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Chair

Ms. Marilyn Gladu

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•(0855)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)): I'm very happy to see you, Minister Monsef, welcome.

Before we begin, I want to present a motion. There has been a request for the parliamentary secretary to receive the Library of Parliament briefing notes for public meetings. I would ask if there's a will from the committee to have that happen? Would one of the committee members move that motion?

It's moved by Pam Damoff that the parliamentary secretary receive Library of Parliament briefing notes for public meetings.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I understand that in addition to the Minister of Status of Women, we have today some visitors from Women in House. I believe some of our committee members want to provide a word of welcome to them, so we'll let Ms. Damoff begin.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): This is a fabulous day. Not only do we have the Minister of Status of Women here, but we also have a number of young ladies from the University of Toronto. I can't think of a better day for you all to be here, but our committee is always an interesting committee.

I hope this inspires you. I'm fortunate to have two young ladies with me for the day. Welcome, and I hope you enjoy, are inspired, and consider politics as a venue as you go forward in your careers.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): I am so proud today to have a young lady with me from U of T. What's really interesting is she's actually from Texas originally. Four years ago, she moved from Texas to Canada. Especially now, as we're looking at different things with gender equality and such, it's great to have a really fresh perspective. I'm very proud to have Madison Bruno from U of T, who is now living in the city of Toronto with her family.

This is a great opportunity for young women to see what we do in the House of Commons and what we can do as legislators. I welcome everybody here today. Please, ask any questions of all of us. It's really important we see all perspectives when we're looking at women's equality in all the different issues.

The Chair: Ms. Malcolmson.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Thanks, Chair.

Women in House is a program the University of Toronto and many other universities like McGill and Brock have brought here.

Women in House is a great program that's waving through a number of universities.

I'm very pleased to have Emily Wuschnakowski with me today, and I appreciate the committee's welcome to these young women.

The Chair: Welcome to all of you, and a special welcome to Minister Monsef.

We'll start with your opening remarks. You have 10 minutes.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Colleagues, friends, guests, allies, it's a great privilege to be in this room with you, the same room in which I was sworn in. To be on this traditional territory of the Algonquin peoples is a reminder of the privileges we bring to this room but also the responsibility that comes with all that privilege.

For your introductions, Madam Chair and colleagues, and your welcome to the young women, who are part of a movement, I'd say, to make sure that the next generation of leaders who take up these seats have a good sense of what they're walking into.... To that end, I will do my best to be as well behaved as I can possibly be.

I'm also here with Meena Ballantyne, who is the head of Status of Women Canada, as well as Anik Lapointe, who's our chief financial officer. As you know, we have an incredible team at Status of Women. They have found all sorts of innovative and creative ways over the years to make sure that the women's movement and the commitment of the federal government is there, improving the lives of women and girls.

In my remarks, Madam Chair, I thought I'd talk about a few things. I will tell you a little bit about me, the values I bring to this work and why I'm even doing this work, given that this is a really important opportunity for us to build a relationship that is mutually beneficial for us but also for Canadians. I think that's really important. I'll talk a little bit about my mandate. Most importantly, what I'd like to leave this room with, if you all agree, is a better understanding of how we can work together and how we can better align the work of the committee with the work that I've been mandated to do. I will also, of course, answer any questions you might have.

What an honour it is to be the Minister of Status of Women in 2017. My predecessor Minister Hajdu has done excellent work. It's a privilege to follow her, to pick up where she left off, and to lead the rest of the agenda that this government has.

I know that this committee is a unique committee, and not just because the chair is a member of Her Majesty's official opposition. I was watching you long before I actually became the minister on this file, and the way you work together is truly unique. I think there's a recognition amongst members around this table that the work of your committee—the issues that affect women and girls and people of different genders across the country—doesn't really fit into any partisan lines. I know that you've travelled through stories of individuals, especially survivors, and that those stories weigh heavily on all of us. We have a shared responsibility to honour them.

This unique committee and the way that you're structured, the way that you work well together, is one other reason why I'm particularly excited to be part of this work. The work that you've done around gender-based analysis, around ending violence against young women and girls, is critical to the work of the government. I thank you for tabling your report recently. It was nice to see all of you on the cover of *The Globe and Mail*, again illustrating what I just talked about, that it's a shared responsibility.

For me, I was raised by a single mom. I'm an immigrant to this country. I grew up on public transit and various public social safety nets that allowed me to understand the challenges that people in a country as wealthy as Canada experience. I come to this place with that humility and also with a deep belief that in this country, anything is possible. A single mom, given the right resources and supports, can raise three daughters in a community that welcomes them, and they can aspire to dream big and to make a difference in the lives of those who have helped them.

My work, like that of many millennials, has involved a range of initiatives that have made a deep and quick impact in my community of Peterborough—Kawartha.

● (0900)

The same organization that allowed my family a safe roof over our heads in Peterborough—Kawartha, the YWCA, ended up being an organization for which I became vice-president of the board. By being a part of that movement, the oldest and the largest women's organization in the country, I've benefited from a lot of the collective wisdom there. It was actually the YWCA that afforded me the opportunity to go to the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2013. Events came full circle just a week ago when members of this committee joined me at the 61st session of the UNCSW in New York, and it was so wonderful and empowering to have a number of you there experiencing the highs and the heaviness of that gathering.

I've also had an opportunity to work with settlement agencies, so the issues of migrant women have a particularly special place in my heart. In university, I was very much interested in mental health and mental illness and changing the stigma and the conversation around mental health, and was part of an international movement of young people on campuses devoted to changing that conversation. That's some of what I bring to this work. I know each of us around this table has personal reasons that we're in politics and we do this work, and I think that's a strength.

In many ways, the goals that are laid out in my mandate letter are connected to what I've always believed in: that government policy, regulation, and legislation can be and has to be sensitive to the different impacts they can have on women and men and people with

different genders. This is a goal that I know we can and have all come together to support. Much of the work that you've already undertaken, and I hope the work ahead, is in line with my mandate letter.

My work generally falls under three broad categories. The first is ending and preventing all forms of gender-based violence. Your report is an important aspect of that work.

Second, it's focused on women's economic empowerment. Whether it's closing the wage gap, ensuring that more women enter STEM fields and other fields where they're traditionally not represented, or ensuring more women entrepreneurs are leading the way, that's a critical part of my work.

Then the third part is leadership. It's making sure that there's more diversity in places like this, making sure that Canada's corporate boards have more women in those seats. We know that greater diversity brings more relevant and responsive decisions and more innovation.

Broadly, those are the three areas that I'm mandated to work on.

You saw in budget 2017 that there's a commitment and I would say a major step towards gender equality in our country in that document. It includes the first-ever gender statement as part of the federal budget and a gender-based analysis that has made a positive impact with over 60 different measures that the government prioritizes. It also builds on the work of 2016 by continuing to invest in actions that help reduce gender inequality including housing, child care, and addressing gender-based violence. It also makes those significant strides towards women's economic empowerment.

In total, \$101 million over five years is what's invested in this budget to address and prevent gender-based violence. This funding will allow us to create a centre of excellence on these issues and add a new survey and a new set of resources and data to help us better understand the current needs of Canadians in the immediate term. We'll soon be announcing that strategy and the foundations that are going to make sure that we are successful.

This will require engagement with provinces and with territories. But I don't need to tell you about the importance of doing that work because we know that for lasting change to occur, we need to work with everyone and engage them as part of the solution.

● (0905)

I'll take the last 45 seconds to talk about the main estimates. Status of Women Canada has been provided with \$38 million to carry out its activities, which are highlighted in the 2017-18 departmental plan. The majority of the agency's funds are targeted for grants and contributions focused on those three areas of addressing and preventing violence, women's economic empowerment, and empowering women in leadership and decision-making.

