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## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Tuesday, November 16, 2004

•(1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):**  
Good morning, everybody. I wonder if we can begin, please.

We're going to begin this morning's meeting with the presentation by the Status of Women Canada, and I'm pleased to welcome Florence Ievers, Jackie Claxton, and Sheila Regehr, who are here to give us an overview of the status of women and to answer our questions as best they can and as best as we can put them forward.

I'll ask you to begin. I don't know who is taking the lead.

Florence.

**Ms. Florence Ievers (Coordinator, Status of Women Canada):**  
Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce my two colleagues who are sitting at the table with me. Jackie Claxton is director general of the women's program and regional operations, and Sheila Regehr is acting director, policy and external relations.

[Translation]

I am delighted to be here with you today and I appreciate the opportunity to brief your committee on the work we do at Status of Women Canada.

We view the creation of this committee as very good news and an indication that Parliament recognizes the importance of advancing gender equality.

[English]

As I just mentioned, it is a very real pleasure for me and for Status of Women to be here today. We appreciate your invitation and we're pleased to have an opportunity to talk to you about the work we do at Status of Women Canada. We view the creation of your committee as a very important step and good news for the women of Canada, and an indication that Parliament recognizes the importance of advancing gender equality.

I would first like to start to give you a little background on where the department began, and that will give you a better understanding of the context in which we work today.

In 1970 the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was established to inquire into and report on the status of women in Canada, to ensure, for women, equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society. The commission submitted its final report in 1970. It was a blueprint for policy and legislation to ensure equality for Canadian women.

In response to some of the recommendations of the commission, the Government of Canada appointed a first minister responsible for the status of women in 1971. That same year, the Office of the Coordinator, Status of Women was established. Five years later, in 1976, Status of Women Canada was created as a free-standing agency of government, with a mandate—and it's still the same mandate we have today—to coordinate policy with respect to the status of women and to administer related programs.

The women's program that Jackie leads was created in 1973 within the then Department of Secretary of State to provide financial and technical support for the activities of women's groups working to achieve economic and social equality for women. That same year, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women was also established to operate at arm's length from government.

In 1995 the operations of the women's program were transferred to Status of Women Canada and the advisory council was closed, with some of its functions also transferred to Status of Women Canada to strengthen the federal government's capacity to address issues of concern to women.

Today, gender equality in Canada is guaranteed under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as the Canadian Human Rights Act, so we have in Canada the legal foundation. In addition to these legal instruments that are Canadian, the government is also guided by the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, or CEDAW, as it's more commonly known. I would like to reinforce at this point that when Canada ratifies human rights treaties such as CEDAW, all jurisdictions—federal, provincial, and territorial—agree to comply. So it's not just the business of the federal government, but it's the business of the federation as a whole.

In 1995 the platform for action was adopted at the United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing. The platform for action highlighted the need to integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programs, and projects, and to ensure that before policy decisions were taken, an analysis of their impact on both women and men was carried out. For the first time the world recognized that gender equality was everybody's business and responsibility, and that approach is what we call mainstreaming.

Recognizing that Status of Women Canada can't do it all and we can't do it all alone, we have established three priorities that guide our work in keeping with the direction outlined in the platform for action and the priorities of the government as outlined in speeches from the throne. Those three priorities are: improving women's economic autonomy, eliminating violence against women, and advancing women's human rights.

We work to foster women's access to economic resources such as housing and business financing, and to ensure their paid and unpaid contributions to the economy are recognized and rewarded through employment opportunities, fair wages and taxes, child and elder care, and other forms of social security.

• (1110)

Experience tells us that violence is both a cause and a consequence of women's inequality. It operates on a continuum that includes family and other personal relationship violence, workplace harassment, economic abuse, public violence that is often based on gender and other factors, and violence manifested in organized crime through trafficking in persons.

In Canada, the basic legal framework for women's rights exist. For example, women have the right to education, health care, employment, and labour standards on the same basis as men. The reality is that outcomes for women are not equal to men's. Furthermore, there are differences among women related to race and other forms of discrimination.

Our work at Status of Women concerns the institutions, processes, tools, and accountability necessary to women in exercising their rights. We work with our stakeholders to share information and experience, identifying opportunities for input into the federal policy-making process, serving as a knowledge broker on gender equality. We also serve as a centre of expertise, proactively gathering leading-edge knowledge on specific issues, particularly emerging issues. We also serve as a gateway or portal for information on gender equality within the federal government, as well as for communities across the country.

I want to emphasize here that Status of Women cannot and does not work in isolation. As I've said before, gender equality is everybody's business. Within the Government of Canada, that means working with stakeholders from within and outside government, NGOs, and the private sector to contribute to achieving women's equality.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Status of Women Canada reports to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. I am the Coordinator, or General Manager, of Status of Women Canada.

Status of Women Canada has four key functions. The Policy and External Relations Directorate monitors policy making in other federal department with a view to ensuring that timely consideration is given to gender equality issues. The Directorate also works with other levels of government and with multilateral international organizations to find solutions to problems of concern to women in Canada, as well as to share knowledge and exemplary practices.

The Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate provides financial assistance as well as technical and professional support to women's groups and to other voluntary organizations across Canada dedicated to achieving gender equality. The Research — Policy Research Fund Directorate provides policy makers with leading-edge knowledge that is important for the development of innovative policies. The Gender-Based Analysis Directorate assists other federal departments and agencies to heighten the awareness of policy makers of gender-based issues and to integrate these considerations into their work.

[*English*]

In 1995, as a lead-up to the World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Government of Canada created the federal plan for gender equality, reflecting the federal government's commitment to gender equality. The plan was a collaborative initiative of 24 departments and agencies.

Five years later, nations from around the world gathered at the United Nations in New York to assess our collective progress at implementing the platform for action. At that time, Canada developed a strategic approach, known as the government's agenda for gender equality, that would see us through the next five years and beyond. This strategic approach is led by Status of Women Canada, in collaboration with a number of other federal departments. As I said, we cannot work alone.

