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## **Standing Committee on the Status of Women**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, March 7, 2017**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu**



## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

• (0845)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.)):** Good morning, colleagues.

We are returning to our study of the economic security of women in Canada. It's an extra special day today because the Daughters of the Vote will be joining us throughout the committee meeting today. There may be more commotion than we normally expect.

However, we are pleased to be able to welcome with us today, from Oxfam Canada, Diana Sarosi. From the Public Service Alliance of Canada, we have Jennifer Howard and Heather Finn. From Unifor, we have Lisa Kelly.

We are happy to have you all here. Each of your organizations has seven minutes to present, and we'll begin with Diana. You have seven minutes.

**Ms. Diana Sarosi (Senior Policy Advisor, Oxfam Canada):** Thank you very much for the opportunity to present Oxfam's recommendations on women's economic security.

Just yesterday we launched our feminist scorecard tracking government action to advance women's rights and gender equality. While the government has taken some significant steps in realizing its feminist agenda, the area that is most lagging behind is women's economic security. As you can see, this study is timely and important.

In January, Oxfam revealed that two billionaires own more wealth than the bottom 30% of the Canadian population. Growing inequality undermines progress in tackling inequality and is particularly negative for women, who continue to make up the majority of the world's poor. Around the world, as in Canada, women are the lowest-paid workers, with minimal security and physical safety.

Our current economic model relies on women's cheap labour to maximize shareholders' profits, which explains why economic growth does not necessarily reduce inequality or even provide hope of escaping poverty. While economic growth increases when men and women participate equally in the economy, growth on its own is not efficient to move the needle on gender equality.

We therefore call for progress in the following five areas in order for growth to be truly inclusive. Number one, the government should ensure that workers make living wages. Women make up 60% of the minimum-wage earners in Canada. Women are often forced into

low-paid and insecure jobs because they have less of a safety net, in part because of difficulties accessing employment insurance; and if they receive benefits, these are too low for them to make ends meet. But nowhere in Canada does the minimum wage constitute a living wage. Without a living wage, women do not stand a chance of working their way out of poverty or achieving economic equality.

Women's rights to organize must be protected. Many sectors dominated by women are not unionized, which contributes to low wages. In Malawi, Oxfam has worked with partners to bring together a broad coalition to raise wages for women working in the tea sector. Through collective organizing and action, the coalition was able to raise minimum wages.

We are calling on the government to commit to being a living wage employer and to ensure that federal government contracts are only given to living wage employers. The provinces and private sector must follow suit. We also ask the government to support women's organizing here at home by increasing the budget of Status of Women Canada to \$100 million a year; and abroad, by allocating \$100 million a year to women's rights organizations, networks, and movements.

Number two, the government should make pay equity a priority. Women in Ontario would need to work until the age of 79 to reach the life-long earnings of men who retire at the age of 65. That's 14 more years of work. Women are paid less than men in 469 out of 500 occupations monitored by Statistics Canada. The wage gap is even more accentuated for racialized, indigenous, and immigrant women. Also, as women face the added challenge of moving in and out of employment to take on care responsibilities for children, elderly, and the sick, often without employment insurance, their earning potential is much reduced.

Senior single women are among Canada's poorest. We are calling on the government to speed up the introduction of pay equity legislation. The government should use every tool available to ensure that all provinces enact pay equity legislation. In addition, the government should lower the threshold of employment insurance and tie it to need rather than earnings, and improve the Canada pension plan and guaranteed income supplement benefits.

Number three, the government must comprehensively address violence against women. The rates of domestic and sexual violence remain persistently high in Canada. On any given night, 3,491 women and their 2,724 children sleep in shelters to escape abuse. Indigenous women are three times more likely to be violently victimized than non-indigenous women. Gender-based violence has a significant impact on women's security, and women's economic insecurity can make them more vulnerable to violence. Also, absenteeism and poor work performance as a result of violence can leave victims vulnerable to discipline and job loss.

We are calling on the government to develop and implement a national action plan on violence against women. While the federal strategy on gender-based violence is a good first step, a comprehensive national action plan is needed to ensure women everywhere have the same levels of services and protection. We are also calling for legislation that gives victims of violence the right to time away from work without losing their job, as enacted in Manitoba.

● (0850)

Number four, the government must invest in the care economy. In rich and poor countries alike, the responsibility for unpaid care work falls disproportionately to women. In Canada, women undertake 3.9 hours of unpaid care work every day, compared to 2.4 hours undertaken by men. Part of the challenge of shifting care responsibility between men and women is social norms.

Oxfam runs a program called We-Care in 12 countries, which aims to shift attitudes toward domestic work by raising awareness and engaging communities in dialogue and training. As a result of the program, women were able to make better choices on how they spend their time, but also saw a decrease in violence as a result of the shift in attitude toward women's status in the family. This kind of shift in attitude also needs to happen in the gender bias of work here in Canada. We cannot continue to see investments in male-dominated sectors such as construction at the expense of the care economy.

We are calling on the government to sustain and increase funding for child care so that quality care is accessible to all by 2020. This needs to be complemented by initiatives to ensure living wages and pay equity for child care workers, and supplemented with equitable family leave support and flexible work arrangements. We are also calling for an increase in services for first nations and seniors.

Number five, addressing women's economic insecurity requires domestic and global leadership. In a globalized world, women's economic insecurity in Canada is caused by the same factors driving economic insecurity for women around the world. The global economy is built on the backs of women as corporations engage in a race to the bottom in wages and labour standards. No matter in which country, the government has to take responsibility and hold Canadian corporations to account for their footprint in the world.

We are calling on the government to seriously consider corporate accountability as part of its feminist agenda and to commission a study to look at specific ways in which it can move forward in this area. We are also calling on the Government of Canada to gradually increase its international assistance—

**The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)):** I'm sorry, but that's your time.

**Ms. Diana Sarosi:** —to meet the UN target of 0.7%.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We're going to go now to the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and you have seven minutes.

**Ms. Jennifer Howard (Executive Director, Public Service Alliance of Canada):** Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members, for inviting us to speak today.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada is the largest federal public sector union. We represent more than 180,000 members from coast to coast to coast. Of these, roughly 100,000 are women.

In our union's 50-year history, we've worked hard to advance the economic equality and security of women in Canada, but women still face significant barriers to achieving economic security, including a gender wage gap; a rise in precarious employment; a lack of access to quality, affordable child care; and domestic violence. Each of these issues is a priority for us.

We've all heard the statistics on the gender wage gap in Canada. Women earn just over 70% compared to what men earn. Even more concerning is the lack of progress to close this gap. In fact, the data shows that the gap is actually increasing. We know that this gap is wider for indigenous, racialized, immigrant, and transgendered women, and women with disabilities, who, on average, have much lower salaries and more difficulty accessing decent work.

We must address the wage gap if women's economic security is to be improved. Adopting proactive pay equity legislation is critical to closing that gap. Proactive legislation would compel employers to review their compensation practices and provide a process to ensure that women receive equal pay for work of equal value.

We are proud of our history of pursuing pay equity. We filed our first pay equity complaint in 1979, but we know that the current complaints-based system is not working. It can take up to 30 years to resolve a complaint and for women to receive economic justice.

Proactive pay equity legislation is a front-end solution. It's one that doesn't force women to spend years fighting each separate case of pay inequity.

This government has committed to introducing proactive pay equity legislation in 2018, but why wait? The road map for a new law was provided in the 2004 federal pay equity task force report.

It's important to note that the wage gap narrows when we look at women in unionized jobs. Defending freedom of association and trade union rights is one of the best ways of reducing the gender wage gap. However, access to quality jobs is difficult, given the dramatic increase in precarious work in Canada.

Women are more likely than men to be employed in involuntary part-time work or temporary contracts. As with the wage gap, this is even more likely for racialized, indigenous, and immigrant women, and women living with a disability.

The cuts carried out by the former Conservative government resulted in the loss of 24,000 federal public service jobs. The current government has made some progress in restoring the balance, though much more is still required. It is concerning that the number of full-time employees in the federal public service is decreasing. At the same time, term and casual employment has increased.

There's a growing use of contract employees who are hired through temporary staffing agencies. Because public sector employment has played a critical role in improving employment equity, a rise of precarious work in this sector disproportionately affects members of equity seeking groups, including women.

As it continues to rebuild federal public services, this government must encourage the creation of permanent employment opportunities; otherwise, the trend of precarious work, which negatively impacts the economic security of women, will continue.

The lack of affordable child care is also a significant barrier to women's economic security. If, in the absence of child care or paid parental leave, one parent must stay home to look after the children, it is almost always the lower-paid parent because families can't forego the higher earnings. In many families this means that women are left out of the paid labour force.

Also, while women's participation in the paid labour market has increased over time, men's participation in caregiving has not increased proportionally. Consequently, women are the ones most often left to balance paid work with parental care of their children and, increasingly, care of their elderly parents.

This means that child care policy has a direct and disproportionate impact on women. When governments act to make child care accessible, our participation rates in the labour force rise dramatically. This improves women's economic status and the overall economy. We need look no further than the province of Quebec for evidence of the positive impact of accessible child care.

• (0855)

Since 2014, the fees parents are paying to access child care have risen by an average of three times faster than inflation. Getting child care in Canada is almost always a matter of luck or personal wealth and, therefore, it is out of reach for many.

Inadequate government support for licensed child care puts downward pressure on the wages and benefits of child care staff. Poor compensation and difficult working conditions are barriers to recruiting and retaining qualified childhood educators and, since most child care employees are women, the poor compensation contributes to the overall gender wage gap.

This federal government promised that it would take action to develop affordable, accessible, inclusive, high-quality early learning and child care for every child. Federal, provincial, and territorial representatives are now negotiating the framework that will serve as the basis for funding agreements. However, we're deeply concerned that the agreements will reinforce the status quo.

Currently, parents are forced to turn to the free market for child care services. This is the foundational cause of the current child care crisis. We need a federal, provincial, and territorial framework that will transform child care into a publicly managed service.

Finally, domestic violence has a significant impact on the economic security of women. For those enduring this violence, the effects are pervasive in every aspect of their lives. Over one third of domestic violence victims say that it affects their work performance, and it sometimes results in disciplinary measures taken against victims, including job loss.

In order to prevent punishing women who are victims of domestic violence, it's necessary to establish workplace strategies surrounding domestic violence, such as paid leave to help women take the necessary steps to re-establish their lives and protection at work from abusive partners.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

• (0900)

**The Chair:** Excellent. Thank you very much.

Now we are going to Unifor. Lisa Kelly, you have seven minutes.

**Ms. Lisa Kelly (Director, Women's Department, Unifor):** Thank you.

Good morning, and thank you as well for this opportunity to speak to this very important study.

Unifor is Canada's largest private sector union, or as we often say, "union in the private sector", as we do have a few public sector members. We have 310,000 members from coast to coast to coast across Canada, and about 100,000 of those are women. The members we represent, including the female members, work in a range of occupations from air traffic controller to retail sales clerk. We have a lot of women who work in the health care sector, which won't be a surprise, in the service sector, in food services, and as customer service representatives. We also have female skilled tradespeople.

You've heard from lots of people. I listened to these statistics. You've heard a lot of these statistics over your weeks of study. I came here this morning feeling a bit like I'm taking a test. I hope that we're not actually disputing that there is economic insecurity for women.

I heard something recently that really struck me. Women aren't born vulnerable. They're made vulnerable by laws and policies, and that's what we all here can do to address the barriers that are there, which are not inherent in the inequality of women themselves but are in the system they face.

I want to focus on a couple of sets of challenges that face working-class women. The two ends of the continuum often get a lot of the focus: the very vulnerable, and the search for the C-suite. Both of those merit attention, but in doing so, I want to make sure we're not missing out on the majority of working women and the impact of policies on them.

Unifor believes in social unionism, which means we think that whole human beings come to work, and our work is to look at the impacts of policies outside of the workplace, as well as inside the workplace. Most often, those things are intertwined. We look at the indicators of women's equality. By and large, many of the issues that we're speaking of, such as violence against women, etc., affect working women, so when we focus on the workplace we can also find really concrete and very targeted solutions that will address these very large issues that feel insurmountable.

I certainly don't want to leave you with the impression that I'm conflating all working-class women together, or all working women together. As a lesbian, and a lesbian mom, I know that many policies impact me differently than they do my colleagues who don't share that identity. I know that I am not impacted in the same way that indigenous, racialized, and trans women are affected, but we still can find solutions that cut across these differences.

I support the government's desire to close the gender wage gap, to reduce occupational segregation, and to address and eliminate sexual harassment and violence. I'm going to talk to you about some concrete measures that I think will address these, and ways in which I think the federal government can take some steps.

The two main areas I'm going to focus on are access to good jobs and equity at work, and supports for women exiting the world of work. We believe that everyone has a right to access a good job, and we believe that with the right regulations and business practices, every job can be a good job, a job with dignity, and a job with equality. Addressing these will require concrete steps and mechanisms of enforcement and accountability.

What are some of the positive steps the federal government can take? I'll give you a bit of a list and then I'm going to focus on two things I think Unifor has that are fairly unique.

You need to strengthen employment equity legislation to ensure that more women have access to areas that have traditionally been held by men, but without leaving the areas traditionally held by women behind. I don't want to open up a door to say, "Go over there for a good job, and we'll leave where the majority of women work behind."

Access is key, as you've heard from everyone here this morning. That means investing in a universal, affordable, high-quality, public, and non-profit system of early childhood education and care. Again, the Quebec stats show that women in Quebec went from having the lowest workforce participation in Canada to the highest in just a few short years, really challenging the notion that we're at home with our

children because that's the totality of our choice, rather than the least bad of the choices we've been given.

You heard from Statistics Canada at the beginning of your hearings. I was flipping through their remarks, and when they asked who works part-time, the answer was that women work part-time. Why do they work part-time? They choose that. One of the statistics was that 25% of women chose part-time work to take care of their children.

● (0905)

I challenge you to ask, "If I had an opportunity to put my children into early learning and quality child care and not spend my entire paycheque doing so, is that really the choice, or is the choice an economic one?", as you've heard from my colleagues?

There are also things such as setting a \$15-an-hour minimum wage; moving to a living wage; addressing sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, including addressing the power disparities that make that much more likely to happen. Dr. Sandy Welsh, at the University of Toronto, shows that where you have precarious and part-time work and where you have programs like the temporary foreign worker program, you're going to increase the existence of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.

As well, there is the need to enact proactive pay equity legislation; to require pay transparency; to address the barriers to accessing leave, such as maternity and parental leave; and, finally, to increase access to unionization. Really, that is a key equalizer for women, and it is incredibly necessary to make paper rights real.