Being the Status of Women minister in Canada in 2017 and being part of a government that is focused on gender equality and proud to call itself a feminist government is an honour. With that honour comes a great deal of responsibility that I am well aware of, but I know that with the contributions and the dedication of people like the people around this table, we can further the agenda of gender equality. We can make sure that Canadian women and girls, and those of different intersecting identities feel more like they belong, and feel more like they can fully participate. Canada, as a result, I know will be strengthened.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I am happy to answer any questions colleagues may have.

• (0910)

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

We will go to questions.

Mr. Serré, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair. I also want to thank you for the good work you have done on our committee. We really appreciate it.

Minister, thank you very much for appearing before us this morning. I also want to thank you for your approach and for the important message you have delivered about all political parties in Parliament needing to work together.

[English]

I will utilize a quotation in my first question and, Madam Chair, you'll be happy to hear that it comes from the VP of strategy and partnerships of Engineers Canada. It's from Jeanette Southwood, who indicates:

We are pleased to see Budget 2017's plans to address gender-based challenges by closing the gender wage gap, expanding maternity leave options and implementing flexible work arrangements for federally regulated employees.

Madam Minister, can you expand on some of the highlights of yesterday's budget 2017?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Absolutely, and I thank my colleague for being one of those good men without whom the work of gender equality would not be as effective, and for being there at the UN Commission for the Status of Women. I was truly proud that there were over 200 of us there and that there were so many male allies as part of the Canadian delegation.

I can tell you, broadly, a little bit about what this particular budget proposes. What you see in the budget is a direct reflection of what we've all heard from Canadians, and what history teaches us, that when you improve things for women and girls, you've improved outcomes for communities. When you enhance their economic potential, you've increased economic growth for everyone.

Let's talk about the economic fund. Investments in early learning and child care to support access to child care to allow greater participation in work, education, or training for mothers, but also for fathers or parents of different genders, will make a difference. It means that parents have that flexibility and the choice to focus on their families and their careers at the same time.

We also know that aside from caring for their children, women are often the caregivers for other members of the family. You've heard from the sandwich generation often, I'm sure, people who are not only caring for themselves and their partners and their own children, but find themselves, in our aging society, looking after their parents. A new EI caregiving benefit, which will allow more caregivers—the majority of whom are women—the ability to balance their work and family responsibilities. It is among the themes that we heard at the UN and at doorsteps.

And yes, we have recognized the right to request flexible work arrangements for federally regulated employees, with flexible start and finish times, the ability to work from home, and new unpaid leave to help manage family responsibilities. It is about recognizing that the family dynamics in Canada have changed and will continue to change.

This is recognizing that some children come home from school at 2:30, but the work hours don't end at 2:30. Parents want to see their kids grow up, and grandparents want to see their grandchildren grow up. That flexibility, and allowing that flexibility within federally regulated workplaces is the federal government taking the lead, and leading by example. It is recognizing that when people are experiencing healthier and happier home lives, they are stronger contributors to their work life and to our economy broadly.

There is also investment in innovation and infrastructure. There is investment in things like affordable housing and, of course, addressing and preventing gender-based violence, but these are a few of the highlights in the budget that we know will make a lasting impact.

• (0915)

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you.

It was a very worthwhile and educational experience going to the UN and participating in this important debate we are having here in Canada and across the world. I wanted to ask you, Minister, to expand on your thoughts about the role of men and boys in this conversation. We've heard from several witnesses across Canada on this topic, and I wanted you to expand on it.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: The feminist movement has been able to achieve incredible results. Changing the status quo, as I think all of us recognize around the table, is rarely easy. There is almost always tension and opposition, and there are days where for every step forward there are four steps back. It is the people, and many of them are women, within the feminist movement who have kept this work alive. They're the reason we find ourselves in 2017 with a feminist budget. This is a direct result of their relentless and creative advocacy.

We know that the feminist movement can be strengthened further by ensuring that men and boys are part of this conversation. Growing up, I was surrounded by a lot of other single mothers, and these single mothers had sons and daughters, and those sons were just as important a part of their mothers' lives as their daughters were. Those sons were just as much affected by the struggles of their single parent as their sisters were.

That's one reason we need to include boys in this conversation, and we need to do it at a young age. Young people today are brilliant, and in many ways they're growing up faster than they ought to. I've seen in front of me boys grow up to be strong boys who respect and appreciate the work of their mothers. These boys grow up to be respectful partners and effective fathers. What's better than that?

The Chair: Sorry, that's your time.

We're going now to Ms. Vecchio.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: May I ask, Madam Chair, if I ramble on, because I'm clearly passionate about this work and I'm my most charming self early in the morning, if you could just wave at me and let me know my time is up? I would appreciate that.

The Chair: I will do that. I run a tight ship as your folks will tell you.

We'll go to Ms. Vecchio now.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Perfect.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: First of all, thanks very much for coming here, Minister. There are a few things I was proud to see in the budget. I think the money set aside for shelters under the housing is very important for people with addictions and for people fleeing violence. I would like to commend the government on that. I think it was very much needed, as was the caregiver employment insurance. I think that 15 weeks is a very positive thing that will be given to people who need to stay home and take care of their critically ill family. I commend you on those two efforts.

I have a question in response to the parental leave. We heard this week from witnesses regarding top-ups. Now they're stating that the parental leave is going to be 33% of the actual employment insurance benefit. We recognize the maximum benefit is \$555 per week, so we have to see how little this money is going to be.

I would like to know the government's plan, because we heard people say that there needs to be a top-up. How is the government planning on making this benefit? We talk about men wanting to take part of the parental leave and that's what we're trying to do, but we're going to now be asking people to have 33% of their income. What are we expecting the private sector to do here? There's talk of a top-up, but the private sector cannot afford a top-up at that rate. As I have quite a few questions, could you please tell me in brief and precise terms what the plans are for that?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: That's quite a few questions, and I thank you. I know you've heard the stories of why this is important. We committed \$90 million to the network of shelters across the country in the last budget, and the \$11-billion investment in affordable housing is the natural next step. We know that women, especially those who are fleeing violence, need more than just shelters and that having a safe, affordable roof over their heads is a key step towards their economic empowerment.

As to parental leave, we know that the time you have with your family, the flexibility and the choice to take your time or go right back in the workforce, is really important to Canadians, and we wanted to make sure that was reflected in the framework we've laid out in the budget. The details of that—

• (0920)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes, it's the details.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: —have not been finalized. I know that my colleagues and I will be working to ensure that it's done right.

As far as the private sector goes, these are the job creators, and I recognize that. They are the ones growing our economy. The most that the federal government can do is create the conditions for that economic growth, but we've also heard from the private sector that what they cannot afford is leaving half our population on the sidelines. I know that they appreciate the leadership that the federal government is showing, and they recognize that ultimately it's good for their bottom lines as well.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Okay.

I'd like to move on to Bill C-337, the "JUST Act" that was put forward by Rona Ambrose. First of all, I would like to know where you stand on this and how you will be voting on Bill C-337, since we recognize that it came from many of our recommendations from the violence against women study.

I would like to have your thoughts on that, please.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Thank you.

I always applaud any member of the House who brings forward a private member's bill that will further gender equality, and I certainly thank Ms. Ambrose for her work. We all know that survivors of sexual assault need to be treated with compassion and that respect is critical. Ensuring that their dignity is intact is critical to how they feel they are treated but also to whether other women and girls who experience that violence feel they can come to authority figures and seek justice. I'm incredibly pleased that this bill will give us an opportunity to discuss this issue.

You saw in the budget that lifelong learning for everyone, for people of all sectors, is a priority for us, and that includes the judiciary. We also know that an independent judiciary is fundamental to Canada's democracy and that it's separate from executive and legislative branches. We actually have no jurisdiction to mandate this training. I look forward to the work this committee will do to review it and to study it. I look forward to watching the bill be presented in the House and to making a thoughtful decision then.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Moving on here, we also see that the plan is to hire 17 people this year at Status of Women and an additional 20 next year. I would like to know what the specific roles will be and what the performance indicators will be, especially when we're also looking outside of these regional offices. When we're looking at this budget, the estimates show that more money will be spent in the department and that a small decrease will be going to the actual groups and associations that provide the front-line work.