The strategy has five components. The first is accelerating the practice of gender-based analysis in federal departments to help government better respond to the realities and needs of women and their families by reflecting these realities in government policy and program design. The second is enhancing the voluntary sector capacity so that NGOs play an active role in developing workable solutions that have a direct impact on women's lives as part of the policy-making process. The third is engaging Canadians to increase government awareness about issues affecting women's lives. The fourth is meeting Canada's international commitments, increasing our visibility and responsibility toward gender equality, both globally and domestically. Fifth, engendering current and new policy and program initiatives, is a responsibility that we share with other departments, allowing us to work effectively and collaboratively with departments on initiatives related to violence against women, for example, through the family violence initiative, increasing women's economic autonomy, for example, through parental benefits, and advancing women's human rights through the work we did, for example, on the optional protocol to CIDA.

The role of national machinery like Status of Women Canada almost universally is to act as a catalyst to raise awareness and be prepared for opportunities. Status of Women Canada is no different. We have anecdotal information that indicates our work is making a difference, but as they say, the proof is in the pudding.

As a result, we've developed statistical information that provides the real evidence. We've encouraged the development, dissemination, and use of gender statistics and indicators that can support gender-based analysis, as well as policy planning and reporting. For example, our work with the provinces and territories to develop violence statistics, economic gender equality indicators, and unpaid work statistics that inform decisions around care-giving policies and programs all show change over time. That change shows both good results as well as persistent gaps where more work is needed.

For other successes I could point to parental benefits, which is a good example of the value-added that Status of Women Canada brings. For a number of years the department worked to measure unpaid work related to caring for children and others to provide hard evidence of the size and importance of this work. In fact, our data showed that women do approximately two-thirds of the unpaid work, which is by some estimations worth about one-third of the GDP.

With that data in hand, we looked for appropriate ways to recognize and reward this essential contribution to Canada's economy and society through various means, such as supporting leading-edge research, both inside and outside government, undertaking gender-based analysis, making proposals to departments, consulting with Canadians, and presenting to standing committees.

We were able to influence a range of related policies, from the tax treatment of child support, to parental benefits, to a caregiver tax credit, and compassionate care measures. All have opened up more options for women to balance work and family, to put more money in their pockets, and, in the case of parental benefits, have enabled men, fathers, to more easily take up child care responsibilities in the critical first year.

• (1120)

We continue to support women's organizations and further our own analysis to address gaps and challenges that still exist for women. One key NGO project on parental benefits is in the Atlantic area. It's looking at how to improve access for new mothers who are not currently eligible through EI.

Status of Women Canada has direct control only on its funding programs and its projects to build capacity on gender-based analysis. However, specific results can only be achieved when other departments and institutions work together with us.

[*Translation*]

We need to put in place mechanisms that will promote sharing of responsibilities within the federal public service when it comes to gender equality.

Last spring, Status of Women Canada took a first step by launching a series of talks on accountability mechanisms and gender equality.

[*English*]

Accountability is perhaps our biggest challenge, and I would really encourage the committee to explore it in your deliberations.

We have made some important gains in our work toward gender equality. We have acknowledged the value of diversity among

women, as well as the disadvantage that can result when discrimination based on sex and gender intercepts with other factors such as race, ethnicity, family status, sexual orientation, disability, age, and aboriginal heritage.

[*Translation*]

Government action has already had a positive outcome. Witness, for example, the improvements to the child tax benefit system and to child care benefits, to the extension of parental leave and to the introduction of new compassionate leave provisions. This type of leave is granted to persons who must take time off from work to care for a seriously ill or dying parent. Most of the time, this burden falls on the shoulders of women.

Another new measure in place is the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act pursuant to which the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is required to report every year to Parliament on this legislation's impact on men and women. We believe this model should be applied to other acts as well.

The data we have on the status of women and men shows that overall, we are making progress, but that the pace of that progress is slow. In spite of noteworthy advances over the last 30 years, there is still much to be done before women achieve genuine equality with men.

[*English*]

Gender equality is a multifaceted reality, ever-changing and ever-evolving. We have to be resourceful indeed if we are to keep up with the pace of change and be truly effective. We must never take gender equality for granted. Other major issues that are also horizontal in nature, such as climate change and the children's agenda, are much more visible to the public, are better resourced, and have mechanisms to promote shared accountability across departments involved.

We cannot achieve success without the mobilized support of parliamentarians along the path to change. Your energy and commitment are integral to the growth of our country. As a nation, we'll grow best only when we strive for the inclusion and participation of the full diversity of women and men alike, and where every member of society is enabled to participate fully.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

• (1125)

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

**Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.):** Do we have your notes, or can we have your notes?

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** Unfortunately, we don't have them available today, but we'll make sure that every member receives them.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** If you send them to the clerk, we'll all receive a copy.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you for a very fulsome presentation.

We'll begin with the Conservative Party and Ms. Grewal.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you so much, Madam Ievers, for giving us the briefing.

The supplementary estimates were tabled on November 4, 2004, for Status of Women Canada. What is the operating budget carry-forward for the item of \$216,000? Is the spending authority related to the government-wide relocation initiative related to the program expenditure review? If so, does the department expect that this amount will also be taken from its budget and looked at for next year?

**Hon. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.):** Just on a point of order, we're not specifically considering the estimates, but Ms. Grewal is using a question based on the estimates. I'm not saying that's a problem, but we didn't come just to do the estimates.

**The Chair:** It's not just the estimates; it's the operation of the whole department.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** My question is, the supplementary estimates were tabled on November 4, 2004, for Status of Women Canada. What is the operating budget item carried forward of \$216,000? Is the spending authority related to the government-wide reallocation initiative related to the program expenditure review? If so, does the department expect that this amount will also be taken from its budget and looked at for next year?