I'm not going to go through all of those in depth, but I just want to raise two areas in which I think we have something to share. Our large employers, including many federal employers, have a joint investigation program into allegations of harassment. We have found that, particularly with sexual harassment, the joint investigation program, with both employer and union, has really reduced and addressed sexual harassment in the workplace.

The second is our women's advocate program. We have 350 women's advocates across the country in many workplaces. Their main role is to assist and support women who are facing domestic violence. As you likely know, a woman is killed every six days in Canada by her current or former domestic partner—and those are mostly working women. This is a program that can address risk assessment and safety planning, as well as incorporating paid domestic violence leave.

Joint investigation, women's advocates, and paid domestic violence leave are areas that I think the federal government can move on.

I'll just leave with the CPP expansion. You've heard about women being in poverty as they move into retirement. I commend the government for moving on the CPP expansion, but I really have to say that the loss of the drop-out ability in that expansion is really clearly discriminatory against women. I hope that you can close that, because it acts against women who have taken time out to do child care.

**The Chair:** Very good. Thanks very much.

We're happy to welcome MP Wayne Long to our committee today.

**Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.):** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We're going to start our regular round of questioning with, I believe, Ms. Vandenbeld, for seven minutes.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

Thanks to all of you for coming here this morning and making some very compelling presentations.

My first question is for Ms. Howard.

I was the chair of the pay equity committee, which went into great depth. Our final recommendation was that we enact proactive pay equity legislation, recognizing pay equity as a human right that can't be bargained away, and part of that would involve repealing PSECA.

When the Public Service Alliance testified before our committee, one of the things we heard—and this is one of the reasons we wanted to make sure we had the right amount of time to do this—was that it is a very technical area. At the moment in the public service there are areas in which the job classification system has not been updated since before the personal computer. Considering the amount of time it will take to develop those processes, this time we have to get it right. Pretty much every witness roundly said that the PSECA legislation was not the right way to go, and that this time we needed to make sure it was correct.

I'm just wondering about your testimony on hurrying the pay equity legislation. I've talked to a number of public servants. I represent an Ottawa riding, so I have a lot of public servants in my riding, and they have said this isn't something that can be rushed. It has to be right this time. Otherwise we may lose another decade trying to reverse it.

Do you have any comment on that?

• (0910)

**Ms. Jennifer Howard:** Certainly, you're right that we want to see the repeal of the previous legislation, PSECA. We thought that did nothing to advance pay equity and in fact harmed the cause of pay equity. We certainly want it to be done right, but we also want to know that it's a priority. I have some experience in government. I was formerly a member of the legislature in Manitoba and a cabinet minister there, so I also know that when something is a priority for a government, it can get done. I would agree that classification within the public service is sometimes out of date and there needs to be more resources and more effort put into also getting that right. We want to see action sooner rather than later, and our concern—and my concern—always is that when you start to get closer to the next election date, things like pay equity can fall off the agenda. We would hate to see that happen with this bill.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** I think you will find that it's a priority for this committee as well.

My next question is for Ms. Kelly. You raised a number of things I'd like to delve into a little bit further, including some terms we haven't heard here before. One of them is “occupational segregation”. You talked a little bit about women moving into non-

traditional areas, but also not leaving the traditional areas. There are statistics that show that as women enter a particular profession and as that profession becomes feminized, the wages go down. Could you comment a little bit? First of all, clarify what you mean by occupational segregation, then how we can avoid what seems to be a very troubling trend, which is that it isn't so much the occupation that is underpaid; it is the actual fact that it's women doing the work.

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** I wholeheartedly agree. Someone explained it once in the reverse, that it's not women moving into a profession, but men leaving it, so the value goes with the men seeking other places. Men used to be bank clerks. There are many examples of how that switches.

On occupational segregation, when you look at some of the background work done by the Ontario government in closing the gender wage gap and striking their committee that did consultations, they talked about the silos that are both horizontal and vertical. If you look at it horizontally, you are looking at who is in what occupation. So, just to use a different term to explain what you've just said, if you look at teachers, nurses, administrative assistants, and electricians, there is a gender skew in many occupations in that horizontal way.

Then when you go into different sectors in the vertical way and look at the pay grades.... I don't ascribe to pink and blue, and I actually believe in a gender continuum, but for simplicity's sake, if you just took that and put pink and blue stickers on things, you would see where people are concentrated by their gender. Again, I dispute whether or not that's by choice. I think employment equity deals with that somewhat. Even in terms of employers, when we've done employment equity, employers are actually surprised. I don't think it's a case of, “Nyah, nyah, nyah, we're going to stick all the women over here.” I don't think that's what the majority of employers think, but they are shocked at what happens. Women themselves are sometimes shocked. So, where we have opportunities.... The systems review, I think, takes on that element of it. You get a much larger diversity of where people are. You can go to other cultures to see that.

On the other hand, you can see that there's a commonality across the world in this day and age where women are concentrated. I think that's where pay equity comes in—work of equal value. Let's look at the value of the work that is contributed.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** In terms of transparency, and certainly on pay equity, one of our recommendations was the need for reporting requirements and having committees in the workplace that would be able to part of that. For employment equity and other aspects, you would say that transparency in reporting would be something that would be important.

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** Absolutely. We see organized workplaces that have almost as many pay grades as they do people. Again, you put them on a little map, and the people who are more related to the employer, who look more like the employer or are the same gender, are those who have skewed wages. When we unionize them, we ask what that work is worth, and ascribe that. Everybody then knows what everybody else makes. Sometimes people say, “We can't have pay transparency, because people get nowhere.”

We're so freaked out about money in our society. Pick up any of our collective agreements and flip to the back. Schedule A will have the schedule of what people are paid, including me in my own collective agreement. Then you will know that. It actually illuminates things that are often the result of unconscious bias.

• (0915)

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** So, in terms of intersectionality, it's easy to know who's a man or woman. Well, there are non-binary people as well, but in general you can find that in the workforce and you can plot that. It's much more difficult to start asking people about other gender identities and then having a transparent reporting process around that. Do you think it's doable?

**The Chair:** Hold that thought. You're out of time.

We're going now to my colleague, Ms. Vecchio, for seven minutes.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Jennifer, I want to start with you. You mentioned that the lower-paid parent is the one who usually stays home. The fact that I, a mother of five, chose to stay home.... What kind of stats do you have that show the difference between people who chose to stay home because they were lower paid and those who just wanted to be a mom? Do you have stats on that?

**Ms. Jennifer Howard:** I don't have the stats on that with me. I completely respect the fact that some women make those choices. My wife and I have two children. My wife decided to stay home for an extra six months. We were economically privileged for her to be able to do that. We could live on my salary. Many families don't have that privilege. I respect that choice, but I know that for many women, when the choice is paying \$1,500 a month to put their kid in child care and they make less money than their partner in the household, they stay home.

That means their pensions are lower.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Thank you very much.

I hear what you're saying but I think a lot of times when we're having these conversations, we have to recognize that some women just want to be moms and stay home. I came from an event today at 7:30 where they were talking about the unpaid work of parents worrying. I worry about everything, so I probably could be a billionaire by now. But let's be honest, how do we put a dollar value on worrying? We're going to all this unpaid care work.

I stayed home to take care of my mother after she had a triple bypass. I was the breadwinner in my family, but I chose to stay home because I knew I could take care of her and that she wanted me there to care for her, because having my brother doing some of the care things he would have had to do would have been very inappropriate and very difficult for him.

I think sometimes we take away the value of our maternal instincts. I think it's really important that when we're looking at these things that we do take into consideration maternal instincts, because, to be honest, I'm fortunate enough to be a member of Parliament but I'm also fortunate enough to have a solid marriage and five children. We can be both. Sometimes I think we're aiming so far, but we can be both. Those are some concerns that I have when we talk about needing a hand up. Sometimes we do need a hand up. But some of us can do both and wish to do both. I think sometimes by making it sound as if we're being stomped down, that's not the case, because I know I can go through those barriers.

**Ms. Jennifer Howard:** What I want for you, what I want for me, what I want for all women is to have that support.

**The Chair:** Would you ask a question, please?

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Lisa, I want to go on to you because I have a question regarding the Quebec child care system.

As the critic for families, children, and social development, I've been studying this. One of the biggest things is that they have extremely long wait lists; it takes two to three years to get into the child care system. Moreover, the quality of their child care is among the lowest in Canada, yet their format is the one you are asking us to use.

I recognize that it's universal, but the fact is, if parents want to go to work and they have a two- to three-year waiting list, what are they supposed to do?

Maybe there's a key here. You mentioned the public and not-for-profit sectors. Can you share with me what you think a child care system would look like in Canada, whether it would be universal or a more targeted program?

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** In answering your question on Quebec, I feel a little like Dr. Danielle Martin when she was questioned in the U.S. by a U.S. senator about the badness of the Canadian health care system. She said she couldn't tell him about this problem but she could tell him that 43 people die a day, or whatever, on that. There might be a two- to three-year wait list in Quebec, but I can tell you that I had my son on a wait list and after seven years, I gave up getting him into the child care program at his school. There are wait lists across Canada and Quebec is by no means the worst.

Is it a perfect system? Absolutely not. But it does prove that it pays for itself, that you put money into it. For the women who choose to go to work—and I take your point that for women who choose to take care of their children at home and not go into the workforce, that's a choice they have—their income pays back into the income system.



I do believe in a universal system rather than a targeted system. I don't object to looking at the pillars of government's investment, as well as parent fees, so that there might be some recognition of a sliding scale—at least for parents. I echo what I know you've heard before, which is that programs targeted at poor people become poor programs. We support the public and not-for-profit institutions because people shouldn't make a profit from caring for my child. But the studies also show that the quality is better in public and not-for-profit sectors.

In connection with that, when you've got good working conditions for the child care providers, you have less turnover. That means on Mother's Day, I don't have to re-explain to someone else what my family configuration is for the Mother's Day cards, whether there's one or two. There is respect for my human rights and my family.

• (0920)

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** You mentioned the not-for-profit sector. You do agree with a potential sliding scale, then, that those families that can pay more should pay more. Where would the intervention be with the not-for-profit sector? You mentioned that, so what do you see its looking like?

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** If you look at the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, it has some materials on that, as does the CCAAC. There are certainly some things I can forward to you on that. Ideally, it would be a wholly public system, but we have to work our way there. What is clear is that we don't support a for-profit child care system.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Awesome.

Do I have a few more minutes?

**The Chair:** You have 45 more seconds.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Jennifer, back to you.

When you're looking at the women in your unions, how many would part of some of the STEM fields? Would you say there are 10%, 15%, 20%, or 50% who are part of the STEM fields?

**Ms. Jennifer Howard:** Our union doesn't represent a lot of the women who work in those fields. PIPSC would likely represent them, so it's probably a question better directed to that union.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We now go to my colleague, Ms. Malcolmson, for seven minutes.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the panel.

I'm going to start with a question to Oxfam. First of all, thank you so much for bringing Oxfam's international reputation to focus on a domestic campaign in Canada. It's a very good reality check for us that there's a lot of work to do right here on the ground.

Your feminist scorecard was just released yesterday, and in it Oxfam called out the Trudeau government, saying, "the government has disappointingly taken very few steps to ensure women's work is fairly paid and equally valued."

I also have your report from October, entitled "Shortchanged: Make Work Paid, Equal and Valued for Women". That was a call from Oxfam to implement pay equity legislation, which the

Canadian government committed to do some 40 years ago, and it still hasn't happened.

Are there any real barriers to the federal government's immediately implementing pay equity legislation? Have you heard any good rationale for waiting until 2018?

**Ms. Diana Sarosi:** No, we have not heard what the real barriers are. Anita pointed some of those out earlier, and we definitely agree that we want a good system rather than a rushed system.

There are models out there that can be looked at and studied. In fact, the Quebec model is hailed as one of the most progressive in the world, but there are also opportunities to look at the models, for example, in Sweden and Germany. This is something we continue to speak out about. We don't just look within; we look outside the country.

There are so many examples of pay equity models, gender budgeting models, that we can learn from, and that can really help us speed up the process. Many countries have been very progressive in this area. We know this is complicated, but learning and lessons learned are out there, and we should take full opportunity of those.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** I'm reminded that at the committee last year, there weren't any witnesses who asked for a delay along the lines that the government's now proposing, so we're going to keep pushing.

Moving to either Jennifer Howard or Lisa Kelly, I'd love to hear from either of you on this. We've been hearing a lot about the changes to pensions, introduced by the government, under Bill C-27, which threaten the defined benefits pensions that many retired women depend on for income.

I've been hearing a lot from constituents in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, which has a lot of elderly people and folks in the retired bracket. I have been hearing that women especially have a higher representation in defined benefits programs. When they don't do well, that's especially what drops retired and elderly women into poverty.

Just this week, we got copies of letters from the Canadian Labour Congress and United Steelworkers, asking the finance minister, Bill Morneau, to withdraw Bill C-27 and protect defined benefits.

Can you explain, for the record, why those changes are so harmful for women, in particular, especially elderly women without other sources of income, and what would you recommend the government do to protect the pensions for those women?

•(0925)

**Ms. Jennifer Howard:** We are also opposed to Bill C-27. I think it opens the door to an attack on defined benefit pension plans by opening the door to the target benefit plan. The average salary for our members is about \$45,000 a year. These are middle-class folks, and when they retire they have access to a good pension that is deferred wages—a pension that they pay into all their working life. If we have seen a decrease in poverty among senior women, good pensions is one of the biggest causes of it, along with women being in the labour force—either their own pensions or having access to survivor pensions, which is also key for women, who tend to live longer than men.

We see this as an attack on those pensions. We know those pensions are critical to good retirement income and dignity. However, we also want young women—some of the women who are going to be in here later today—to have access to those pensions.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Is there anything you would add from the Unifor side?

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** I would just add that sometimes we look at these things in such isolation, saying that we've been in an economic downturn or that there's not enough money. It really feels as though that viewpoint skews towards looking at public service workers to be the solution.

I'll get you to go back to listen to Kathleen Lahey's presentation about tax policies and where money has gone and the money that's not in the coffers of the government because it has been foregone in tax changes in the last 10 years.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** We've been hearing a lot about the trend towards precarious work and how it affects women in particular, especially young women. I was disheartened to hear Finance Minister Morneau say that Canadians should get used to job churn, because it's going to happen and we have to accept that.

I'd like to hear from you as strongly as we can what this government can do to ensure that women, and young women in particular, have stable employment that helps them achieve true economic security.

**Ms. Jennifer Howard:** Well, they can start with their own workforce. What we have seen is some restoration of the previous cuts, but not a growth in full-time permanent employment in the federal public sector, at least not from the statistics we've seen. We'd be happy to be provided with other statistics that show that. That is concerning.

Leading by example, stopping the reliance on temporary staffing agencies, and creating full-time jobs not only is good for recruiting employees, but this is a government that has said it wants to attract the younger generation into the public service to renew the public service, and those folks need good, long-term, full-time jobs.