Can you please advise me on what the plans are so that we can make sure the money is being used most effectively and we are actually having results? As well, how will you be coming up and presenting those results?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: As you know, the government is focused heavily on deliverology and a results-based approach. That's certainly what I have been taught, so we'll be coming to this committee, as we have, with those indicators, frameworks, and deliverables.

As you know, there were 10 years when these organizations you're talking about were starved. They didn't have adequate funding. Those who were advocates for the vulnerable populations that they served were penalized. They were not allowed the same funding opportunities that those who didn't were allowed, and the regional offices were closed. Part of the reason for enhancing the capacity of Status of Women is to catch up with 10 years of cuts that hurt women.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: All right. We'll move on, then.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: With regard to the work of these organizations, over 300 were supported by Status of Women last year. The money that you see there will be going mainly to the centre of excellence and the data aspect, something that I know you heard about from stakeholders across the country.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Okay. I'll move on to the next question, because my time is becoming very low.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: That evidence-based approach will serve these organizations really well.

• (0925)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you.

I will move on to the next question, because I only have a little time. This will be a little bit more specific.

The Prime Minister has said multiple times, in response to questions about President Trump's immigration policy, that he wouldn't want to interfere with the independent, sovereign goings-on of another country. He wouldn't want to dictate policy to another independent country.

A week and a half ago, though, as I was leaving a caucus meeting, I was scrummed on the \$650 million that's going out to remove judicial and legal barriers in other countries. Some of these barriers are very concerning to Canadians.

When it comes to the fact that in one way he's saying we will not, that we'll allow sovereign countries.... I want to know what your feelings are on this when the Prime Minister says one thing but is actually doing the exact opposite with some of these funds.

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

We'll move now to Ms. Malcolmson for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister for being here. I know your heart is in this work. I appreciate the budget naming the problems of gender equality, but I am so sorry that the concomitant action isn't there. We don't see funding for pay equity legislation and implementation. We had the grassroots alternative budget requesting that investment be

made in a national action plan to end violence against women and that this investment be proportionate to the cost and consequence of gender-based violence.

Its recommendation was that there be \$500 million a year and that there be uniform access to domestic violence support and prevention, courts, sexual assault crisis centres, and all of that, and instead we ended up with only \$100 million over five years. We know that the cost of domestic violence is \$12 billion. I know we're going to get a chance to talk about this more, but I just need to say I wish there were more oomph. We've been hearing a lot, in the context of the study this committee is doing on economic justice for women, about the benefits of a good child care system.

We heard this every day last week at the United Nations, where I was very glad to be part of your delegation. Every expert here has been saying that if we invest in getting a strong child care system, then more women who want to work will be able to. On Tuesday, Professor Pierre Fortin said that Quebec's child care model generated \$900 million in revenue just by virtue of mothers getting to work. But in this budget, there's not a penny of funding for child care for this coming budget year. The budget increases funding by only \$5 million between 2019 and 2020, and then there's no increase in 2021 and 2022.

We had the child care advocacy association of B.C. say that they thought a budget commitment of \$7 billion over 10 years is far below what's required to develop a system. The CCPA budget called for 1% of GDP. This is apparently an international measure. They called for \$600 million this year and then \$1 billion more every year in the future until that 1% threshold is met.

Can you talk with me about why the budget isn't on track to meet the 1% of GDP being spent on child care, which is the new standard for developed countries?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: I want to thank my colleague for joining us in New York and for all the ways in which she's worked to advance gender equality in Canada under different governments and different value systems.

On pay equity, as you know, there was a committee of the House that did really great work around pay equity, and the government is on board. I know that some members of that committee are around this table. My colleague Minister Hajdu and I are committed to making sure that the legislation we introduce in 2018 is thoughtful. We know that it's a complex issue that's going to have various consequences, much of which is going to be positive, but we need to make sure we get it right. That's what we're committed to. I know that the work we do will be transformative.

As far as the violence against women focus is concerned, with the gender-based violence strategy, we know that there are provinces and territories out there—you were there for the presentation at the UN with our colleague from the Yukon—that are leading the way. They've had to step in and take the lead. They're doing really good work. Part of the strategy that we will be working on together will allow us to work with them, to learn from them, and to share those best practices around the country.

We know that what we heard across the country over and over again, and what you've heard, is that the federal government plays a really important role in coordinating its own services across departments. Right now, as we've walked through, there's a silo effect happening, where different departments are working towards the same noble goal but those efforts aren't always coordinated. We're going to be getting our own house in order. I think that's really important.

We also know, as we heard over and over again from stakeholders, that governments can play a critical role in data collection and gathering the evidence that is so badly missing right now. This evidence, this focus on research in this centre of excellence and sharing best practices across the country—a one-stop shop, if you will—will be laying the foundation for the work we have to do to get to that place where no woman or girl or anyone of a different gender has to struggle with gender-based violence.

There's a lot of work to do, but I know that \$100 million isn't the only way that we're going to address and prevent gender-based violence. The investment you saw, the \$11 billion in housing, is going to be fundamental. For example, we know that one of the reasons why women don't leave abusive relationships is the fear of losing that safe roof over their heads. On the child care focus, I know that it's not everything, but \$7 billion over 10 years is significant, and it's going to make a positive impact—

• (0930)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: With respect, though, Minister, it doesn't start for two years. We don't want to see this as part of the re-election platform. We want to see the result right now.

I'm going to take you to another question about shelters.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Okay.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: The five shelters over five years on first nations reserves have been loudly identified as inadequate, and we didn't see any new funding for reserve shelters or new operations funding for shelter operations. I know that the operations issue is a very pressing one for these front-line services and for the women and men around the country who are providing shelter. Can you tell me about your commitment to increase funding for domestic violence shelters?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: There was \$90 million invested in shelters across the country in the 2016 budget and this builds—

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: That was this last budget, right?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: That's correct. No budget is a one-time hit on its own, if you will. Each budget builds on the next. Budget 2017 is about building on the work of the previous budget.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Is there new money this year in this budget?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: The focus on the indigenous peoples of this land, the relationship, is paramount to our government. It's a relationship that was broken and that we're working to rebuild. We've seen unprecedented investments in various infrastructure needs across indigenous communities. There's been a 27% increase. I know that during the election the 2% cap was a topic of great contention and disappointment. We've addressed that by enhancing that to 27%.

I want to say this, Sheila. I think we have a lot of work to do, but I know we're on the right track and I know it's because of people like you, who are restless, just as I am, who push us to do more, and we're going to be able to do more—

The Chair: I'm sorry we're out of time. We have to move on now.

We will start with Ms. Ludwig.

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Good morning. Thank you for being here.

First of all, I would like to compliment you on your outfit.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Well, you know, I enjoyed our phone conversation earlier this morning where we coordinated this.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: I'm very pleased with the work of this committee. I'm also very proud of the government in terms of what has taken place with feminizing the budget and the outcomes from it. I have a couple of questions.

Last week I was very honoured and fortunate to attend the UN convention on the status of women. One of the sessions that I attended was on violence against women in politics. The outcomes and the research from that are very concerning, but it's something we all need to be conscious of.

I have two questions regarding that. How closely does your department collaborate with the other departments, such as International Trade, Small Business and Tourism, Immigration, Defence, and Veterans Affairs, specifically looking at the cross-cutting approaches to policies and legislation that were identified as a priority at the conference last week?

• (0935)

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Thank you for being part that delegation. I know that those of us who were there as part of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's presentation regarding the violence that women in politics experience around the world were moved by the discussion. There were six ministers from Canada around that table, and regardless of the regions we hail from, this is an issue that we know in Canada we can do more to address.

