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Chair

Ms. Anita Neville

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• (1110)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)):
I wonder if we could begin, please.

Thank you all for being here.

I want to advise members of the committee that we have some new tools to assist us in our committee work that you may not be aware of. The sections of the Parliament of Canada's Internet website related to House of Commons committees and joint committees have been enhanced somewhat. They now include links to committee member information. There's enhanced information about committee meetings and studies, frequently asked questions on general and committee-specific matters, a subscription feature, and a search tool for information about witnesses' appearances.

I particularly want to draw your attention to the fact that the new site also contains a direct link to the parliamentary web broadcasting services, known as ParlVU. Through the ParlVU service, the real-time audio stream of all public committee meetings and real-time stream of all televised committee meetings are now available to Internet users. As such, I want you to know that our committee meetings can now be heard by Internet users throughout Canada and the world. I wanted to let the presenters and the committee members know that.

I'd like to welcome anybody who's listening to this meeting and tell you that these are interesting times. It's a public meeting. It's just enhancing the publicity or the opportunity for people.... I encourage you to visit the redesigned website and take advantage of it. It's www.parl.gc.ca, and then it'll take you to all of the links.

This morning we have three witnesses from the Coalition for Women's Equality, who are going to provide us with a third-party perspective on Status of Women Canada and on how they see its work. I understand they're going to give us a 20- to 30-minute briefing, and then we'll follow up with our usual rounds.

Just to advise members, I may have to leave early, and at that time I will ask Ms. Grewal to take the chair.

We can begin.

Bonnie, who's starting from your group? Let me welcome the three of you here and say we're pleased to see you. We've seen you here before, but you're here today in a different capacity.

Ms. Bonnie Diamond (Representative, Coalition for Women's Equality): First of all, let me express how happy we are to be with you this morning and absolutely delighted that women throughout

Canada, and across the world in fact, will be able to hear us. That's wonderful news, and we'll share that news with women we work with across the country.

While three of us have been selected to present on behalf of the Coalition for Women's Equality, other members are present, and some cannot be here. So I want to take just a moment to introduce the coalition to you.

I have beside me the Canadian Research Institute on the Advancement of Women, Lise Martin, who will be joining in the presentation. We also have Tahira Gonsalves with us from that organization.

We have Anu Bose from the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women, who will also be presenting.

From Womenspace, we have Kathy Marshall and C.J. Rowe.

From MediaWatch, we have Melanie Cishecki.

From the Feminist Alliance for International Action, we have Nancy Peckford. Nancy is just coming in now.

I am representing the National Association of Women and the Law.

The people who cannot be present with us today are la Fédération des femmes du Québec, the YWCA, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, and the Native Women's Association of Canada. They're certainly here in spirit, but can't be here in body.

While Anu, Lise, and I will make the formal presentation, during questions if other coalition members are in a better position to provide responses, we will call upon them, with the indulgence of the chair.

In terms of the mandate of the coalition, the groups in the coalition came together a little over a year ago for the specific purpose of pursuing stronger federal mechanisms to achieve women's equality. We were compelled to do so because equality mechanisms at all levels of government in Canada, which were never strong enough, have been significantly weakened over the last decade. The coalition has a platform for strengthening the machinery at the federal level, which will be more fully addressed after we talk about Status of Women at the end of our presentation.

You present one plank in the coalition's platform. Women's groups widely agreed that a parliamentary standing committee was one key feature of a strengthened federal mechanism for women's equality, and the movement worked very hard with women and men of your parties to secure your space at this table. We are delighted that all parties were able to see the benefit of such a committee, and we extend a special thanks to all of you for serving, because we know an additional standing committee puts an additional burden of time on you as parliamentarians. But Parliament must be systematically brought into the quest for equality, and the overall federal government machinery must be held accountable to Parliament.

Regarding the historical context of the machinery from the women's movement perspective, in this coalition we are very future focused. We want the women of Canada to obtain substantive equality today and to continue to enjoy it tomorrow. However, when addressing the machinery of government and its efficacy in delivering its promise on equality, it is useful to take a brief glimpse over our shoulders to provide the context of the mechanisms that currently exist and of the formal equality framework that women of Canada have moved Canada to build.