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** I would echo that and just add that having a strong system of employment standards in the Canada Labour Code is really important for setting a floor. Often there's an idea that we can just go in individually and bargain with our employer or tell them how different work practices are affecting us.

I have two teenager kids.

Actually, my son turned 20 yesterday, so I have to stop saying that. I have one teenager and one 20-year-old.

They had an experience, over their summer jobs, of absolutely well-meaning employers whose idea of flexibility was all on their side. When you get a text at 7 a.m. saying, “Your shift at 2 p.m. is now at 10 a.m.”, and you had plans to work around that.... That was a reality for them.

So it's getting full-time hours and having standards there for you, and not only looking to the individual to make those things real.

•(0930)

**The Chair:** Now we're going to Ms. Damoff for seven minutes.

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Thank you, and thank you all for being here and for your presentations.

Could you give some global examples, if you have any, of countries in which there are policies that are working well? I believe the U.K. has day care available for its citizens. Could you give some examples that we could perhaps implement here, best practices that you may have seen, from other countries?

If you don't have any, that's fine, but I wonder whether any of you has any.

**Ms. Diana Sarosi:** Do you mean specifically for child care?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I mean for gender equity.

**Ms. Diana Sarosi:** In general, we always point to the Nordic countries—Sweden, Finland, Denmark—as examples. I'm not sure about the U.K. system, but I would definitely look at those countries.

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** In the Nordic countries, one of the things the federal government is considering, I understand, is what I think got labelled as “paternity” leave. I would call that “second parent” leave, although I don't want to leave out the gender component of that. It really is about giving targeted use-it-or-lose-it leave to the second parent, who overwhelmingly is a man, to disrupt this notion of what women's work is and the connection with their children, the role modelling with their children. My understanding is that in Quebec, where they do have that, the men who took that leave are more likely five years later to do more domestic work. In Sweden there is a lower rate of divorce after men have taken that leave. You've walked a mile in my shoes. You actually understand that a day at the beach with the baby is a day with “the baby”.

I love my children. I was really happy to be supported to stay home with my children for an extended period of time before coming back to work, as compared with my U.S. counterparts; but boy, it's when you get that other person stepping in, knowing that they can contribute to that care, that you get a shift in gender roles. I think that's really important.

**Ms. Diana Sarosi:** I just want to add that one of the challenges here in Canada is that it is a federal system, and a lot of things lie within provincial jurisdiction. In that case, I would also encourage you to look at Germany, which is also a federal system where jurisdictions are split like that.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Lisa, I have a question for you about leave for women who are being abused. Some of my friends from Unifor in Oakville have talked to me about that. It's predominantly within union contracts that it's been negotiated that women can take 10 days to just deal with life should they have to leave an abusive spouse. Can you speak to that at all?

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** Actually, about two weeks ago we bargained four weeks' paid leave with one of our employers for someone coming forward about her living with abuse.

Often there are three components to it—a women's advocate, paid domestic violence leave, and a protection against discipline. It often comes up when there are absentee issues and when there are other disciplinary issues, because there is an impact in the workplace. A woman, and sometimes a man, will come forward to talk about their home life and get support that way.

We've negotiated it. It's not taken up in big numbers. Australia actually did another study on how much it costs in their system, and it's only taken, on average, two days. It does allow for women to go to court, it allows for women who are in shelters to get their lives together that way, and it means the connection to the workplace continues. There was a study showing that one of the number one indicators of safety is economic security. Those things are really connected, as 8.5% of women have lost a job due to domestic violence. That was the pan-Canadian study that the University of Western Ontario and CLC did.

It's something you can legislate. Manitoba has done it. Ontario has a private member's bill. B.C. has a private member's bill. I think it was considered by the federal government in the flextime consultation. It's not something that would put a big burden on employers. It signals, really importantly, that women are supported in the workplace, and it addresses something that can be quite devastating to women's lives, including their working lives.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I've heard from women's groups in my riding about the need for it, so it seems like something that would be useful outside of just having the benefit of a union contract that can be negotiated for you.

● (0935)

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** Absolutely. Statistically, only 18% of private sector people are unionized. That leaves 82% of people uncovered by things that we can negotiate in our collective agreements. I wholeheartedly support putting that into basic employment standards across the country.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I want to talk a little bit more about universal child care. I worked when my child was young, and it was tough. A big part of the decision to have only one child was the cost. At the time, I had only three months away from work, and having a baby in child care was costing more than \$2,000 a month.

One of the things we don't talk a lot about is the economic benefit to employers of having that, because a lot of women are forced to take time off work if their child is sick, or if, for example, they're

using a babysitter as child care because it's cheaper, and then the babysitter is sick or something happens. Can you maybe talk about the economic benefits to the employer of universal child care?

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** Yes, and I'll be quick, because I feel as though I'm now hogging the time.

There's actually a Manitoba study about this sense of it being an economic benefit for women to provide child care in their homes. They want to take care of their own kids, so they take in a couple of other kids. They showed that there is a real churn involved, because as soon as their children become school-aged and need less care, they get out of the child care business. For the children who are in that home child care, we have that churning. Four out of five kids are in unlicensed child care right now, so absolutely having solid, reliable child care would help. In my own experience, I had a fantastic child care system, so that when I was peeling my crying toddler off my leg, I knew that was a momentary thing because the child was going into a place where children were not being abused; people were getting their breaks, and there were lots of checks and balances. It was licensed. My being able to go to work and have my whole self at work while my children were actually learning there had a positive impact on my employer and on my presence there, and on my children eventually becoming workers.

**Ms. Jennifer Howard:** There is also good research about the benefit of early childhood education to employers in that it produces citizens who are better educated, kids who are more ready for school and have better social skills. You can get all of those things outside of child care. In Manitoba, where I come from, we have a child care system that is funded by the government. The fees are capped. I never paid more than \$600 a month in Manitoba for child care, and it's also open to parents who stay at home, so if you're a stay-at-home mom or dad, you can also bring your kid to nursery school a few times a week or once a week when you need a break or if you want that child to have interaction with other kids.

Manitoba is not a wealthy province, but we decided that children were worth that investment. The federal government has tremendous power to work with provinces so that all provinces can have those high-quality child care systems. There are long wait-lists. There is a problem with access, absolutely, but that can be addressed with investment.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

Now we're going to round two of questions, starting with Ms. Harder for five minutes.

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

Thank you to each of you for taking the time to be with us this morning. I know that you're taking time out of your personal schedules, so we appreciate that.

My first question I'll direct to Lisa. A special committee was put together to study pay equity and where things are at in Canada right now. That study went on over the last year and then was put on hold and now sits as is. No report has been produced or tabled in the House of Commons.

In your estimation, is this a report that should be expedited and brought to the public's attention?

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** I think you have a great study from 2004. I don't think we need to keep going back and reinventing the wheel. I think almost all of those recommendations and situations are still accurate.

**The Chair:** Well, we tabled a report—

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Has anything been done on the report?

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** That was responded to positively. They said there will be legislation in 2018.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** I apologize. That is coming in 2018. That's what we're talking about.

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** That's our issue. We think because there's been such comprehensive study under a former Liberal government, that there isn't a need to do any more study. Although I recognize that there are some complexities, there's always a roll-in time that comes after the legislation comes into place, so the idea that we're getting everybody to get ready now, I think, is wasted time. I'll refer us back to the example of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. When the charter came into play, the equality section, which is section 15, governments were given three years to examine their laws and bring them up to an equality standard, and they didn't do that—

• (0940)

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Sorry, in the interests of time, are you basically saying we need to take action? Is that essentially what you are saying?

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** Yes, absolutely.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Okay, thank you, Lisa.

I'm going to go to my next question.

Jennifer, I believe you brought this up. You talked about the wage gap and one of the things you said was that actually the wage gap is widening. I actually have a chart in front of me from Statistics Canada that would show me otherwise. This was produced as of 2016 and it actually shows me that the wage gap has plateaued at this moment.

I would also draw your attention—only because you brought attention to different governments in power—and that of the committee to the fact that when I look at this chart, the greatest increase in wages for women took place under Brian Mulroney, a Conservative. The second-greatest increase took place under Stephen Harper, also a Conservative. That is interesting to me. You're more than welcome to take a look at that chart to see the production that's been there for women and their wages.

Moving forward to my third comment or question, I'd like to talk about gender-dividing jobs. In particular, one of the things that I hear about from women over and over again, and we see this in the statistics as well, is access to STEM fields—science, technology, engineering and math—and, of course, access to agriculture. These are two fields in which we don't traditionally see as many women as men.

Diane, I'd actually be interested in your thoughts. How could we encourage women to enter into these different fields in order to help them engage in these areas?

**Ms. Diana Sarosi:** While the agriculture sector might be dominated by males here in Canada, in the rest of the world it isn't. It's actually women farmers who are doing most of the agriculture work. There are lots of different programs and policies that can be in place to empower women to enter that area. A big part of that is, of course, land access, right? In order to do so, they require capital and the skills, so it would require training, capital, and just changes in policies that provide them with access.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Would you be able to specifically outline how we could take some of those barriers down so that women could enter STEM and agriculture to a greater degree?

**Ms. Diana Sarosi:** It's done by, first of all, investing in training programs, and then making laws. I don't know the specific context here in Canada in terms of women's access to land, but anywhere in the world, access to capital is a real challenge for women. We see that with small business owners. Most of the small businesses led by women are just one person, and they have a hard time growing their businesses because they don't have the access to capital that men do. That's definitely a huge barrier.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Now we're going to go to Ms. Nassif for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you also to the witnesses for their presentation.

My question is for Ms. Kelly.

You talked about access to employment and employment equity, but I would like to talk about Unifor, which implemented the women's advocate program to prevent violence against women and workplace harassment.

Can you explain how this program works? How do women in your union benefit from this program? What results have you achieved since the inception of this program?

[*English*]

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** As I said, we have about 350 women's advocates across the country. It's something that is bargained with an employer. The employer recognizes this person, similar to a steward, whose role is to assist women and men in the workplace, although we know that the overwhelming majority of survivors of domestic violence are women. The advocate is given resources such as, in our large employers, a dedicated phone line, ways of accessing the woman. They'll meet, or where we have federal employers across the country, sometimes that's contact done over the phone.

Those women go through a 40-hour training program put on by Unifor and a yearly update that advises them not only on the underlying elements of domestic violence, but also what the resources are in their community. They become very familiar with where the resources are that they can refer women to. They're able to assist them in working through any job implications if they have to have an absence from their job, or sometimes there are issues around safety.

For example, we had someone in the airlines whose partner went to jail for domestic violence. When he was released, she was in a public place, so the union worked with the employer to say, where in the workplace might she move to that the public can't get access to?

Similarly, we had a situation in a nursing home, again a place that the public comes into. What's the safety planning there? What are the protocols that you need to actually go through to ensure that the woman is safe at work?

In Ontario, we had the murder of Theresa Vince; we had the murder of Lori Dupont in the workplace. In B.C., there was actually the murder of a manager who was intervening in the attempted murder of one of the workers. These things happen in the workplace, and the women's advocate has that 40 hours of training to know what to do there and how to reach out.

● (0945)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** The community chapters of your union offer certain opportunities to people employed in non-unionized workplaces.

Can you explain how these community chapters work? What are the benefits of joining a community chapter?

[English]

**Ms. Lisa Kelly:** That's an excellent question. Again, I really recommend that the government take a look at these alternative accesses to collective action, democracy, and voice.

I'll give you an example of the East Danforth Community Chapter. It's made up largely of Bangladeshi women who have self-organized and are then a community chapter. They have access to support through the union about methods of organizing, advocating for their rights, and determining out of their membership what their needs are. They were one of the groups that made a presentation to the Ontario government's changing workplaces review, and did a very effective job at reaching in to those precarious workers we so often don't hear about.

It's that interim place where the methods of unionization that we have right now don't address the working structures that happen. It's a way of supporting democracy and voice within those workers.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

I want to thank all of our witnesses today for your testimony and the work you're doing to improve the economic status of women in Canada.

Thank you to my colleagues.

We're going to adjourn so we can switch the panels.

We are very fortunate today to have Pam Damoff taking over as the chair for the next two sessions.

Let's suspend.

● (0945)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

● (1000)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.)):** We'll bring the meeting back to order. I'd like to welcome all of our witnesses.

We'll start with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

You have seven minutes.

**Dr. Kate McInturff (Senior Researcher, National Office, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives):** I'd like to thank the committee for inviting me to speak today and for undertaking your work on this very important issue.

My name is Kate McInturff, and I am a senior researcher at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

By now the committee will have heard a number of recommendations about what they should do. I would like to take a moment to talk about the cost of not doing anything.

In spite of equal levels of education, there is still a gap of 7% in men's and women's employment rates. The OECD projects that gap is costing our economy \$8.7 billion, with a "b", annually.

The women who are employed are twice as likely as men to work part time, and last year more than 700,000 women in Canada were working part time for involuntary reasons. There were 275,000 of those women who cited the lack of child care as the reason. If those women who were working part time involuntarily were working full time, they would have brought home an additional \$20.6 billion in wages last year.

Women across employment sectors at every age and education level are paid less than men. If only the women who worked full time last year earned the same hourly wage that their full-time male counterparts earned, they would have taken home an additional \$42 billion. That is the cost of doing nothing.

If we want to do something, then we need to address some of the root causes of women's economic and equality, and those are unpaid work, occupational segregation, and violence.

First, on unpaid work, women in Canada continue to spend more time than men on unpaid care work. As long as there are only 24 hours in the day, that unpaid care work will put an absolute limit on the number of hours of paid employment that women can take. More to the point, it also limits the kind of paid work that women can do. Thus we see a concentration of women in occupations with hours that accommodate their unpaid work. These are occupations like nursing, teaching, and retail. We also see the overrepresentation of women in part-time work.

Second, with regard to occupational segregation, men and women in Canada tend to work in different occupations. More than one out of every five women working today works in health and social services. Now that in itself should not lead to a gap in pay or employment if we value the work of women equally. However, we do not. The occupations in which women are most likely to work in Canada include some of the lowest-paying jobs. For example, the medium employment income of an early childhood educator or a home care worker falls below the poverty line.

Increasing representation of women in predominately male employment sectors may pay off for women in the longer term. However, the rate of change is very slow. For example, while the federal government has invested nearly \$5 million over the past five years in programs to increase women's participation in the mining, oil, and gas sector, the share of women working in that sector has remained unchanged at 19%. The wage gap in the oil and gas sector for full-time workers remains one of the largest of any occupation, with women earning 64% of what their male counterparts earn. Again, that's working full time.

