broadly influences the culture that we've tried to foster in the department with respect to the application of GBA.

In addition to the considerable amounts of sex-disaggregated data that we generate, disseminate, and use, I'd like to provide you with a couple of steps that we've also found very useful.

First, we have created a focal point within the department that provides guidance and advice to branches or sections of the department on implementing GBA into both program and policy development. At IRCC, our GBA unit has been established in my organization, the strategic policy and planning branch, and it acts as the functional authority in facilitating, convening, and supporting the application and implementation of GBA.

Second, we believe that good tools and guidance must be available throughout the department. We believe very strongly that it would limit the effectiveness of GBA if the function of GBA were isolated in one specific area of the department.

At IRCC, I would highlight two measures that we've recently taken to disperse the application and use of GBA. First, we've instituted an intradepartmental working group on GBA, which is a bureaucratic term for those of us inside a department talking to each other and bringing together representatives from various branches to serve as an outlet for resource sharing, for best practices, and for knowledge dissemination. Second, we've also developed a new assessment tool on GBA that's used as a practical way for analysts at the working level to support program and policy development at the outset of the policy-making process in assessing GBA implications.

Third, training is important and critical. Our colleagues at Status of Women Canada have helped the federal government in developing a very good online course on the application of GBA, as you have just heard. This is something that we feel is important for departmental staff to take advantage of, even to the point of making that training mandatory for executives in several branches where policy and program issues they deal with most often have GBA implications and considerations.

Finally, the deputy minister has appointed a GBA champion for IRCC. We believe that having a champion who is separate from the focal point or responsibility centre is important to give GBA both function and profile. At IRCC the champion has a key role in promoting GBA across the department to both staff and senior management.

Many of the features of our GBA approach that I've outlined here are not novel in themselves; in fact, they align quite closely with the departmental action plan on GBA, which was developed by Status of Women Canada in response to the 2009 Auditor General report on GBA. At IRCC we are of the view that we have fully implemented and are fully compliant with that departmental action plan. However, in 2015, under my authority as the functional lead for GBA, we

decided to conduct a department-wide review of GBA to assess the application and results of the approach and to identify any areas that may benefit from being strengthened. We found four key things that I'd like to share with you.

First, we found that GBA is being conducted at IRCC. We have identified concrete areas where the approach has influenced program and policy development as well as changes to our operations in the field. At the same time, we know that the application could continue to be more rigorous.

Second, we identified that the utility and importance of GBA is understood across the department at all levels of the organization, but we also found that this understanding is uneven and that there is a need for GBA to be better understood by departmental staff across the organization and at all levels of the organization.

Third, we must continue to strive for a broader and more systemic application of GBA in the department and in the field.

Finally, monitoring and reporting mechanisms, including the annual report to Parliament on immigration, could continue to be enhanced.

We are now acting on this review, including through enhanced training that we recently implemented and through communication and promotional efforts, and we've recently put in place a new GBA performance measurement framework.

Overall, I would say that the department is well positioned to be a GBA leader among departments in the system. We have some important pieces in place, but of course we're always looking to improve. We feel it's likely very appropriate for us to continue to assess the application and make adjustments as we go. We don't view this as an end state. GBA is not something you reach and then finish; it's something you apply on an ongoing basis. I often think of it as a lens. The key is to ensure that we can teach our folks in the department how to use that lens, how to focus the lens, and where to focus the lens.

We also feel very strongly that GBA, to be successful, is about culture. As you heard from colleagues from Status of Women, it's about leadership and ensuring that there is leadership in the department, particularly at the top but also among senior management, to ensure that its application is consistent.

I'll now turn it over to my colleague Maia Welbourne, who will say a little bit more about her role as a GBA champion and offer some observations on her experience.

• (1640)

Ms. Maia Welbourne (Director General, Immigration Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you very much.