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** On the cuts that were required by the government last year, the \$1 billion cuts, because we are part of the Heritage portfolio our department was asked to provide a contribution of \$200,000. That's what you find in the supplementary estimates. That amount of \$200,000 is always taken out of our budget. It was taken from our budget last year and it will be taken out for the current year and years beyond.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC):** I was thinking specifically about the plans and priorities as well, and I wanted to know how the spending was determined. You talked about the gender analysis—you have grants—and the programs you're implementing. I'm kind of interested in that area, because I see your department has two goals. One is the policy end of it and the other is the grants and supporting different initiatives. I want to get a grasp of that, because I think the policy end of it is probably where your department should go. I think you should be working more in policy and how it's affecting other...or legislation that's affecting the impact on that.

I want to understand that. Do you have two different roles? Are you competing for the same money? You're under the umbrella of Heritage. Should you be under Heritage, or should you be under a department that oversees all departments in some capacity, which you really aren't, I think?

Am I reading this right, or do you see where I'm going? I'm just thinking of how we're lacking in policy analysis or gender analysis in different parts of legislation—for instance, immigration. I could see you playing a hand there. I don't know if you do our aboriginal file. I think it's very important that you are there as well. But are you there, or is it just that you are managing a department and grants?

• (1130)

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** The allocation of grants and contributions by the women's program in regional operations is very complemen-

tary to the work we do in Status of Women. So I wouldn't want to separate the two functions, if you will.

Obviously, you're right, the policy work we do is essential in bringing gender to the forefront and working with departments. We feel that the grants and contributions we receive are a very important complement to the work we do. They provide us with a connection to the grassroots. They allow us to be better informed on the priorities and concerns of women across the country.

As you know, on top of the grant budget of \$10,750,000 for 2004-05, we also have 15 points of service across the country, where we interface with the women's community, women's groups, and other groups that are interested in promoting gender equality. It helps to better inform us in making the decisions on where we focus our energy on the policy side.

The grants budget is 59% of our budget. The rest of our budget goes to communications and consultation—gender-based analysis. That is a key to developing better policy within government in external relations and research, in large part. That's how I described the role of those directorates in my presentation.

You're right that where Status of Women Canada fits in the scheme of things in the organization of government is at times puzzling, and it has changed over time. At the present time, we find ourselves with a full minister, a minister responsible for the status of women in the Heritage portfolio. Earlier we've had ministers of state and secretaries of state. At other times in our existence we've had ministers who were responsible for other departments, for example, Employment and Immigration, Defence at one point, and others. So we've been here, there, and everywhere.

I think the key issue you raise is that our mandate is not linked to one department or one area of endeavour of the government. Because of the situation of women in Canada and how we strive towards equality, we need to be able to interact, interface, and input into economic issues, social issues, justice issues, human rights issues—all of those issues. The way we're organized at Status of Women Canada right now, we have a number of mechanisms that allow us to interface with other entities of the government.

Our stakeholders have asked whether Status of Women Canada belongs better in one portfolio or another. I would hope that perhaps in the work of your committee you might be able to make some recommendations on the best way of ensuring that gender equality remains high on the government's agenda, and with the appropriate accountability mechanisms is able to interface appropriately with all facets of the government's endeavours.

**The Chair:** The next round is to the Bloc, Madame Brunelle.

[Translation]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Good day to all of you. It is a pleasure for us to welcome you to the committee today.

I was especially interested in hearing about the Women's Program, perhaps because I met last week, while the House was in recess, with a number of women's groups in my riding. We've heard that a results-based accountability framework has recently been created for this Program. What exactly is meant by the word "recently"? What impact is this having on results? Have the number of funding applications declined?

Furthermore, I'm wondering how results are assessed in the case of the Women's Program? In many cases, it comes down to a question of attitude and shift in mindset. How are you planning to evaluate the results of the Program?

• (1135)

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** As you know, all governments are concerned about the approach taken and about how results are measured. All departments are giving this matter careful consideration. As for the Women's Program per se and the particular point you raised, I'll let Jackie Claxton, the Program's Director General, tell you about the work we're doing.

[English]

**Ms. Jackie Claxton (Director General, Women's Programs and Regional Operations, Status of Women Canada):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The framework was done in 1998-99, I think. I can double-check my dates. It was actually done in connection with the receipt of additional dollars to the grants and contributions program through the agenda for gender equality. As Madam Ievers has mentioned, all funding programs now have to have frameworks clearly indicating the results and things we call logic models. We can certainly make a copy of that available to you.

The work we do, as you mentioned when you talked about the question of evaluating results, is very challenging because it is work that is often done over a long time horizon. What we do when we work with the groups, when we provide support, is we ask the groups when they submit a proposal to us to give us an indication of the kinds of results they expect and then to work on a draft framework of an evaluation plan and indicators.

We understand very clearly that these are forecasted results. Given the kind of work that the groups do and that we do, there are many factors impacting on what happens. So we understand the need to be flexible in terms of what we are actually able to obtain by way of evaluation information. On the other hand, that information is essential because that is what allows us, at the end of the day, to determine the impact of the work we are supporting as well as to determine the impact of the work the groups are carrying out.

To your question about whether the arrival or the requirement to provide information on results has resulted in a reduction in the demand, I would say no. I haven't seen any reduction in the number of requests we have. We know it poses challenges for the groups, and that is why, as part of the technical assistance we provide.... We realize this is a challenge not only for the groups but for the department as a whole, to work toward a clear articulation of results and outcomes, so we do attempt to provide assistance, and in some instances we will include resources within the funding provided to the groups in order for them to do work on building capacity in those areas as well as planning.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Any further questions from the Bloc? You have another few minutes left. No?

We'll move to Ms. Kadis.

**Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.):** I'm interested to know—it's a little more of a global question, more of an overview—how well we're doing. I know you can't give a specific breakdown today in the time allotted. I'm interested to know where you feel we have not been as successful to date and where you feel the roadblocks that have impeded that progress lie. I know you've referenced financial capacity, but I'd like to know if you can expand on that—why we haven't achieved the goals we've set out to date.