I give you, in a way, the same brief history that Florence Ievers, the coordinator of Status of Women, gave you earlier in the week, on Tuesday, but I'm giving it to you from a slightly different perspective. The difference is that I will present the struggle of women from coast to coast in Canada who toiled very hard to secure the machinery that Florence referenced. You will know from experience on this Hill and in your parties that it is neither the benevolence of government nor an eager bureaucracy that makes equality machinery appear or makes it work. It is the organized political work of women, including some politicians and bureaucrats, and the organized women's movement that advances the understanding of equality for all Canadians and for politicians who then direct the bureaucracy.

●(1115)

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women, as Ms. Ievers pointed out, was a landmark event in the 1970s. While the royal commission did not even address violence against women, it did strongly address women's need for economic security and for autonomy. The commission's report reflected the weaknesses of the time as well. It did next to nothing to address the diversity issues, and it generally approached women as "Madame Tout-le-monde".

However, the recommendations resulted in creating an opening for women to press for mechanisms to deliver equality. It created the women's program, the funding body within the then Secretary of State that funded a national pan-Canada conversation among women that, among other things, brought the issue of violence against women from behind closed doors and into the political discourse of the nation.

The program also financially supported the work of women's groups, much of it through core funding, and a network of women's organizations grew to construct the formal framework for equality that we now enjoy. The government established the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women and put well-resourced and respected research behind the emerging realities of women.

The government appointed a minister responsible for status of women, who at his or her peril, because we've had both men and women, ignored the mounting evidence on inequality. And finally, the policy agency known as Status of Women was created.

Some of these mechanisms have disappeared. Those that are remaining are greatly diminished.

Let there be no doubt, the organized women's movement that emerged from the royal commission won the formal equality framework that I'm about to describe for equality. The cornerstone of that framework is often seen to be the charter guarantees in sections 15 and 28 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Believe me, this was not a gift to the women of Canada. Women came from all over Canada to Ottawa and overworked what was then the recently acquired fax machine to actually fight this fight when the Trudeau government of the day attempted to trade away to the provinces and territories the charter clause on women's equality. Women of all political stripes stood up and claimed their right to the constitutional recognition of their equality.

The charter not only brought to us equality protections, but it also brought us a very important and more comprehensive definition of equality. It is significant to pause for a moment to look at the charter notion of equality, which is substantive equality. That is what women's groups mean when we talk about equality for women.

Substantive equality rejects the simple approach to equality, which is equal treatment. Equal treatment ignores differences among groups, such as differences between men and women, and does not account for the different social locations or the differences of powers that those groups hold.

On the other hand, substantive equality recognizes differences and the disadvantages of different social locations, and it adjusts treatment so that in the end everybody achieves equality of outcome irrespective of the differences in the power they may hold.

The charter expressly allows for this ameliorative approach to equality. The charter does address substantive equality.

For illustration, because it's a difficult concept, a good example of the difference between simple equality and substantive equality arose around the legislating of maternity leave. Now, bear in mind that what I'm talking about here is maternity leave, the actual confinement and not the more recent concept of parental leave that both women and men enjoy.

Believe it or not, at one time it was argued that extending maternity benefits to women would be discriminatory toward men, who would not qualify for that leave. It sounds like an old notion now. That was the simple approach to equality, which did not recognize the difference between men and women or the disadvantages that women face in having to leave the workforce temporarily.

Substantive equality, on the other hand, recognizes the biological difference between women and men, that only women bear children, and it also looks at the disadvantages that flow to women from the biological difference, that is, the necessity to leave the workforce, resulting in loss of promotion, loss of seniority, loss of leave credits, loss of pension credits, etc. So in a substantive equality sense, when you have legislation, you must legislate in a way that recognizes both the biological difference and the penalties that flow from that difference.

I'm going to leave the charter now and go on to the Canadian Human Rights Act, because this is another important part of that equality framework.