A key part of my role as champion is to promote and communicate the importance of GBA within the department. It's not enough to have departmental policy if nobody knows about it or is reminded of it. IRCC's departmental policy on GBA+ states that IRCC will ensure that the needs of diverse groups of women and men, girls and boys are considered in the development and implementation of policies and programs across IRCC's business lines with the intention of better reflecting Canadian values and government commitments on progress toward gender equality.

Part of promoting GBA can be about highlighting instances where the analysis has been done well and has made a difference. I'd like to highlight a couple of examples here.

In 2014, a gender-based analysis was conducted for the live-in caregiver program. The main findings indicated that while it was a helpful route to permanent resident status for many women, the program's design was also one that may place this population in potential situations of vulnerability due to the live-in requirement.

On November 30, 2014, the Government of Canada introduced reforms to the caregiver program, including two new caregiver pathways that do not require the caregiver to live with their employer.

Another example of a current initiative the department is developing is a proposal to allow the minister to meet a mandate letter commitment to raise the maximum age of a dependent child to 22 from 19. This change would require an amendment to the immigration and refugee protection regulations.

We will be using our new assessment tool on GBA+ to both pilot the tool and to assist officials in developing our understanding of the potential impacts of this possible regulatory amendment on diverse groups of people. For this assessment, we will use diverse data on past cohorts of immigrants in terms of their gender, age, country of origin, immigration category, and other variables that will help us assess which groups may be most affected.

[Translation]

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. We look forward to the findings of this committee.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will begin our questioning with Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you for being here.

One of the reasons we wanted to hear from you first is, of course, the fact that immigration is mandated in the legislation to implement a GBA strategy.

What changed when the requirement to implement it became mandatory?

• (1645)

Mr. Fraser Valentine: I wasn't in the department when that happened. It happened in 2002 when the legislation was passed. Maia may have been in the department...no, she wasn't in the department then. From talking with my colleagues, I know that there

was clearly an immediate impact, and we've had a bit of a lasting impact.

A legislative change is blunt because it's legislation, so the immediate impact was that it required the Minister of Immigration to report annually to Parliament on the application of GBA and the outcomes that were achieved through it.

The way the department has approached that since that time is to focus on our admissions on an annual basis. The minister reports on an annual basis on the number of permanent residents coming to Canada, so there is a separate chapter in that report on GBA. It provides a very detailed outline of sex-disaggregated data in all of the different immigration categories.

What I found, though, over the medium term, and in particular working with colleagues from Status of Women Canada, is that the legislative requirement has also influenced the culture of the department because of the annual requirement. We did have to immediately build capacity in the department to ensure we could meet that legislative requirement, which has had a cascading impact throughout the department as a result.

Legislation in itself is probably not the panacea or sufficient. It's one important tool. The other, though, as my colleague from Status of Women said, is leadership. We've had sustained and committed leadership at senior management levels to the application of GBA, which has ensured that we continue to learn how to apply it and also adapt how we continue to measure and report through it.

Mr. Sean Fraser: During the implementation phase, which I realize is ongoing from your chat at the beginning, what were the biggest challenges you felt the department had to clear to implement a successful GBA analysis?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: I think the biggest challenge is capacity.

There's a lot of very interesting academic literature on the application of GBA from a public policy perspective, largely from feminist scholars who have studied the difference after gender-based analysis was mainstreamed in Canada post-1995, when the Beijing declaration was issued. Before that time, it was mostly pressure from outside the state that tried to make changes and exert that gender-based analysis lens.

The application of GBA meant that it was mainstreamed inside the federal bureaucracy. I think in the short term we needed to ensure that we could build the capacity to undertake that analysis.

One of the critiques in the academic literature and in other public policy spheres of the mainstreaming is that you don't necessarily know that the application and tools being used through that gender lens are appropriate, because it's very much happening inside a bureaucratic institution.