Further, unfortunately, we also see that where we are successful in moving more women into traditionally male fields, the value placed on that work diminishes. There's been some very good research in the United States that's come out in the last year, which has shown that as the share of female employees increases in an occupation, wages stagnate or decrease.

Third, violence against women is an economic issue. Although women from every income level experience gender-based violence, it is clear that violence against women is exacerbated by economic insecurity and is itself a cause of economic insecurity. Shelters consistently report that women return to violent homes because they can't afford to move out. Violence can cost them their jobs, their health, and their education. Justice Canada estimates that violence against women costs our economy more than \$12 billion each year.

•(1005)

Here are four things the federal government can do this year to make a difference to women's economic security.

First, it can invest in a publicly managed system of high-quality, universal child care. The result: more women will be able to move back into paid work. Part-time workers who want to work full time will have access to that work. Single mothers will not continue to face one of the highest poverty rates of any group of women in Canada.

Two, it can invest in the sectors where women work. Investments in infrastructure are important and necessary, but women continue to make up only a fraction of the workers in the fields where jobs will be created. If we invest equally in the sectors where women are likely to work, we will see higher employment levels, not only for women, but overall. We will also see a diversified, and thus more stable, economy.

Three, it can table proactive pay equity legislation today. The result: greater economic security for women, economic growth that lessens inequality rather than contributing to it, and increased government revenues.

Four, it can implement a national action plan to end violence against women. The result: women will be safer, both in their homes and their workplaces, and survivors of violence will be adequately supported.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** I'm sorry, I'm not used to doing this, and I realize I have to call on the next witness—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** I'm just busy listening.

Next we'll move to the Canadian Labour Congress.

You have seven minutes between the two of you.

**Ms. Vicky Smallman (National Director, Women's and Human Rights, Canadian Labour Congress):** Thank you.

I'm happy to be here with my colleague Angella MacEwen, our senior economist. I'm Vicky Smallman and I'm the national director of women's and human rights at the Canadian Labour Congress.

We're the national voice of 3.3 million workers in Canada, bringing together national and international unions, along with provincial and territorial federations of labour, and 130 district labour councils, whose members work in virtually all sectors of the Canadian economy, in all occupations, and in all parts of Canada. We're really pleased to be here to participate in this study on women's economic security.

In our statement we intend to focus our time on solutions that help address systemic barriers to women's economic security. The realities facing women and their barriers to economic justice are well documented: unequal access to decent jobs; higher rates of unemployment and precarity, and under-employment; lower retention and promotion rates; and lower earnings.

What women in Canada need is action to break through the status quo. Economic justice for women will never be achieved unless we lift up all women, including, and especially those who are most marginalized. We know the barriers to equality are magnified for racialized women, indigenous women, and women with disabilities, as well as lone mothers, so if we focus attention on women who already have privilege, say, by preoccupying ourselves with economic leadership positions, as this study puts it, then we will not make progress. As Rosemary Brown said, "Until all of us have made it, none of us have made it."

We want to put on the table some simple, concrete initiatives that the government can act on right away. Number one, let's get proactive pay equity legislation tabled. It seems you've heard this already. We don't need to repeat the points that the CLC and others have made for more than a decade to this committee and to the recent special committee on pay equity.

The government has committed to tabling proactive pay equity legislation, but not until the end of 2018. We're concerned that this timeline would not allow for the new legislation to pass before the next federal election, so women would have justice delayed yet again. The work is already done, thanks to the pay equity task force which made detailed recommendations for action. Unions and other experts are ready to help draft the legislation, so why wait? Let's get this done in 2017.

Number two, let's get a national child care framework signed and funded. Child care helps parents, particularly women, take part in the labour force. We all benefit when people can go to work knowing their kids have a safe place to play and learn. It's good for women, good for kids, and it's good for the economy, but in Canada it is hard to find and hard to afford.

The Advisory Council on Economic Growth recently noted that the wide availability of affordable child care has made Quebec a national leader in women's labour force participation. We know that negotiations toward a new framework for early learning and child care are under way and that's great, but we need that deal and we need funding to provinces and territories to ensure all Canadian families can access quality affordable child care. Let's get this done in 2017.

Number three, let's get paid domestic violence leave into the Labour Code. Domestic violence does not stay at home, it follows people to work, putting jobs and safety at risk. Our recent study revealed that one in three workers in Canada have experienced domestic violence in their lifetime and more than half say they experience the violence at or near their workplace. Paid domestic violence leave can help keep victims safe. It means being able to take the time that you need to deal with police or lawyers, get new bank accounts, find a new place to live without worrying about losing your job.

Manitoba's government recently passed a law giving all workers the right to five paid days of domestic violence leave, the first of its kind in Canada. Now we need the federal government to do the same with the federal Labour Code. Let's get this done in 2017.

• (1010)

**Ms. Angella MacEwen (Senior Economist, Canadian Labour Congress):** Thank you.

Let's help precarious workers. The most important thing that governments can do for precarious workers is to provide high-quality, universal public services, such as health care and child care. Almost as important, though, are effective employment standards legislation and proactive enforcement of those standards.

It's true that the federal government can only legislate the employment standards for less than 10% of the workforce. However, it's not true that all federally regulated jobs are already decent jobs.

There are many low-wage jobs in banking, telecommunications, airports, and airlines.

Women in Canada earn less money than similarly educated men and are more likely to have incomes that put them below the poverty line. Women dominate low-wage, precarious work. One in three women earns less than \$15 an hour, compared to one in five men.

We think that federal leadership, in setting a \$15 minimum wage and establishing a proactive employment standards enforcement team, would not only help low-wage workers employed in the federally regulated sector, but also provide important leadership for the provinces.

Finally, let's improve access to employment insurance and make sure that EI redresses labour market inequalities.

There are three elements that would improve women's economic security through employment insurance.

First, recent research shows that Quebec's parental and maternity leave does a better job at reaching low-income families than the program available in the rest of Canada. There are several elements behind this, including a lower entrance requirement, additional "use it or lose it" weeks of leave for the non-birthing parent, and higher replacement rates for portions of the benefit period. These should all be considered.

Second, add an improved low-income supplement, based on individual income rather than household income. For example, impose a floor on benefit levels.

Third, improve access to benefits and the fairness of EI with a uniform, national entrance requirement of 360 hours.

Thank you.

**Ms. Vicky Smallman:** In conclusion, we just have to say, why wait? In 2017, we call on our government to act to put women in Canada on a path toward economic justice.

Thanks.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you very much. You were well within the time frame.

Next, we're going to go to Canada Without Poverty. Thank you for being here. Again, you have seven minutes between the two of you.

**Ms. Megan Hooft (Deputy Director, Canada Without Poverty):** Thank you, and thanks everyone. Good morning.

My name is Megan Hooft and I'm the deputy director of Canada Without Poverty. I'm joined by my colleague Michèle Biss, our legal education and outreach coordinator.

We are pleased to make this submission on three critical factors that we believe are impacting women's socio-economic security. These are poverty, the need for the full implementation of human rights, and government accountability.

For those of you who are not familiar with Canada Without Poverty, we're a federally incorporated charitable organization dedicated to the elimination of poverty in Canada. Since our inception in 1971 as a national anti-poverty organization, we have been governed by people with direct, lived experience of poverty. This experience informs all aspects of our work.

The discussion of barriers to women's economic security in Canada comes at an opportune time. Tomorrow is International Women's Day, and around the world the women's movement is perhaps the most energized it has been in some time.

In the Canadian context, it seems as though we're ready to take steps in the right direction towards gender equality. Our Prime Minister has called himself a feminist. In an August 2016 letter to the ONE campaign, he acknowledged that poverty is sexist and that nowhere in the world do women have as many opportunities as men.

As members of a national anti-poverty organization, we applaud such public statements. We believe our government leaders must also recognize that poverty within Canada is similar to poverty in developed countries to some extent. Poverty is sexist here at home. Women in Canada experience significant levels of poverty, inadequate housing, homelessness, and hunger that are disproportionate to the country's economic wealth.

Lone-parent mothers enter shelters at twice the rate of two-parent families. It is estimated that four out of five women in prison are there for poverty-related crimes. Social assistance rates are so woefully inadequate that only in Newfoundland and Labrador can a lone parent receive support that brings them above the poverty line.

The statistics are particularly striking when looking at women who are members of marginalized groups. For example, 36% of first nations women living off reserve experience poverty. Poverty rates are also higher among elderly women, who make up 73% of all poor seniors living alone.

Canada's reputation as a leader in women's rights is disconnected from the reality on the ground. In 1995, Canada was ranked first on the United Nations gender inequality index, but today this ranking has dropped to 25th. In recent years, Canada's approach to women's poverty has been piecemeal and based on emergency responses. From food banks, to inadequate shelter spaces, to pockets of money for child care, such patchwork programs represent band-aid solutions. They're not tackling systemic causes.

For Canada to say we are a leader on gender equality is one thing, but to act like a leader is something else entirely.

• (1015)

**Ms. Michèle Biss (Legal Education and Outreach Coordinator, Canada Without Poverty):** The world is looking to Canada to be a leader, and this government has an opportunity to break the

barriers that stand in the way of women's economic empowerment. Canada has a shared responsibility to the sustainable development goals, in particular goal one to end poverty, and goal five for gender equality, as well as our international human rights obligations.

In October 2016, the United Nations CEDAW committee reviewed Canada's compliance with women's economic and social rights. The committee issued Canada a number of concrete recommendations, many of which have been reflected on this panel today, that speak directly to the barriers women face to achieving economic security.

In particular, I'd like to draw your attention to the first recommendation, that Canada ensure that its poverty reduction strategy and national housing strategy protect the rights of all women by integrating a human rights, gendered approach.

The second was that Canada increase the amounts of transfer payments to provinces and territories, earmark sufficient funds specifically for social assistance, and set conditions on those payments based on human rights.

Third was that we intensify our efforts to revive sufficient numbers of affordable child care facilities and affordable and adequate housing options.

This is not the first time that we've heard these recommendations from a United Nations body. In fact, these points were articulated recently at the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in February of 2016.

It's time to recognize that women are rights bearers, and the responsibility to address poverty stems from our obligations under international human rights law, something that must be reflected directly within our laws, policies, and programs. Good laws and policies are a start, but it's crucial that they be framed in international human rights.

We're very much encouraged that Canada is already taking steps toward some of these important recommendations by the CEDAW and other United Nations committees, in particular Minister Duclos' commitment to the creation of a national housing strategy and Canadian poverty reduction strategy.



Further to these and other initiatives by the federal government, including the gender budgeting aspects that we're anticipating in budget 2017, we further recommend that this committee call on the Government of Canada, first, to implement a review mechanism to assess, through a rights-based and gender lens, all national laws, policies, and programs that serve to support women's socio-economic rights in light of the sustainable development goals and international human rights obligations. Such a mechanism should allow for input from civil society experts and women with lived experience of poverty.

Second, we recommend that the Government of Canada ensure that national strategies such as Canada's national housing strategy and Canadian poverty reduction strategy use a human rights framework that makes direct reference to international human rights obligations and women's economic and social rights.

We thank you for your time and we look forward to your questions.

• (1020)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you very much.

We're going to go to our first round of questions with Mr. Fraser.

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.):** Thank you very much for being here. I have about six days' worth of questions and so I will jump right in.

Ms. McInturff, I'll begin with you. I found the way you opened very interesting as you described the economic impact of the employment gap between men and women.

One of the things I foresee as a problem when we try to correct this social issue is that there are a limited number of full-time positions in Canada generally, and that, if we have a lot of women who are currently working part-time for one of many reasons but who want to work full-time, there may not be opportunities for everybody who wants to.

You mentioned that one of the things we can do is invest where women work to help create those opportunities. I was hoping you could be a little more specific and say what kinds of investments and which industries would make the biggest difference.

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** Thank you. Absolutely.

First, I would say that, while I agree that there isn't an endless supply of full-time jobs out there, we've seen the government make investments to produce jobs, for example, in the sectors that will benefit from infrastructure spending. I think that what we need to see is greater investments by the federal government, working with provinces, in health and social services. For example, I welcome the \$3 billion investment in home care, but I would say as a caveat that we need to think about the fact that home-care workers' median wages right now fall below the poverty line. We need to think both about investing in a sector like home care, but also ensuring that the investment and those jobs come with a living wage.

The other thing I would point out is that more than a third of the women who work part-time voluntarily do so for reasons of child care. I think investments in child care will free those women up. When the labour force surveys the people who are working part-time, and they ask why are you doing that, the women are not saying

they can't find full-time work. You can say you can't find full-time work and, indeed, many women do say that's the problem, but the 275,000 women don't say they can't find full-time work, but that they can't find child care. I think that tells us that there are some jobs out there for them, that they're trying to move into them, and that they're being hamstrung by the lack of accessible child care.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** To build on that, if we're making investments in child care and look at the wait times that exist now and want to bring those down so more women can find child care, where is the deficit right now? Should we be investing in child care infrastructure? Should we be subsidizing child care service providers? Should we be putting money in the pockets of parents so they can afford child care?

What's the right approach? Maybe it's a combination of these different approaches.

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** We have a very good natural experiment here in Canada, because Quebec has made very significant financial investments in subsidizing child care. I'm sure my colleagues from CLC can speak to this as well, but there are a couple of take home lessons, I find, from the Quebec example.

One is that if you simply look at the cost of running child care—paying your rent and your overhead, paying child care workers a living wage, which by and large we do not at the moment, and meeting your safety regulations—you have to charge parents more than they can afford, essentially.

We thus have to have government subsidies. The math just doesn't add up unless we provide government subsidies. The market will not fix this, because you can't make ends meet as a child care organization and not charge people exorbitant fees.

The other lesson I would take from the Quebec model is that it needs to be universal. I know that people say that's not fair. We've had this discussion even within Quebec. Should people with high incomes not be paying more? The answer is that they do pay more. They pay more when they pay their taxes.

Also, if we don't have universally accessible child care, what happens is that we create a whole lot of paperwork, which is very expensive; also, the poorest Canadians will not be able to access that child care, because they won't have a regular home address, they won't be able to provide all the receipts, and they won't have all of the paperwork they need to access to go through the income testing.

• (1025)

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Thank you for that.

I just have a couple of minutes left, and there are two issues I want to hit on.

I want to touch on domestic violence leave, which I think Ms. MacEwen raised—or maybe Ms. Smallman. Either can answer.

Do you have a suggestion as to what the appropriate amount of leave for domestic violence would be? One thing triggered in mind as a sort of “part B” is the question whether there is a role for the federal government to extend, say, EI benefits, as we do sickness benefits, for 15 weeks, but maybe for domestic violence or something of that nature.

**Ms. Vicky Smallman:** There are two types of leave that we're talking about.

What women really need is what we call paid safe time. These are days to be taken not consecutively but whenever needed, and maybe not full days; there could be half days.

