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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, May 30, 2017**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu**



## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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• (0845)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)):** Good morning, colleagues. We're happy to be back studying the economic security of women in Canada.

For our first panel this morning, we have Tamara Daly, who is an associate professor at York University and the director of the York University Centre for Aging Research and Education. Welcome.

By video conference, from Caregivers Nova Scotia, we have Angus Campbell, executive director; and Cindie Smith, caregiver support coordinator. Welcome to you, as well.

[Translation]

Joining us is H  l  ne Cornellier, from Quebec's Association f  minine d'  ducation et d'action sociale.

Welcome.

[English]

Each of our speakers will have seven minutes. We will begin with Tamara, for seven minutes.

**Dr. Tamara Daly (Associate Professor, School of Health Policy and Management, CIHR Research Chair in Gender, Work and Health, Director, York University Centre for Aging Research and Education, York University, As an Individual):** Madam Chair, I'm very honoured to be speaking to such an important committee. My specialization is care work for seniors, both in its paid and unpaid forms, and that's what I'll focus my comments on today.

The conversation about unpaid work is current and it's critical. What it isn't, however, is new. The quintessential Canadian book on gender and unpaid work, *The Double Ghetto*, was written nearly 40 years ago. It used Statistics Canada data to look at women's and men's segregated work inside and outside the home. A recent second printing highlights some of the gains women have made in educational attainment and labour force position. However, it scathingly reveals the persistent segregation all these years later, particularly when we consider care work.

The debate is increasingly showing up in popular media. For instance, following on the heels of Anne-Marie Slaughter's *Atlantic Monthly* piece, Melinda Gates used her 2016 annual letter to focus on unpaid work. She wrote:

Unpaid work is what it says it is: It's work, not play, and you don't get any money for doing it.... You can think of unpaid work as falling into three main categories: cooking, cleaning, and caring for children and the elderly. Who packs your lunch? Who fishes the sweaty socks out of your gym bag? Who hassles the nursing home to make sure your grandparents are getting what they need?

Child care is most often the focus of debates about unpaid work, while care for seniors is less visible. Care work for seniors in both its paid and unpaid forms can involve help with body care, dining assistance, and organizing, such as with medical appointments and finances, providing transport, and assisting with the home, such as cleaning and maintenance.

Importantly, family care work and private companion care provided in communal and publicly funded dwellings like nursing homes are less often discussed. My comments will highlight paid and unpaid care work and note when it is publicly funded or privately paid.

Care work is gendered, with women generally providing greater quantities and performing tasks that are more time-consuming and less flexible than care work than men provide. For instance, women provide more housekeeping, meal preparation, and personal as well as medical care. Men provide more transport and home maintenance such as snow shovelling.

According to a Statistics Canada, in 2012 there were 5.4 million Canadians who provided care work to a senior with a chronic health condition, a disability, or a problem related to aging.

The location where care work is provided is also an important consideration. More than two-thirds provided care work to a senior living in a private household. An additional 16% provided that care work to a senior who lived in a private household with them. Another 14% provided care work to a senior who was living in a care facility.

It is most often daughters and spouses who provide this work to women who live in residential settings. The 2016 census data show that about 70% of those who live in nursing homes as well as seniors residences are women.

Many Canadians are also providing substantial amounts of care work in terms of time. More than half of family or friends who lived with a senior provided more than 10 hours per week of care. Nearly one-quarter are doing more than 10 hours of care per week for a senior living in a nursing home where publicly paid care is available and provided.

We also cannot ignore the impact of providing care work. Strain on family relationships was reported by just over one-third of those helping seniors living in a care facility and about one-third of those who shared a home with a senior needing care. This compared with about one-fifth of those who provided care work to seniors living in a separate household and about one-quarter of those who help seniors living in supportive housing.

Women also experience greater negative impacts resulting from their care work, affecting areas as wide-ranging as their finances, their health, and their social lives.

The care needs of people with dementia are particularly important to consider. There are more than half a million people currently living with dementia in Canada, with estimates that this figure will nearly double by 2031. The unpaid care required to aid people living with dementia is an estimated 19.2 million hours per year. That's unpaid care, and a conservative replacement cost of this is \$1.2 billion. Experts warn that care work time is also expected to double in accordance with the numbers of those living with the condition. A very large proportion of the costs of unpaid dementia care work is borne by families because the public system only covers a fraction of the total cost of dementia.

More attention is required to attend to the diverse needs of diverse women. For instance, due to cultural challenges, most immigrant families provide care work in private homes, even when dementia is a factor, and they don't, therefore, place families in nursing homes. More attention is also required to look at unmet needs. Families are dispersed geographically. In addition, the family unit has changed over time, with fewer children available to provide care work.

• (0850)

According to Statistics Canada, nearly half a million Canadians required care for chronic health conditions but did not receive it. One-quarter of those with unmet needs were over the age of 65.

Paid care work is also a key consideration. It is a feminized occupation. Overall, 80% of the paid care workforce is composed of women, and women make up over 85% of paid care workers in nursing homes. There is a large proportion of women from diverse racialized and immigrant populations who provide care work to seniors in communal settings. Immigrant and racialized women are often streamed into this care work, especially when other women are unwilling to do the work.

Care work is also among the riskiest of workplaces. Our research shows that care workers in Canada are frequently exposed to high rates of illness, injury, and violence. Conditions in Canada are far worse than in the Nordic countries, for instance. About two-thirds of the nursing and residential workforce is unionized across Canada, but it ranges from a low of 40% in Newfoundland and Labrador to a high of 65.9% in British Columbia. Despite this, most of the work remains low paid, part-time, and lacking in benefits.

There is an insufficient amount of publicly funded care available in home care and residential settings. Our research in nursing homes shows that increasing numbers of families are paying out of pocket to hire private companions to provide one-on-one care in nursing homes. This is largely due to insufficient staffing levels afforded by

publicly funded care. Importantly, this care work is precarious, often paid under the table, and lacking in employment standards.

As the care often completely overlaps with the roles of the care aides who are on staff, it is also risky for the residents, the paid staff, and families. Most facilities lack even basic rules about care work that is paid privately, including about basic but important issues such as ID badges, duties to report to staff, or compliance with vaccination or infection control procedures. This private payment also creates a huge economic burden on families.

To conclude, paid and unpaid care work is one of the most important issues affecting the everyday lives of women across this country. While many seniors require care work, an increasing number have needs that are unmet. Paid and unpaid care work comes with risks. Families and friends are bearing an increasing financial and physical burden to provide care. There is an insufficient amount of publicly available care, and this mostly affects seniors who are women. Families are paying privately to compensate for insufficient levels of publicly funded care in nursing homes.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to raise these points with you today.

**The Chair:** Very good.

Now we'll go to Caregivers Nova Scotia.

Cindie and Angus, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Angus Campbell (Executive Director, Caregivers Nova Scotia):** Madam Chairperson and members of the committee, thank you for accepting our written submission on the impact of caregiving as it relates to women caregivers and for allowing us to make this presentation to the committee.

Whether through telephone or face-to-face conversations or in support groups, we are honoured that hundreds of unpaid caregivers have shared their personal stories with us. It is from those stories that our recommendations have been drawn, but perhaps the most important, overarching message we wish to convey is the need to address challenges experienced by caregivers as far upstream in their journey as possible, before they lose their health and their ability to be productive. It is far more efficient to prevent a break than to try to mend an item after it is broken.

• (0855)

**Ms. Cindie Smith (Caregiver Support Coordinator, Northern and Eastern Mainland Region, Caregivers Nova Scotia):** There are many positive and uplifting testimonials, and we celebrate the caregivers' resilience and achievement. However, the accounts of unmet needs as well as struggles to see the job through and regain one's health at the end are far more common.

It is important that we put a human face on these challenges, so we are going to share with you some of their stories.

Here is the first one. Pam had to leave work several years before retirement to care for her parents. Although her workplace was able to grant flexibility with her work hours to accommodate medical appointments and the times when she was needed for hands-on care, they declined to do so. Her father and mother died two years apart. Shortly afterwards, her husband was diagnosed with dementia and now needs round-the-clock monitoring. She has lost her most productive pension years. As her husband was self-employed, his only income is CPP and OAS. She has no children, and she is very worried about her financial future.

**Mr. Angus Campbell:** Our second caregiver is Alice, who is a retired nurse living on a pension. She gives care to her elderly mother, who had a brain stem stroke last year. Her mother is no longer able to live independently and has moved in with Alice. Alice's mother was on a feeding tube for some time, and the cost of the food was not covered. Alice reviewed her out-of-pocket expenses for the previous year, and they totalled approximately \$16,000. These additional expenses, along with the added stresses of caregiving, have taken a huge toll. Alice was denied the Nova Scotia caregiver benefit because her mother did not have dementia, which is a qualifying factor.

**Ms. Cindie Smith:** Our third caregiver is Cathy. She is 66 years old and one of 10 siblings. She's the only one who didn't marry and have children, so when it came time to care for their 90-year-old mother, it fell to her to move back to Nova Scotia to help. Because Cathy took on that duty, the rest of the family has abandoned their caregiving duties. She does not drive and lives in a rural area, so she must rely on unreliable public transportation to take her mother to a variety of medical appointments. Cathy has recently gone through a cancer diagnosis and treatment, and still, she's the only one who steps up. Now, two years later, she's feeling the stress not only physically but emotionally and financially as well. She struggles every day to do the best for her mom and for herself. She says, if not for her faith and sense of humour, she would be much worse off.