I think, though, the area in which we've made a lot of progress—and we have in many respects the Auditor General to thank for this—is in ongoing and sustained review of how this has been applied. Clearly the Auditor General has found that there are things that could be improved, and, through the leadership of Status of Women, we have been working with partners to continue to build that capacity.

So, Mr. Fraser, I would answer your question by saying that capacity was the short-term challenge, but I think it continues to be a challenge throughout. It's something we need to work on in a sustained way.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Ms. Welbourne, I understand that as a GBA champion you liaise with people in similar roles in other departments. Do your conversations with them highlight any challenges they are facing that are similar to what you experienced at the Department of Immigration?

Ms. Maia Welbourne: Actually, that's quite topical, because as my colleagues from Status of Women may have mentioned, there is an interdepartmental working group of champions that meets regularly, convened by Status of Women. In fact, we had a meeting yesterday afternoon, as it happens. This is a great opportunity to hear from one another about things that are working well and about areas for improvement.

Our Status of Women colleagues essentially outlined the plan that you heard from them today for engaging with deputy ministers and getting more feedback on some of those aspects, such as the barriers to GBA being rolled out. We also agreed at that meeting that we should meet more regularly, because it provides a rich environment for a really good exchange of ideas and views.

•(1650)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Excellent.

I think I have just a minute and a half left or so, Madam Chair.

The Chair: That's correct.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Valentine, you ran through a handful of very useful tools that I think are great examples, but the broader themes—I want to take a step back—that I hear you both referring to are culture, leadership, and capacity.

Do you have any advice for other departments that would help them reach the level of success that we're seeing in your department?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: I believe, based on our experience, that the action plan that Status of Women has laid out, with those six building blocks, as I would characterize them, is pretty essential. It is a menu that will allow a department to have the essential elements to advance the application and the use of GBA within itself.

What's critical, though, I also think, is that senior management set out very clearly the expectations for staff with respect to GBA, so that it's something that cascades throughout the department. In 2011, then-Citizenship and Immigration Canada implemented a GBA policy, which is a department-wide policy, and the policy makes it very clear that the responsibility for the use and application of GBA is accountable at all levels of the organization. It stipulates people at my director general level, at the director level, and then at the analyst level. This is in fact, I think, what's critical, which is why, then, training is critical.

The Chair: Wonderful.

We go over to Ms. Vecchio for seven minutes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thanks, Madam Chair.

Thanks very much, once again, for returning.

The 2015 annual report on immigration noted that certain classes of immigrants—notably the Canadian experience class—have been stagnating or declining in female participation in recent years. How does GBA aid in reversing these negative trends?

Ms. Maia Welbourne: That kind of monitoring—knowing that we're looking for this and having access to the data—allows us to see what's going on and monitor and explore whether there is actually a problem that needs to be fixed. I think it's important that we look at the data to see whether it's a blip rather than a trend, but because we pay attention to these things, because we report it so formally, we have the opportunity to ask whether there is a problem, and if there is, to ask whether we should then look at the program criteria and explore whether something among them is having this unintended consequence, if that's what it is.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: As well as the Canadian experience class, is there any other class of immigration you're concerned with? Is there anything else you're seeing that has a peak or a valley we should be aware of?

Ms. Maia Welbourne: No. In fact, based on the data in the annual report, I would say the trends generally are good. We're seeing more women immigrants arriving and being admitted, and more women who are the principal applicants are part of that trend. We see that as entirely positive.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Certainly.

Chapter 5 of the 2015 annual report on immigration notes these officers are equipped with tools and procedures to assess the gender aspects of refugee resettlement applications. How do we ensure officers are using these tools and adequately implementing GBA? How are they monitored, and are there reporting mechanisms they are accountable to? When I'm looking at this overall, how does it progress?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: I would say there are two things being done. The first is in the field. The immigration program manager, who is the senior executive responsible for the immigration program in missions abroad, is accountable for the way in which the GBA policy is applied in the field, and that is critical.