Then it's possible that some women may require longer periods away from work, but that would be very rare.

The EI-funded component of it, then, wouldn't be our immediate priority, because what women really need is time during the workday to go to do the things they need to do to keep themselves safe.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** For this, the labour code is the right place .

**Ms. Vicky Smallman:** Exactly. We're talking about employment standards and the Canada Labour Code.

Manitoba has five days; Ontario's private member's bill suggests 10.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Okay.

**Ms. Vicky Smallman:** Let's start there.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Finally, we have just over one minute and you're not going to be able to do it justice, but I have a question on the issue of housing and shelters. We know there's going to be a significant investment in affordable housing, which includes a requirement in the mandate letter for the minister to address shelters as well.

How can we get this right? What are the key elements we can be looking at to make sure we don't waste billions of dollars?

**Ms. Megan Hooft:** Essentially, one of the things we're saying, first and foremost, is to use the human rights framework. Part of this will involve accountability mechanisms and the ability of people to access the money. It's going to require dedicated resources and responses from the people who are receiving the money: is it working; are there enough shelter spaces? It's going to require that type of consultation, ongoing throughout the implementation process.

The other point to make is that not all women want to go to a shelter. There could be concerns about safety. There could be concerns about losing their children. What sorts of other programs in the housing structure, then, are you putting in place? It could be a rent supplement program that's portable; it could mean that there are different transitional housing options, and so on.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Very quickly—there are 10 seconds left—when we talk about international obligations, are you specifically referring to, for example, CEDAW and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights?

**Ms. Megan Hooft:** Yes, but if you are talking about housing as well, look primarily first at the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights and then at CEDAW also.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Perfect.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** We'll turn now to our Conservative friends—Ms. Harder—for seven minutes.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Thank you very much.

I want to clarify something very quickly. I believe, Kate, it was you who were talking about voluntary versus involuntary reasons for part-time employment.

Can you clarify what you said? Are you saying that women more often are in part-time employment for involuntary reasons?

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** First of all, women are twice as likely to work part-time than men. If you look at the women who are working part-time, you will see that just over 700,000 of them cite involuntary reasons. There's a portion of women who are part-time who say that's voluntary. That percentage hasn't changed much at all over the past 20 years.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** I just want to make sure that we're clear then. Would you say that their choice is more involuntary than voluntary?

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** Statistically, more women cite involuntary reasons than voluntary reasons.

• (1030)

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** For the sake of this report, I do want to correct the record. Again, in the Statistics Canada 2016 report, voluntary reasons given by women equated to 18.8% and involuntary equated to 11.4%.

Would you agree to accept those statistics?

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** I would have to look at my Excel spreadsheet, but that's not my recollection of the statistics I've looked at for 2016.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** For the report going forward, I think it's in the best interest of Canadians to accept Statistics Canada.

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** I agree.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** I'm not sure where your statistics come from.

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** The labour force survey.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Okay, but StatsCan would say that it is more often—

**Ms. Angella MacEwen:** I can help with that. In their official reports, StatsCan doesn't count child care as an involuntary reason, but a lot of—

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Is that a difference that you would make?

**Ms. Angella MacEwen:** —people who use Statistics Canada statistics do count child care as involuntary. When StatsCan puts out their statistics, they don't, because of a decision they've made. That would be the difference.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Okay. It's good just for us to understand the definitions and the basis that we're functioning on here today. Thank you.

Kate, you also mentioned the STEM fields and women's entry into STEM. This is where we see fewer women participating, in both STEM and agriculture. In your opinion, how could we increase women's involvement in these two areas?

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** I think you've heard from some folks who have more experience than I do working in this, for example, from the Canadian Women's Foundation. I've been in front of this committee speaking specifically to this issue with people who have been engaged in programs that help women enter those fields. What I've heard consistently from the folks who are directly involved in this is that you need a long-term approach. What we see, for example, is women going into apprenticeship programs and having difficulty even completing the apprenticeship program for a variety of reasons, whether it's experiencing some hostility, whether it's access to child care, whether it's a matter of choice. Then they come out and enter the workforce.

For example, the last time I was in front of this committee, one of my fellow witnesses gave an example of a woman. She was working with a factory, whose owners wanted to have more women working in the factory. The entrance to the factory went through the men's change room.

You need to follow people right through the apprenticeship process, through the job entry process, working with employers, and then into their time in employment. Again, we see women who complete their apprenticeships, go into the trades, for example, and then drop out after two, three, or four years. I think the Canadian Women's Foundation has done really good working on trying to support those women so they can stay in those fields. Again, I think it's a question of really working with those women all the way through that first five, or even 10, years of their entry into those fields.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** My next question is for Megan.

You mentioned the low incomes and that your goal, of course, is poverty reduction, which I fully support. When I look at the statistics, they show that 13.5% of women and 12.5% of men have low income. The gap there is only 1 percentage point. However, if we take a closer look, we know that among women, it's those with disabilities, those who are aboriginal, those who are visible minorities, those who are recent immigrants, those who are unattached, and those who are over the age of 75 who are disproportionately affected with a lower income.

I'm looking to you for some guidance on how we might alleviate or solve this issue that is before us with regard to these specific groups for whom we see the greatest gap.

**Ms. Megan Hoof:** I think there are various ways to do it. For example, when we talk about poverty, it's never a silver bullet solution.

You've heard a number of really great ideas at this table. Of course, we're presenting ideas with regard to housing. There is child care; there are wage gap issues. We know from our colleagues and some really great research that women who are paid less are struggling with things like housing and child care to a greater degree than men who are earning more. That could explain why lone-parent mothers are disproportionately represented in the poverty statistics in terms of wages. It could also explain why some of the older women are in precarious situations now as seniors. They weren't able to save, they didn't have the same retirement options, or the same jobs with pensions.

I think what needs to be said is that a lot of these women need boosts from a number of angles, whether it's housing supports or the universal child care program. They're not able to fully contribute or be of equal status because some of these programs aren't reviewed through a gendered lens. In that sense, when I say the word "affordable", what could be affordable for a single father is different from what's affordable for a single mother. Even that word itself needs to be considered in terms of what it means for women. One of our recommendations was to review current policies and programs because they do have different impacts on women.

• (1035)

**Ms. Michèle Biss:** I'll just add one thing. The other piece is that we can look to a couple of international mechanisms and review processes at the United Nations for how to address these numbers for marginalized groups. You're right in saying that, among the women who are living in poverty, those numbers are very stark when we look at women with disabilities, racialized women, and indigenous women.

Coming up in April at the committee on the rights of persons with disabilities, we're going to see issues of women living with disabilities and in poverty, as their economic and social rights come under review by a United Nations treaty body. We ratified this covenant in 2010, so it's our very first moment on the international stage for this. However, we can look to those international examples and those review processes to inform our processes going forward.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** We'll now go to Ms. Malcolmson for seven minutes.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you to all of the witnesses. We're going to cut and paste all kinds of your testimony for our report because your work is really appreciated and important.

My first question is for Kate McInturff from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. From your testimony and your other work, I see how hard poverty hits women. We see that 37% of single mothers in Canada live in poverty. Women with disabilities are among the poorest population in all of Canada, with an unemployment rate of up to 75%. It's appalling. You've talked about how universal child care would help lift a lot of low-income women out of poverty. I'm hoping you can elaborate more on that. How would universal child care impact poverty rates among Canadian women and, in particular, what lessons can the federal government take from the Quebec universal child care model?

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** In Quebec we've seen rates of poverty fall quite significantly amongst single mothers, for example. I can follow up later with the exact number. I don't have it off the top of my head, but I believe it was something on the order of 140,000 single mothers who moved out of poverty. The period I looked at was from 1997 to 2015. Of course, some of those women moved out of poverty for other reasons, but it's a significant number and, I think, strongly correlated with the introduction of child care.

The issue of part-time work also speaks to this. We have women in part-time work—and I'm looking at the numbers on my spreadsheet now. There are 25.78% of women who cite preference or voluntary reasons for being in part-time work. Then there are various percentages of women who cite illness, child care, family responsibilities, going to school, and business conditions. For the women for whom child care as the reason, it means they are trapped not only in part-time work and, as my colleagues have pointed out, in low-wage work, but also that they may not have access to employment insurance. If we've seen an economic downturn and the high entry-level requirement that my colleague spoke about, what happens then is that you have a cycle of women living in poverty, not making enough through work to get out of poverty, potentially losing a job during a period of economic downturn, and not having access to EI at all, or having much lower EI benefits. Therefore, they take the first job they can get, which may be precarious, part time, or low wage. Because they don't have access to those EI benefits, they can't wait another week or two weeks to get into that more permanent job, that job with the living wage, so you have a cycle there.

Child care isn't the only way you break that cycle, but I think the evidence is there that it is one of them.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Thank you very much.

To Vicky Smallman from the Canadian Labour Congress, you had a very punchy way of expressing your concern in a Twitter post about what happens when we hold up and celebrate successful entrepreneurial women. You mentioned how it doesn't actually get at the basic economic security questions that our government should be tackling. Can you give us a paragraph of more than 140 characters on that thought?

• (1040)

**Ms. Vicky Smallman:** I knew my tweets would come back to me someday. I think you're referring to my remarks on the difference between women's economic empowerment and women's economic justice. This is why we very cautiously use the term "economic justice". "Economic security" is pretty good, too, but "justice" has a bit more push to it. The problem with the notion of economic empowerment is that it focuses on solutions that benefit individual women. You give them the tools they need to succeed in their careers. This is not in and of itself a bad thing. Of course, we want women to be empowered, economically and otherwise, but when we focus on solutions that benefit individual women, we lose sight of the systemic barriers that are keeping all women down, especially those who are most marginalized.

Economic empowerment and programs and rhetoric aimed at the empowerment of women—especially if they have an entrepreneurial focus, but not necessarily—don't allow us to look at what the systemic barriers and solutions are. It means that we're not actually addressing those inequalities and breaking down those barriers that make things worse for the most marginalized women—indigenous women, racialized women, immigrant women, lone mothers, and women with disabilities. You can have a few people get up the ladder and maybe crack the glass ceiling a little bit, but there's a whole other ceiling made of brick for a bunch of other women down here. That's why we prefer to focus on systemic barriers and talk about women's economic justice.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Thank you so much.

My final question is for my friends at Canada Without Poverty. My own province, British Columbia, has no provincial poverty reduction strategy. I note that in your work you've highlighted some of the successes in other provinces that our federal government could learn from. For example, Newfoundland and Labrador used to have the highest rates of poverty, but they've introduced some holistic approaches, including child care, pharma care, and increased social assistance, and the province now has the lowest poverty rate in the country. Can you talk about how such programs can affect women and their poverty rates?

**Ms. Michèle Biss:** Yes, and thank you for that question.

As part of our work at Canada Without Poverty, we produce our poverty progress profiles, which are a review of provinces and territories, and how poverty reduction strategies are playing out and how they measure up to our international human rights obligations. What we've noticed overall is that the provinces and territories that are doing the best are adhering not only to specific pockets of policy—it's not just piecemeal policies here and there—but to this overall approach. It's what we would call a rights-based approach, or elements of a rights-based approach.

Two of the provinces that are doing quite a bit better would be Quebec, which we've talk quite a bit about, especially from the lens of their child care program, as well as Newfoundland and Labrador, as you remarked. Another territory that has some good elements is the Northwest Territories. What we're seeing in an overarching sense—and I'll speak very quickly because I can see that my time is running out—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Yes.

**Ms. Michèle Biss:** —is that it's with this overall approach that they're going to do something about poverty, and all of these piecemeal policies are going to fit in a framework—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** I'm going to have to cut you off, I'm sorry.

We're going to turn to Ms. Ludwig.

You've got seven minutes.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.):** Thank you very much. Thank you for your excellent presentations.

My questions, overall, focus on the unconscious and structural barriers.

Ms. Smallman, you had mentioned systemic barriers.

Kate, looking at the issue of women in trades, here's my scenario. If we look at trades training in Canada, largely through the college system, a student would go in and study so many hours and then they go into the field. To get the next block, they have to come back to school. In my home province of New Brunswick—I'll speak to that as an example—the individual comes back, but when they come back to school to finish the second block, they have to be, first, maybe eligible for EI, and if they're not, they pay for it themselves, and it goes on and on. Over the course of the four blocks to a journey person's specialty, so many of them drop out.

In your experience, are the drop-out rate higher for women? We know the difficulty of getting to the first block. I've seen, at the college level, a significant increase in the number of women, but I do not see the same trend at graduation because of the blocks. If someone has a child or two children, could you speak to their ability to go back to school and collect only EI, not a regular salary.

• (1045)

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** I'll do my best to speak to it. It's a little outside my expertise.

The non-traditional field that I have spent some time looking at is the oil and gas sector, just because we've seen investments in moving women into that field. There was a very good study of women in the mining sector, and those women cited as their top two barriers a hostile work environment and the lack of child care and flexible hours. When the mining companies employing them were looking for employees during that period of time—this was in 2014 and we weren't seeing the loss of jobs, but an increase in jobs—and were asked if they had any kind of policy or template, or anything around addressing employing women, none of them did and none of them thought there were any problems.

Sometimes it's a matter of making sure we're communicating, but also I think we want women to be able to enter the fields they want to enter and we need to listen to them. If what they're saying is there's a lack of child care or they don't have child care that works with the hours in some of those non-traditional trades, or with the seasonal nature of returning for training and then back, and so on, and that women's lives can't accommodate that because of the unpaid care work, we need to think about how we provide child care for those women. Then we also need to work on the issues of unconscious bias. This isn't about creating an antagonistic relationship. This is about saying, "Here are some really qualified people who want to complete their qualifications. They want to be your coworkers. They're good coworkers. They don't look that different from your wives and sisters and aunties. You know, you just need to think a little about how maybe they don't need to enter the building through the men's locker room."

It's really dialogue and responding to those women and making sure that you're listening to what they say they need.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Thank you.

We have just recently completed a report, "Violence Against Women and Young Girls in Canada", and a common theme, unfortunately, that we heard from the witnesses was the difficulty when reporting, and then taking that all the way through the justice system. So I have two questions.

The first question is for Kate: how was the loss or the cost of \$12 billion to Canada's economy calculated?

My second question is for Ms. Smallman. I just want to get my mind around what you referred to as "paid safe time". How would that work? Would someone have to go to their employer? It's tough enough for someone to go to the justice system, let alone to someone whom they work with side by side, and with the systemic barriers and biases, to say that they are being abused or that they've had a problem. Does someone have to get convicted? How would that work in a work setting? Five days definitely doesn't sound like a lot.

I'd like you both to speak to that.