**Mr. Angus Campbell:** Our fourth caregiver is Denise, who was a career nurse and was looking forward to retirement with her husband, but his diagnosis of dementia derailed their plans. She cared for him at home through the journey of this horrible disease until his death. Eighteen months after he died, she went to see her doctor about how terrible she had felt for years. She was no longer willing to chalk it up to caregiver stress or the effects of grief. After some testing, she was diagnosed with her own long-standing chronic medical condition and struggles to retain her mental and physical health.

**Ms. Cindie Smith:** Our final story comes from a wonderfully insightful client, who I have named Flora. She is a reluctant caregiver, and we've had many conversations about the lack of options available to her. Through her frustration, she compares the current condition of caregiving in Canada to the generation of lost young men who served in World War I. Intending no disrespect to their service or sacrifices, she talks passionately about the generation of middle-age women who currently are lost to caregiving.

In that discussion, we drew contrasts between the two groups. Soldiers had volunteered or were conscripted, confident that they

would receive the tools and skills they needed to be successful. They received a paycheque. It was an indicator of the value of their time and effort and a means of support for their otherwise lost income. They were trained in boot camp on what to expect in the field and how to protect themselves and each other. They were given guns, protective equipment, maps, and rations, and they were shown how to use them. The enemy was defined and could be identified by its uniform. They were taught how the enemy thinks and acts and how to stay a step ahead of it. They were given a platoon leader who would provide guidance and leadership, helping to keep them safe and battle ready. In an office far away, there was a strategist working on a plan of how to defeat the enemy and get the soldiers safely home. When that soldier returned, there were plans and programs and services in place to help him move back into his productive civilian life.

By contrast, the average caregiver is more often a conscript than a volunteer for the position and lacks the confidence in what she is undertaking. She receives no paycheque to indicate the value of her time or her lost income. She is not trained for the role, but there are both societal and self-imposed assumptions that she should know or will somehow learn how to do the job. Although reminded often by many well-intended people to take care of herself, she is not versed in the personal dangers of caregiving.

Although the enemy is a medical condition, there's often scant information offered to help her understand the characteristics of the illness or what to anticipate. Sometimes there's a secondary enemy disguised as an overburdened health care system, uncooperative family members, or a care recipient who is resistant to services. There's no leader to help her along the way. There are no strategists with an eye to the overall plan and big picture, and when her loved one dies, when she is physically, mentally, and financially broken, there are no services. There is no GI bill to offer transition back to her life, and no glory to come home to, only the sorrow of grief.

• (0900)

**Mr. Angus Campbell:** We thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Very good.

Now we will go to H el ene Cornellier by teleconference.

[Translation]

Ms. Cornellier, you have seven minutes.

**Mrs. H el ene Cornellier (Coordinator of Action Plan and Communications, Association f eminine d' ducation et d'action sociale):** Good morning.

I wanted to say that, to stay within the time limits, I will not read the entire four-page brief I submitted. I will skip some paragraphs of the brief to stay within my seven minutes.

That was a comment for the interpreters.

On behalf of Afeas, the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale, I want to thank the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for inviting us to participate in the hearings related to its study on the economic security of women in Canada.

First, I will give you a brief overview of Afeas, and then I will talk about the two main areas that the government should focus on when implementing solutions to prevent Canadian women from being at an economic disadvantage their entire lives.

Afeas is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1966. It represents 8,034 Quebec women who work as volunteers in 225 local groups in 11 regions of Quebec.

Since its inception, Afeas has been striving toward gender equality in every sphere of society. That is the organization's main goal, and as a result, it works on various issues affecting women in Quebec and Canada such as: gender equality, including women's ability to access democratic institutions at all levels; the financial security of women throughout their career and after they retire through the recognition of the unpaid work women do within the family as mothers and caregivers; access to education and training, pay equity, non-traditional jobs, and measures to support a work-school-life balance; access to safe living environments and measures to address violence against women and girls.

Afeas believes that both the paid and unpaid work of Canadian women must be taken into account in order to ensure their economic security.

Since its inception in 1966, Afeas has been considering what impact the lack of recognition for women's work has on our society. In 1968, Afeas presented the information it collected on homemakers to the Bird Commission.

One of its first campaigns sought recognition for the contributions women make to family businesses run by their husbands. In 1974, Afeas succeeded.

Other campaigns followed, and progress was made toward improving the living conditions of women in Quebec and Canada.

Some 35 years later, on April 1, 2001, Afeas created Invisible Work Day. As part of this annual campaign, which is held the first Tuesday in April, Afeas educates the public and decision-makers about the social and economic value of invisible work. Afeas believes that, if the contributions that women make within the family and community—which are essential to our society—were recognized, then social and financial measures could be implemented that would prevent women from living in poverty.

On April 1, 2010, at the request of Afeas, MP Nicole Demers moved the motion to make the first Tuesday in April National Unpaid Work Day. Although this motion was adopted, no action has yet been taken to implement it.

Here are a few recommendations concerning unpaid or invisible work.

First, the Government of Canada should make the first Tuesday in April National Unpaid Work Day, add it to the calendar of national days and acknowledge it every year.

Second, Statistics Canada should assess and calculate the value of unpaid work in Canada to show how important it is to the gross domestic product using the 2015 General Social Survey on Time Use. This calculation has not been done for 25 years, since 1992.

We also recommend that Statistics Canada make sure that the question regarding household activities is included in the 2021 long-form census, so that the people responding to it would be aware of how much of that type of work they do every day.

In addition, we recommend that the federal government ensure that all laws, policies and programs undergo gender-based analysis in order to determine how they will affect women, particularly their economic security.

● (0905)

Moreover, we recommend that the Government of Canada adopt a policy on work-life-school balance that applies to all spheres of society, including public institutions and private businesses under federal jurisdiction.

Next, we recommend that the Government of Canada work with the provinces and territories to create a family insurance plan that would cover mothers or fathers when a child is born or adopted, as well as caregivers when they have to take time off work to care for a loved one who is sick, has a disability, or is losing his or her autonomy.

We also recommend that the federal government work with the provinces and territories to create a national child care program to give women access to affordable child care and allow them to return to the labour market, if they so desire.

When it comes to the last two measures, every province and territory must have the option of opting out of this program, under the appropriate agreements, as was the case in Quebec when the Quebec parental insurance plan was implemented in 2006. Similarly, since Quebec has its own child care program, it does not need a national program.

We also recommend that the Canadian government provide retirement benefit credits equivalent to 60% of the average industrial wage for the period an individual spent caring for a young child or a loved one, if that person does not have any employment income.

Finally, we recommend that the federal government turn non-refundable tax credits for stay-at-home mothers and caregivers into refundable tax credits.

I would now like to talk about paid work.

There was a major influx of Canadian women into the labour force in the late 1960s. At that time, employers considered these women's contributions to the family as complementary to those of their husbands and, therefore, paid them less.

Still today, women generally continue to earn less than men, even for the same work. This lack of pay equity affects many women and has an impact on their economic security throughout their lives. They are negatively affected when they claim benefits, such as maternity, parental or retirement benefits.

In its brief, Afeas gives you a few recommendations on paid work.

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

We will now go to questions, starting with Mr. Fraser.

[*English*]

You have seven minutes.

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

I'll begin with our witnesses who are here from back home in Nova Scotia. It's good to see you by video conference.

One of the reasons I want to start with you is I'm familiar with the demographic problem, in particular, that Atlantic Canada is facing. We have more seniors per capita out east than any other province or region in Canada. If it hasn't already exploded, there's a ticking time bomb taking place with a need to enhance caregiver services, particularly for our seniors.

My grandfather is a 96-year-old veteran who has actually received great in-home care, from which my family has benefited, because of certain programming that we have for veterans. There are many seniors, particularly those living in poverty in my community, who don't have access to a similar level of benefits.

Could you comment on how the federal government could best fund in-home care programs for seniors who aren't necessarily veterans to make sure they have access to quality care in their homes as well?

• (0910)

**Mr. Angus Campbell:** Mr. Fraser, thank you for that question.

Right now in Nova Scotia, as you are probably aware, we do have some provincial benefits that are unique to our province. We are the only province that offers a caregiver benefit of \$400 a month to low-income people and a supplementary care program of \$500 per month for people to look after somebody with dementia. Those things are unique to Nova Scotia.

How we can support seniors or caregivers is exactly one thing we have mentioned in our recommendation. We could possibly take a look at the savings to our health care system. We know that people want to stay at home as long as possible, and the health care system is saving from that, so why can we not redirect some of that funding to help keep these people at home?

**Ms. Cindie Smith:** If I may add, I believe currently there is a guaranteed basic income pilot project going on in three communities in Ontario. The guaranteed income is \$17,000 a year. Given average costs in Nova Scotia of long-term care per month and alternate level of care, ALC, beds in hospitals, providing that caregiver with a \$17,000 guaranteed basic income, allowing her or him to step away from work, is a savings of almost 50% of the institutionalized cost.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Certainly. Is that institutionalized cost the cost of care in a nursing home or hospital care?