With respect to how these officers are taking decisions, that gets a little more challenging for us to assess because of the independent role these officers are playing with respect to those decisions they are taking. What the department has done is that our international region, which is responsible for all of our missions abroad, is bring together their senior management from around the world on an annual basis. I know recently GBA was discussed with respect to its application in the field. It's done in that way, as well.

•(1655)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's 2015 annual report indicates the department continues to collect and generate sex-disaggregated data and disseminate research to support policy and program development. Does your department collaborate with Statistics Canada to collect this data? How do you get this data?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: This work is led through our research and evaluation branch. We have a dedicated section in the policy side of the department that works very closely with Statistics Canada with respect to the collection and use of that data. We have an internal data warehouse. We also share that information, and have memorandums of understanding, with Statistics Canada. They act as a critical focal point for statistics across the federal government, so it leverages out as well.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Okay. What gender-specific research has been conducted recently by the department?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: I would answer that question in a couple of ways.

The research and evaluation branch has done a number of studies both internally and in collaboration with, for instance, Statistics Canada. In May 2015 a study was done by StatsCan, which worked with us on the labour market outcomes of immigrant women who arrive as dependents of economic principal applicants. There is an ongoing set of research that's done through that gender lens to understand the place of immigrant women who come to Canada.

The other way I would answer that is that research is much more dispersed through the department. There are also research endeavours that happen in different parts of the department that then are used in, for instance, our settlement programming. This is a large expenditure of the department, monies we provide to settlement-providing organizations once a permanent resident has landed in Canada and accesses services such as language training and other kinds of settlement services. Gender-related aspects are embedded into the calls for proposals for those services, and that was done by using GBA and research that was conducted by the settlement branch.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Okay. Those are some of the impacts from having GBA. Is there anything else you can identify, or things that you've seen change, whether it's the work or the outcomes to the department, because of GBA? As you said, the settlement services are a good indicator. Is there anything else?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Yes. One really resonated for me as I was preparing for today, having conversations with my colleagues, and looking at the data we collect with respect to our temporary resident business line. These are individuals who want to come to Canada as visitors, as students, or as workers.

As you probably are aware, nationals from some countries are required to submit biometrics—fingerprints—and those biometrics are collected abroad by third parties that we contract with called visa application centres. When we were developing the approach to implement biometrics abroad, a GBA was applied during the development process, and what was uncovered through that work was the need to be very conscious of the intersection between gender and race in the collection of those biometrics.

That was fed into the call for proposals and ultimately resulted in the following. If a woman goes into a visa application centre, she can request that her biometrics be collected in a private space and by a same-sex operator, if for religious reasons she would prefer that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go on to Ms. Malcolmson for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: What are the challenges, if any, for Immigration Canada having a legislated mandate to conduct gender-based analysis? Is there any downside?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: That's a great question.

I don't think that it's a downside, but I would say that we could continue to think through ways that we can present more robust outcome data in the context of that report to Parliament.

We have been, I think, very successful at presenting what I'm going to call output and activities-based data, including with respect to admissions, which is critically important, and this has done a lot to advance our thinking, but I think the next step is to have a much better understanding of the outcomes that we're achieving with respect to bringing immigrants to this country and how successful they are. That work is certainly under way throughout the department. We have not yet, though, embedded that in the annual report to Parliament, and I think that's something we will be looking at.

• (1700)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you.

Can you give us some examples of how your GBA lens for your department shaped the form of policy recommendations to cabinet?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Yes. Again, I would answer this question in two ways.

The first is structural. As my colleague from Status of Women said, there is a requirement in the memorandum to cabinet and Treasury Board submission templates to focus our attention to the need to undertake a GBA and, if appropriate, to lay out those considerations. There is a structural element there.

The other thing that we have done in the department involves the cabinet and regulatory affairs section of the department. That's the focal point in the department that's responsible for assisting in the management of the development of memoranda to cabinet and getting them into cabinet and supporting the minister. It is co-located in my organization, so I'm responsible for both the cabinet and the regulatory business for the department and I am also the functional authority for GBA.