Women continue to play a significant role in trying to strengthen the Canadian Human Rights Act and its enforcement arm. It is difficult to use, and it comes into play only after the fact of discrimination.

• (1120)

Most recently, women have contributed from across the country to a review of the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Human Rights Commission. The results of that review, which recommended ways of strengthening enforcement of the act in order to protect women, sits with the Minister of Justice awaiting attention.

In terms of the formal framework, we also have to look at the Criminal Code provisions on sexual assault and significant features of family law, which were strengthened through a series of once vibrant conversations between the justice minister and women's groups, particularly groups from the anti-violence movement. These talks have been abandoned—they were important stuff. Can you believe that until the 1980s it was legal to rape your wife? Those conversations with women made that change; it was the women's movement that secured that change. The justice minister needs these occasional talks, even if they're sometimes hard talks.

Besides our domestic guarantees, there are numerous international instruments. Of particular significance are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which we fondly call CEDAW, and the Beijing Platform for Action.

While Status of Women Canada plays a significant role in the international area, it is really the NGO sector that takes the documented experiences of women to that international forum. The recommendations that Florence addressed on Tuesday that were directed to Canada by the UN CEDAW review committee did not arise out of the government's report on compliance with CEDAW. Those UN recommendations to Canada are grounded in the NGO shadow report done by FAFIA and the B.C. CEDAW Group, to which women's groups at all levels contributed evidence. The optional CEDAW protocol, as Ms. Ievers pointed out on Tuesday, was pursued by the NGO community, albeit with significant support from Status of Women Canada.

In the international arena, only the best face of Canadian action on equality will be carried forward by the bureaucracy, which has the hazard of embarrassing its political masters if it doesn't put the best face forward. It is the autonomous women's movement that carries forward the substantive report card on equality. Thousands of women, most of them volunteers, carry out this work. Increasingly,

they are carrying out that work without sustained government support.

So you would think from describing this machinery and the highly developed equality framework that we enjoy in Canada, there would be nothing left to do. I think some people think that occasionally. We are here to dissuade you from that notion.

I'm going to now turn it over to Anu Bose, who is going to put a face on inequality of women in Canada.

Dr. Anu Bose (Representative, Coalition for Women's Equality): Thanks, Bonnie

In spite of the accomplishments to date, the women of Canada are still waiting on the commitments made by successive governments as signatories to various international human rights treaties and agreements.

My presentation will focus primarily on women's poverty, but I will also flag two additional issues: violence against women and girls, and political representation. These will continue to be a high priority for the coalition, and we hope that it will be for you parliamentarians as well.

Legal frameworks and international commitments apart, I think it's important to make the link between women's equality and women's poverty. Inequality results in women being less well off relative to men. For a large proportion of them, that means poverty at higher, deeper, and more sustained levels than typically experienced by men. Clearly, if a woman's income is just above the poverty line, she is much more susceptible to falling below it.

In the several decades we've been talking about these issues, we've also been learning more. We think there is still a lack of understanding of some fundamental aspects, such as gendered poverty analysis; that is to say, women and men experience poverty differently and have different capacities to escape poverty or sink into it. The causes of women's poverty differ from those of men. Male poverty is directly related to low wages in the labour market, but women's poverty is more complex and relates not only to low wages, but also to women's multiple domestic roles. Secondly, there is a multi-dimensional view of poverty, that is to say, an analysis that integrates the non-economic aspects of poverty, such as vulnerability, powerlessness, voicelessness, and gender bias in the government systems, with the more obvious economic aspects.

Turning to poverty and equality, a 2002 CRIAW fact sheet on women in poverty asks the question, who is likely to be poor? Then it answers it, saying it is predominantly females. It is an unhappy thought that in the 21st century, in a rich country with a federal budget surplus, a girl child is more likely to grow up poor than a boy child. In Canada, one in five women live in poverty, or almost 2.8 million or 3 million women. This is occurring in a country that has achieved eight successive years of multi-billion dollar federal budgetary surpluses, including the current one of \$9 billion. This performance has been lauded by the Minister of Finance—and rightly so—and by the OECD, the IMF, and the World Bank, but has been deplored by women, men, and children who have seen their safety net wither away.