**Ms. Cindie Smith:** That's both long-term care and ALC units in hospitals.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** As a follow-up, one of the things that our family has experienced, and I know many others have as well, is trying to find a person who can offer the kind of quality care even if you do have the resources to pay for it. Is there a sufficient number of people qualified to provide care across Canada, or in Nova Scotia if that's your expertise? If not, how can we make sure we have the skilled workforce to meet the needs of our aging population?

**Ms. Cindie Smith:** In our opinion, no, there are not enough skilled persons to do that. Again I'll refer you to the recommendations we made in our written report, in particular recommendation 3.

A few years ago in Nova Scotia there was a non-repayable bursary for those individuals who wished to study continuing care assistance to provide exactly that service. That bursary has disappeared. Reintroducing that would, I'm sure, be enormously helpful, and in particular looking at those caregivers who have completed their role as a caregiver. That is an untapped pool of talent from which we can draw these people back into the workforce using their new skill set, augmented with some training.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** I can't remember which of the witnesses—it may have been you, Dr. Daly—commented on the importance of transportation. No, I believe it was Caregivers Nova Scotia again, but this question is for whomever would like to tackle it. The example was there might not be access to reliable public transit in rural communities to allow a caregiver to travel to where they need to go, or potentially take the person to whom they're giving care to where they need to go in an affordable way. Could you comment on the importance of public transit, particularly in smaller communities, for seniors, individuals living in poverty or with disabilities, and what the federal government could do to help improve this situation for the caregiver?

**Ms. Cindie Smith:** There are challenges with living in rural areas, in particular, when the caregiver has reached a point in their life when they're no longer able to hop in the car and go to where the services are provided. In some communities there are services like mobile blood collection, that sort of thing, but not nearly enough, though. Of course, health care centres are in more populated areas. Given the geography of our province, a great deal of distance needs to be covered by some families, and it is a great stressor to them.

• (0915)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** My question is for Ms. Cornellier.

You talked about the need to provide training and education for family caregivers.

What education and training programs could be introduced to turn the role of family caregivers into paid work opportunities?

**Mrs. Hélène Cornellier:** For Afeas, it is not a matter of transforming caregivers—we actually don't refer to them as “family” caregivers, since the role is a social one—into orderlies. We feel that caregivers—who are usually either family members, neighbours, colleagues or friends—must be supported through financial measures and home support programs provided by their province's health institutions.

We think that those local health institutions or community organizations must include orderlies who can provide, usually at home, support to individuals who need care, such as seniors who have completely lost their autonomy because they suffered a stroke, people with cancer, people who need a bath, and so on.

So far, our position is very clear: we do not want caregivers to—

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, the time is up. Thank you very much.

[English]

We will go now to Karen Vecchio, for seven minutes.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** I want to start with AFEAS, who is on the phone right now. You talked about making refundable tax credits from the non-refundable. Can you give me a brief summary of what those tax credits are, if there are any now, or things that you think should be implemented?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Hélène Cornellier:** I don't have that information on hand, but I could send it to you by email.

We worked with an economist here, in Quebec. She analyzed the Quebec and federal tax credits to determine which of them could be transformed.

I could send the clerk that information by email.

[English]

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Perfect. I really do appreciate that.

I want to move over to Caregivers Nova Scotia. I really do appreciate all you have put in today. Thank you very much.

The thing is that we do have a lot of common ground, but some of the things we're looking at may be a little different. This actually is for both Tamara and the caregivers association. When we talk about it, we talk about the roles of families. It is really important that we find the common ground here. We're not always going to agree on everything, but let's find the common ground.

One of the first things I want to find out is where that line is in the grey zone when we talk about the difference between family responsibility and the role of the state. We can say that the government should be paying for our children to go to child care and should be paying for everything when it comes to families putting family members into seniors homes. Then we talk about house-cleaning and maintenance as well. I recognize that sometimes those are additional services. I guess part of my issue is when it becomes the responsibility of a person versus the responsibility of the state. Could you define that? We just need to have that broader discussion, please.

**Mr. Angus Campbell:** I'll go first, if I may.

I'd like to back it up a little and state that caregivers are not assessed, so when a continuing care coordinator goes into the home to assess the care recipient as to what the needs are, the caregivers are the invisible half of the dyad. Nobody currently asks them if they are willing, if they are capable—

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** I'm just going to put in here that when it comes to my mom, when it comes to my children, there are people who feel that is their responsibility and so they may not be asked, but there is.... I know somebody said it's not natural to be that caregiver, but for some people it is. I'll be honest. I happen to be one of those, so that's why I just want to find.... It's really important. We recognize that everybody has different opinions, and I appreciate that, but when does it become the role of the state versus a member of a family?

For me, taking care of my mom is my responsibility. Taking care of my children, whether I put them into child care or whatever it may be, is my responsibility. We have to recognize that people have different visions of what the responsibilities are of the family. If we can go back on that, caregivers are not assessed but sometimes, based on the culture of the family, they truly are, and we'll see that whether it's my family or families from across the world. Sometimes people do feel those responsibilities, so the responsibility versus willingness is definitely a good debate.

● (0920)

**Mr. Angus Campbell:** It's also capacity. Everybody at our organization is or has been a caregiver, so we've all felt that responsibility and stepped up to the plate.

I'm just going to leave it there for now and let the other person to whom you posed the question answer.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Excellent, thank you.

**Dr. Tamara Daly:** This is a question about shared risk and also about how we live together in a community. For instance, if somebody has a catastrophic illness, something like dementia, at what point does the state take responsibility for that illness? I would say that when we're pulling people out of gainful, paid employment, that poses risks for their own ability to contribute to their pension plans and to save for their own retirement. We are actually putting greater financial burdens and risks on women and on their futures, because it is particularly women who are taking on these roles.

In Denmark, for instance, in a generation, they have made care a shared responsibility between men and women by making both men and women equally responsible and able to enjoy both the benefit and the cost of popping out of the labour force.



In addition to that, when we talk about care for seniors, we need to think about the fact that it's not just health care; it's actually social care. The federal government did play a very large role in funding community support services for a very long period of time. These are small grassroots agencies that were providing things like transportation, Meals on Wheels, friendly visiting, and those types of supports, but that support has slowly declined over the course of the past 15 years. In provinces like Ontario there is more and more of an emphasis on these small organizations providing health care services, as opposed to the types of social and emotional supports that they were intended to provide.

If we want to live together in Canada as a community, then we need to share some of these responsibilities.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Tamara, thank you very much. I think you hit it exactly. That's what we have to look at.

We're talking somebody who is now personally jeopardizing their income. I think that shared risk is a good way of looking at it when we talk about unpaid work.

I think some of the times it's choice, and sometimes making sure that the state is available. We do recognize, and I see it a lot in my community, that there are not people there to assist. It may be a man and woman who do not have children. What happens? Is it going to be the VON, the Victorian Order of Nurses, or is it going to be the Golden K that takes them to transportation sites? Thank you very much. When we talk about that, I think we have to understand the risk.

Now, what happens when it's a choice?

Tamara, I'm going to go back to you, if you don't mind.

With a person who was not employed, when do we look at it as they had not been employed, that they had always chosen to take care of their children and family first. What do we do there? Where do we find that balance between the difference of somebody taking leave from work and somebody choosing to do that role the entire time? Is there a balance there?

**Dr. Tamara Daly:** I'm not sure that I'm comfortable with the word "choice" here, because I think for single mothers or women who are living in poverty, it isn't necessarily a choice. I think they feel like they're in a situation and the circumstances are dictating it, rather than it being a real choice about whether to participate in gainful employment or not. I think we have to be careful about using "choice".

I'd also caution you to not think about the VON and these other organizations in the third sector as having the capacity to do this alone. When I say that the federal government and other levels of government provided a lot of support to these organizations, it's really what allows these organizations to do what they do.

We can't just assume that the third sector is going to take on these roles and responsibilities. We can't assume that families have the capacity to do it. Not everybody has strong family connections, or even family to rely on. We always need to think about outliers, and we need to think about how some issues are not really about choice, that they're about circumstance.

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

**The Chair:** That's your time.

We're going to Ms. Malcolmson, for seven minutes.

• (0925)

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all three witness groups. It's extremely helpful and very powerful.

Professor Daly, in one of your academic publications you described the care gap created by a lack of public funding for seniors, particularly seniors homes. We have a conversation happening right now around infrastructure investment, and it sometimes defaults to the traditional infrastructure, such as highways, as opposed to social infrastructure, such as health care.

I'm hoping you can talk about the neglect to invest in that physical social infrastructure and how that might affect female family members who often, by default, provide that unpaid care.

**Dr. Tamara Daly:** I'm considering a lot of things in talking about this.

One of the first things that we need to understand is that the nursing home today is not the nursing home of 15 years ago, which provided an awful lot of social care, and was there for the frail elderly, mostly people who were quite old and needed some medical support. The nursing home of today is really an alternate for hospital care, so you have people going there who would have been in hospital 15 years ago. We find an increasing medical complexity, people going into nursing homes at the very end of their lives. That's in Canada. That's not necessarily the case in the Nordic countries or the rest of Europe where nursing homes are there to do more social care.

When I talk about the care gap, I'm talking about the gap between the care we are able to provide with public funding and how it's filled. It's filled with families in nursing homes, with student work, with the work of volunteers, or we're expecting the paid staff to volunteer their own time so they're working overtime. Also, families are hiring privately paid companions. They're paying out-of-pocket to have private care in publicly funded nursing homes. These care workers are doing work that's identical to that of the paid staff, so it's creating tons and tons of risks for the staff, for residents, and for families.