What that means practically is that in my management team, I have the director of cabinet and regulatory affairs and I have the lead that's responsible for GBA. I make sure that they're making those connections in a structural way and in a kind of challenge function way with my colleagues in the department.

The other way I would answer your question is that as we've advanced with the application of GBA, I think we've been successful in having analysts accept the idea that they are responsible as individuals, as public servants, for providing non-partisan professional advice to the government in the application of this lens to the advice that we're providing.

I'll be very candid and say that it is still uneven, which is what we found in the review that we did and which is why we've launched another set of training, but I think it's fair to say that we've had success in that regard, and some of the examples that Maia and I have provided are evidence of that.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you.

Are there any more examples of success stories and outcomes that you want to give us? I think the more we can describe in a three-dimensional way how this changed it, the more compelling it is for other departments to take on this work.

Ms. Maia Welbourne: I can give you a relatively narrow but concrete example of where it's made a difference.

When we're designing economic immigration policies and programs, some of them involve work experience requirements. In developing the federal skilled trades program and a decision to require two years' work experience, it was recognized that many women have breaks in employment and are more likely to engage in part-time work. That was worked into the requirements to recognize that we didn't want to put up any barriers to female tradespeople. The way of addressing those work requirements took that into account in a very direct way.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you.

Mr. Fraser Valentine: With respect to my previous example on biometrics, the other element that was adopted was the introduction of a family fee. Prior to the application of GBA, the fee was thought to be primarily per individual. Once the GBA was done, we quickly realized there are many parts of the world where people have much larger families, and those costs would become prohibitive. Therefore, a family fee was introduced and capped so that it was more affordable for those individuals.

• (1705)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you for the great examples and for giving a concrete example that we can fan out to other ministries. This is going to be really helpful in our work.

The Chair: We'll now move over to Ms. Vandenbeld.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you very much.

We heard from you and from the witnesses from Status of Women about the importance of leadership and of this being part of the culture. In your testimony you said that this application is understood, but it's uneven. We know that in many cases it could be that if you're an analyst and you aren't used to thinking this way, you may very well say that there is no different impact of this policy by gender, and then just tick that box and say that you don't need to do it, whereas perhaps delving a little further would show that there was a difference.

You mentioned that training is mandatory for executives, but not for all levels. Would mandatory training or some other form of proactive training make a difference?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: We decided to take the approach of making the training mandatory for all executives in the organization. What I didn't say in my remarks was that we made it mandatory for key managers as well. This is just under the executive level in those lead organizations that would be working on files, such as the folks

in Maia's area, which is responsible for all selection policy. I would include my organization as well.

The reason we felt it was mandatory to include it for executives is that leadership principle that we discussed, and as you know, the executives in the Government of Canada are considered the leaders of those organizations. We felt it was important to ensure they understood their responsibility and accountability with respect to not just understanding GBA but in applying GBA with their staff and in their work. Ultimately they are responsible for approving that work up the line.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: You are the functional authority, and Ms. Welbourne is the champion. Can you explain what that means?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: The functional authority means that I am the lead in the department for the entire organization. I'm accountable for the policy and the organizational capacity. The GBA unit is housed in my organization, but as I said earlier, the application is very much considered to be a responsibility throughout the organization. Maia, as the champion, has the pompoms, so we felt it was important to separate my role as the challenge function.

It's a bit of carrot and stick. I want to make sure it's done, but we also wanted to have somebody who could promote the use of GBA in a manner that demonstrates its effectiveness and also make connections in a way that I might not be able to as the lead functional authority. I can tell you that we work very closely together, which is why we're here together today.

Ms. Maia Welbourne: If I could just add to that, I think one of the things that I ideally would like to achieve as champion is to create an environment where there are in fact multiple champions across the organization.