We know that if we want to encourage the next generation of leaders to come to this place and to stay and keep serving their communities, we need to do more to enhance the way we conduct ourselves in this place in terms of the overall aggression levels that we understand to take place.

The work that Status of Women does is a horizontal approach. One of the ways we make sure we're involved in every department's policies, programs, and legislation is by making sure that a GBA+ is conducted on every item that comes across the cabinet table. This means that our phones are ringing off the hooks in a way that I understand has not happened in over 20 years, with different departments understanding how critical the GBA+ analysis is to having their proposals received at the cabinet table. They want to make sure they get it right. I know we'll be coming to you with an interim report with how we're doing there.

We work across departments because there's an understanding with the Prime Minister, with cabinet, with all our caucus colleagues, frankly, and I think with members from different sides of the aisle, that everything we do has a gendered impact. That's what the gender statement in the budget is about, that different policies affect women and girls and people of different genders differently.

That's one way.

The gender-based violence strategy is a collaborative effort between over half a dozen ministers and departments. That's the only way it's going to work. Women's lives are dynamic. The different services, programs, and supports that they need have to be just that.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

Continuing on with that, Minister, is there a role or a vision in terms of education and awareness for the general public on why it's important and the benefits of having women in positions of leadership? We've heard from witnesses before this committee who have talked about how companies on the Toronto Stock Exchange that have women in senior leadership positions tend to have greater annual revenues than those that do not, and that it's not just about putting women in place just because. There's a real economic benefit to it.

How could you help us or how could we help you, and help all of us as Canadians, to get that message out so that people see the true benefits of putting women in and offering opportunities for leadership?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Thank you for that.

Bill C-25 is a bill that's gone through part of its movement through the House, and it's with committee right now. Part of it is addressing just that: ensuring that we do better than having one out of five seats filled by women around corporate board tables. We know that when there are more women around those tables, we make better decisions. I'll be working with Minister Bains on that. I know that colleagues in the House and committee will make sure that it's the best bill it can be.

We hosted Canada's Daughters of the Vote here on International Women's Day. Those 338 young women and their passion and their knowledge and their talent and the respectful ways they conducted their debates and dialogue—all these are reminders of why we need more diversity in this place.

We've been working on various initiatives, and there will be a lot of work ahead of us. One thing that I believe in, and I know members around this table believe, is that those of us who are here, women or men, have a responsibility to the next generation of leaders who are watching us, who are paying attention not just to what we're doing and how we're spending but also to how we conduct ourselves here. We have a responsibility for the way we behave, the words that we use. We have a responsibility as leaders to lead by example and to make sure that we are positive contributors to the culture shift that needs to happen.

• (0940)

Ms. Karen Ludwig: How would you relate those examples to a vision of modernizing Parliament?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: When the Fathers of Confederation did the work necessary to bring us to this point, I'm not sure they were imagining 338 young women in Parliament. But Canada has changed, politics have changed, and we need to evolve if democracy is going to be relevant. We've seen many occasions that are demonstrative of why we need to change, why something has to give.

I'm thankful that we have an opportunity before us in the House, as leaders who lead by example, to have a thoughtful, respectful conversation about how we can make sure that this evolution takes place, so that this is a healthier workplace not only for us but also for the next generation of leaders who walk into these halls.

The Chair: Very good.

Ms. Harder.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): As you're aware, your mandate letter said that you're supposed to implement a policy or strategy with regard to violence against women. Further to this, we put a report forward with regard to that. This is an issue that I am very passionate about.

One of the things that is rarely discussed is a report that came out in 2012 from the Canadian Medical Association. In this report, they talk about gender-selective abortion. They say that here in Canada there are upwards of 2,000 abortions committed every year in order to essentially get rid of girls. Now, I would say that this is actually gender-based violence targeted at little girls, preborn girls. I'm wondering if you agree with this statement.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Your statement being what?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Is this violence and does it fit within your mandate?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: I believe that violence comes in a spectrum.

Ms. Rachael Harder: It's actually a really simple question: yes or no.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: It can be physical, it can be psychological, it can be emotional, and it can be cyber.

Ms. Rachael Harder: In this case, do you believe that this is discriminating against girls?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: I think what you would like to speak to me about is abortions, and I believe that women have a fundamental right—

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'm asking specifically about gender-controlled abortions—

Hon. Maryam Monsef: —to be able to control their reproductive health.

Ms. Rachael Harder: —which were identified in this report.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Sorry, I didn't hear anything you said, because I was answering your question.

Ms. Rachael Harder: You weren't answering my question; you were avoiding it.

Do you believe that sex-selective abortions, as identified by the Canadian Medical Association in 2012, are gender-based violence, yes or no?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: I believe that any sort of gender-based violence is wrong. I understand that women and girls—

Ms. Rachael Harder: Is this gender-based violence?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: —in Canada are vulnerable to all sorts of forms of violence—

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: —and preventing that violence is a shared responsibility for us all. I also believe in the importance of—

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: —giving women choices.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: You're welcome.

Ms. Rachael Harder: My next question has to do with another statement within your mandate letter. It says that one of the things the minister, you, are called to fight for is gender equality. Within that, it explicitly states that you're actually mandated to include involvement “in gender equality”, and that's a direct quote.

Now, you put an interesting post up with regard to sharia law and a wedding. You said, “Isn't it interesting that there are no women here”? Then you said, “Sharia law fascinates me”, with a smiley face. These posts would appear to make light of the fact that sharia law is incredibly violent against women and discriminates against them. The fact that you're pointing out that there are no women in this room tells me that you are noting this but making light of it. How is this advocating for involving men in this problem of achieving gender-based equality?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: First, thank you for allowing me an opportunity to acknowledge my parliamentary secretary, Terry Duguid, who demonstrates all the ways that we can enhance the work of gender equality when we include men and boys. Having a feminist Prime Minister who is leading the first gender statement in the budget is a really good reminder of why we need to include men and boys. As far as the tweet from....

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Chair, can I just get a point of order? I'm not sure what this question has to do with Status of Women or what we have the minister here for today.

• (0945)

The Chair: I believe there are questions that are allowed to be asked on any of the topics that would fall under the Status of Women's mandate letter.

Ms. Pam Damoff: But this doesn't fall within the Status of Women's mandate.

The Chair: I'm going to allow the answer to the question.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm happy to answer. My colleague is referring to a tweet from 2012 when I noted that isn't it fascinating that in a—

Ms. Rachael Harder: My question is simple. It's actually yes or no. Do you believe that this advocated for gender equality?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Madam Chair, I'd love to answer my colleague's question if she will allow me.

The Chair: Yes, answer the question, please.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: The observation I made was just that. Isn't it fascinating that there is not a woman around that table to be part of that very important conversation?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you very much.

I'm going to stop you there. I'm going to ask a question on the estimates.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: You didn't want me to answer that question.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Chair, if she can answer the question I think we should allow her to answer the question.

The Chair: She may answer for 20 seconds, and that's all the time.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: My commitment to women and girls and gender equality, Rachael, is apparent. One of the reasons I'm here today is that I know there are challenges across all cultures when it comes to gender equality. As I look at my mother, I'm reminded of what can happen when women are given opportunities to succeed.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Do you have any other questions?

The Chair: No. We're out of time. Thank you again for appearing —

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Chair, I don't think the session started until nine o'clock so I think we still have 15 minutes.

The Chair: We had asked for the minister to be available until 9:45. I'm not sure what her schedule is. Are you willing to stay for another 10 minutes or so?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: If you have more questions, absolutely.

The Chair: All right. That's very good.

We'll go to Mr. Fraser for five minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): That's excellent. Thank you so much for being here, Minister. It's been a pleasure to work alongside you and to get to know you over this past year and a half.

One of the programs that I wanted to get you to elaborate on, given your own life experience, is the Canada child tax benefit. I know in my own riding we saw approximately \$4 million invested in a single month in the families I represent. When I went through budget 2017, an interesting pie chart highlighted the fact that 65% of the people who qualified for the full amount are single parents. Of those 65%, 90% are single mothers.