Families are also finding that they are under incredible pressure and burden. Maybe mom has become a bit aggressive with her dementia and the nursing home is saying they can't keep their mom there unless they pay to have someone to watch her around the clock.

Families are facing these sorts of burdens and it's an increasing and incredibly difficult challenge and it creates difficulties all the way round.

If we think about the role of the federal government, the Romanow commission talked about home care, and they didn't talk about nursing homes at all. Nursing homes are practically invisible. These are extended health services, so as you know, the federal government sends money to the provinces and they don't necessarily look at how much the provinces are funding nursing home care.

If the federal government wants to make a big impact, they should be thinking not only about home care, but also about nursing home care. While it is true that people want to remain at home, that's if they have a good home to remain in, and that's if they have sufficient supports to keep them in that home—community supports like Meals on Wheels and transportation, and help with their housing. Some people have no choice but to get round-the-clock nursing care, and they really do need nursing homes. I think by not concentrating on this need, we're neglecting the over 200,000 people who are using these services every year. By understaffing in this area, we're also putting great risks and burdens on the women who mostly provide this work.

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

Caregivers Nova Scotia, the very powerful personal stories that you told really do help amplify why we're doing this study. I'm very much reminded of a meeting just two weeks ago in my own riding with the Nanaimo Family Life Association. They are just being hammered by having invited community calls for support through their seniors connect project. They're funded for 100 places, and they're looking after 400 people who are isolated seniors in poverty with no public transit. Many of these people spent their lives working in low-paid care jobs and are now having a very hard time getting by.

I want to focus on the NGO side of things, because the Nanaimo Family Life Association described the hoops they jump through to try to find program funding. I note your acknowledgement within your website around the operational funding that your group receives.

Could you talk about how important operational funding is for organizations like yours to be able to fill the gap and support women in poverty?

● (0930)

**Mr. Angus Campbell:** Absolutely.

We receive operational funding every year. I was just with the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness yesterday asking for additional funds. Our numbers have increased about 15-fold in the last three and a half years. We have well over 4,600 members in our database. We need that operational funding for consistency such that we're able to hold 21 monthly support groups around the province, as well as using some innovation where we're doing it now. We also have a teleconference base for people who do not have access to transportation or have other reasons that they can't attend in-person support groups.

We offer some educational workshops on everything from caregiver stress management to safer medications, oral care, and advance care planning. Those are just some that we're offering now, but we have more in the works. We need to have that continuity where I can have the same staff staying in their places doing their jobs. It takes between six months and a year for someone to get up to full speed. The project funding is nice when we are able to get it to do a specific project, but it really is the operational funding that we need.

Part of that operational funding, and unfortunately, we don't have it right now—it's one of our recommendations—is to continue to

publish hard copies of resources. I can't state that one enough, although many people think it's a simple thing to have a little booklet. There is a 94-page caregiver's handbook that people can sit down with when their caring day may end at about 10 p.m. They can actually sit and read through some of this or keep going back to where it supports them; it helps them get started on things and continue on with their care responsibilities. Personally, I feel that the caregiver's handbook is worth \$4 and that we should be funding this. Whether it comes from the federal government or the provincial government, it's something that I come back to.

So operational funding—

**The Chair:** Very good. That's your time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serré, go ahead for seven minutes.

**Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will share my last two minutes with Ms. Ludwig.

I would like to begin by thanking the three witness groups for the work they are doing in this area. I also thank them for preparing and making their presentations before this committee.

For the first time in Ottawa, the Parliament of Canada passed a motion on creating a national seniors strategy. That was two weeks ago. Your testimony is very relevant to unpaid caregivers' work. This is an important issue.

My first question is for Ms. Cornellier.

You talked about Statistics Canada in your recommendations. Our government has reinstated Statistics Canada's long-form census. As we often hear people say that data is lacking, I would like you to tell us whether you think any specific information that would be useful to your organization and the entire field should be collected.

**Mrs. Hélène Cornellier:** In the issue that concerns us—the recognition of unpaid work—it would mainly be a matter of information provided in response to the question on household activities. We are talking about time dedicated to children or to a loved one in need. So it also has to do with the work of caregivers.

Of course, there were also questions on volunteering, which is another form of unpaid work. In addition, there were subquestions on the time spent on housekeeping or directly dedicated to children, persons in need, and so on.

In every census, that data allows us to provide an overview of unpaid work. That is not necessarily the most complete overview, as Statistics Canada says, but it does give us an idea of what is happening in Canada. As a result, those who have to fill out the long-form census—20% of the population—can acknowledge the work they do at home for their loved ones.

According to Statistics Canada, the best tool would be the General Social Survey on Time Use. Statistics Canada conducted one of those surveys in 2015. As the case was in 1992, we want the survey to be used to show the value of that unpaid work done by Canadians in the gross domestic product. That way, everything Canadians do would become visible.

● (0935)

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Okay, thank you.

As I don't have a lot of time, I will ask my second question.

[English]

Ms. Daly, thank you for the work you do as a research chair. I'd love to get your thoughts on how to get more women as research chairs in universities across Ontario. Perhaps you could submit that separately later on.

I want to focus today more on the dementia side, as personally my mom's taking care of my dad right now at home. From your experience on the research side and best practices, you indicated home care. We as the federal government are working with the provinces to establish more best practices. You mentioned nursing homes. Do you have specific recommendations on best practices that we could look at as we're developing a national strategy for seniors?

**Dr. Tamara Daly:** We tend to think in terms of promising practices, and around dementia care one of the things that works quite well is day programs, but along with day programs, you need to think about some of the infrastructure that's required, such as transportation to get people to and from those day programs. You can imagine, particularly as people age, that their partner may no longer be capable of helping them into a car or getting them out of the house. When we talk about care work, there are a lot of very physical aspects to care work that can't be forgotten. An older person may no longer be capable of driving themselves.

There is also an issue with the cost of these programs. While for some people maybe \$30 to \$40 per day is not prohibitive, for other people it is a lot of money.

Finally, there isn't sufficient space, so we are outstripping our capacity in terms of spaces for these day centre programs. This is particularly in communities that are growing rapidly. I think about York region which surrounds York University as one of those areas. This is one strategy that the Alzheimer Society has taken upon themselves. There are other organizations that provide this as well, but again, this is a community support service. This is an area in which the federal government, through their horizons program, was quite keenly involved, but over time that amount of funding has shifted.

I think the Nova Scotia organization talked about having operational funding. It's not enough to ask organizations to have year-over-year funding and project funding, because then you get into a situation where it's just one project after another, as opposed to knowing that you have the capacity to plan long term for some of these services.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you.

Ms. Ludwig.

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

I have one question, and it's for Professor Daly.

We heard from Professor Bakker from York University. She said that one of the ways of addressing the challenges of economic security could possibly be through tax policy.

I'm wondering if you could speak to the two-thirds of seniors living in private households. I've heard from a number of seniors in my riding. Some of them have the income, certainly. They want to stay in their own homes, but their homes are too large. I'm wondering if you could possibly speak to the opportunity for a tax policy or a tax credit for seniors who are in their own homes to make accommodations. Maybe there's an opportunity for them to rent some of the space and gather some income, but still stay in their homes, which are more amenable. Perhaps that would offer more round-the-clock nursing care to those who really need it the most and maybe are less able to pay for it. Thank you.

**Dr. Tamara Daly:** It sounds really interesting. I would say that probably, in terms of tax policy, it's not my area of expertise, and so I wouldn't want to comment on that.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Do you see there is an opportunity to help seniors to stay in their own homes longer? I live in a rural area in New Brunswick, and many of the homes are two-storey homes. There are stairs. There are challenges. There are not washrooms on the first floor. They want to stay there longer, but their homes have to be accommodated for them to stay there and for someone just quickly to come in and out.

**Dr. Tamara Daly:** Yes. Again, it's not my area of expertise, but I know that in the past there have been these sorts of tax incentives, and people do take advantage of them. If you're talking about the medical expenses portion of taxes, I'm assuming that is one area that you could look at, expanding the percentage that people could use to write off their income if they make those kinds of accommodations to their homes.

● (0940)

**The Chair:** That's your time.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** I was actually thinking of the home renovation side.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We're going to go, for our final five minutes, to Ms. Harder.

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

My first question is for Ms. Daly.

You talked about the community taking responsibility. Based on the premise of the question, your definition of community would be largely government-driven. My definition of community would not include the government. I don't consider them to be a part of my community. I have a very different community. There is, I think, a need to define what exactly community is. With that, one of the thoughts that it prompted was that part of many people's communities is actually faith. Since the mid-17th century, faith-based organizations and churches have played a very significant role in being able to provide health care and those necessary services to individuals in need.

To this day, would you agree that faith-based communities still have a desirable role to play in being able to offer some of those services, and to actually do it in a cost-effective way, as well?

**Dr. Tamara Daly:** Well, unless you don't use roads or street lights or attend public libraries, I don't see how your community doesn't involve government.

Some of the community support agencies like the ones I talked about are associated with faith-based organizations and some are not. It really depends on who's doing what in that particular community. I think the important point is that a lot of these organizations have found it more and more difficult to get the sort of funding they need in order to provide the excellent services they're able to provide.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Do you think, then, that perhaps there is an opportunity for governments to work with not-for-profit organizations, particularly faith-based organizations, in order to provide some of those services?