Fraser was talking a bit about the training and the mandatory training and so on, and I think that's important and great, but we also develop opportunities for learning—for instance, in celebration of GBA+ awareness week—that are very hands-on and allow the use of case studies and are very interactive.

A very critical point has been made here a couple of times. Being able to show a difference that has been made through the application of a GBA+ analysis is really critical. It's important to have that opportunity to sit down with analysts and talk through the difference it made, and almost to do the counterfactual sometimes. For example, "This is where we ended up, and if we hadn't done the GBA+ analysis, this is where we would have ended up, and this is why it would have been unfortunate and ineffective."

Again, I think for a lot of people the proof is in the pudding. If you can have those conversations about cases in which it obviously made a difference and you can have that conversation about real-life application of the thinking and the analysis, it makes a huge difference. Then you have people who are believers, so to speak, out in the system, who can then disseminate it further.

• (1710)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you. That sounds like an excellent model.

I am sharing my time with Ms. Sahota.

The Chair: Over to you, Ms. Sahota.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: I'm really enjoying a lot of your discussion about the way you've implemented GBA into policy. You've talked a bit about the caregiver program and how doing GBA has affected that policy and also about changing the dependent child age of 19 to 22.

How about providing it immediately to PR? Is that something your department had input into for the ministry? If so, was there a GBA done on that policy when it comes to spousal sponsorship?

Ms. Maia Welbourne: Yes, absolutely. It's fair to say that we do the GBA analysis as a matter of course when we're developing new policy proposals.

In terms of the conditional permanent resident initiative, I think what came up through that analysis was the fact that this condition could place some spouses, many of whom are women, in situations of vulnerability. That's why there was a specific exemption introduced at the time that allowed spouses who were subject to abuse or neglect to be exempted from the condition.

Again, that's a pretty concrete example of where the analysis led to an understanding of a risk that was part of a proposal, and a measure to mitigate that risk was introduced as a result.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: How much more time do I have?

The Chair: You have 40 seconds.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: On TRVs, I've been having a big issue with them in a lot of areas.

Women often don't get the opportunity to travel under TRVs because they perhaps don't have a job to claim, but they are housewives and take care of their children, so they do need to return to their families. That's not enough to show that they would come and they would leave. I find myself in a predicament. Is that something your department is looking at in terms of whether it is disproportionate for TRVs?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: I don't actually know the answer to that question, so let me go back to the department. I will be happy to follow up with the clerk on that. I don't know if it's an area that we're investigating in any detail, so I'll find out.

The Chair: Sure. You can get back to the clerk.

That's your time, Ms. Sahota.

We'll go over to Ms. Harder for five minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Can you tell me why you're the only department where it is mandatory to do GBA?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: No. I mean—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Rachael Harder: It was kind of the obvious question out there. Someone had to ask it.

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Yes, it is an interesting.... I think that there was a constellation of factors that led to an interest in including it as a mainstream requirement through the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

I anticipate that some of it was probably because at the time that the 1995 Beijing declaration was going through, there was a lot of discussion, both inside government and out, about gender generally and the application of a gender lens inside and outside the state, both in domestic and international fora.

IRPA—that's the acronym—would have been in development around that time. What I anticipate happened was that there was an opportunity, the stars aligned, and it was included, but I can't tell you if there was an individual or a report or a particular trigger that resulted in its inclusion.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Overall, it looks as though you guys have done a very good job. It's very good to see you have a champion or a carrot and a stick; I think that's probably quite complementary.

There perhaps are some resource limitations or other inhibiting factors involved in this process within your department. I'm wondering if you can comment on that at all.

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Resources are always finite, so leadership is pretty critical in this regard. You need to protect some resources to have a dedicated focal point and team. Our department and others in the system have made that decision.

In my organization I have an analyst who is responsible for this pretty much full time. Throughout my organization I also have the expectation that my directors and their analysts—for example, in cabinet affairs—are applying GBA, and the resources become a part of their ongoing and daily business.