Could you elaborate on the importance of this policy to helping families and in particular single mothers in the communities that you and I represent?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Thank you for all your great advocacy on behalf of Atlantic Canada.

The Canada child benefit is an example of how budget 2017 is building on the work that we began and prioritized in budget 2016. We know that under the previous proposed child benefit plan that single parents like mine would not have benefited. These are often the parents who need the most support and the greatest hand-up. They are the ones who are often choosing between a safe roof over their kids' heads or good food on the table. Those aren't choices that women and parents in Canada should be making, but they are.

We know the Canada child benefit is lifting 300,000 Canadian children out of poverty, and those children are going to have a better start because of that focus. These children have mothers, parents who care for them, who dream of better lives for them. One way we can make sure they get a solid start is by making sure their parents, at the end of the month, aren't worrying about whether or not they will have the dollars to put their kids in after-school programs or buy back-to-school clothes for their kids or supplies or food or camp opportunities over the summer. This program gives parents that flexibility.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I think you've hit the nail on the head. To me, it's a tremendous social policy innovation that really helps the people I represent.

I wanted to follow up on a conversation I had with one of your officials shortly before we started. We've heard in the corporate context during one of our current studies on women's economic security and participation in the Canadian economy that when you have, not necessarily gender parity, but representations from different genders you start to see a difference in the quality of decisions that are being made.

I'm wondering if you can speak to how gender parity in cabinet has led to this gender lens being applied to the budget. Because when I see the infrastructure investments aren't all just for water pipes this time around, but are for things like child care facilities that are going to give 40,000 children access to child care or things like housing that are going to allow women fleeing domestic violence to have a safe roof over their heads, can you tell me how gender parity contributed to the discussion to ensure these investments impact men and women in a positive way?

• (0950)

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Firstly, being a young woman in politics and finding myself around that cabinet table, it's inspiring to see my colleagues around that table, these strong women, compassionate women, leading and advocating for Canadians. Research has shown that whether it's politics or STEM fields, the more young women and girls see people like them in these positions of power and influence, the more likely they are to be able to see themselves in those positions.

You're right. The gender-based lens that you see in our policies has something to do with the feminist approach that our government takes, but I also want to let you know that the people who are around the table are bringing a range of experiences and intersecting identities. Minister Hajdu, for example, her work in running a homeless shelter as well as being raised by a single mom and being a single mom herself brings a really interesting lens, amongst all the other ways that she's a dynamic person, to that table.

We have a feminist Prime Minister who has so much respect for his partner and his mother, and his focus on things like youth advocacy and mental health has been shaped by his experiences. Whether it's those of us who are settlers to this country or whether we are indigenous to this land, like Jody Wilson-Raybould, each of us brings intersecting identities and experiences beyond our gender identity that, I think, are serving Canadians well. We need to see more of that across tables, across the country.

I met with folks from the Bank of Canada, for example. They are, as a corporation, working to enhance the diversity around their board tables because they recognize that's how innovation happens, that's how creativity happens, and that's how they can become an even more attractive workplace for others. Ultimately it will help their bottom line.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you.

Do I have additional time?

The Chair: No, you do not. In fact you're over.

I did confer with the clerk. There is not really a limit on what can be asked, as long as it's cordial and respectful.

Ms. Harder, you have five minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question has to do with the budget, the supplementary estimates. I'm hoping that you can answer precisely and quickly, if you don't mind.

With regard to grants and contributions, you said the majority of the funding is going to this area. That's true but what I notice is actually from year over year, 2016 into 2017, the amount that is given to grants and contributions, which of course we know is actually to support the programs that are taking place in the community, is coming down slightly by about \$100, so there's no meaningful increase to this category. Could you help me understand that, please?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Our grants and contributions have remained at around \$19 million since 2009. The decrease that you see is because of the variance in the action plan for violence against indigenous women and the plan for women entrepreneurs. The increase in operational funding mainly supports women by strengthening the capacity of Status of Women to expand our regional presence. As you know, we went from having four offices across Canada to 15. Also, we are investing in research and evaluation of gender-based analysis.

Ms. Rachael Harder: My question is with regard to the grants and contributions and I don't see any meaningful increase there. You used it as a boast point before, in your opening statement. I'm wondering why I don't see an increase there if that's so important to you.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: It continues to be important to me. I also know that we're increasing grants and contributions to different programs that will improve the lives of women and girls.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: One of them is the PromoScience program, which will receive \$10.8 million over five years, starting in 2017-18, which supports organizations that offer opportunities for youth—

Ms. Rachael Harder: Minister, respectfully I'm going to cut you off. Thank you.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: —particularly young women and girls. That's an increase.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I think essentially what I'm hearing you say is that you're shuffling the money around, but there's no meaningful increase.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: No. That's not what I'm saying.

Ms. Rachael Harder: My next question has to do with internal services. We know that the former minister put about \$1 million into office renovations. I see that you now have plans for internal services to increase your budget by another \$2 million. What further renovations do you have planned?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: I'm not sure but it will go through the proper channels and we'll make sure that you're kept in the loop as need be.

• (0955)

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'm sure you will.

I'll share the rest of my time with Karen Vecchio.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I just want to go back to the question I had started regarding the Prime Minister and his immigration policies towards the United States and the \$650 million that he's going to be using to change some of the judicial and legal barriers of other countries. Specifically I'm going to ask this because we recognize and we have heard, through not only media, that some of this money will be used to go to organizations.

First, I offer the premise that I am pro-choice, but we recognize that much of this funding is going to go to 125 countries where abortion is illegal and the money is going to go there for advocacy for better rules for abortion. I want to hear from you specifically that money will not be going to advocate for pro-choice efforts. Although it's fine for this country, in other countries where it's illegal, I want to make sure that our money is being used efficiently to help children, to help mothers. We have great maternal and parental care. I want to make sure that our money is being spent appropriately and respecting the sovereign nation rules and laws. Could you please specify on that?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: As you know, my colleague Marie-Claude Bibeau consulted with the international community, and they highlighted the need for sexual health and reproductive rights as the way that Canada could step up on the international stage, because we know that unless women have sovereignty over their bodies, empowerment economically or around leadership is nearly impossible. That \$650 million is going to go to countries, not just for abortions where it's legal but to things such as education, information, and contraception. This is what the international community has asked us for.

Those who were at the UN saw the incredible way that this announcement was received. It allows countries to focus on other

things that their communities desperately need to ensure that their women and girls in communities achieve their full potential.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: So you're saying there will be not one dime of Canadian taxpayers' money to go against the laws of other countries. Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: I think that if you have further questions about sexual health and reproductive rights and our international development aid, you should consider talking to Minister Bibeau about her efforts and how she particularly intends to continue her good work.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you.

Do I have any more time? No? Okay.

The Chair: We'll go to Ms. Damoff for five minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): I'll pass over to Ms. Damoff, but I just want to remark on that particular comment.

One of the reasons that I ran is that when I was working with the UN in Africa, one of the young women on my staff there told me that there was a double standard, that she had studied in Canada and she knows Canadian women have reproductive rights and when some of that funding was cut she said, "I am so ashamed, because you're saying that Canadian women have rights but we African women are not good enough to have reproductive rights."

I'd like the minister to address that last comment made by Ms. Vecchio in that regard. Rights are rights and reproductive choice is something that is important for all women, whether they are Canadian or they are in other countries. That is something our government supports. I'd love to have the minister respond to that.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: I agree. There was a great woman who said that unless all of us are free, none of us are free.

One of the conversations I had with my colleagues from the American countries while I was in New York had to do with that. In terms of what's happening in Brazil, what's happening in Mexico, what's happening in my ancestral land of Afghanistan, and what's happening here in Canada, we are all parts of the same humanity. When one of us is hurting, all of us are hurting.