**Dr. Tamara Daly:** I think it's important for government to consider working with all the different types of third sector organizations in order to provide the sorts of services that people in all class brackets require, in rural and urban communities. A lot of these organizations help particularly people who are living in poverty or who are extremely isolated. Because they are grassroots, they are able to do the sort of work that other organizations are not able to do.

My point here is that a large component of seniors care is social care. In this country, we focus more and more on health care services, but we can't forget the integral part of care that is social care. I think that's an important aspect.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** I would agree with you on that. That's exactly the point I wish to make.

In my riding of Lethbridge, Alberta, I see this demonstrated incredibly well. We have two seniors organizations that, I would argue, are actually preventative care, in the sense that seniors are invited to come and engage in social activities: eat meals together, play games together, lawn bowl, exercise together, take computer classes together. These sorts of things are proven to keep people healthy longer.

In addition, we have a number of churches within my riding that have actually started care homes for seniors and are doing a phenomenal job in providing not just for their health necessities, but for their social necessities or well-being in that area as well.

**Dr. Tamara Daly:** I think the important point is to separate the ownership structure from the delivery and funding of services. In a

lot of these cases, there might be private ownership, but we often have public funding that is supporting the delivery of these services. I think that's the important point to consider.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** You made reference to Denmark, and you talked about enforcing equal responsibility between men and women for taking care of a loved one. Help me understand. How do you enforce equal responsibility?

**Dr. Tamara Daly:** In the case of Denmark, they did it through legislation. They made it a requirement that both men and women, if they are in a partnered relationship, take responsibility for early child care. They would take time off work. If not, it would be lost for both parties. What happened was that, over a generation, as more and more men participated in work without the negative consequences that are associated for a lot of men with taking time away from work, they have become one of the most gender-equal places on earth. Men now see that they have a role to play in care at all stages of life.

● (0945)

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** I can appreciate that, but it certainly does rob people of choice.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Rachael. That's the end of our time for today.

Thank you so much to the witnesses. We've enjoyed the conversation about unpaid care, and we have some good suggestions to go on. If you have additional comments that you'd like to make, please submit them to the clerk. Thank you again for your time.

We're going to suspend while we prepare for panel two.

● (0945)

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

● (0945)

**The Chair:** We are back with our second panel.

Today we have with us Dorothy Byers from FIRST Robotics Canada. Dorothy is the chair of the board of directors.

We also have with us today Iris Meck, who is the president and founder of the Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference.

We are very happy to have you here today talking about improving the economic security of women in Canada.

We'll start with Dorothy, for seven minutes, and then we'll go to Iris.

● (0950)

**Ms. Dorothy Byers (Chair, Board of Directors, FIRST Robotics Canada):** Good morning, everyone.

First, thank you so much for the opportunity to speak with you today about this very important issue.

As a woman in Canada who has been very fortunate to seek and enjoy a stable and enriching career in the service of others, I am passionate about my new path that speaks to the successful engagement of girls and women in STEM, the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.

For the past 17 years, I've had the opportunity to encourage girls and young women to challenge themselves in the FIRST Robotics family of programs. FIRST is an acronym that stands for, for inspiration and recognition of science and technology, a family of programs that is a catalyst for learning for students from grades 1 to 12. It's run nationally through school- and community-based teams. There are four FEWO committee members who have a total of 11 teams dispersed among their ridings. Five provinces currently have FIRST high school level teams.

The founding mentor of Canada's longest-standing, nationally and internationally most successful girls' team in FIRST, I am a proud supporter of this initiative. Now as chair of the board of FIRST Robotics Canada, and the first woman, I may add, internationally to be in such a role, I am in a national position to impact the ability of girls to chase their dreams in STEM.

What's the issue? Here are some of the statistics. Growing numbers of girls successfully pursue post-secondary education in STEM fields. They're very high achievers in university, college, and industry training programs. We tell them that they can do anything and that they know they can. They believe us. When they enter the world of work, though, something causes them to question their choice. Women retreat from these fields as they pursue their careers.

Why is there this attrition? They're unsupported by male colleagues. They're frustrated by gender biases, conscious and unconscious, in hiring and promotion practices. They're faced with stigmas related to women in STEM, which is perceived often as being unfeminine. They lack supportive networks. They don't have role models or associations. There is inequity in pay, as reported by Statistics Canada, across all STEM fields. In fact, in Canada, women make 72¢ on the dollar of a same job.

We do not see women in leadership—there are 12% of women employed in engineering—or colleagues achieving to their full potential. They're frustrated. They're very high-achieving women, of whom 64% report that they are under more scrutiny than their male colleagues, especially when they're applying for a promotion.

The U.S.-based, data-driven and research-driven NCWIT, the National Center for Women and Information Technology, says that women don't need to be fixed; men need to become their allies and advocates.

We often hear about the leaky pipeline. Little girls engage in STEM wholeheartedly. I have witnessed this. As they progress along the pipeline, though, they question their ability and lose confidence. Ultimately, without supportive peers and adults, they decide to leave STEM fields. The statistics are clear: those who continue are in a minority in post-secondary programs.

Further attrition occurs in the workplace for all of the reasons above. This is a travesty for Canada. It's proven that diversity brings richness of thought, enhanced innovation, stronger teams, and has a profound impact on our GDP.

What's the impact of FIRST Robotics Canada? Our recent strategic plan, EDI, equity, diversity, inclusion, is there to support girls or alumnae of the program, but we're in a catch-22. Here we are supporting girls, but we're not serving these extraordinary young

women who will be Canada's STEM leaders if we don't focus on the workplaces they will enter.

The creation of the Girls in STEM Executive Advisory Council this year is a results-driven, strategy-based group with three aspirational goals: to support young women in FIRST programs; to change the culture of the workplaces into which they will enter; and to investigate the impact of men and dads on the attitudes of their daughters.

FIRST's strategy is this, to meet goal one. Last weekend we had our first girls in FIRST weekend. Sixty-five girls from 25 teams across the province and 35 adults came together for two days. The focus was on the development of personal life skills: to be resilient, confident, courageous, brave, embrace failure as a learning opportunity, and to flee from perfectionism—so often part of being a woman—to enable success in the STEM world.

● (0955)

On the agenda, we had presentations and panel discussions from role models and industry leaders. If you see her, you can be her. Challenges of the glass obstacle course were discussed. There were workshops to discuss issues, build skills, dream about the future, to network, and to assertively suggest how they would like to proceed. The goal is not to fix the girls, but to augment their skills. Conceived of and executed by adults created the head of the comet, but the girls themselves have taken on the tail. The next steps are emerging.

To meet goal two, the girls in STEM executive advisory board are seeking systemic change in workplaces where women traditionally retreat. We are building presentations to build awareness and to call out gender biases and to grow the movement of men as allies and advocates and champions, to clearly state that equity, diversity, and inclusion aren't just good for women, but they're good for society and the economy as well. It is an economic imperative.

We need to challenge the media, to change that image of scientists as being men in white lab coats.

We intend to call attention to the status quo where 22% of employees in STEM are women, and this has only grown 2% in the past 30 years. We know this will cause discomfort, but we're okay with that.

To meet goal three, there are workshops for men in the lives of girls, to make them aware of their impact and provide strategies to support their girls and their daughters.

These are aspirational goals of FIRST Robotics Canada to move the needle on the current generation of young women by helping them and by challenging systemic attitudes. If we don't, all the good work encouraging girls in STEM is for naught.

What's the national picture? We need women in STEM and for them to stay in STEM. We need to close the gender gap. It isn't just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do. That is echoed around the world. We need to achieve systemic support for solutions, to demand change. This will be challenging, but together we can all make it happen. We need national strategies to reverse the trend. It is not just good for society, but for Canada's innovation strategy, the national economy, our place in the world, and it's good for 50% of the population.

I have some recommendations. Challenge the status quo by holding CEOs and boards accountable for their demographics and hold organizations accountable for systemic change. Withhold funding and other resources, as Minister Duncan's proposal for university funding states. Bring together organizations that support women in STEM. Build networks. Impose quotas to achieve balance. That's demonstrated by Sweden's voluntary quota project. They can be very effective in boosting diversity and improving systemic change. Engage men in the conversation so that they can become advocates. Empower women, and engage men. There should be support from the federal government to encourage the development of organizations such as Australia's Athena SWAN, the U.K.'s Athena SWAN, and the U.S.-based NCWIT, all of which support women in STEM fields. At present, Canada lags behind in this work, and we need to change that.

**The Chair:** That's very good. Thanks so much.

We'll go to Iris. You have seven minutes.

**Ms. Iris Meck (President and Founder of Advancing Women In Agriculture Conference, Iris Meck Communications Inc., As an Individual):** Good morning, and thank you to the committee for inviting me to present.

I was raised on a farm in Manitoba, took my degree in agriculture and management in agriculture at the University of Manitoba, and have worked in the ag industry for all of my career.

In 2000, I started my own company and worked with agriculture communications and marketing, specializing in ag conferences.

In 2014, I gathered a group of women leaders from across Canada in the agricultural industry. I brought them together to discuss the opportunities and challenges that women face in the agricultural industry, and the skills and tools that would be needed to hone their leadership skills.