• (1140)

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** We have made significant progress since 1970, when the royal commission made its report and brought those issues to the forefront of the policy agenda. I think if you look at it from our perspective, a lot of the easier things and the more obvious things have been done. What remains now are the most difficult things.

If you look at how Canada is doing and how we were assessed, for example, when we presented to the committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the committee identified that in Canada, for the kind of country we are, poverty rates among women were very high still. Even though there was marked progress—we have improved in many areas—some groups of women are still extremely poor, and in that I would include visible minority women, immigrant women, and particularly aboriginal women.

The issue of violence is still very prevalent in our society. We have, at all levels of government, tried to come up with solutions to improve, and improvements have been made, but violence remains a very big deterrent to women's equality. Yet again, aboriginal women are most vulnerable to that violence.

Those are more process and government public servant types of questions, but the question of accountability has been raised in a number of fora. It was raised in the CIDA committee as being an area where governments as a whole need to look more carefully, not only at what they've done, but at how we can achieve results. For many years, governments, not only in Canada but everywhere, were measuring our results by the activities we were achieving or doing. Now we need to look more carefully at what the difference our policies, our programs, our legislation are making on the real lives of women. So questions of accountability are also extremely important.

We work on issues. I mentioned obliquely trafficking. This is an issue that was not on the government's agenda 10 or 15 years ago, but it is certainly something that is a factor internationally and it is something that happens within Canada. In trafficking, the work of Status of Women has been, in my view, significant. We've contributed and we've worked very hard with a number of partners within the federal government to ensure that in the new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act there's a trafficking offence that is included. The Department of Justice continues to look at those issues to see if there are not further actions the government can take.

We're looking at issues of trade, where Canada is very much involved in developing new trade relations with a number of countries, even just in this hemisphere. We're doing research and we're looking at how those issues will impact on women, both positively and not so positively.

**The Chair:** Is there anything further?

Ms. Torsney indicated, but she's disappeared, so let's go back to the other side.

Ms. Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

I have a couple of questions, but first of all I'd like to thank you for your presentation today.

Ms. Ievers, you talked about acknowledging that we have a long way to go around women and poverty. Last week when we had the Treasury Board here—and I was looking for the exact language around it—one of the things that came up was that gender-based analysis and status of women are not part of the horizontal line that currently departments report on. I'm specifically thinking about the employment insurance legislation, which has disproportionately impacted on women. There are fewer women who are eligible for EI. So that's an example of a policy decision that was made without what appears to be a sufficient gender-based analysis on that initiative.

I wonder if you could comment on the fact that the status of women and gender-based analysis is not a horizontal line, and are there some suggestions you can perhaps make for the committee to encourage that to happen in order to make some meaningful changes around these policies that are developed?

• (1145)

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** Madam Chair, the member raises a very excellent point. Gender-based analysis, I think, is at the heart of how we can ensure that both women and men are considered and how we can devise and find outcomes that will be equal for both women and men in the policies, programs, and legislation the government adopts.

Gender-based analysis is a policy that the government adopted in 1995 with the federal plan for gender equality, which I mentioned in my presentation. A few years after the existence of that plan, maybe two or three years out, it was felt that although gender-based analysis was the overarching objective of that plan, the practice of gender-based analysis was really hit and miss in many departments. Some departments had created gender focal points and frameworks to do gender-based analysis, but it was felt that Status of Women could play a role in facilitating capacity-building of gender-based analysis throughout government. That's why, when the government adopted its strategic approach—what we call the agenda for gender equality—in the year 2000...we have the application and the acceleration of the application of gender-based analysis as a key factor in that new strategy.

Since then, we have made some significant inroads. But I must say again that gender-based analysis is not yet the business of departments on a day-to-day basis. We have developed some

training tools and have done a number of activities that will help departments build their capacity to do gender-based analysis, but at this point in time it's not a reality in day-to-day life.

Is it aligned? The Treasury Board is right that it is not yet aligned. Perhaps the deliberations of your committee could lead to government departments looking at the application of gender-based analysis in a more systematic fashion.

An example I mentioned earlier is the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. In the department, a number of factors came into play: there was political will; the department gave itself the tools to be able to do gender-based analysis; they developed a framework and applied that concept throughout their policy and program-making. The result is what we see in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, where the department must report to Parliament on the application of gender-based analysis and how their policies are impacting on women and men on a yearly basis. We see this as a first step. We see it as a model that, hopefully, other departments will adopt in the legislation they propose. Perhaps your committee could play a significant role in encouraging departments to go that route, because eventually....

We found that trying to blanket government and trying to impose a concept that was misunderstood, where the tools hadn't been developed and where there was resistance, was not the way to go. That's why we decided to take a more targeted approach, even after the year 2000, in the agenda for gender equality, where we did create a new directorate within Status of Women, a gender-based analysis directorate. But we can just take it so far.

I mentioned earlier the importance of accountability mechanisms within the government, so that departments are told not only to apply those concepts but also that they need to report on them, so that we see the results that application of these concepts can have.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Thank you for that.

I'm always a believer in educate rather than regulate. However, at some point, when there isn't sufficient movement, I think we need to get into the regulation. It may be that at some point we want to recommend more accountability from government departments on how they report out.

I wonder if you could comment on project-based funding versus core funding. A number of women's groups are feeling very pressured by the move to project-based funding, which does not recognize the fact that unless organizations have stable funding for core activities, it's very difficult for them to respond to project-based funding. We're seeing the decimation of any number of women's organization—and other not-for-profits and volunteer organizations as well; it's not just impacting on women's organizations. It's diminishing our capacity to respond to local community needs, specifically, for example, rural communities, who certainly fall into that category of less than 50,000, or smaller communities where there are 5,000 residents, for example. Unless they have core funding, they are challenged very much in delivering services. The reality in rural communities is that women don't have access to child care; they don't have access to transportation; and they don't have access to women's services, because they have to travel great distances to larger centres.