With respect to training, though, we did consider whether or not we should make that online course mandatory for all staff in the organization. I will share with you that the decision to not do that was in part because of a resource consideration—time, mostly. We thought that as a first step in terms of a mandatory requirement, we would focus that training on those individuals in the department who would have a lead role, rather than on everybody across the entire organization.

●(1715)

Ms. Rachael Harder: As your department is the only one that does this—to the extent that you do, I should say—I'm wondering if you would be able to attribute a dollar amount with regard to how much it costs you to be able to do GBA on an annual basis.

Mr. Fraser Valentine: No, we don't as a department account for the time individuals would spend on the application of GBA in that way. We're not required to report in that way.

It would be very challenging to come up with a global figure. If I were to disaggregate further down, I could identify in my organization a certain quantum, but that would largely be staff time—i.e., their salaries—which for all intents and purposes are embedded in their responsibilities across a whole number of accountabilities.

Ms. Rachael Harder: That's fair.

Ms. Welbourne, you said earlier that you increased the age of a dependent from 19 to 22. I'm just wondering how that relates to GBA. Why is it that a GBA analysis would lead you to make that change?

Ms. Maia Welbourne: Just to clarify, this is actually an initiative that is in our minister's mandate letter, so it is something that we have not yet done but are exploring doing in the future.

The idea there is that, yes, a dependent child is currently defined as 19 or under. The mandate letter commits us to exploring the idea of raising that age to 22.

What I think we're going to do as we consider options is take a broad GBA+ lens. As I noted, we're going to test the new tool that has been developed in our strategic policy area. We'll look at things beyond gender, at the impact this change may have in terms of other identities—ethnic identities, age groups, etc. Culturally speaking, for instance, in some areas of the world it is more likely to have unmarried children stay longer in the home with their parents than it is in other areas.

It's just getting a sense of what—

The Chair: That's it for time.

Now we'll go to Ms. Ludwig for five minutes.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you for your presentations.

During the entire presentation, a question about the Syrian refugees came to mind. Recently I welcomed four families, one of them a family of nine, and I was picturing, when you were talking, each of these families. I'm wondering how the GBA analysis impacted particularly the application process and the implementation in terms of Syrian refugees to Canada.

Mr. Fraser Valentine: I would answer your question in two parts.

First, with respect to processing and settlement, I can't speak directly to processing because I wasn't abroad and as close to that. With respect to settlement, I know that when families arrived through either the government assistance stream or the privately sponsored stream, there were additional resources put in place to provide access for women and young girls in particular to understand their rights under Canadian law. Those sessions were held separately from sessions for their male peers.

Also, I know the moms and the kids were also separated to try to allow them to have those discussions as peers. The cultural impact was new, and it was felt that it was very important to do this very soon after their arrival.

Through other immigration streams, a lot of that work is done pre-arrival. We were able to engage with the International Organization for Migration to offer those kinds of pre-settlement services. That wasn't an option with the Syrian movement because it was done so quickly. Instead, it was done immediately once those folks landed.

The second part is with respect to the tool that we have developed to monitor the outcomes for this population with respect to their settlement outcomes. I know that the GBA lens has been applied and there will be sex-disaggregated data collected across a whole number of variables so that we're able in the short, medium, and long term to present the data in that way.

• (1720)

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Will you also correlate that based on the GSRs, the government-sponsored refugees, and the PSRs, the privately sponsored refugees?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Yes. That work is led by our research and evaluation branch. They'll do all the multi-regression analyses across the various cohorts as well as with other classes.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

One area would be temporary residency. How is the GBA being applied to international students applying, and to foreign workers and tourists who are also applying for temporary visas, and how might that lead to a path to citizenship?