It became very apparent through this group of women leaders that there was a strong need for women at every age and every stage of their careers, in every agricultural sector and food sector to hear and learn from the experiences of successful women, to network with women who share a common passion for agriculture and food, and to grow life and career skills to prepare them for the best possible futures. It was an opportunity for women to invest in themselves and benefit their families, their businesses, their communities, and the industry overall.

With this as our guiding principle, we created the first Advancing Women in Agriculture Conference in April 2014, and we attracted over 400 women from over six provinces, representing over 130 organizations. It was a huge risk for me, personally, one that was not very profitable but most rewarding.

The program emphasizes what I call the key leadership skills and development opportunities that women need in today's society: communication, including mentorship, coaching, and networking; financial management and independence; health, both physical and mental; balancing life strategies and career planning, and setting goals in all of these areas.

Speakers were chosen on the basis of their expertise and their experience. They were selected not only from the agricultural industry but from the industry overall.

Over the last year, due to demand, we've enhanced the program of agricultural workshops by including networking, succession planning, coaching, financial management, and risk management.

The time has never been better, I think, for women in agriculture. Women are changing our industry every day, on the farm, through associations, in our universities, and in the board rooms of corporate agribusiness across North America.

To accomplish this change, women need strong networks and solid skills to build confidence, as Dorothy mentioned, to be motivated and inspired, and to increase the recognition of women in the industry through articles, print ads, and their actual day-to-day work. They need real-life, real-world examples of what's possible. That's where Advancing Women takes the lead.

Our audience today represents every industry sector, 4-H, university students, farmers, and entrepreneurs.

Since 2014, we've held six conferences in Alberta and Ontario. Over 3,000 women—that's an average of 500 women per conference—have attended from across Canada, representing over 350 organizations in Canada. This initiative is clearly filling a great need as represented not only by the number of women who attend but also the importance of the support that we receive from private industry sponsorship. This includes farm organizations, financial institutions, agribusiness, and a wide range of private ag and food stakeholders from across Canada.

Many organizations participate not only through sponsorship but by registering many of their staff and customers to attend AWC. They use it as a supplement to their internal training programs and marketing programs.

Our main goal for Advancing Women was learning, and bringing an exceptional speaker program to our audience. To date, we've been true to our commitment, and according to our audiences we have exceeded these expectations.

Our second goal was to make the conference as affordable as possible for all women in the industry. We are not only grateful to our private industry sponsors, who have helped accomplish this, but also to the Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan governments, which have classified AWC as a training program and allow for reimbursement, in part, of registration fees and expenses incurred by producer farmers and processors.

Our third goal is to assist in building a stronger ag community and industry overall for the future. To do this, we sponsor young women from universities and colleges who are studying agriculture, 4-H members, and any of those who apply in the community, by covering their registration and hotel accommodation. This is done by myself personally and by industry stakeholders who are interested in doing so. To date, we have sponsored over 50 students from across Canada.

• (1000)

AWC is recognized in supporting, celebrating, and recognizing the contribution that women make in the industry. Women participants leave more confident, enthused, and motivated, and are more apt, therefore, to be advocates in the industry and involved in industry associations and boards.

We have supported many women networks in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario. We have also provided a network for women who, for example, are widows raising families and want to keep the farm for their children growing up. We've built a network of over 25 farmers across the Canada-U.S. border, so that they have this network of support.

We've been asked to bring the conference to the United States and Africa. We have also been approached by other industries in the insurance, energy, food, restaurant, and hotel associations. We also support women in youth groups, to get involved not only with 4-H but with others.

Our overall goal is to have women involved in agriculture and food to benefit from AWC, not only from the speakers but from each other. We are considered today to be the largest leadership conference for women in agriculture, where women in agriculture can join a community of their peers to listen, learn, network, and grow.

We have more than 2,800 followers on Twitter, more than 860 connections on Facebook, and more than 9,000 connections on LinkedIn. Our YouTube station, which we created last year, has been gathering thousands of people to view our videos of speakers from the conference.

I thank you very much.

• (1005)

**The Chair:** Excellent.

We're going to start our round of questioning with my colleague, Ms. Damoff.

You have seven minutes.

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

I want to thank both of you for being here today and for being trailblazers in what both of you are doing to encourage young

women to seek careers in fields that are not traditionally filled by females.

I'm going to turn to Dorothy first. I've known Dorothy for years. She is truly an inspiration to generations of young women.

Dorothy, thank you for being here.

I saw a picture on your Twitter feed—I think it was on the weekend—with the caption, “FIRST is important to me.” Some of the things the young ladies have said are things like, “It helps boost my self-confidence,” “It allows me to feel equal,” and “We are the future. Let's make it good.”

That's tremendous, but we heard, as you mentioned, that we don't have enough young women who stay in those careers. Given your long history at St. Mildred's, and now at FIRST Robotics, do you know if those first girls who joined the robotics team at St. Mildred's have stayed in STEM as they've gone on?

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** Yes. Actually, my two first FIRST girls, as I call them, who came and said, “Mrs. Byers, we want to build a robot,” are both practising engineers.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** How many years ago was that?

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** That was 17 years ago.

The statistics state that 95% of girls who are in FIRST Robotics programs go on to STEM-related fields. A longitudinal study is under way to see where they are in their careers. In my experience with the girls in the girls-only team, many of them stay because they have the confidence. They've had the opportunity to know that they are resilient and that they can withstand what we call the glass obstacle course. Now that I've left the educational field, I have a much broader perspective. I really have put a lot of focus on that in the last year.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Are you seeing more girls joining the robotics teams?

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** Yes, and many of the teams are very keen on having girls on their teams. It's not just being on the team, it's also what they do on the team. FIRST has such an array of opportunities for girls, whether it's media or business planning, building a robot, or making presentations.

For us, it's a matter of what they are doing. Are they rolling up their sleeves, getting in, building, designing, and getting dirty? Are they elbowing the boys out of the way to be able to do and learn all of those different skills, and to have the opportunity to test themselves?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I think it's interesting that it's getting them involved and giving them the confidence when they're younger.

• (1010)

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** Yes.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Iris, I have to commend you for what you've done in agriculture. It's not something we've heard a lot about at the committee at all thus far, so thank you for bringing that perspective.

I have to tell you that last week I did a young women in leadership program in my riding. I had young women partnered with mentors in various fields and, I'll be honest, agriculture wasn't one of them. I did visit an agrifood business in my riding, which is an urban one: EarthFresh Foods. I have that on my mind for next year to open up that avenue to them.

Women are still under-represented in leadership in agriculture. How can we go about changing that? You've touched on some of the points, but how do we get young girls to think about that as a career if they haven't grown up on the farm?

**Ms. Iris Meck:** In terms of representation in the universities, I think we do see a lot of women. Across the country today, you'll see that women are graduating from universities in agriculture in greater numbers than men. In looking at the university studies, we don't have that problem. It's in what happens after that. That's why I'm so forceful about bringing young women from the universities into the conference. That way, they can hear from women who are involved in the industry what the opportunities are. They can build those networks, make those contacts, and see that there is a real future in agriculture.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I know that co-ops play a large role within agriculture. We're not seeing a lot of women in the co-ops, I don't think, as well, so where has the disconnect been there?

**Ms. Iris Meck:** I'm not sure I understand your question in regard to co-ops. Are you talking about Federated Co-ops?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Yes, and if you don't know, that's fine.

**Ms. Iris Meck:** I'm not sure what the numbers are. I wouldn't be able to say why there isn't a good representation of women. I know that I deal with a lot of women, of course, with every organization that I deal with. Each one of them has a good representation of women. What percentage that is in their organization, I couldn't say.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Okay.

Dorothy, you touched on Minister Duncan's recent announcement. I wonder if you could speak to that a little more in terms of what she's doing in the universities to try to get more women into the research chairs.

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** Thank you for this opportunity.

What Minister Duncan has done is to come forward and say that we will withhold resources if we don't see the changes that we need to see in research. That's a bold statement.

To be able to say that we will...what is the genesis of this? We will be stronger if our research base is broader. If there's diverse thought around the table, if there are opportunities for those who may not have had the opportunity to engage in research—and I touch on it in my paper—it enables women to have a way in and to be supported while they are there. Truthfully, the challenges come with the gender bias that they seem to still experience in post-secondary and in the workforce.

It was really welcomed, that kind of statement, to draw light and to point the spotlight at it.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I have only about 15 seconds left, so I'll just thank both of you for coming and for your comments and testimony today.

**The Chair:** We'll go to Ms. Harder, for seven minutes.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Thank you so much for being with us today.

I echo that thankfulness to you, Ms. Meck, for offering an agricultural perspective. I'm from Lethbridge, Alberta, so agriculture is big for us, in both ag production and science and tech. I have a keen desire to understand this industry, as well as a desire to see more women in this field. All of that is to say that I have just a few reflections to start with.

Ms. Byers, one of the things you talked about is the difference in income with regard to women. I certainly would agree with you. Women do not make as much as men do, but I want to clarify something, because we have new data from Stats Canada. What that data shows is that the hourly wage of a full-time woman worker is 88% that of men, rather than 72¢ per dollar, which is what I think you said. StatsCan also shows, when comparing women and men with the same demographic, work, and workplace characteristics, that it's actually 92% of what men earn. We are seeing an increase. We're seeing a good trajectory. I'm not saying that we don't have a way to go—we certainly do—but I think where we're making gains, it's worth acknowledging and celebrating those gains.