So that project- versus core-based funding is really hurting some of the smaller organizations, and I wonder if you could comment on that.

• (1150)

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** I thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Again, I would like Jackie Claxton, who is responsible for the program, to talk about the issue of core funding versus project or initiative funding.

**Ms. Jackie Claxton:** It is a very important question. Because of my responsibility for regional operations as well as the program, I had the opportunity to travel across the country. We did make changes to the funding mechanisms back in 1998.

Perhaps I should preface my comments by indicating that the women's program, I believe, or we believe, plays a unique role in that funding is available through the program for a cross-section of issues. We support strategies in different areas—economic, social justice, violence—and we are supporting strategies linked to ensuring that women participate in the public policy processes, institutional change, public education, as well as capacity-building. So while there are other places that provide funding to groups, I think we can safely say that we're one of the few that provides support to the kind of cross-section of things we do.

With respect to core versus project funding, we did provide core funding. The core funding was limited to, I would say, approximately a little more than 100 groups on an annual basis, which meant that they were...“guaranteed” is perhaps too strong a word; there was funding for the overall operations of the group through the fiscal year.

When we looked at the renewal of the program, and we looked at the situation, I think the main factors we were looking at were questions related to equity and also flexibility. We had two categories of groups with these two categories of funding. We felt that the purpose of the program was to provide support to advance issues. Rather than having two separate types of funding, we're now providing funding to what we call “initiatives”. These are strategies designed to achieve results that meet the objectives of the program. All the costs that groups have are eligible to be covered as long as they are attached to that strategy. That includes rent, that includes salaries, that includes travel. With the program's budget, we do not provide funding for services.

You raise a very important question about access by women to services in rural areas. Just to give one example, in British Columbia we have over the years provided funding to women's centres, including in the north and in rural areas. We don't fund the services. We fund them for their public education or policy work. Because of where they're situated, they get to see the impact of policies and other things on women on a day-to-day basis, so they are in a good position to be able to pull that information and to take the results of that information to policy-makers.

When you look at the resources, the strategies, and the initiatives we are funding across the country, I think you would find a cross-section of support going through the program into large communities, small communities, up in the north, to a cross-section of women. In fact, my regional director in British Columbia brought to

my attention an initiative that we funded in Cowichan Valley, a little \$15,000 initiative that is allowing women in that community who are living in poverty to document their situation and then use that information as a jumping-off point to interface with policy-makers and others in order to make a difference.

• (1155)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Guergis.

**Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Thank you.

The work of the status of women committee is focused on improving women's economic autonomy and well-being, eliminating violence against women and children, and advancing women's human rights. Just to give you a bit of my background on my previous experience, prior to becoming an MP, I did many years volunteering at a rape crisis centre. I also organized and participated in a week-long walk to raise awareness of violence against women and children.

I recall the statistic back then that one out of three women would be affected by violence at some point in their lives. I'm wondering if that has changed in the past decade. Do you have any statistical information on that? I'm also wondering what you would consider to be the outstanding challenges specific to that area.

As well, on shelters, I would like to better understand the funding and how it's provided to shelters.

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Since statistics change over time and are kind of a moving feast, I'd like Sheila Regehr to address this issue. Then perhaps Jackie Claxton could talk about funding for shelters; she alluded to that a little earlier.

**Mrs. Sheila Regehr (Director General, Policy and External Affairs Directorate, Status of Women Canada):** Thank you very much.

I think maybe one of the things we can provide to members that might be interesting is the report that Florence mentioned earlier, the result of work done by federal, provincial, and territorial ministers, looking at violence against women. There are a number of indicators, and through those, through our work with Statistics Canada, we're getting a much more nuanced understanding of what's happening on violence. As well, it's a little bit long in terms of your current timeframe, but we're working with Statistics Canada and other departments on updating this big publication on women and men in Canada that will provide even more detailed information.

So I don't think we have a specific response to that particular data question, but certainly we can get information to committee members.

**The Chair:** Ms. Claxton.

**Ms. Jackie Claxton:** As I mentioned previously, we do not provide funding for direct services. With our limited budget of \$10 million annually, it's just not possible for us to do that. We do, however, provide support, and I can think of three examples off the top of my head. We often will provide support to the umbrella groups of the shelters—for example, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses.

[Translation]

In Quebec, we operate a number of shelters.

[English]

In Alberta there's an association of shelters.

For all three of them, typically we would be supporting them to do work related to gathering data on the impacts of policies, to be tracking the level and the nature of violence, and to be using that information in order to increase the ability of the shelters to provide their services and/or to intervene at the policy level.

I can think of another initiative at the national level. The YWCA actually across the country provides significant shelter services in communities. We are providing support to them to look at the question of how they can analyze their services in order to improve them, but also to look at what else is needed from a prevention point of view.

Those are just a few examples. I'm happy to give you more details, if you'd like.

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** I might just add that in 2003 the ministers responsible for the status of women at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels decided to take a closer look at the aboriginal population because of the particular situation of aboriginal women. The work that's been done so far points to the fact that provinces and ministers responsible for the status of women will be looking much more closely at issues like housing and shelter as it relates to aboriginal women. So we might see some improvements on that front in the near future.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Ms. Torsney.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** Thank you.

There are a couple of areas I want to ask you about, and one sort of practical thing.

One of the concerns we have is the state of senior women. Obviously, senior women have historically been much poorer and have had less ties to the paid labour force. Programs like GIS have made a huge difference. However, a lot of issues remain. Most of us see them every day in our constituency offices. They are often overhoused, or living in expensive housing, and we're trying to deal with that component in the housing portfolio.

I was surprised—well, surprised and not surprised—when a group working on social housing in my riding told me about this group of 45- to 65-year-old women who don't qualify for a lot of the seniors housing yet. It's almost like there's going to be another rush of poor women who often have had illness issues or marital breakdowns or disabilities. So they're trying to deal with those housing needs as well.