Discrimination against women in the paid labour market is one of the major factors affecting women's poverty. The participation in labour markets of women with young children has jumped from 39% in 1976 to 72% in 2003. In 1990 women earned 59¢ to every dollar that men earned; in 1999 they earned 64¢ to the dollar that men did. The gradual closing of the wage gap between the sexes is due not to women's increased access to better employment opportunities, although some gains have been made, but to occupational segregation and the depressing of male wages.

Now, to put a face on poverty in Canada. Who are they? They are single mothers making due on social assistance or in precarious employment, juggling family responsibilities with two part-time jobs on minimum wage. In fact, 45.4% of mother-led families are poor compared to 24% of father-led ones. Female and youth minimum wage earners make up 83% of all minimum wage earners in this country. They earn wages well below the poverty line, however defined. Furthermore, 37% of all lone mothers are trying to raise families on less than \$10 an hour.

● (1125)

The face of poverty is senior women over 65. Forty-five per cent of all single, divorced, or unattached women are considered poor. The face of poverty is unattached women under 65; 40% are poor. The face of poverty is disabled women under 35, who had average annual incomes of \$13,000. The face of poverty is aboriginal women, whose average income is two-thirds that of non-aboriginal women—\$13,300, and \$19,350 respectively.

Since I represent NOIVMWC within the coalition, I will give you a snapshot of poverty in my constituency. Visible minority or racialized immigrant women are largely poor—37% live in poverty, compared to almost 20% of the general female population. The average annual income is \$16,621, almost \$3,000 less than the average for women in general. Immigrant women's yearly average earnings are \$34,700, while Canadian-born earn \$50,000. The gap has doubled in the last two decades, although the educational level of immigrant women has increased faster than that of their Canadian-born counterparts. In 1980, 15% of the full-time, full-year employed immigrant women held university degrees. In 2000, it had risen to 38%. In the same period, the educational level of Canadian-born, similarly employed women went from 10% to 22%, thus education does not always make a difference. Immigrant women recently arrived in Canada still earn \$14,000 less than Canadian-born women in full-year, full-time employment.

I would like to remind everyone that many of these women were selected to enter Canada based on their educational qualifications. They were considered professional or middle class in their countries of origin, or in third countries. Once here, these women and their families are becoming steadily impoverished, as neither their credentials nor their work experience is recognized. They end up in low-paying jobs, often performing more manual labour than Canadian-born women.

That is why NOIVMWC, with financial assistance from CEDAW, is studying the processes that contribute to the impoverishment of immigrant women, and developing with them the policy initiatives they feel are needed to reverse such a trend. Some immigrant women—and these are the luckier ones—are able to find work in immigrant

settlement services, where they represent 80% of the workforce. According to Dr. Jo-Anne Lee, president-elect of CRIAW, settlement services are a separate, parallel, and marginalized sector of the publicly funded social services.

Most of these jobs are insecure and poorly remunerated. There's also an expectation that they should volunteer their time between grants. Immigrant women who suffer from this kind of egregious discrimination become part of what Professor Jeffrey Reitz of the University of Toronto has termed the brain waste in Canada. These women are progressively de-skilled and become increasingly disillusioned about their chosen home. We have anecdotal evidence of people receiving remittances from their countries of origin, returning home to their countries of origin, or moving to third countries where their skills and experience are valued.

A second problem we would like to flag is violence against women and girls. It's a problem that crosses all socio-economic and racial lines. In Canada, one in three women is victimized in her own home. However, low-income women are more often trapped in abusive relationships for lack of financial resources, housing, and income support. A great majority of aboriginal women report that they have been assaulted.

In 1989, Jillian Ridington reported for the DisAbled Women's Network that 53% of women disabled from birth or early childhood had been abused. Statistics from 1999 show that victimization rates among immigrant and visible minority women are lower than those among Canadian-born, but let us not rejoice at that. Experience suggests this is partly due to under-reporting because of a lack of understanding of the Canadian justice system and appropriate services, limited language skills, lack of support systems, and possibly cultural norms. Many come from cultures where the police are not trusted. A woman who is a family-class immigrant is highly unlikely to report domestic violence for fear of losing her immigrant status if her husband is convicted.