Perhaps on that note, too, I'll highlight this. Interestingly enough, in terms of the points in history where we've seen the greatest gains made, when we look back to 1976 and move all the way to 2016, the greatest gains were made between 1988 and 1994, when Brian Mulroney was in place, and then from 2004 to 2008, when Stephen Harper was in place. I think there's something to be said there, and that is, the economic platforms that were put in place during those times were based on balanced budgets and economic responsibility with regard to fiscal management. I do think that plays a role here, because there is a larger picture to be considered. We want to enter into specific industries and see women championed, of course, but I think we also have to care for the entire economy as a whole. There is much to be said for that as well in making sure that we thrive as a country, both locally within our national economy and also on the international stage.

That's my bigger picture for context, but it leads me to this question. Iris, you talked about 4-H. Within my riding, I've seen the impact 4-H has had. I also was raised on a small farm in a rural area and was quite engaged in the different community initiatives, so I've seen the way 4-H impacts a young person's professional development, their confidence, skills, and abilities, and even their decision-making as they go forward into the workforce or to university or college.



I'm wondering if you can comment on the different benefits you've seen from that, specifically in the context of this study, which is women and girls and the decisions they're making with regard to university and college education, I guess, as well as the professional fields that they choose to go into.

• (1015)

**Ms. Iris Meck:** Thanks, Rachael.

I fully agree. I think 4-H is a tremendous training ground and foundation for women in agriculture. Personally, I see them as more dedicated to a goal. I see them as more directed, more confident, and understanding the principles of leadership much more than women who don't go to an organization such as 4-H, which gives them a tremendous step up.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** What are some of those skill sets that you see them being able to develop and bring into the workforce with them, based on a program such as 4-H?

**Ms. Iris Meck:** I'm sorry to say that I wasn't in 4-H, so....

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Okay. Do you have any observations? Do you see women come in who have gone through 4-H and do you see the difference that it's making?

**Ms. Iris Meck:** Absolutely, yes. We work with a lot of university students in my own practice at work and also through the conference. The 4-H students, if they're attending university, will always be the first to apply. They'll always have a presentation that is the most professional and the most put together; it doesn't look like their video was made at two o'clock in the morning with their hair sticking out after an event.

They're more put together. They're more classy. They reach that level of professionalism a lot more than if they had not attended 4-H. I think it's a tremendous opportunity for all women, and I definitely can see the difference from that.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Okay.

The other thing I want to home in on here, Ms. Meck, is that you talked a lot about networks and about support, really, what I maybe would call social support. I'm not sure that's the right term. You can correct me with a different one if you like. It would appear that this is kind of what you're doing. You're offering that soft skill support, maybe, but also that networking opportunity, that encouragement, and that empowerment, that side of things.

That, I believe, is a really important part of women being able to advance in the ways they need to advance to be successful within their careers. Can you comment on how you see the networking and the social support systems, I guess, being put in place? Can you comment on how you see those benefiting women in terms of their advancement?

**Ms. Iris Meck:** I think networking is important only to those who don't have one. I think networking is imperative to every industry and to everybody in an industry. I think women set back a little.... Everybody talks about the glass ceiling, and I think there's a bit of a sticky floor. I think if you can raise yourself above and make the networks in the industry, that will help you.

For networking, it has to be understood that it's not a time when women get together, drink wine, and talk about their bosses. Networking is the time when you can meet somebody who you can take advantage of, in the sense that it will take you to another level, that it will give you an advantage. Then, in time, that advantage might be paid back. It's about building a relationship with somebody who can further your career path. That's what I think networking is. For that, everybody has a responsibility to build a network themselves.

• (1020)

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

**The Chair:** We'll go over to Ms. Malcolmson, for seven minutes.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Thank you for the sticky floor analogy. I think that's helpful. We're hearing a lot of testimony along those lines.

I want to carry on my colleague's lauding of 4-H. I was a pony club kid in Charlottetown, P.E.I., and now, in my own community, both Gabriola Island, where I live, and Cedar, on Vancouver Island, have phenomenal 4-H programs. The participants are 80% young women and girls, and they are articulate, organized, and dedicated, so in terms of that youth potential, the skills they learn, and the dedication they show, I'm discouraged, on the adult end of things, to see women so under-represented in agricultural leadership.

I'm hoping that in a minute or two you can describe your big picture view of where those barriers sit and what we can do on the federal government side to try to remove some of those barriers to clean up that sticky floor.

**Ms. Iris Meck:** That's a huge question.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** That's what we're working on here.

**Ms. Iris Meck:** I think people have to understand what the definition of true leadership is. If leadership is defined by the number of senior positions that are held by women in an organization, that could be one definition. However, I think our overall definition of leadership has to be looked at when you look at individual genders.

Women play a huge role—and they should be recognized as playing the huge role that they do—in agriculture as support: playing a part in a farming operation, working with the organizations that they do on the rural levels, and taking senior, middle, and lower management positions in corporate agribusiness. I think there's a tremendous opportunity for women to increase that and to raise that level, but I think we have to take a look at what the true definition of leadership is.

We have to recognize that women do take maternity leave and that their salaries, jobs, positions, and roles are affected by that. Sometimes I think we have to turn the corner and look at the recognition women get from the male gender, by having males understand the role of women in an industry and what role they can play to assist women in keeping a leadership status.

I think it's all in the definition.

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

Ms. Byers, at our last committee meeting, we had testimony from Professor Beatrix Dart from the University of Toronto, who was talking about quotas being the shock to the system that is really needed and who said that the comply or explain model, which has been used both in corporate Canada and the Government of Canada, just hasn't worked.

We've been discouraged to see the present government carrying on the previous government's tool of that comply or explain model in their Bill C-25. I have a private member's bill, Bill C-220, which instead suggests quotas around crown corporation appointments and what the federal government has direct responsibility for in order to reach gender parity of 50% over a six-year term.

Because you introduced it in your brief to the committee, can you talk a little more about your recommendation to impose quotas and the value of the quota model from the industry you're representing?

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** The challenge with quotas, of course, is that when women are appointed or find their way through, the comment will be made that it's because of the quota. The big challenge then remains having a really carefully thought-out list of criteria that a candidate must meet. We know there are very many highly trained, highly skilled, and absolutely excellent candidates of both genders. Often, though, as we've certainly seen in the research we've done, it is the unconscious bias that will enter into hiring.

If you had blind applications or names that could be either male or female just to get through the initial stage of application, it would be interesting to research the impact that would have. Then, I believe, you could put a quota in place, and women would know that they had been appointed or that they had been the successful candidate because of their skill set, not because of their gender. Perhaps more importantly, the men who might be critical of that would also be aware that the women at the table are there because they're the best candidates.

• (1025)

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** You also talked about pay equity, the wage gap. We've been discouraged that there is a bit of a delay. Have you any advice for the federal government on how fast it should move to legislate?

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** Tomorrow.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Tomorrow.

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** It's something we've been talking about for a very long time. I was just reading my Twitter feed before I came in, and Ontario is talking about raising the minimum wage. I'm not quite sure what the speed will be on that, but when there are issues that have been impacting and affecting us as a society for a significant period of time, I think the time is the present. I'm a little impatient on those types of things.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Yes. It's time.

Thank you. Those are my questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will go to my colleague Ms. Vandenberg, who is sharing her time with Ms. Nassif.

You have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

I thank the witnesses for their presentations, which were quite enlightening.

My first question is for Ms. Byers.

As we all know, we are constantly working on overcoming certain obstacles, including the fact that masculinity is associated with jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and femininity is associated with nursing. We are noting some progress in that respect, but the fact remains that a change in culture must happen.

Do we know of any effective tools that could be used—be they incentives or awareness-raising mechanisms—to encourage women to integrate into disciplines that are already considered as male-specific and are generally male-dominated?

[*English*]

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** Looking at tools to incentivize or to support women going into the field is often in the hands of the employers or of the universities. One of the things FIRST Canada did was to align itself with industry leaders as well as organizations to first build a network so that employers understand the need for females in STEM-related fields to be able to have an opportunity to go into those areas, and then to incentivize the company itself to be able to keep them there, whether it's through training programs or whether it's through opportunities for the women to learn further.

The federal government could support industries that move in that direction so that they could have a support system in place. Those kinds of programs could be paid for or supported or resourced by government as an opportunity for women to learn further in those areas.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Thank you very much. That was a very good answer.

Is education from a very early age the answer? In other words, will that help women—as well as men—take note of a wide range of disciplines and opportunities available in terms of careers?

Will that also help teach them about individuality, gender equality and the ability to decipher all the contradictory messages the media and popular culture bombard us with every day?

[*English*]

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** Children need to have an opportunity in school to learn about how society works. It's critical for girls and boys to understand the need for having equity, for having diversity and inclusion in everything they do.

I know that my educational colleagues would groan a little because it would be another program that would be put in place, but it would be easy, frankly. When you talk about programs in schools, look at pedagogical practices in a classroom to engage both boys and girls; look at all of the statistical information and all the research that's been done about the number of boys versus girls who are called on to answer a question, or even the opportunity for girls to put their hand up, where boys will shoot their hand up. Looking in those different ways, supporting girls in the classroom, and helping the boys understand that the girls' voices are just as important, although they may be quieter, will encourage and support the girls and help build their confidence at the very beginning of their educational career.