When it comes to suggesting to the departments to design programs, you obviously have all these research papers, and you were talking about how you have people doing very important things to identify opportunities. But how would it actually work? If, say, the minister of housing is looking at the problem and listening to community groups, where would your group come in? How do you add value to the policy discussions taking place on housing, for instance?

Then I'll ask you another question about core funding.

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** You raise a very excellent point, and it is really fundamental to how we do our work at Status of Women Canada.

On the issue of housing, if the minister responsible for housing were to bring a new program or wanted to develop a policy regarding that, there would be an interdepartmental committee that would be formed involving a number of departments. That would include Status of Women Canada, because the issue of housing is important to women, and not only for senior women, but for a number of lone-parent mothers and aboriginal women. This is an area in which Status of Women would want to play a very active role.

We would use the research we've done, if we have done it so far. If the issue warranted it and if we saw that gender considerations were not going to be taken into account unless Status of Women did more ad hoc research on it, we might do that. We would very much encourage that department to take the approach the citizenship and immigration department took when it wanted to reform the Immigration Act and looked at the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act; that is, to make sure they have the tools in place to be able to conduct good, gender-based analysis, get the frameworks in place, and work with us in order to include the differences between women and men on the issue of housing. So our work with that department in seeing it taking that responsibility of deciding it wants to do gender-based analysis would be key.

You mentioned housing. I also want to say we're seeing that an increasing number of women are becoming homeless as well. A number of categories or groups of women are vulnerable to the housing issue. So that's how we would do our work. We would work on the interdepartmental committee and provide research if we have it. If we don't have it, we'd encourage them to develop it, with a gender perspective, but also—and I think this would be key—to develop and put in place made-to-measure tools on gender-based analysis, so that they can, at the end of the day, do it. Also, if we had our best wish, it would be that they have to report to Parliament about it yearly.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** When you mention that you're seeing an increase in homeless women, obviously we have this nice process that works well and is moving forward from housing and you make sure they are planning it in the first case. But where you see that there's an issue of homeless women emerging, do you also flag and say we need to figure out, in your department, what's going on? You're suddenly seeing all these people showing up. You may not know the scope of the problem yet, but heads up, there's a problem coming down the pipe.

•(1205)

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** In regard to my previous answer, I just wanted to add that Jackie has suggested to me that, yes, we would fund groups and we would bring that to bear on the policy work that we do.

On the issue of homelessness, a few years ago, with the homelessness secretariat and through our contacts with groups and communities across the country and through some of our research, we were realizing at Status of Women that women were part of the homelessness puzzle; however, they were not recognized as such in the policies and the identification. Because of the nature of why they're homeless—often it's linked to violence, and therefore there are security and privacy issues related to why they're homeless—women were kind of the forgotten. With the department responsible and a number of related departments, we put together a group to be able to develop more information on the number of homeless women, in order to find ways to allow them to be counted—without jeopardizing their security and subjecting them to more violence—so that we can develop appropriate policies to deal with the increasing number of women.

That's the kind of role we play. At times, if our department is not looking at the gender perspective, sometimes we will bring the forces together in order to be able to look at the different facets of a problem with a gender lens. We did that in trafficking as well.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** Do I have another turn?

**The Chair:** No, you really don't.

**Hon. Paddy Torsney:** I'll wait until the second round.

**The Chair:** The Bloc.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Good day. Earlier, Ms. Claxton, you stated that your budget was \$10 million. Rumour has it that the government wants to slash your budget by 5 per cent. What impact would a 5 per cent cut have on your operations? If you do not receive the same level of funding, how will women's groups and gender equality programs be impacted? Five per cent of \$10 million is a substantial sum of money.

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** That's a good question. Last year, our budget was permanently reduced with no impact on the grant program.

As for slashing the program's budget by 5 per cent, a decision has yet to be made. However, we at Status of Women Canada feel that too little grant funding is allocated at it is to women's groups. Therefore, we'll have to wait and see what impact a 5 per cent cut will have. As I said, a decision has yet to be made, but in the face of last year's budget cuts, the program was unaffected.

**Ms. France Bonsant:** What are the consequences of a funding shortfall? Do you run fewer programs? Do you provide less support? Are more people left to fend for themselves?

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** When the government asked departments to consider slashing budgets by 5 per cent, it didn't ask them to cut overall funding indiscriminately. It asked them to look at certain long-standing departmental or agency initiatives, programs or activities to see if any had become less relevant. Consequently, Status of Women Canada will not proceed with indiscriminate,

across-the-board cuts. I stress that last year, when our funding was cut by \$200,000 — that's a substantial amount in our case — the program was spared.

Jackie has also reminded me that if we take into account the Federal Plan for Gender Equality, 50 per cent of these funds went directly to grants for women's groups. Over the past five years, including the current year, \$10.5 million in new funding has gone directly to women's groups.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Can I ask a question as a follow-up on that? What was the impact of the \$200,000?

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** We were able to reduce slightly some of our operations in a number of directorates. While it was felt, the impact didn't stop us from doing anything that was essential for us to do.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'm going to be a little tighter on the times this time.

The next round is to Ms. Crowder.

•(1210)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Thank you.

I appreciate Ms. Claxton raising the funding that came into the Cowichan Valley, and I'm going to ask some specific questions that are probably directly B.C.-related.

That funding was actually used to fund a group of women to look at gathering women's stories. And it's a really good example of the challenge that organizations face around getting an initial piece of funding that then leaves them looking for second-stage funding to complete the work. Although they have some second-stage funding from Status of Women, they are a group of women who had no resources and who are now scrambling to finish the project. So that's a good example of how we don't fund projects on a longer term for sustainability.

I wonder if you could comment on the multiple year and multiple funding sources that organizations, with limited resources, often end up facing.