Ms. Maia Welbourne: We do monitor the data of the people who are landing within those various categories. Probably at the more macro level, we're not doing the GBA analysis. When we're looking at developing new policies or programs—for instance, to encourage transitions from temporary residence to permanent residence—that's the sphere within which we would look at the GBA considerations and factor those into the policy development.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: How diverse is your department leadership in terms of a model or an example? I don't mean that as a loaded question; I'm just curious.

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Do you mean with respect to gender?

Ms. Karen Ludwig: I mean in terms of diversity in leadership.

Mr. Fraser Valentine: I can certainly get you that information. We can provide it to the clerk. We have that available.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

Do you do any work as well in interconnecting with other departments, such as health? When you're looking at refugees coming in, you must find that there are questions not just about immigration but also about health and mental health. How does that work in terms of self-reporting and self-screening in a foreign nation when someone is in the application phase?

Mr. Fraser Valentine: Just so I understand the question, certainly when policies and programs are being developed, lots of interdepartmental collaboration happens as those policies are developed. Once the formal memorandum-to-cabinet process starts, there's a very formal interdepartmental exercise that happens. In any proposal, there would be a lead department that would be responsible for it. It very much is the responsibility of that department to ensure that all of the considerations are brought into the analysis.

I can tell you that if our department is participating in an interdepartmental consultation and the analyst or an individual at my level feels that it's important to ensure that a gender-based lens is applied, then that would be brought forward.

The Chair: Excellent, and that's your time.

I want to thank Fraser Valentine and Maia Welbourne for joining us today and for the excellent responses that you've given.

There's only one other item that has come to my attention. I believe it was raised that the May 16 week is gender-based analysis week. I know all of you have done your web-based, gender-based analysis as required. I'm not going to put you on the wall of shame. If you have not, hurry up, because what we were suggesting is that maybe we should put that forward to the House.

I believe the clerk has conspired with Ms. Vecchio to come up with the language that's needed in order to make it official.

• (1725)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Chair, I have some more questions, because we still have five minutes on the clock.

The Chair: If it's the pleasure of the committee to stay a little bit afterwards...?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: It will be really short.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thanks. I appreciate it.

I wanted to follow up on the question around the costs of having a legislated mandate for GBA. Would you be able to describe to us the ways that you may have saved trouble and human resources time by using a GBA test to identify problems or conflicts before they arise?

If I can editorialize, I don't want us to walk away thinking this is a program that we cannot afford without having asked the questions about whether it saves us money too.

Ms. Maia Welbourne: In a very general way, I would say that at least part of the value is identifying risks or considerations that, if not thought through at the front end of the policy program development process, could be costly in terms of resources because of having to go in after the fact and make changes.

It's almost like avoiding a two-touch. If you figure it out at the outset, you're very clear about what the risks or considerations are and you're able to work that into your policy or program development. Then you're not caught by surprise at the end of the process and faced with potentially having to go back in and make regulatory changes or change the program requirements, etc. At that very high level, when it's done well, it avoids having to do that.

Mr. Fraser Valentine: In the example that I provided on biometrics in the temporary residence process, that was a third party that we were contracting with through a formal request-for-proposal exercise, and because that gender requirement was identified before we went out with the RFP, it meant that we were able, as Maia said, to be a bit proactive with those requirements.

Had we not done that, we could hypothesize that potentially we would have had to go back and amend the RFP, and then those third-party contractors would have had to make those necessary adjustments.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: That's helpful. Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Very good.

Perhaps I could hear the motion.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: We worked on this a few times. I move:

That the Chair present a report to the House that the Committee challenges the Members of Parliament to complete the online course "Introduction to Gender-based Analysis Plus" (GBA+) from Status of Women Canada as soon as possible, preferably before the House rises for the summer break this coming June.

The Chair: Is there discussion on the motion?

Ms. Karen Ludwig: It's a great idea.

The Chair: Very good. I believe an S. O. 31 qualifies as a report. I did check with the clerk.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We will see you Thursday for our next regular meeting. Thanks so much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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