● (1130)

In addition to sexual or domestic assault, immigrant women, particularly those from visible minorities, often suffer racial violence and harassment.

The third point is the lack of political representation, and for us this is another marker of inequality. The present House has—and please correct me if I'm wrong—65 women, or 21.1% of the 308 seats. This is two more, I believe, than were in the last House. It is an increase of 0.2%. We seem to have hit the glass ceiling here too, like elsewhere.

The Quebec National Assembly should pat itself on its back and say it has elected 30% women, but that runs counter to trends elsewhere.

Canada today lags behind other countries in the world in the number of women in the national legislature. It is 36th on the list, based on the last Parliament's figures. Even Rwanda has 48.5%. How has the composition of this House of Commons begun to reflect the change in the demographics of Canada? Were more than 10% of the MPs born outside Canada? It's 39 of 308, and this includes at least seven women from visible minorities.

Equal political representation for women is an old issue that will not go away. Unfortunately, there are no magic solutions. The political gatekeepers need to find better ways of bringing more qualified and competent women into Parliament. They need to identify and mitigate barriers where they exist. We are depending on you to carry this message back to your respective caucuses.

Having said my piece, I will now ask my colleague Lise Martin to speak to you about the stated diminution of the Status of Women Canada and recommendations for a more constructive engagement.

Thank you.

• (1135)

Hon. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): I just thought I would seek a clarification.

Surely you meant additional qualified women, and not more qualified, because I think all the women around this table are a little offended, perhaps.

Dr. Anu Bose: I stand corrected.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lise Martin (Representative, Coalition for Women's Equality): In view of what you've just heard, clearly women's equality in Canada is not a done deal and we still face many challenges.

For us to be able to meet those challenges successfully, decision-makers, including the Government of Canada, should take a leadership role on that issue of women's equality. Despite major international commitments by Canada on the issue of women's and girls' equality, the government structure required to fulfill those commitments remains very shy and fragile.

As you heard on Tuesday, the women's equality file has been transferred mostly to Status of Women Canada. Status of Women Canada is not a department, but rather a government agency. The mandate of Status of Women Canada or rather its ability to fulfill that mandate, is restricted due to the limited resources made available for that government agency.

The agency therefore has a very limited ability to influence policies and practices within the government. In the interest of time, we have chosen to limit our comments to gender-based analysis and the Women's Program.

Status of Women on Tuesday clearly showed in their presentation that the agency puts a lot of emphasis on gender-based analysis.

The federal plan for gender equality states that the federal government is committed to making sure that every future legislation and policy will involve as required an analysis to determine whether those legislations and policies may have a different impact on women than on men.

The federal government also means to integrate gender-based analysis into the development of every legislation and economic and socio-economic policy as a way of dealing with gender inequities. Unfortunately, most of those commitments have not been implemented.

There is no requirement for any department to carry out a gender-based analysis, and no accountability or quality control system has been put in place to make sure that such a gender-based analysis is carried out regularly and in a proper way.

The plan clearly states that departments and agencies will carry out a gender-based analysis as required.

As Status of Women stated, their role is to help train department bureaucrats on gender-based analysis. In other words, the federal plan for gender-based analysis is based on the trickle-up theory. They seem to be thinking that as bureaucrats are trained to carry out gender-based analysis, gender-based analyses will gradually be undertaken.

Although Status of Women Canada stated that ten departments have somehow undertaken a process of gender-based analysis, we know that there is no requirement to follow up on the results of that analysis.

As a coalition, we are however concerned with the possible impact of a misguided gender-based analysis. If that gender-based analysis is carried out with only a superficial understanding of the issue, in other words if it consists only in examining the various impacts on men and women without questioning the status quo, the standards and the assumptions, and of course the power relationships, it has clearly very limited scope.

Given the lack of willingness on the part of several departments, we believe that such a superficial analysis has been the norm rather than the exception so far.