Canada, as a founding member of the United Nations, is going to be there, and we're going to remain at the forefront of ensuring that women and girls everywhere reach their full potential. Our focus on reproductive rights, health rights, and having that choice has been clear to Canadians since before we got elected, and we're going to continue to illustrate that commitment through our actions, as well as our international commitments.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Minister, and thank you for being here.

• (1000)

Hon. Maryam Monsef: It's my pleasure.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I know that you're a very passionate advocate for people living with disabilities, and in your previous role we met with a few groups who spoke to you about challenges that people have living with disabilities. Just recently at the UN we had a conversation about employment for women living with disabilities, because as we know, the unemployment rate for them is about 75% and their income is quite low.

I wonder if you could take a moment to speak about some of the initiatives you're looking at to deal specifically with the issues of women living with disabilities.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Thank you, Pam.

We know that 60% of those living with disabilities are vulnerable to gender-based violence. We know from our own personal and professional experiences that people with disabilities and exceptionalities bring gifts and talents to organizations and communities, gifts and talents that aren't always utilized, and as a result, we're not as strong as a nation as we could be.

We also know that my colleague Carla Qualtrough, the minister responsible for persons with disabilities and sports, has been actively connecting with Canadians across the country in her consultations to develop Canada's disability act. I believe this legal framework will make a significant impact in the lives of Canadians whose talents and contributions have not had their full platform in Canadian society.

I also want to let you know that in the GBA+ lens that we put on every policy, legislation, and program that the government reviews, that plus includes persons with disabilities and exceptionalities, because we know that our programs and our decisions affect different people differently and that there's going to be a different impact on persons with disabilities and exceptionalities.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

Very quickly, I wonder if you could expand on how we've improved our GBA+ analysis within the government.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Over 60 measures in this very feminist budget are a direct result of a thorough gender-based analysis with that plus sign on it. It's no accident that housing is such a focus in this budget. It's no accident that caregiving is such a focus in this budget. It's no accident that chapter 5 is focused entirely on a gender statement and an analysis of how women and girls in Canada are faring right now. That has a lot to do with the work that this committee has done.

I know that the GBA+ focus was on the books since 1995 and your work has allowed us to move it forward further. You will be receiving, Madam Chair, an interim report on how our monitoring and evaluation of these efforts are going so far.

The Chair: Excellent.

The last three minutes with the minister go to Sheila Malcolmson.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: What a gift to have extra time.

Minister, we've had a number of witnesses come before us on the matter of pay equity. To use the words of Vicky Smallman from the Canadian Labour Congress, "Let's get this done in 2017."

Diana Sarosi from Oxfam, when asked whether she could explain any rationale for why pay equity legislation is being delayed beyond what the committee or anybody asked for, said, "No, we have not heard what the...barriers are." Jennifer Howard from the Public Service Alliance of Canada pointed out that there's no reason to delay until 2018, because the road map for the new law was provided in the 2004 pay equity task force report of the previous Liberal government.

This new budget had no specific benchmarks for narrowing the wage gap at all. I'm sure that you're concerned, as I am, that women get equal pay for work of equal value. Why delay pay equity legislation until 2018, until the very end of your mandate?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: I agree that the wage gap is an issue that needs to be addressed. Part of it is pay equity and the Ministers for Labour and the Treasury Board are focused on this commitment, as I am. You're right. We believe in equal pay for equal work, and that legislation alone—when it comes to pay equity—will not address this issue. We need cultural changes in the workplace, as well as the supports for women.

We're committed, Sheila, to moving beyond the complaint-based approach to pay equity and to introducing pay equity legislation by late 2018. We also know that other aspects of the wage gap need to be addressed through things like parental and maternal leave, through opportunities to take leave to care for elderly parents, for example, and through making sure that women and girls find themselves dreaming of and succeeding in growth where they have traditionally not been seeing themselves, including STEM fields.

Collectively, I believe these efforts will be steps in the right direction towards closing that wage gap, which I believe is unacceptable. To do it right, the federal government is going to be leading the provinces and territories, which means we have a greater responsibility to ensure that we get it right. The time we need to do this is going to allow us to do just that.

• (1005)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Women have been waiting a very long time, so we certainly want this to move faster.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: I agree.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Nothing in the budget referred to the national inquiry on murdered and missing indigenous women. Can you tell me how those tragedies can be addressed now concurrently, as your government has committed, without any budget allocation for them in this year?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: There are significant budget allocations in this budget. As you know, for the inquiry, as we heard from families of survivors of those women and girls who have gone missing, it was really important for the federal government to trust that process with an independent group of commissioners, which is exactly what has happened. They've begun to set up and they're going to be doing their work. They'll be providing us with a report later this fall, which we look forward to seeing and reviewing.

In the meantime, we're investing in infrastructure in indigenous communities, both off reserve and on reserve, across the country. Eighteen boil water advisories have ended, with more work to do, but work that we're committed to.

There's a focus on education. There's a focus on indigenous leadership, which Status of Women has played a part in. I look forward to coming back to this committee and talking about that.

The work we need to do around reconciliation has begun, but it's going to require generational, intergenerational, cross-sectoral, multicultural work. I know that the young leaders in this room and the young leaders I've heard from across the country and at the UN certainly prioritize a stronger relationship with indigenous peoples. This generational work is in good hands with the people here, but also with the people who are waiting to take their seats.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Would the minister be willing to provide for the committee an accounting of where the money is going?

The Chair: I'm sorry, Sheila, you're out of time. We have to wrap it up.

Thanks so much, Minister. We appreciate the work that you're doing. You're definitely headed in a good direction. Many of us want to see more, but I know that's coming. Thank you for joining us today.

We will suspend briefly to give the minister an opportunity to depart before we continue with our witnesses on the main estimates.

•(1005)

(Pause)

•(1010)

The Chair: We're ready to commence the second half, where we're going to continue talking about the main estimates. We are extremely lucky to have, I would say, very strong women from the Status of Women department: Meena Ballantyne, Justine Akman, Lucie Desforges, Anik Lapointe.

Welcome. We so appreciate all the work you ladies have done. You must be very pleased to see the front-and-centre gender analysis in the budget, and we look forward to doing our rounds of questions.

We will start right away with my friend, Ms. Nassif. You have seven minutes.

[Translation]

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

Like other colleagues, I am very happy to have participated in the UN Commission on the Status of Women last week.

I will begin with a question on gender-based analysis plus, or GBA+, which our committee has already studied. My question is for Ms. Akman.

According to the 2017-18 Main Estimates, Status of Women Canada should receive additional funding of \$6.2 million for the 2017-18 fiscal year to increase the research and evaluation function, expand regional presence, increase the gender-based analysis function and increase capacity at Status of Women Canada.

How will the amount of \$6.2 million be divided among those four elements?

[English]

Ms. Justine Akman (Director General, Policy and External Relations, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women): I would

leave any precise financial questions to my colleague, the chief financial officer, Anik Lapointe. We have hired up fully in our gender-based analysis unit. We have tackled our action plan, which has been shared with the committee, I believe, with full force, and been able to support other federal departments in our gender-based analysis efforts because of the money that we received in 2016.

It has been a true leap forward for gender-based analysis in the federal government, as was demonstrated and, as the minister pointed out, came out in the federal budget last night.

[Translation]

Ms. Anik Lapointe (Chief Financial Officer and Director, Corporate Services, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women): Here is the breakdown of the amount: about \$1 million for regional presence; \$2.2 million for research and evaluation; about \$1 million for gender-based analysis; and another \$2 million for internal services to increase capacity at Status of Women Canada.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: I have another question.

According to Status of Women Canada's 2017-18 departmental plan, one of the key risks associated with the agency's work is the difficulty of measuring social change.

To mitigate that risk, Status of Women Canada intends to develop staff capacity, frameworks, tools and systems to collect data, undertake research, and monitor, analyze and report on performance.

What measures is Status of Women Canada taking to develop staff capacity, frameworks, tools and systems to collect data? Can we know more about that?