One thing that always drove me crazy in the co-ed educational classroom, and I will reference science classrooms in particular, was seeing the boys with their noses in the test tubes and the girls sitting back taking the notes. One thing I really worked to change was so that everybody would have equal time at the test tube, if you want to think of it in that way. It's a simple strategy in the classroom, but it's instructive both to the boys as well as the girls, giving them the opportunity to do that.

Education is a key place to begin.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Would additional training be required?

That is actually not a federal responsibility. That decision comes under provincial jurisdiction.

That said, do you feel that additional training would be necessary?

[*English*]

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** I believe that what we're doing at FIRST Robotics Canada is critical. That is helping girls to understand that they are confident, to build their confidence—they have so much to offer—and that, frankly, the gender biases they experience, whether in school or in the workforce, need to stop. If they have the skills and the resilience to meet those challenges head-on, they will certainly be able to contribute in a better and more fulsome way to what we can do in society in Canada.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Thank you, Ms. Byers.

I have one minute to ask Ms. Meck a question.

[*Translation*]

In agriculture, women remain underrepresented in management positions, including as cooperative leaders, a role you have played, Ms. Meck. We know that there are barriers. Statistics show that there are more women than men with university degrees.

Ms. Meck, could you tell us what obstacles prevent women from accessing management positions in agriculture?

[*English*]

**Ms. Iris Meck:** I think that is changing, those numbers are changing. The percentage of women who are becoming recognized in the agricultural field, in associations and organizations, is changing. I can't say what the number is in percentages, but I think it is changing from the days when I started in the industry in 1978,

when there were token women brought into organizations to meet the balance of equity in the workforce.

I'm totally against that. I think it is an area where women have to strive to achieve, and men have to recognize that the position is available to either gender. Through the organization of conferences like this, we do see recognition of women at the podium, women at the management level. I think that the more you see it, the more it will be recognized and appreciated.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Thank you very much.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We'll go to Ms. Vecchio, for five minutes.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Iris, I think you're reading my mind. You talked about women in those leadership roles. We know that Cargill has female leadership. Farm Credit Canada has female leadership. I'm thinking of the Walker farms in my area. Shelley Doan does all the exporting of her Holstein cows.

I'm from 4-H, so the fact that I'm classy is funny. But it's one of those things. When we talk about those programs, I remember being in 4-H in the early eighties, and there was home economics for most of the girls. There was the beef. I actually showed a Limousin, so I was on the beef side. It was really funny, because there was that disparity. Now when I go to the 4-H shows, I find that there are a lot more women.

We talked a lot about things when it comes to whether it's going to be government or peer to peer. Having quotas is another question that I have for you too.

I'm going to start off with Iris, because I have another question for Dorothy.

Were quotas ever used in the implementation of some of these women in the higher-ranking roles in national organizations such as Cargill and Farm Credit Canada? Were those quotas, or was the selection of the person merit-based?

• (1035)

**Ms. Iris Meck:** Having been a token woman in 1978, I think it was always that if you could accomplish and were qualified for the position, you got it. I would like to hope that today there is the same feeling particularly in the agricultural sector. Having women's organizations in those large corporations is only making that a more viable option.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Iris, it's great that you say that. I always looked at my dad, and it didn't matter whether you were a boy or a girl, you could work on the farm. Sunday afternoon was my day to pick up the turkey eggs, wash the turkey eggs, and get them prepared to go off to P and H on Monday morning. I totally understand that. A hand is a hand, and it didn't matter. That was our role.

Dorothy, you mentioned the blind copy and potentially using that when someone is looking at resumés. It's funny that you said that, because in St. Thomas, there's a gentleman by the name of Bob Pate. His name is really Bahvan Patel, but when he came to Canada, in order to get hired, he thought it was necessary to change his name. When he went back just a few months ago, I was so proud of him, because I think one's name doesn't matter, and that's really important and critical.

What can we do? I think there is that unconscious bias. I think we do know that. Is there a process that we can put through in the private sector and other sectors so that it's not...? I'll be honest. Although I was in supply management, I'm not a quota girl. When we're looking at that, I would really like it to be merit-based. Whether it's for new immigrants or for women, what would you recommend when people are choosing to somebody to be employed?

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** That's an excellent question. I was a quota girl in education, a little bit later than 1978, and in leadership it was the same kind of situation. I was a woman. My name was Dorothy, and some people said afterwards, "Well, you got it because they're looking for women in leadership." That's a tough one.

When you look at competencies—and that's what I went back to, that I was the best candidate—I was the most competent candidate for this particular role. I had the vision that was going to be shared by the rest of the organization, and this was in public education. When you look at how you deal with that, you create a list of criteria and you make sure that those criteria are upheld by hiring committees so that it doesn't matter who you are. Equity, diversity, and inclusion impact everyone, male, female, culturally and in everything. It's critical to have EDI, for all of us in Canada, to make a stronger country.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** That's awesome. Thank you.

I know Rachael had one more question.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** You're going to let me?

**The Chair:** You have 40 seconds.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Ms. Meck, the last question I was going to ask you, based on my other series of questions, was this. Would you agree that peer-to-peer support is actually more important than government programs are?

**Ms. Iris Meck:** I think they go hand in hand. Peer support is up to the individual, but the governments, federal and provincial, can help by instituting funding for women to attend conferences, and having training programs and educational programs available to them.

We have to remember that on the rural side there's a lot of isolation. Where does a woman go to get assistance in building a business, and understanding finances for business? It's not like there's a Scotiabank or RBC just around the corner. There's distance involved.

I think the federal and provincial governments can help by making unrestricted programs to allow for assistance in funding, so that women have the opportunity to take some training.

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

**The Chair:** The last five minutes go to Ms. Damoff.

• (1040)

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I'm sharing my time with Mr. Fraser.

Do you want to start?

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** No, go ahead.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Okay.

To go back to me again, I would like to say that while my colleague may look fondly back on the previous governments, I for one don't want to go back to a time when I had to have a male colleague ask the head office for permission for me to attend a meeting with him, or go back to 1993, when women with disabilities couldn't vote. I think it's important for all of us to recognize where we are but to be looking forward in trying to make the changes we can make going forward.

Dorothy, you brought up the blind applications, but our government actually is doing that as a pilot to see if and how that changes this. We can talk about merit-based all we want, but as I've heard quite often from colleagues in business, if it came down to a man or a woman, they would hire the man, because a young woman is going to have children. There's a natural bias against hiring women.

One of the things I've heard a lot is that young girls are taught not to take risks. You mentioned the science class, where the boys have their faces in the test tubes and the girls are taking notes. I wonder how important you see risk-taking at a young age so that later on in life, whether in business or politics or science or engineering, a woman will take that leap of faith to apply for that job, or in agriculture a woman will say "yes" and get out there and do it.

How important is it that young girls are not protected, are not taught to not take those risks or leaps of faith? I'd like both of you to answer that. Is there anything we can do to help instill that in young women?

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** I took a leap of faith starting FIRST Robotics in an all-girls school. I call them my "Thelma and Louise" moments.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Dorothy Byers:** But we land, you know. We're not quite sure where we're going to land, or how we're going to do it, but I believe that as women, as role models, we help young girls understand that risk-taking is good. Girls in particular, little ones, have such curiosity about the world. They are fearless. We need to sustain that desire to test and to push and to challenge, to not be afraid of failure, and to understand that failure is the biggest teacher and the greatest teacher. It gives you an opportunity to understand how you could change things to make them better.

That flies in the face of perfectionism in girls. As a society, we need to do everything we possibly can to help girls, at the youngest ages and all the way through, appreciate that they don't have to be perfect. They have to be brave. They have to be courageous. They have to know how to get around the glass obstacle course that they will face. I love the sticky floor, but the glass obstacle course also means that they will hit things that they don't know how to get over and around, or even see, but they will, because they have the resilience and they have the skills and they're not afraid of failing. They'll put their names forward.

So Pam, I believe the more we can do for young women to give them opportunities the better, where they are not afraid to fail, where they know there's a network, where they know there are supports for them, and where they know they're empowered and men are engaged to be able to support them as they try their wings.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Iris, did you want to answer that?

**Ms. Iris Meck:** Yes. First off, I think we have to recognize that women who grew up on the farm recognize risks right from the start. That's the way the farming operation is. I think when women go to things like 4-H and organizations that bring all the opportunities to them, they learn risk management. If you don't grow up on a farm and understand the risks that happen every day in the farming operation, there's a great opportunity to learn from peers and to hear real-life stories of women who have been challenged through their careers. That's what we try to do at Advancing Women.

I think the more women can network, the more women can experience relationships with other women who have succeeded. Learning from real-life stories is of the utmost importance. Again, any way to get women off the farm, off the chair at the office, and pooled up into a formalized group is nothing but beneficial.

**The Chair:** That's your time, Ms. Damoff.

To the witnesses, thank you for the excellent input you've given us to help with our study. It's wonderful.

I also want to tell the committee that one of the topics that will be important for us to follow with interest is the investigation into the murdered and missing aboriginal women that begins today.

I think the last word on that goes to Ms. Malcolmson.

● (1045)

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Because this is the first day of the inquiry and because this committee has heard from witnesses about the importance of it, I just want to put on the record, on behalf of all our committee members, our support for the families, and our best wishes for the inquiry and its commissioners in doing the important work that the country needs.

**The Chair:** Well said.

The meeting is adjourned.

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