**Ms. Jackie Claxton:** Madam Chair, on the issue of funding, as I mentioned, we have \$10 million, and you can imagine at the national level...and the staff across the country who deal with the groups on a day-to-day basis, the level of the needs, the complexity of the issues, the diversity of groups....

Let me just address the question of multi-year funding. When we made the changes to the program, when we changed from project and program funding to initiative funding, we also added the possibility of groups getting multi-year funding for initiatives related to two of the program objectives, institutional change and public policy, precisely because we realized, and groups had been saying for years, that much of the work that had to be done could not happen within a 12-month timeframe. You start by gathering the stories. Then you need to take that to the people who have the power to make changes that will have an impact on those lives.

I think this has been very important in terms of our capacity to support work that we can see concretely is having an impact and is making a change, because we've been doing this now since 1998.

In terms of the multiple sources of funding, our staff members try as much as possible not to ever turn away a group in the sense of just saying no, that's not something we can do. Staff members attempt to stay on top of sources in other federal departments, with what's happening at a provincial level and even at a municipal level, as well as in foundations, and they do often play a role in helping to open doors. We do the same at the national level. I can think of an initiative right now. It's a \$149,000 initiative, and thanks to our knocking on doors we were able to bring in another \$80,000 in support to contribute towards the \$149,000.

One of the things we hear from women's groups—I think it's important for the committee to be aware of this—is that when they go to other places to look for money, they're often sent back to Status of Women because they are a women's group or because it's a women's issue. I think we work at trying to help our colleagues in programs in other departments to understand how the gender analysis or the women's angle is relevant to their mandates and their work so that we can then put our resources together and collaborate on initiatives that are being supported.

**The Chair:** You have about 50 seconds left.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Okay, thanks.

One of the challenges with the multiple sources of funding for many organizations is the fact that government departments don't have consistent reporting. So you get a small organization that has to fill out five different mechanisms if they have five funding sources, and I wonder if there is a role Status of Women could play in that.

**Ms. Jackie Claxton:** We try as much as possible in those kinds of circumstances to coordinate among the departments to arrive at an agreement on somebody taking the lead so that the group makes one submission. We get the money into our department or to whoever is taking the lead, so that it flows out of one place and groups, exactly for the reasons you mentioned, are not forced to report at multiple places, because we realize it's a challenge.

• (1215)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Phinney.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I was very impressed when you were answering Ms. Torsney's questions that you said you would be called in if there was a new program for housing. Is that the usual practice in every department? Are you called in to help in creating a program or seeing where the needs are?

I'm going to give you two questions before you answer. The other one is this. I was wondering if you could do this or if you're already doing this. Could you rate all the departments on their progress and their gender-based analysis? You've already mentioned that the immigration department, from what I understand, is way ahead in doing it. I wonder if you could rate them for us, because then we may be in the position of, say, calling some ministers in and just informing them and educating them on what they could be doing and

what other people could be doing. If you rated that, we would know to start at the bottom and work up and to make some progress in this area. Is that possible for you to do? How many hundreds of thousands do you get?

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** I will obviously answer the first question first. When I said we would be called in, I said that when a department decides to launch a new initiative or program, or wants to develop legislation, the current practice is that they would convene to an interdepartmental committee the appropriate players to be around the table.

More often than not, Status of Women would be invited, but I don't want to overestimate the power we have and the role we play on those committees. If there are 23 departments, we're one out of 23. If there are 10, we're one out of 10. We promote gender-based analysis and our policies, our approach, and our position in that way.

The example of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act was a new thing, something rather different that happened, where the minister and senior officials of that department wanted gender-based analysis to be done and therefore they took the lead in asking the right questions and making sure that they have the tools and the instruments in place in order to be able to do it. That doesn't necessarily happen in all departments.

It leads me to an answer on your second question. No, we do not rate departments. We see them all as partners. Some are more effective than others, obviously. I gave the example of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. It's very new legislation. We'll have to see, over time, how that reporting to Parliament goes.

A number of departments across government have gender focal points that are effective. I'm afraid to mention them because I may forget some, but they are: Health, Justice, CIDA, Foreign Affairs, obviously Citizenship and Immigration, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food. There are a number of departments that have those considerations.

You should ask yourselves the question, and you might want to ask departments, where are those gender focal points located in departments? What kind of influence do they really have on senior management when they develop policies or when they decide on approaches? Are they a bit like Status of Women Canada is, a bit on the sidelines, or is it really an integral part of the policy and planning of that department? Those are the kinds of questions that I think need to be answered.

Status of Women Canada, in developing its approach to more accountability within government, has the results of having been in this business for 30 years, and after 30 years, if you are not necessarily getting some of the results you want, you need to look at how you're doing it.

This is not, as I said earlier, a situation that exists only in Canada. A number of countries are looking at that. As we prepare for Beijing plus 10, which will be taking place in March, 10 years after the platform for action was adopted, countries are being asked to look at how they are organized. How effective is national machinery?

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** Can I stop you for a minute? What we want to do is work on our situation here. How can we even do that if we don't have the information? I think you probably know that in the agricultural department they have this program over here that's doing something. In another ministry they have another program over here that's working on it. If you had that information, it would be helpful to us.

We can't just pull a minister's name out of the hat and say, we want to know what you're doing. If we had some lead, we could, but it would be better if we had some background and knew that this department is doing this already. It's not doing anything else, but it's doing that; this department is doing a whole lot—so we would know who to contact.

Is there any way you could...? It may be up to Julie to do that, I don't know, but it sounds like something you might have the information about, and we could work from a little bit of a background.

• (1220)

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** I think what we can do is provide you with a list of the departments that do have gender focal points. I think that would be a good start. What we're trying to get—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** And maybe what you know about them.

**Mrs. Sheila Regehr:** Perhaps I can respond to that in a slightly different way. When we get involved in a certain area, there are a number of strategic considerations we go through in deciding what Status of Women Canada works on, on a policy basis.

You've mentioned that if there's an interdepartmental committee looking at something, we might be involved. Sometimes that happens at the last minute.