[English]

Ms. Meena Ballantyne (Head of Agency, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women): What we have put in our departmental plan is that Status of Women has the lead for gender equality but all the levers are in other departments, so we work with them to advance gender equality, as you know. That is one of the things I think you're referring to in the departmental plan, which is where we talk about the fact that we're coming up with research and evaluation and performance indicators. How will we know that we are making advances in gender equality? How will we know that the rates of violence are going down?

That's through surveys that we're coming up with, through different tools, like the GBA+ tools, and the training that we're doing with different departments. Then the different departments are tracking their indicators. We all need to collectively get better at this work, and we're just starting that process now with the money for the research and evaluation unit that we established since the last budget.

I'm not sure if I understood your question properly.

•(1015)

[Translation]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Yes, thank you.

I have another question.

Status of Women Canada also intends to mitigate that risk by engaging in regular formal consultations with Canadians.

What form will those consultations take?

[English]

Ms. Meena Ballantyne: Last summer we carried out the consultations with Minister Hajdu on the gender-based violence strategy, where we went across the country and heard from experts and stakeholders and survivors, which is informing our federal strategy on gender-based violence. We also participated in the pre-inquiry on the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. The pre-inquiry consultations with the three ministers who went across the country—Ministers Bennett, Hajdu, and Wilson-Raybould—are examples of some consultations.

We consult with, for example, experts and stakeholders on the data-gathering part that we're working on as part of the federal strategy. Last September we had a two-day consultation with some of the leading experts and stakeholders. For the gender statement that was in the budget, we held initial pre-budget consultations, and there's a plan moving forward in terms of improving the gender-based statement for the next budget. We also have the women's program evaluation, where every program is evaluated every five years, so we've consulted with over 700 people on the women's program in terms of what's working and what's not working from the stakeholders' perspective. Those are the kinds of consultations that Status of Women Canada does.

We also do international consultations. For example, at the UNCSW, we're meeting with groups; we're meeting with other countries. The minister referred to the American states. We had a consultation with other countries from the American states, which was a first. There are all these various ways that we consult.

[Translation]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: I attended one of the consultations held by the minister in Montreal last summer. We heard from many witnesses, representing various organizations. There is definitely a lot of work to be done.

Similarly....

The Chair: Your time is up, Mrs. Nassif.

[English]

We will go now for seven minutes to Ms. Harder, who is splitting her time with Ms. Vecchio.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you very much.

My question for you is with regard to internal services. This budget line has increased by about \$2 million. I'm wondering if you can just help me understand why that increased and where that money is going to be spent.

Ms. Anik Lapointe: There's an increase to our internal services to support the additional staff that we're getting for the research and evaluation, so the 38 new full-time equivalents. There's \$0.4 million that goes toward communication to increase that capacity, and there's an increase to the minister's budget also because there's a difference between a full minister's budget and a minister of state as we had before, or a minister who was in charge of other portfolios as well. There's an increase there, and all of that goes under internal services.

Ms. Meena Ballantyne: If I may, I'll elaborate on that. Internal services as defined by Treasury Board are all the usual things you might think of, such as HR, IT, financing, and communications. The ministers' office budgets also are under that. When we increased our size from last year's budget investment, we needed those people.

Because we're a separate, small agency, we need the people in HR, IM, and IT to do that. We need the communications function. In terms of our social media, we never had—before the last year or two—social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and now LinkedIn, and also the website to transmit information to everybody. These are the internal services that we've increased in the past year.

As my colleague said, having a full minister and supporting a full minister, which we've never had before.... It used to be part of other portfolios. For example, the minister previous to the last one had both the labour and the status of women portfolios. It was a bigger portfolio, the ESDC portfolio, that supported that function. Now it's within our agency, so we were given more money to do that.

• (1020)

Ms. Rachael Harder: My next question has to do with the \$6.2 million that was put towards an increase in research and evaluation. What exactly is going to be researched and evaluated with this money? That's the first question.

Next, is there any intent with regard to this to delve further into violence against women and girls in particular, into the root causes, and into how we can thwart that?

Ms. Meena Ballantyne: I'd like my colleague Justine to answer that.

Ms. Justine Akman: We are in the process right now of defining our future and multi-year research program that we'll be conducting using the budget 2016 money. In the past year, we used it to support our engagement strategy on a gender-based violence strategy. We're in that process right now. We are talking to experts, academics, and Canadians about what will be in that research strategy. It certainly will not be finalized until we've consulted quite widely on it.

In terms of violence against women and girls, absolutely, that would certainly be one of the themes. This is the first time in many years that Status of Women has had a significant research budget, so we're starting from scratch. We are very excited to do so, as are all of our stakeholders. On the violence front, we've already had a two-day panel of academics and experts in the field of violence against women and girls, who came together to talk to us about the research gaps in this area. We did that as part of our engagement last year.

I anticipate that the research strategy would reflect all the priorities of Status of Women, such as leadership and women in the economy, but very much in terms of violence as well, to support the ongoing federal strategy.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Last, very quickly, will all of the research done within the department be made public?

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I have a quick question on this. With Bill C-24 not being passed yet in the House of Commons, are all ministerial budgets increased without the votes from Parliament?

Ms. Meena Ballantyne: I'm not sure. Was it Bill C-24?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: It's to make all ministers of equal status. Has that bill had a royal recommendation?

Ms. Justine Akman: I think we'd have to get back to you on that one.

Ms. Meena Ballantyne: Yes, I'm not sure.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I know that it was at first or second reading in the House of Commons, to make all ministers equivalent. Therefore, I was wondering if the ministerial budgets are passed without the consent of Parliament. That's one of my concerns.

Ms. Anik Lapointe: To get an increase on any type of budget for the organization, yes, we need the consent of Parliament. That's through the main estimates process. To make a minister a full minister, it doesn't come with a budget. There's a budget increase that is provided by Treasury Board. If the department can't fund within its own reference levels, we need to request the money through the finance department and then through the main estimates process.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I know that we did main estimates this week, so it was voted upon, but one of the greatest concerns we had is that the actual legislation to make the ministers of equivalent value has yet to be passed. It's kind of the cart before the horse. That's why I'm asking for more on specifically that question. I didn't know what the true protocol was for ministerial budgeting when it has not yet passed through the House of Commons in terms of the change of a person's portfolio.

• (1025)

Ms. Meena Ballantyne: We'll take a look and get back to you because I'm not sure. As Anik said, it's usually through the main estimates, and this is the process coming through this committee on the status of women, but I'm not sure about that other bill so we'll look into it and get back to you.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes, I think Bill C-24 had more to do with CBSA. I have Bill C-22, Bill C-23, and Bill C-24 on my brain, but it is another one.

Thank you.

The Chair: Now we'll go to Ms. Malcolmson for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the Status of Women panel.

We had witness testimony a couple of weeks ago by Kate McInturff from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. She talked about different ways of categorizing voluntary versus involuntary work, and we were looking at the Statistics Canada table that lists caring for children as a voluntary reason for a woman taking part-time work. The witness said her information was that last year more than 700,000 women in Canada were working part time for what they called involuntary reasons, and 275,000 of them cited the lack of access to child care as a reason. They considered that to be involuntary. If there had been child care, then they would have been able to work full time. Because they didn't have access to universal child care, they had to work part time, and as we know, this has compounding effects on a woman's place in the economy.

I'd like to hear whether the department, along with Statistics Canada, is reconsidering that approach so we can get good data on the reasons women get pushed into part-time and precarious work.

Ms. Justine Akman: It would be helpful if we could get the exact name of the data and the study you are referencing in your question.

Statistics Canada does a lot of work. We're working with them right now on questions related to gender-based violence, for example. They do a lot of work to field those kinds of questions and in how they are defined in the various surveys and data collection tools they develop.