Let us take parental leave as an example. It is true that parental leave has been significantly extended and is now available for the fathers. However, to what extent has it become more available for women who need it most? For the many women working at the minimum wage, which is \$5.80 an hour in Alberta, it is inconceivable to even think of an extended leave for a few months—forget even the 12 months—when they earn 55 p. 100 of their normal wage.

We do know that immigrant, racialized and native women are overrepresented in those categories. We also know that, since the EI changes were implemented, women have been less able to access that program. Finally, more and more women are self-employed and are not eligible.

•(1140)

Nevertheless, I would like to point out that a gender-based analysis may provide the expected results, first when it is carried out in-depth and not superficially; second, when the required financial and human resources are available; third, when there is a political will; and fourth, when it involves the research and experience of women's groups.

This is to some extent what has been found by women's group in Quebec which use that mechanism to advance relevant issues, especially at the regional and local levels.

As an example, the former Conseil régional de développement de la Montérégie had a comprehensive plan including the training of decision-makers, professionals and pilot projects which were examined by a consultant woman. The results were promising. We will have to see how the Conférence des élus de la Montérégie will follow up on that file.

Women's groups in Quebec demand the full implementation of gender-based analysis in Quebec.

Let me now talk briefly about the Women's Program. The program has a funding of \$10.7 million per year. This represents about 59 ¢ per year and per woman and girl in Canada: less than the cost of a cup of coffee. Don't we think women are worth more than that?

The issue of core funding versus project funding was raised last Tuesday. We regret the decision of Status of Women Canada to cancel core funding. In fact, we only heard on Tuesday that this decision had been the result of a choice. That major change in the program has clearly had a negative impact on the independent women movement in Canada. As our security system gradually crumbles, so does the women's movement also.

Among the reasons put forward for getting rid of core funding, we were told that they wanted to introduce results-based management into the program. In our view, core funding is not incompatible with results-based management. Although CIDA was the first agency to use results-based management, that agency still allows core funding for international development groups.

Although the system of project-based requests has been in place since 1998-99, the executive directors of national organizations spend on average two or three months on every grant application. It is therefore no surprise that small women's groups which often represent the most vulnerable women or women who live in remote or rural areas, simply do not have the necessary financial or human resources to put together a grant application.

Let me also note that the largest women's groups at the national level, that is at most four or five groups, have on average three employees. In reference to our mental health, it is important to remember how much we have achieved and we keep achieving with such limited means.

Another weakness of the present system with the Women's Program is the fact that we often do not have enough time to fully utilize the material that we have developed, because we have to move quickly to the next initiative if we do not want to close our doors.

As a women's group, we feel that our contact with Status of Women Canada is too often restricted to the Women's Program. We have little contact with the Policy Development Section or the Gender-Based Analysis Section, despite the fact that we have a lot of expertise among our staff and the many volunteer women on our boards.

We can clearly see several shortcomings in the operation and role of Status of Women Canada. We realize however that this agency is lost within the system. As a women's group, we are easily marginalized when we find ourselves alongside more mainstream groups within the Canadian movement for social change.

•(1145)

Status of Women Canada is in the same position within the government. I think we should really take the time to examine and question the reluctance to identify the lack of equality between men and women and between various women's groups.

As we indicated earlier, the goal and rationale of our coalition is to strengthen the institutional mechanisms that would help Canada better fulfill its obligations on both the national and international levels. Being a leader on the international scene is not good enough.

The Coalition for Women's Equality believes that the federal government should strengthen its mechanism regarding the status of women by: enacting a status of women bill, to give force of legislation to the government's commitment to provide equality for all women; appointing a full-fledged minister with an in-depth knowledge of the status of women who would work with her colleagues in Cabinet and make sure that the issue of equality for all women in Canada is raised whenever a new policy comes up for discussion; creating a department of the status of women with adequate funding and led by a full-fledged deputy minister who would be responsible for making sure that the Act is enforced; providing adequate funding for an independent women's movement; and finally, mandating the Auditor General to carry out at appropriate intervals a full assessment of the government's performance regarding women's equality.