**The Chair:** Excuse me, could you just stop for a moment? The French translation is not coming through.

**Mrs. Sheila Regehr:** Ideally, I think it's important for—

**The Chair:** Just hang on a moment, please.

Ms. Regehr, I'm going to ask you to wind it up quickly when it starts, because we're well over the time.

I'm sorry, the clerk advises that it's going to take a few minutes for a technician to come. I suggest that we suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

• 1223

(Pause)

• 1232

**The Chair:** I am going to suggest that we adjourn today. We'll invite witnesses from the Status of Women office back a little further on when we've heard from some of the others. We have a meeting of the steering committee on Thursday morning, prior to our regular meeting....

Is it working again?

Let's go. You were responding to a question of Ms. Phinney, and I'm wondering if you could do it quickly. We then have Ms. Grewal on the list.

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

In the interlude due to technical problems, I had an opportunity to speak to the person who leads the GBA directorate in our department. She tells me, and I know, that we have an interdepartmental committee on gender-based analysis and that committee is presently looking at self-assessment from key departments. They will be proceeding to a self-assessment of how effective they are in the promotion and the implementation of gender-based analysis in their departments. Following that work, we would be pleased to share the results of that self-assessment with you. This is currently under way. In the meantime, I will be forwarding to you a list of the departments and the gender focal points. When we know exactly where they are, we will provide you with as much information as possible.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** If you could send them to the clerk, everybody will receive a copy.

**Ms. Florence Ievers:** Madam Chair, could I add something? I see that time is passing. Jackie Claxton mentioned to me that she erroneously mentioned a date that was not exactly right when she talked about

[Translation]

the Accountability Framework for the Women's Program. It was created in 2001, not in 1998.

[English]

Madam Chair, I just wanted to clear that for the record.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I have Ms. Grewal next, and then we may come to a conclusion.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Could you please provide us with some examples of the projects that have been funded by the women's program? What proportion of funding is distributed by the national office? What proportion is distributed by the regional office? Does the women's program cover operational costs of organizations or is funding limited to special project funding? What criteria are used to assess which proposals are funded?

**The Chair:** Who will answer that?

**Ms. Jackie Claxton:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

There are multiple parts to the question. Let me start with the percentage spent at national versus regional. I'll give you the percentages and then the actual numbers. About 32% of the budget is kept in the national office for national initiatives, and the remaining 68% is divided between the five regions of the department. In actual numbers, that means there's roughly \$3.3 million in the national office, and the rest of it is spread out. In the Atlantic, there's \$1.1 million; Quebec is \$1.5 million; Ontario is \$1.8 million; the prairies and Northwest Territories are \$1.3 million; and B.C. and Yukon are \$1.2 million. The split is based on a formula that has been developed to ensure there is an equitable basis.

In terms of the kinds of things we fund, like the criteria and our operating costs covered, we have a set of objectives. We have criteria for the eligibility of organizations that they have to meet in order to be eligible to apply, and we have criteria for the eligibility initiatives. Essentially, you need to be a voluntary organization. There has to be some demonstrated commitment to equality. We need to have some demonstrated indication that the group functions in a democratic manner. We don't dictate how, but you have to show us how you do it. From there, it's a question of looking at the specific strategies and how they fit within the three areas of focus we have.

We do fund what some people would call overhead costs, rent, salary, travel, and board meetings, as it relates to the specific strategies and work that is being carried out. I know some funding programs have a formula where they can't cover more than 20%, for example, of the overhead costs. We don't do that. We look at the work that's being done and the resources that are needed.

Somebody asked previously whether we were involved in the aboriginal file. To give a couple of examples, off the top of my head, at the national level we are one of seven departments that receives funding through the family violence initiative. We have a small allocation of \$250,000 a year on an ongoing basis. We made a decision a year or so ago to commit those resources to address the issue of aboriginal women and family violence. We are funding a coalition of aboriginal groups that is working at building their ability to work together, gathering information, coming up with a strategic plan, and then, from there, the groups will be working on their individual strategies.

At a local level, with respect to aboriginal women, one of the critical issues is self-government, participation in decision-making for aboriginal women. I can think of two examples. Up in the Yukon we're supporting an initiative where we're helping aboriginal women come together to learn about the treaty negotiation processes, in order that they can then make more effective interventions as deliberations unfold.

We have some good news in northern Ontario, where we have been supporting, since 1999, aboriginal women in the Treaty 3 region, who have succeeded in getting the chief on board and supportive and increasing the number of women band councillors. Some of the tools that have been developed, with our support, include a manual, a type of guide to participation that is going out across the community. They have also obtained the collaboration of the aboriginal radio station, Wawatay. These are only a few examples of activities.

You have in the audience—and I think you'll be hearing from them later on this week—representatives from a number of national women's groups that are funded through the program: the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women; the National Association of Women and the Law; and a group called Women-space that works on a variety of issues with the support of the program.

I would be happy to provide a list to committee members with more details of the activities funded in the last year, if that would be useful.

**The Chair:** That would be very helpful.

Thank you.

I will take the prerogative of the chair and end this at this point. Thank you very much for coming today. I suspect—in fact, I'm sure—we will be inviting you back for further comment for the discussion as time goes on. But I think this was a really good first step. Thank you very much.

I know some of you have commitments at 1 p.m., so I want to move into committee business for a few minutes.

You will notice on your e-mails that some of them come from the committee. FEWO is the bilingual acronym.

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** Is the meeting in camera?

**The Chair:** No, it's not in camera. Do you want to move it in camera?

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** I don't see why it wouldn't be.

**The Chair:** If there's unanimous consent, we'll move it in camera. It is up to—

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** We should have it in camera. Everybody goes out.

**The Chair:** Will you make a motion then?

**Ms. Beth Phinney:** I make a motion, Madam Chair, that this part of the meeting be in camera.

**The Chair:** Is it agreed?

(Motion agreed to)

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*







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