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** The \$12.2 billion number comes from two reports that were issued by Justice Canada over the last couple of years. They look at the self-reported rates of intimate partner violence—and sexual assault in another study—and they calculate the number based largely on academic research, including the average number of women who end up in hospital and the average length of stay; the reports of lost work hours, the costs to the victim and to the employer; the cost of the use of victim services; the justice costs, the policing costs; and they calculate a cost for the suffering, which is a bit of a strange exercise but not atypical of economists. It is a way of assigning a value to the fact that these are victims who have suffered a violent crime.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Thank you.

Ms. Smallman.

**Ms. Vicky Smallman:** A couple of things need to happen in addition to having access to the time.

One is to view domestic violence as a workplace hazard, a health and safety issue. Our colleagues in Australia, whose work we are basing this model on, have many years of implementing these types of clauses at workplaces in that country. In addition to having access to the time, there are also internal policies around how to deal with domestic violence if it's having an impact on somebody at work. Usually the person can just go to their supervisor and say, "I'm having some trouble, I'm experiencing some violence, and I need tomorrow to go and deal with this thing," and the supervisor will give them that time. Right?

• (1050)

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** If I could just jump in there, though, Ms. Smallman. What happens in the case of unconscious biases among colleagues?

**Ms. Vicky Smallman:** A really important component to all of this is training for managers. In the labour movement we are engaged in a very extensive training program for our shop stewards right now, to build awareness of this issue. There are programs available for employers in most provinces now. Building that awareness and breaking the silence around domestic violence and how it works is what's helpful.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you very much. Sorry to cut you off.

We'll go to Ms. Vecchio for five minutes this time.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Yes, I'm going to make it really quick and short. I want to start by asking all of you on the panel, what are the key barriers? Just call out the names. I don't need explanations, but what are those key systemic barriers?

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** The disproportionate burden of unpaid work.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Unpaid work, okay.

**Ms. Angella MacEwen:** Discrimination.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Discrimination for being a woman?

**Ms. Angella MacEwen:** Being a person with disabilities, a racialized person.... If you're a woman and you're racialized, you have more discrimination than, say, I do.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Next one.

**Ms. Vicky Smallman:** I would say it's the lack of decent work.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Lack of decent work, okay.

Next, Michèle.

**Ms. Michèle Biss:** I would say it's political will towards a rights-based approach that recognizes women's economic and social rights.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Okay.

Megan.

**Ms. Megan Hooft:** It's implementation of policies and programs that don't consider a gendered lens.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Okay, so that's discrimination.

**Ms. Megan Hooft:** It's implementation.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Implementation? Okay.

And honestly, I want more terms. I don't want explanatory lines, because then I want to go back and say, "Then tell me, what are your solutions?"

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** It's violence against women.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Violence against women.

Okay, so what do we do now to deal with unpaid work? How do we give that a monetary value that is fair to all Canadians, whether they choose to stay at home or choose not to stay at home, whether they have eight parents, or they have two parents, or no parents? What can we do for things like that?

**Ms. Angella MacEwen:** One of the really big things that we can do is to add eight weeks of parental leave for fathers under a "use it or lose it" model, and that actually improves—

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Right now, there are totally 35 parental leave weeks, so—

**Ms. Angella MacEwen:** Yes, but Quebec has a model with an extra five weeks that only the second parent can take, so it's called "use it or lose it".

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Eight weeks over and above, so you're talking about a 60-week leave then. Okay, so another option—

**Ms. Angella MacEwen:** What it does is rebalance the unpaid care workload at home.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Okay.

What can we do when it comes to discrimination against women, whether they're disabled or because they're female?

**Dr. Kate McInturff:** We can listen to them, and that means we need to support women's organizations to speak about women's experiences of discrimination. I think my colleagues from Canada Without Poverty can speak to this as well, but if you're a woman living in a situation of domestic violence, you maybe don't have time to come to Ottawa and talk to the committee. However, if there's a shelter organization that's empowered not only to provide them a safe place to live, but actually to talk to the leaders in their community about what those women need, then they might see—

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Okay, I'm just trying to be really brief here.

**Ms. Vicky Smallman:** I would also add employment equity legislation and pay equity legislation.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Okay, and I want to talk about the lack of decent work. What can we do to deal with this? Karen brought up the fact that there are apprenticeship programs. What can we do to create more work opportunities for women?

**Ms. Angella MacEwen:** Lack of decent work can be addressed by proactive employment standards enforcement. Manitoba has a model. You can make a complaint, and it doesn't have to be brought forward by the worker themselves.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Okay, I want a specific issue.

**Ms. Angella MacEwen:** That is a specific issue. Proactive labour standards enforcement: you can't be working at a temporary agency and being paid less than the person working next to you, and not getting the benefits, right?

**Ms. Vicky Smallman:** And a federal minimum wage, too, would help.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** I really do have issues with that, since we talk about 90% of it being under the province. Those are some things that we've dealt with. We are not in a pyramid; we're in silos, so we need to make sure that the provinces are doing their jobs as well.

When you talked about implementation, Megan, what is it that we do to—

•(1055)

**Ms. Megan Hooft:** Yes, you just mentioned one of the key things. You have two national strategies right now on the table, for housing and poverty. How are you going to make sure the money is getting there? How are you going to make sure everything is funded properly? You need to make sure that what's happening at the provincial level is actually happening to support women. That's going to require monitoring, review, and ensuring that you're talking to the women who are affected and involved. It means conditions on some of the money that's being spent. It means committed resources.

Implementation fits within the human rights framework. That's why we talk about it as a human rights issue.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Basically, what I'm hearing, though, is that all of these systemic barriers are actually all tied into one. For instance, if we did not discriminate against women, we would not have a lack of decent work. If we implemented things, we would not have a lack of decent work. If we paid women more or paid men to take time off, then women would be all of this.

How is that done? You all profess on this. What is it that we actually do, then, to put this into a working method that works for all Canadians, and I say "all Canadians", meaning men, women, youth, elders, everybody.

I know I'm out of time, but that is what I challenge you with. What does this look like that would benefit all Canadians, young boys who can't find jobs, young girls who can't find jobs, and elders who have had to go back to work? We talk about these things but I want to—

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** They don't have time to answer.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** No, no, but write me a summary.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** So....

**Ms. Angella MacEwen:** We need gender-based analysis in government policy-making.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** We're going to turn for our last five-minute round to Ms. Nassif.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** I will now turn to Ms. Hooft and Ms. Biss.

You indicated in your report entitled "Human Rights and Poverty Strategies, A Guide to International Human Rights Law and its Domestic Application in Poverty Reduction Strategies" that more than 4.8 million Canadians are living under the poverty line.

What obstacles to economic participation, prosperity and leadership might Canadian women face?

Further, have you identified strategies and best practices that could be used to reduce poverty rates among women and enable them to achieve greater economic security? If so, what strategies and best practices do you recommend?

Thank you.

[English]

**Ms. Michèle Biss:** In terms of what the strategies and best approaches are within the poverty reduction strategy and housing strategy, I want to reflect a bit on what we're saying when we're

saying a rights-based approach and what that actually means concretely, because I think our overall recommendation would be that what we need is a rights-based approach. I want to give some context to flesh that out a bit.

One of the key pieces to that is accountability and government accountability to ensure that if you have a rights-based strategy, there are mechanisms by which those 4.9 million people living in poverty can access some sort of review mechanism and have some sort of response from the government. We're thinking about policy, I think, as a piece that the government puts out, and then that's it. But it's more about implementation in the long term. How do you get feedback from those who are the most marginalized?

What we're really pushing here as a best practice isn't so much referring to this little pocket of policy or that pocket of policy—which are all really key pieces—as talking about an overall framework for these strategies that allows for that dialogue.

**Ms. Megan Hooft:** To add to that, I think when you're thinking about concrete pieces, we put it down to a few pillars. For example, you have to include human rights language in policy and law, and you have to start thinking about things from the human rights perspective, a gendered perspective, which is how this policy impacts people on the ground.

Part of that will involve what Michèle was saying—monitoring it, having timely reports, transparency, adequate funding, but also the inclusion of people in the process itself to hear back what this means for them and how it impacts them.

When you get down further and you look at those policies, such as a living wage, they actually speak to whether they meet the woman's needs and a woman can comment specifically on that, or maybe her issue is child care, and she can comment specifically on that. But if she has nowhere to go except to come to Ottawa, and there's no way for her to claim her rights, her right to housing, her right to food, and an adequate standard of living, she's left in the poverty cycle.

There are a couple of these concrete steps that you need to put in place, and that's what the human rights framework offers.

•(1100)

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Thank you. Do I have some time?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** A minute and a half.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** To all three witnesses, would you add anything?

**Ms. Vicky Smallman:** Well, no, I think they've done a good job of wrapping up. The idea of empowering people to take command of their rights is good, but I do think that the government can show proactive leadership in bringing rights to policy-making. That, I think, is fundamental. That's what this is all about.

I've heard an interesting dynamic in some of the conversations as if rights for one group means fewer rights for others. It's not a pie. Gender equality benefits everybody. I know I'm quoting like a Facebook meme right now, but it resonates with me. It also means that you actually have to start down the path. Further delaying the rights for women and for other marginalized groups means the situation continues to get worse. Inequality does not get better by further delays.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Okay.

Thank you all for being here. We really appreciate your testimony. It was very helpful. I notice that we've been joined by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ms. May.

Thank you for being here.

We're going to adjourn for 15 minutes, and then we'll be joined by some Daughters of the Vote delegates.

• (1100) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1115)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** I'm going to call this meeting to order.

We're studying the participation of women in politics.

I want to welcome the Daughters of the Vote delegates who are here. I can't tell you how thrilled we are to have you here.

What you see in question period is not indicative of what most of our life as members of Parliament is like. It's really nice to have you here to get a sense of, frankly, how collegial committee work is, and how most of our time as members of Parliament involves working together across party lines.

I spoke to you before. We're going to start left to right. You have three minutes to speak, and then we're going to have 15 minutes of questions afterwards.

To the committee members, I know we normally have a set structure of questions. The clerk is going to take a list of people who have questions. We are going to try and keep it to about one question per party, and limit it to about three minutes so that we balance it out.

Alana, welcome. You are the first Daughter of the Vote to address a committee ever. I understand that your topic is violence against women. Alana, it's over to you. Thank you.

**Ms. Alana Robert (As an Individual):** Thank you.

My name is Alana Robert. I'm from the Manitoba Métis Nation. I'm so proud to be the first woman in my family to go to university.

I've always wanted to pursue a career in law to help combat the magnitude of violence and exploitation experienced by indigenous women in our country, and I'm currently studying at Osgoode Hall Law School.

I vividly recall this aspiration of mine being validated when speaking at a women's rights march only a few years ago. I saw a young indigenous girl in the crowd, perhaps eight years old, holding up a sign that said, "Will I be next?" This moment made me realize that our young indigenous sisters should be dreaming of their future,

not for their future, and so I began to try to create a safer space around me for the women who surrounded me in my life.

I began a group at the University of Manitoba called Justice For Women. I brought together community organizations and leaders to help create consent culture workshops.

These workshops helped educate students about how to obtain consent and ways that they can design student programming to mitigate the risks of sexual violence. This encountered reluctance, so I created and successfully advocated for a policy that mandates this training to students across every single faculty at the largest university in my province.

I then designed a self-care and sexual violence resource centre that serves our community and secured funding to operate it.

While this work has made and continues to offer an impact at my home in Manitoba, this is only one component of the ability that we have to create a safer environment for our women, particularly our indigenous women, who experience a higher incidence of sexual violence.

I know students who go to class and sit only a few seats down from the perpetrator of violence against them, and students who use Justice For Women services because they don't know where to go or because there is nowhere else to go.

This leaves our women behind, and there's a lot of work ahead of us. The government can help advocacy groups like mine build the first generation free of violence against women.

With your support, we can create a national policy mandating all post-secondary institutions to have comprehensive consent education, response centres, and resources that are accessible to students. We can support the establishment of full-service community centres where women escaping violence can go for legal assistance, counselling, financial planning, and cultural activities, all within the same space.

This can reduce the re-traumatization of women that occurs when they are forced to retell their stories over and over again. For indigenous women, who are particularly targeted, this is especially important to ensuring their safety.

Many environments of our young people and indigenous women are conducive to violence. Our women are capable of greatness, which can be achieved when we facilitate a society that lifts them up so that they can flourish and reach their full potential.

Thank you.

• (1120)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you very much, Alana.

Now we're going to Shania, for three minutes.



Welcome.

**Ms. Shania Pruden (As an Individual):** Thank you.

Good morning. My name is Shania Pruden. I am representing Elmwood—Transcona from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Did you know that according to the Native Women's Association, indigenous women are almost three times more likely to be murdered by a stranger than a non-indigenous woman is? It's very difficult to take that in because it brings fear for many indigenous Canadians, including me.

A big thing that tends to happen is the negative stereotypes that these missing and/or murdered women get. Things like, "Oh, she was asking for it" or "Oh, she was a runaway", and sometimes even, "She deserved it". Why would someone say something like that? Then you stop and realize there are still people in Canada that don't care about equality, and making Canada a better and safer place for everyone.

I get scared walking home from my bus stop at night, but also when I'm in public, my self-esteem disappears. My parents told me many times that I am not allowed to take a taxi anymore due to the recent events that occurred in Winnipeg. Why is it still happening in 2017?

Something that I've never told many people is the reason why I dress the way I do, and the reason why I act the way I do. It's because I feel braver and more secure. If I was to dress more like a girl, people would know I'm a girl, and I'd likely be harassed for it. If I dress more like a boy, people won't bug me. They would sweep it off because, "Oh, it's just a guy". Why should I have to do that just to live free from harm?

The biggest thing that struck me the most was the death of a 15-year-old girl. Her name was Tina Fontaine. Her body was wrapped in a bag and pulled out of the Red River. It's terrible because she was only 15. She wasn't able to experience graduating high school, getting married, or having her own family. She had her life stolen from her.

Losing a sister is hard. My older sister died by suicide, but my family knows how she died. Can you imagine the thoughts that these families have knowing that their daughter, sister, and/or mother are somewhere out there, not knowing whether they're alive or not.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** It's fine, don't worry.

**Ms. Shania Pruden:** It's scary. Tragedy can happen at any time. Indigenous or not, women are women, and I strongly agree that violence against women has to stop. It's not fair that women have to live in fear. When we work together, we can help end violence against women once and for all.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you very much for your really personal and powerful testimony.

Natasha.

•(1125)

**Ms. Natasha Kornak (As an Individual):** Thank you all very much for having me here today.

My name is Natasha Kornak, and I am the Daughters of the Vote delegate for Calgary Confederation.

Roughly one year ago I launched a campaign in Alberta called Right2Know, which is working to put an end to sexual violence in the province.

I believe that three key elements are needed to eliminate sexual violence and its ramifications: education, creating robust public health resources, and revamping our justice system so that it is accountable to those who come forward with allegations of sexual assaults.