You have raised a good point. Of course, Status of Women considers child care a critical tool to address the wage gap. This government has just invested fairly heavily in child care. We understand in our analysis that more women would likely enter the workforce if they had more choice around child care, so your line of questioning is very much in line with the kind of analysis and policy advice that Status of Women provides to various federal departments, but on this precise question on a data collection tool of Statistics Canada, it's certainly something we could come back to that department on and have a discussion about.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you. That committee testimony was on March 7, 2017.

A related question is about the data collected about unpaid work done by women. This was a real focus of the testimony at the United Nations last week, which had that very strong focus on economic justice for women. The latest census did not include questions about the unpaid work of women, despite calls by women's organizations to have that information collected, and because women perform the vast majority of unpaid work, we know that as a government, as a country, we need that data to make good decisions.

Can you tell me what the plans are that Status of Women might have with Statistics Canada to correct those gaps in data collection so that we can make more well informed decisions?

Ms. Meena Ballantyne: You probably know we work with Stats Canada, and we have a publication called “Women in Canada”, which has various chapters that come out over a period of years. I don’t know the latest chapter that has just come out. We have 20 departments that fund this along with us, and we pick various chapters. We have worked on unpaid work. I don’t have the latest information, but for example, “The Girl Child” was a chapter that just came out in February, and “Women and paid work” came out in March. I don’t see unpaid work on this list, but I know that we are talking to them about it.

This tool, the “Women in Canada” publication, is apparently the most widely accessed Stats Canada publication and a lot of people across Canada and even the world use it as a source of information for gender disaggregated data, and it is very useful.

We will look into this unpaid work issue with StatsCan.

• (1030)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thanks.

In both of those areas—unpaid and precarious work, and access to child care—given that people are accessing the document, we want to make sure StatsCan is actually asking the questions relevant to the issues that face women today.

Turning to a different area, on the national inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women and girls, we know that the minister is, within her mandate letter, responsible for tracking progress on the inquiry. We’ve been hearing quite a bit from concerned women’s organizations and human rights organizations. Particularly, they’ve been asking for the legal path document that’s been promised to be released in order to address some of the confusion around the inquiry process. They’re asking for clarity also about what happens with family members with missing loved ones who want to speak to the inquiry.

Can you talk with us a little bit about the oversight process and what you’re doing to address some of those constituent concerns? I know this is an independent inquiry, but ultimately it is the government, so we’re looking for leadership here.

Ms. Meena Ballantyne: As you said, it is an independent inquiry. The government has basically turned it over to the commissioners to conduct this inquiry in the way they see appropriate. In terms of tracking what the inquiry is doing, we work together with the three departments at various levels—the working level, the deputy level, and then the ministerial level. We’re just sorting out right now how to get progress reports without undermining the independence of the inquiry. We’re not getting reports on this document you’re talking about that people are trying to get. We’re getting overall information in terms of whether they’re on track to produce that interim report they’ve been asked to produce by the end of this year, with the final report next year, and how the information flow—basically it’s our colleagues at INAC who are providing them with all the information—is going along.

We have the mechanisms in place to track progress while respecting the independence of the inquiry and not getting into the details of some of the issues they’re looking at.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we’ll go to Ms. Vandenbeld, for seven minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you very much.

This is the first budget that has a full gender statement, which is the first step for GBA+ analysis, on every aspect of the budget.

I know that going through that process actually highlighted the need for disaggregated data on gender, and of course on the intersectional identities. Can you talk a little bit about some of the challenges and difficulties in being able to do a full gender-based analysis on every aspect of the budget and the need for more disaggregated data in order to do that?

Ms. Meena Ballantyne: I was telling some of the members before the committee started that we are absolutely delighted from a public policy perspective to have this gender statement, and not as an add-on but as an actual chapter in the budget. It really is historic. There’s a lot of work to do in terms of improving it for next year and the years after. What it does show is that the push by the Auditor General’s report on GBA+, your report on GBA, and the government’s commitment to doing GBA and taking it seriously have really pushed everybody within the bureaucracy to take it seriously.

They’ve made it mandatory for all MCs and all Treasury Board submissions to have GBA in the documents. When you think of the minister’s mandate commitments, every part of this policy cycle has GBA, from consultations to policy development to programs—because now we’re going to have to look at it in the departmental results framework and the performance reporting and the indicators. That work is just beginning. We’re at the very early stages, but it’s all moving in the right direction.

To have this kind of statement...and it acknowledges that there are data gaps. There’s no question that there are lots of data gaps and we all need to do better, which we are going to try to do. The work of all these past years has led to this. We’re working with the OECD, which is mentioned in here as well, to help us with this—gender-based budgeting, learning from other countries, learning from the OECD—and internally, we’re working with Finance very closely.

As the minister said, at Status of Women our phones are ringing off the hook because everybody wants to work with us now to ask, “How do you do a good GBA? How do we collect the data? What are the diverse stakeholders that we should be talking to?” The system is in overdrive right now. The analogy I use with our team is that the government is like a big ship. To try to turn it in all those facets from consultations to program evaluation at the end is going to take some time. But we’re moving in the right direction and there’s no turning back now. To me, it’s irreversible. It’s fantastic.

•(1035)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

Of course, the reason that we want to do GBA+, and want a gender lens on policy isn't for its own sake, but because we want to see in the end result an improvement in the material well-being of women and girls in this country.

When I went through the budget, I noted that having a gender lens seems to have had a tangible result in terms of what is in the budget, not just in the areas like child care, housing, homelessness, and flexible working hours. If you look at the section on international relations and trade or you look at tax policy, in all of these sections there are references to women. Do you think that's because we did use a gender lens on the budget? Is that a direct result of having looked at every area of the budget according to its impact on women?

Ms. Meena Ballantyne: Yes. In the budget-making process, departments produce MCs, which now have to have the GBA, and then the Department of Finance does its own analysis as well in producing this. Absolutely, it's because of all the GBAs that are being done. There are some areas that we know aren't done as well as they could be or should be, but to me it's a direct result of it.

One of the things that we did last night was look at how many times women are mentioned in this budget. I think it was 270; I don't have the exact figure. It was almost once per page that the word "women" was used throughout this budget. We did some analysis of previous budgets where it was a much lower number.

All of that to say that the differential impacts are being highlighted and wherever they can't be, the need for data is being highlighted to say we need more data on this and we need to figure out a way of getting it.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: This is actually a perfect case study on the impact that GBA+ can have on policy-making.

When we did our GBA+ study, we talked about the challenge role of Status of Women, of Finance, and of the Treasury Board. Could you talk a little about the way forward in terms of how Status of Women Canada will maintain this momentum to make sure that now the legislation coming out of the budget and all of the

recommendations and policies will continue this gender lens on policy-making?

Ms. Meena Ballantyne: My minister's mandate letter has five commitments that deal with GBA. She has to report on that, which means that gives us the lever to go to other departments and ask them to work with us. As I said, now we're in demand. We're working with everybody. There's a desire from everybody.

Status of Women Canada did a survey on GBA+ last year and 30 deputies reported to me to say that these were the barriers to GBA in their departments, this was how they had organized themselves to do this work, and this was where they were going in terms of their minister's mandate letter commitments and where they were going to apply GBA. I reported on the results of that to the public service management advisory committee, which I think is 43 deputies chaired by Yaprak Baltacioglu, the secretary to the Treasury Board.

Everybody is working together. There is no question that the momentum is going to be sustained as we move forward.

The Chair: That's very good.

I agree there is momentum and I'm happy that our committee was able to help push forward with the GBA+ from the report and our challenge in the House, of course.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81.4, the committee will now dispose of the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018, minus the interim estimates the House agreed to on March 21, 2017.

OFFICE OF THE CO-ORDINATOR, STATUS OF WOMEN

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$15,608,148

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....\$20,580,000

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I report these votes to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Ladies, I would like to thank you again for your wonderful work. I'm sure you will be very busy. We are moving in the direction of good and we will continue to support you as the committee.

The meeting is adjourned.

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