The primary focus of my activism has been on reforming Alberta's sexual health curricula to teach youth about consent, how to prevent and cope with the aftermath of sexual violence, and how to maintain healthy relationships. This is something I'm working on at the provincial level with the help of many outstanding MLAs from various parties in Alberta.

I believe, however, that the federal government has an obligation and the ability to help with the third pillar of the plan I just outlined: the revamping of our justice system.

When I was younger, I was picked on by boys in my class. I asked my teachers for help, and they said the boys were doing it because they "liked" me. We equate the abuse and assault of women to affection, which sounds ludicrous when you say it out loud, but you don't need to look past our justice system to see that this is the case. From Justice Robin Camp in Alberta, who told a woman she could have prevented her rape by keeping her knees together, to Judge Greg Lenehan in Nova Scotia, who claimed that a drunk individual can in fact give consent, our justice system is failing those who are brave enough to come forward with allegations of sexual assault.

Today I ask this committee to consider studying the effectiveness and feasibility of a survivor's bill of rights for survivors of sexual violence. Right now there is a vast discrepancy in the quality of care survivors can access across the country. Many people in rural and northern communities, for instance, lack access to sexual assault centres and sexual assault evidence kits.

Additionally, a recent investigation by *The Globe and Mail* found that on average one in five sexual assault claims is dismissed as baseless, often because of a lack of physical evidence. The investigation also found that detectives in this country oversee cases of sexual violence without proper sensitivity training.

In the courtroom, if a case even makes it that far, it often doesn't get any better. There have been cases in which judges have refused to allow a lawyer to read a victim's impact statement on behalf of the complainant. There are judges like the two I just mentioned who treat the complainant as though they are the ones on trial, calling their sexual history into question. This is a blatant violation of subsection 276(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada. It's no wonder that 90% of Canadian women will never report their assaults.

A survivor's bill of rights should include, but should not be limited to, the following: the right to be notified of one's options for reporting; the right for a victim's advocate; the right to ask for a change of the detective overseeing one's case; the right to accessible medical and counselling services; and the right to further preservation or destruction of a sexual assault evidence kit, upon the survivor's request.

For too long, our justice system has treated sexual assault as a petty crime, something to be met with a slap on the wrist. This undoubtedly perpetuates the pervasiveness of sexual violence in our country, and our government should not stand for it. We have the obligation to create provisions that will protect the rights of survivors of sexual violence. This committee has the opportunity to change the status quo, and I hope you will take action to do so.

Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you very much to all three of you for some of the most powerful testimony we've heard on this committee.

I'm going to turn it over to Ms. Ludwig.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Thank you all for your testimony and thank you for being here. I think the three of you, and the other women who are here in the room, are a true example of empowerment.

We heard from witnesses earlier today about economic security. One of the witnesses made a distinction between "women empowerment" and "women justice". Could you, I wonder, comment on that? Certainly what I am hearing from all three of you is more about justice than individual empowerment.

Also, if you have a chance, if you're able to share this with us, who were your mentors who helped you get here with confidence today?

Thank you.

**Ms. Alana Robert:** I think the two complement each other really well. Indigenous women whom we particularly spoke to all identify with the view that we need justice for our women, but at the same time that seeking justice for our women helps empower us and our daughters and our sisters. I think these go hand in hand.

Examples of things that we collectively can do, with the support of government action, are creating more comprehensive policies and creating a survivor bill of rights. These are things that can not only bring justice, but also help empower our women as well to gain autonomy and to gain justice in the process, and then to have the availability to choose the life they desire and pursue those paths.

•(1130)

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Did someone help you on the path to get here?

**Ms. Alana Robert:** I think my mom was a really beautiful influence on me. I'm the first in my family to go to university as I mentioned. It was just knowing someone was there cheering me on and saying, "You can do it. There are going to be hard days, but keep persisting." No matter what my dream was it was really empowering for me.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Thank you very much.

**Ms. Shania Pruden:** One of the biggest mentors I had was my mom. When I first applied for Daughters of the Vote, I was saying, "No, wait. I don't want to go any more." But then she kept pushing me. She was saying, "This is your way to go somewhere where you want to go."

Regarding the other question, do you think you could slightly paraphrase it again?

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** One of the earlier witnesses today talked about the economic security of women and that if we only focus on empowerment we can sometimes individualize cases. But if we focus on the justice for women we're talking about raising all women up. Would you be able to speak to that?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Don't feel you have to answer the question. Alana did a great job answering.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** That's right. You don't have to.

**Ms. Shania Pruden:** I don't have an answer. I'm sorry.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Okay.

Natasha Kornak.

**Ms. Natasha Kornak:** Yes, Madam Chair.

With respect to your first question, I think what's really important is that when we talk about empowerment we often talk about women. I think something that often gets neglected in the conversation, especially at the political level, is the intersectionality of women. All three of us sitting here on this panel are of indigenous descent. I think when we talk about the intersectionality of women we need to talk about how these issues impact women on different levels: indigenous women, women of colour, LGBTQ, and two-spirit women. All these different elements that pertain to women come together and diverge. When we talk about trying to instill empowerment in women, those efforts have different effects for those different levels of intersectionality. That's one thing that's really important. When we talk about individualizing cases, we can't lump people together but we also can't individualize cases. I think it's a very complicated issue, which is why I think this committee is very important.

With respect to mentorship, I'm really fortunate to have had women in politics who have mentored me over the past few years. One of my biggest mentors has been my MLA in Alberta, Mrs. Leela Sharon Aheer. She has been one of the most amazing people who has been behind this campaign from the get-go, and I'm so grateful for her support. Another person for whom I'm really thankful to have had a relationship is the Honourable Michelle Rempel, who has probably been one of the most incredible crusaders for feminism in politics. She's also been a supporter of this campaign. I'm very fortunate to have had the influence of these women. I was hesitant to even send my initial letter to the Minister of Education in Alberta about my concerns regarding sex education. I thought, if they can do it, why can't I?

I hope that answers your question.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Thank you all very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** I believe Mr. Motz is next.

**Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Thank you.

Again, thank you, ladies, for being here.

As a bit of a background, I spent the majority of my previous career to this dealing with exactly what you've talked about. In law enforcement for 35 years, I dealt with many young ladies who had the fear that you live with far too often. I partnered with a number of teachers in a high school and together we taught the sexual rights and responsibility through the CALM class, as it was called at the time. That was before you were born. What I find really disturbing is that the trend hasn't improved. You still face the challenges that you face. The justice system is an uphill battle. In the policing community we feel that same uphill battle that we're struggling with.

The Honourable Rona Ambrose introduced a private member's bill that we hope will get some traction to at least start the justice system revamp, as you said, Natasha. I would like to get your thoughts on what you feel that would do and what other things specifically you think might help the justice system revamp.

• (1135)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Before the answer, could you maybe say what's in the private member's bill? They may not be familiar with what's in it.

**Ms. Natasha Kornak:** It's the JUST Act that you're referring to, isn't it?

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Yes. Go ahead.

**Ms. Natasha Kornak:** I can speak to it.

The JUST Act is essentially aiming to improve training for judges who oversee sexual assault cases.

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Yes, right.

**Ms. Natasha Kornak:** This is something I brought to Alberta's Minister of Justice, Kathleen Ganley. She was rather dismissive of what I brought forward, but I think it's because it's at the federal level that we need this legislation.

I'm actually going to meet with Ms. Ambrose this afternoon about this legislation. I think it's a very important first step. As I mentioned, women who go on to pursue sexual assault charges often are treated as if they're the ones on trial. I think it has to do with how we sexualize women.

I could go into a whole rant on that, but I think there's another element involving the justice system that starts at the policing level.

As I said, there's a report by *The Globe and Mail*, and if you haven't read it, I strongly encourage you to do it. It's called "Unfounded". It says that on average, one in five cases of sexual assault is dismissed as baseless, or they're called "unfounded" cases, meaning that they don't have the evidence, whether it be physical or circumstantial evidence, to support their going forward with charges. Much of the time, we find that the police who are overseeing these cases aren't willing to cooperate fully, and they doubt the victim from

the get go. We need provisions at that level, I think, to start off with, so as to make sure that cases even get to a courtroom.

One reason we don't see cases going as far as prosecution is that the justice system is expensive, and people don't see it as worthwhile and worth the taxpayer dollars to prosecute a rapist. This goes again back to the sexualization of women.

What people forget is that sexual assault is expensive. It costs our economy \$2 billion a year. That's in medical costs, in costs for medications for sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancies, counselling services, trauma, missed work, missed school. We need to look at the big picture and work to ensure that justice is an element of our ensuring the health and success of women and all people, but especially women who are victimized by sexual violence.

I'm sorry for the long-winded answer.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Would you guys like to chime in?

**Mr. Glen Motz:** I'll follow, if I may.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Well, I'm assuming that there is a question from the NDP, and Ms. May, are you going to ask questions?

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** I would love to, with your permission; I definitely would like to ask questions.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Okay.

We'll go to the NDP next.

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Thank you very much.

Thank you all for being here, and thanks for your testimony. I know there's going to be a report to Parliament coming up on violence against young women and girls, and my NDP colleagues are drawing inspiration from your words here today.

I want to say a special thank you to Shania for representing so well Elmwood—Transcona, which is my home riding, and for your courage in sharing your personal story. I think it's important for all of us to hear. We often talk about these issues at the policy level, and it's a little sterile and a little distant from the impact such things have in people's lives. Thank you for taking the time to remind us just how important these things are and what they mean to people on the ground.

In the spirit of trying to bring back what we do here—which can be a little distant from people's everyday life, or be seen that way, anyway—to things on the ground, I wonder whether each of you may want to take a moment to say what you think, in terms of a concrete step....

We talk about issues, and they're big issues, and there are many issues that are connected, and it's hard to get a handle sometimes on just where we should start. What do you think, each of you, would be a useful action for government to take, just as a starting point, if we want to start getting something done and move towards a culture that's safer for women? How can we start doing that here in Ottawa? What are some first steps?

We could start with Alana and go down the line.

Thanks.

**Ms. Alana Robert:** I think there are two really tangible things that government can support young advocates like ourselves with. One is making sure that post-secondary institutions have the means to support their students and proactively prevent sexual violence from occurring, so that there is effective response and effective prevention. There are wide discrepancies in what universities and colleges offer their students. Some offer nothing, and others offer very comprehensive services.

Another tangible item that I think government can support is creating full-service centres to which survivors can go for everything they need following an incident of sexual violence, whether it be legal assistance, counselling, financial planning—whatever the needs might be.

In Toronto, there's the Barbara Schlifer Clinic. It offers these services to women who've experienced sexual violence or who are fleeing domestic violence, all within one house. We don't see that anywhere else in the country. There are often sparse resources and strings on funding, but actually prioritizing that funding and making these services available to women coast to coast is something that I think can offer beautiful implications and help us build a first generation free of violence against women.

• (1140)

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie:** Shania.

**Ms. Shania Pruden:** I want to check in on her for a second, on the whole thing about having community safe houses and stuff for all women of all ages.

I don't remember whom I was talking to but somebody told me that the average age of sexual exploitation is 13. How many 11- and 12-year-olds made 13 the average age? To have services available to children from 11 to adult would be very helpful.

Also doing what we are doing now. We're invited to talk to you guys. We're all under 23 so it would be nice to hear from more under-23-year-olds and have the youth voice heard.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Natasha, I'll ask you to keep it quick so we can give Ms. May a chance.

**Ms. Natasha Kornak:** I was going to second what Alana has put forward. A lot of universities are now having to be mandated by provincial governments to create sexual violence policies, but not every university has them. Right now a lot of them are very sparse in their language and the kind of provisions they outline in those policies.

I think we definitely need to legislate and create standards that post-secondary institutions have to adhere to, to make sure they are consistently providing services to people on campus.

That's something I think the federal government can definitely step into.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you.

I know we only have until 11:45, and then we have more young ladies coming.

Over to you, Ms. May.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** First, I want to thank each of you for coming. I think it's wonderful that you applied for the Daughters of the Vote and that you were chosen. Natasha raised the issue of intersectionality, which is clear. The first-wave feminism of my generation tended to be women of privilege in the 1950s and 1960s, and now there's greater awareness that racialized and indigenous women are much more vulnerable to patterns of domination and exploitation. I think that's even evident in hearing from the three of you of indigenous backgrounds.

Shania, have you ever spoken publicly before about how you present yourself to the world and your feelings of vulnerability if you present more as the beautiful young woman you are?

**Ms. Shania Pruden:** The first person I told about the way I present myself was Alana last night, so I thought it would be great to tell you guys because I've been holding it in so much. Why not just put it out there? Somebody has to get the conversation started so the opportunity came, and I did it.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** That's very brave.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you all.

Shania, I can see why you didn't want to speak first, and I'm glad you did have to courage to share your story. To all three of you young ladies, what an amazing opportunity it is for all of us to hear from you. I think I speak for all of us in saying how grateful we are to you for taking the time to come to speak and how worthwhile it was for us to hear from you. Thank you very much.

We're going to switch over now. We have three other young ladies who are going to speak to us.

• (1140)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1145)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** I'm going to call the meeting back to order.

The next topic we're discussing is human rights. I want to thank all of our delegates for being here. You have three minutes each.

We'll start with you, Anne. We'll go left to right again if that's okay.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Anne Elizabeth Morin (As an Individual):** Thank you.

The majority of Canadians have truly enviable living conditions. In Canada, we have the best human rights models as regards civil and political rights. Yet, even in 2017, economic and social rights are truly secondary. They are not protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or by any statute in Canada, and this includes the right to adequate housing. It is truly time for this to change and for the right to adequate housing to be accorded greater statutory if not constitutional protection.

Today, I would like to briefly address the issue of women and housing. The point I wish to stress is that access to adequate, safe, and stable housing is necessary for the growth and development of every Canadian woman, and for the advancement of the status of women. The fact is that 50% of women in Canada are renters. Two out of five of them spend more than 30% of their income on rent, which is staggering in a country as highly developed as Canada. Moreover, increasing access to housing will above all require increasing the number of social housing units right across Canada.

Given that women are more economically vulnerable, in particular as a result of the major cuts to provincial social assistance programs; given that the current shortage of decent and affordable housing is primarily due to gentrification—which reduces the number of housing units available—and above all the fact that, since the 2000s, the growth in the rental market in Canada has primarily been the result of the construction of high-end condos and not affordable housing for the people who need it; given the widespread discrimination in housing against single women with children, aboriginal women, and women on social assistance; given that these three factors often create obstacles that are in some cases insurmountable for women wishing to escape domestic violence, especially immigrant women who have a much more limited social safety net; given that these obstacles leave many women with no other choice than to return to or live in violent environments; given that otherwise, women are often left without adequate housing for themselves and their children; given the increase in the number of homeless women, especially among immigrants, aboriginal women and seniors, who often cannot afford to pay for housing; and finally, given that nearly 95% of women's housing agencies have in recent years been forced to turn away women due to lack of availability; I maintain that we need to establish a national housing strategy that addresses the specific challenges facing women, including gender-based analysis, and that responds to the urgent need to increase social housing for Canadian men and women.

Thank you.

• (1150)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you very much, Anne.

Welcome, Antu.

**Ms. Antu Hossain (As an Individual):** Thank you.

Hi, everyone. Thank you so much for your time today. My name is Antu Hossain and I represent the riding of Beaches—East York.

I want to speak about one of the most condemning human rights violations we have in Canada, which is migrant detention. I want to start with the story of Lucia Vega Jimenez. Lucia was a 42-year old

Mexican refugee, who was detained by the Canada Border Services Agency, the CBSA, for not being from Canada. Even when Lucia showed CBSA officers her scars from past incidents of domestic violence, they proceeded with processing her for deportation. She was being held in immigration holding centres while awaiting deportation and in that time, she hung herself. This is not an uncommon story.

Between 2006 and 2014, the Canadian government has detained 87,317 migrants, the majority belonging to racialized groups. In Canada under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, migrants are detained in medium-security immigration holding centres or maximum-security provincial jails if they pose a danger to the public, if their identity is unknown, or if they arrive without proper paperwork.

As you can imagine, with these general, categorical reasons, many migrants can be deemed dangerous. To worsen matters, many migrants are denied access to legal services. That prevents a fair judicial process from occurring and has led to migrants being detained more than 11 years in Canada. It is unsettling that migrants are the only population in Canada who are criminalized for immigration concerns that are clearly administrative.

Not only is that the issue, but Canada is the only OECD country that practises indefinite detention. There is no presumptive period in which migrants are let go, which means that again, they can be detained more than 11 years or indefinitely.

Since 2000, 15 detainees have died under CBSA custody, of whom three have died in Ontario provincial prisons. The most common cause of death is their having been denied health care, followed by suicide, both of which are often preventable and unexplained. The most vulnerable population who are suffering are single mothers, pregnant women, and children, and they are largely racialized. One in three is indigenous. Women with children have to choose between having their children in detention with them or being separated from their children. This has led to 232 children spending time in immigration holding centres.

The lack of knowledge about the end date for release has caused psychological illnesses, trauma, and depression, all of which are exacerbated for migrants who cannot be removed for legal or practical reasons.

In response to the three detainees' deaths under the new Liberal government at the time, there were three hunger strikes by migrants demanding an end to indefinite detention and poor prison conditions, which are unlawful. At that time, Minister Goodale announced his plan to reform Canada's immigration detention system by investing \$138 million toward enhancing alternatives to detention and rebuilding immigration holding centres.

However, his proposal has been criticized for not addressing the root cause of migrant detention and, in turn, for the resulting increased capacity to criminalize more migrants. Advocates have called for a 90-day limit, as a lawful time to remain detained or otherwise to have migrants be released, and to further increase access to mental health services.

What we need is action to ensure that the health and human rights of migrants are recognized and upheld. This means adopting the presumptive period recommended by the United Nations, allocating access to mental health services, and ending the practice of mixing migrants with criminal populations.

Thank you.

• (1155)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you very much.

We're going to turn to you now. Is it Teanna?

**Ms. Aygadim Majagalee Ducharme (As an Individual):** Yes.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Welcome.

**Ms. Aygadim Majagalee Ducharme:** [*Witness speaks in her native language*]

Good morning. My name is Teanna Ducharme. My traditional name is Aygadim Majagalee, and I come from the Nisga'a Nation, from the community of Gitwinksihlkw. Today I'm representing the riding of Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Matriarchs, respected guests, fellow sisters, I stand before you not only as a Daughter of the Vote, but as a sister in solidarity as well. As an indigenous woman, it is an honour to be here, to be sitting amongst each of you. It is also an honour that carries a lot of responsibility, responsibility not only to my people, but to my community, to fellow indigenous peoples, to fellow Canadians, and to this land.

Instead of talking about the last 100 years of struggles, I'd like to shift the conversation. I want us to talk about and explore the next 100 years of possibility, the next 100 years of revolution. Let's take a moment to imagine this revolution being led by women. I envision a Canada that respects and honours the voices of all Canadians as equals, as partners. I envision a Canada that protects our women and that stands up for our women. I envision a Canada that is fierce in its leadership and shows how much every person is equal.

I want to talk to you today about the intersections between land empowerment and women's empowerment. It is a theory that I've been developing over the last few years as I started to question why there was so much violence happening to our women and so much violence happening in my community. When I looked out and started to observe, I saw all of the destruction that was happening to our land.

As you know, the land is a female entity. She is our mother, the earth. As long as Canada allows and permits violence against the land, that also gives way and gives permission for the perpetuation of violence against our women. We need to learn how to protect the earth, because when we protect the earth, we also protect our women.

One fierce way Canada can ensure that we are honouring not only the rights of indigenous peoples, but also the rights of the land, is by honouring the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I know that Canada is making efforts in implementing this declaration, but we need to start really putting effort into this. When we talk about truth and reconciliation, we're not at reconciliation yet; we're at truth-telling. We're at a time when you allow space to welcome us here to tell you our truth, and through that we will reach reconciliation, but we're not there yet.

Therefore, I encourage you, each of you, to go back into your communities, to go back to your leaders, and to start asking them questions about how they, in their own roles, are contributing to the implementation of the UNDRIP, and how they are contributing to truth-telling and to reconciliation.

Thank you very much.

[*Witness speaks in her native language*]

• (1200)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** *Meegwetch.* Thank you.

Élisabeth. *Merci.*

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Élisabeth Gendron (As an Individual):** First, I would like to thank the committee for welcoming us and thank Parliament for inviting us this week, we delegates from the Daughters of the Vote. I would also like to thank my colleagues for their testimony. Some very important issues have been identified.

My name is Élisabeth Gendron, and I am the delegate for Trois-Rivières. I am here to talk to you about access to justice. Access to justice is a concern in Canada, especially in Quebec. Access to justice is not equitable, especially when comparing people with money with those who have less. This inequality is also evident between men and women. Based on these findings, it makes no sense to say that our justice system is supposed to be the foundation for the protection of vulnerable members of society if it fails to serve its role owing to the complexity of the judicial process and the lack of resources for the underprivileged.

Inequality before the law is especially evident in family law, in the case of women who may be experiencing domestic abuse. The law is not designed to properly protect them and their children from violent former spouses. Similarly, in divorce proceedings, in many cases these women cannot afford a lawyer or the legal aid program is completely overloaded by the thousands of requests it receives every year.

In 2014, for instance, the legal aid clinic Juripop, which offers low-cost legal services, stated in its annual report that the majority of its family law clients were women who head single-parent families with one or two children. I observed this myself when I did a work term at the clinic.

Similarly, in 2016, the Commission des services juridiques du Québec noted that women accounted for 62% of its clients in family law, civil law and youth protection.

This is also a serious problem in the criminal justice system. The group that appeared recently spoke about that. Statistically speaking, women are more often the victims of crime than they are the accused. In Canada, in 2008, 83% of victims were women, more than two-thirds of them under 18 years of age. Let us also remember that approximately 88% of sex offences go unreported.

Criminal prosecutions are currently designed in a way that more often than not disregards the victim, treating her as a mere witness to the crime and not a central figure in the proceedings whose interests should always be considered in determining the sentence.

Similarly, it is unacceptable that women are not taken very seriously and that their credibility is constantly called into question by decision-makers and prosecutors. These two obstacles no doubt explain why many women are reluctant to report crimes in which they have been the victim. Criminal justice needs to change and be reconfigured to give a greater role to the victims, if they wish of course, so they feel heard to a greater extent. Moreover, the rules of evidence no doubt need to be changed so that victims' testimony in sexual assault cases is not systematically called into question.

In closing, I would say that women, especially poor women, are not well liked by the justice system. Although a number of initiatives have been taken in recent years to address the situation, it is essential that members from all parties turn their attention to this problem so we can work together to resolve it and ensure that our justice system truly represents and reflects the interests of all Canadians, including women.

Thank you.

• (1205)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you very much.

We have only 10 minutes before we adjourn so we'll have to keep our questions and answers crisp.

I know you have a delegate here, Nathaniel. Would you like to ask a question?

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Thank you to all the presenters. You would all make excellent parliamentarians, and I'm sure you will be one day.

I have a question for my representative of Beaches—East York. You spoke of 11 years in indefinite detention, and then you spoke of the 90-day period—a huge disparity. Perhaps you can speak to whether other countries have adopted that 90-day period—and you referenced the United Nations—and the importance of adopting that 90-day period in Canada.

**Ms. Antu Hossain:** Thank you for your question.

The importance of that weighs heavily on the way migrants are detained because at this point we are the only country that not only practises migrant detention, but also that does not have a 90-day presumptive period. The U.K. and Australia have employed this.

It is highly unfortunate that this has led to more suicides by migrants within detention centres. There is no out. There is no end in sight when you do not have access to legal services or even improved mental health provisions.

This is one way in which we can at least ensure that if migrants are going to be detained, they are being detained because of a criminal offence. Right now they are being detained without a criminal charge. The importance of this weighs heavily on all of us.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you very much.

Do our Conservative friends have a question?

**Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** No, thank you very much. I'm here to learn, and it has been very informative. All four of you have spoken incredibly well, and when Ms. Erskine-Smith said you'd be great parliamentarians, that wasn't meant as an insult. It was a compliment.

Thank you for sharing. I appreciate it.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Irene, would you like to speak?

**Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Yes, thank you very much.

The fact that you're here gives us great hope. You will note, as you watch through the week, that there simply aren't enough women. We need more, and we need women who have the passion and the understanding of our society that you have obviously demonstrated.

I want to ask everyone a question, but I suspect that I'll be limited, so I will go to you, Teanna. You talked about the fact that there has been truth-telling but no reconciliation. Some years ago, I was on the status of women committee, and we travelled the country. We talked to indigenous women, to women in shelters, and to organizations. The one thing they said was that they wanted there to be an inquiry, but that they had done so much research and had talked to the families and knew what had to happen next. They knew how to get to reconciliation.

However, that plea on behalf of those women has largely gone by the wayside. I wondered if you had thoughts on that in terms of the women who have lost sisters and daughters having control of that inquiry?

**Ms. Aygadim Majagalee Ducharme:** First off, I'd like to say that I stated that we are at a place of truth-telling, which means that this is the point we're ready for. In that truth-telling, I believe that our indigenous women are leading the way for reconciliation. I think all of the initiatives that we're taking about at the community level, at the grassroots level in our communities and cities, are what are leading this reconciliation journey, and it's mostly led by our women. There's a very specific reason for that; it's because women need to reclaim their power. That was one of the biggest things that was taken in colonization and the efforts at colonization—the importance of women and their rightful place in leadership.

One of the biggest efforts that we as women are offering to this journey of reconciliation is the reclamation of matrilineal leadership.

• (1210)

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you very much.

We have representatives from the Green Party and the Bloc here. I'm just wondering if you two want to share the last five minutes. Is that okay?

[Translation]

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Yes, we can share the speaking time.

Thank you very much.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Please go ahead, Ms. May.

[English]

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Thank you. It's almost impossible in two and a half minutes to ask the things I want to ask.

[Translation]

I would like to thank all the witnesses, especially Ms. Morin and Ms. Gendron.

I have some quick questions for Ms. Ducharme and Ms. Hossain.

[English]

Thank you, all of you. I am very impressed, Antu, with the information you pulled together on the detention of migrants. I've been very concerned about this myself.

How did you come upon this issue and what makes you passionate about it?

**Ms. Antu Hossain:** Thank you for that question.

I was a refugee when I came from the United States. Considering the state that the United States is in right now, with many asylum seekers coming across our borders and our policies having failed to evolve in response, I've been very concerned about this issue. I have also gone to an immigration holding centre myself and met an ex-detainee who told us that if we are not the ones advocating for detainees, no one will.

These are some of the things that have brought me to bring these narratives forward, and which I hope you can take away from today.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** If I have any time left, to Teanna, you....

I don't have time?

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** I'm sorry.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I'll give my time to her.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** *Merci beaucoup.*

Teanna, you're not the first to note—although you're brilliant in noting it—that there are parallels between the violence done against the earth and violence against women. There's a deep literature on this, including the work of Rosemary Radford Ruether particularly, who's a feminist Catholic theologian. I think it's also embedded in things like the Tsilhqot'in decision, that there's a pattern of domination and exploitation—men against women, humanity against earth—and violence in that notion of exploitation.

Would you like to speak more to that, because you clearly came upon it on your own, which is brilliant. Please, would you like to expand on it?

**Ms. Aygadim Majagalee Ducharme:** I came to an understanding of notion when I experienced violence in my life. The only

way I reclaimed my body sovereignty was through land sovereignty, through ceremony with the land. That was the only way I was able to regain my strength and reclaim my spirit.

It was just something that I noticed.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you for your bravery.

I think we have two minutes, maybe three, if you'd like to use them.

[Translation]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** I will be quick.

I was really struck by what you said about access to housing for homeless women. You said there are more and more homeless women. Can you elaborate on that?

I live in Montreal and I can see it. There are far fewer shelters for homeless women than there are for homeless men. This is a basic need that is not being met.

**Ms. Anne Elizabeth Morin:** For your information, the Conseil des Montréalaises released a report on March 1 about homelessness among women. It found that senior women can be left in the lurch when their landlord takes back the dwelling for his own family, for instance. In some cases, these senior women had been in that housing for 25 or even 40 years and they paid just \$450 or \$500 per month. For equivalent housing, they now have to pay \$800, but they cannot afford it.

The waiting list for shelters, such as Le Chaînon, is incredibly long. There is not enough low-income housing either.

FRAPRU is an organization that is active primarily in Quebec. It is a source of information about housing conditions, for women in particular. In 2015, there was a testimonial campaign, and the testimonials are still available on YouTube. The FRAPRU website includes testimonials from aboriginal women, women who head single-parent families, and women having difficulty finding housing.

• (1215)

**Ms. Monique Pauzé:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff):** Thank you very much.

Teanna, I just want to recognize that your member of Parliament, Mr. Cullen, has joined us at the back.

Ladies, thank you very much. As I mentioned to the previous group, and will say to you as well, that was incredibly powerful testimony. We hear from a lot of witnesses in our committees, and you rival the best that we've heard—all of you.

Thank you very much for your very important testimony. We're privileged to have you here with us today. We look forward to what you'll be doing after you leave us. Thank you.

I get to bang the gavel one last time.

The meeting is adjourned.









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