When we submitted this plan to Prime Minister Martin last December, we had a sixth mechanism which was the creation of your parliamentary committee.

[*English*]

We welcome the opportunity to work with you throughout your mandate for the benefit of all women in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you very much. It was certainly a fulsome presentation.

We're going to continue questioning with Ms. Grewal.

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

I would like to thank Anu, Lise, and Bonnie for their presentations. They were certainly very helpful.

Equality-seeking organizations have been calling for the creation of a standing committee on the status of women for some time. Now that this committee has been struck, what is your view on how Status of Women Canada, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, and equality-seeking organizations can work together to move toward greater equality between men and women?

Could you please describe the process an organization such as yours goes through to obtain funding for the women's program?

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: I think the best way for us all to move forward in achieving the equality we all crave is to keep in touch with each other, to very much listen to the women of Canada, and to come to some sort of agreement that the most serious issues we can agree on should be implemented very systematically.

There is a very large agreement amongst the women in Canada. As recently as the year 2000 in the World March of Women, 50,000 women came to Ottawa with a platform for action that they presented to the government at the time. I think we could have a look at that platform and update it with the CEDAW information. I believe if we sit and talk those things over together we will see a priority that arises that we can work on together. We have to keep in touch and make sure we understand.

The process by which we make an application to Status of Women is a very lengthy process whereby you contact the department, the department will assign a program officer to you, you make an initial indication of what it is you would like to propose in the project, and then you undergo a very long series of "back and forth".

One of the trouble spots in it is, as you know, that the department has recently moved to results-based management. It is not well understood within the department and it is not necessarily well understood among women's organizations, particularly those that are outside of Ottawa and aren't familiar with it. That has added to the length of time in which projects are negotiated.

We're very proud of being an autonomous women's movement supported by government. One of the real problems with it is that the change from core funding to project funding means if Status of Women Canada does not like what we are proposing—and some of what we're proposing is political—it can be turned aside, or we can be asked to cast it in another way that does not achieve the objectives of our organizations as well.

You'd almost be surprised to hear that in fact it's not always addressed at the federal level. There are the 15 points across the country that Florence talked about. For instance, if a group from Quebec were to make an application and wanted to do something about the Government of Quebec and inequality there, it could be granted, but you'd be surprised to find out that in fact Status of Women Canada checks with the Quebec government before they would grant that request.

So you can see that inherently when you're dealing with political work it is very difficult, when you're going on a project basis where you could be cast aside because you don't fit Status of Women's objectives, and it greatly diminishes the will of the women of Canada to make political change.

● (1150)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): It'll be interesting to expand on that. But I want to run something by you, and that is the reflection of women in the House of Commons. I wonder if it fails to recognize how hard it was for us to get there, ladies who, if we had been handed the nomination... I went through a very rigorous nomination, and I don't know how you can avoid that, because you want the best person to go forward. When I was challenged by four men, I'll tell you there were four bitter men after it was all over, but there was a happy electorate.

If I had been placed, there would have been one happy man and maybe three others—I don't know—but a very angry electorate, because it would have appeared they didn't even pick the person they wanted. I think it's very difficult to bring that into the House of Commons. I'd be very interested in some ideas. I've visited with the banking world; I've talked to people from universities. Women are continually going into law. The numbers are really high in those areas—engineering... I think if we're allowed, it will happen.

I just wondered how we could ever do it. I was challenged again, and it wasn't good enough after the first time I ran against four people; one of the men was still bitter and wanted to run again. My leader was very kind and said he would have done anything to be able to just re-place me there. It wasn't because I was a woman; it was because he knew I was a good candidate. But he had to step aside. Would that have been the time to step in to say, I'm sorry; I want Mrs. Yelich in there, not because she's a woman, but because she's good?

If you people think there is a woman who should be there—any of you today spoke very well—and had some strong message, I would say you get one heck of a lot of women behind you and you bring the women into Parliament so that you will have the representation there, and you will be there because the electorate wants you. I had a lot of men vote for me because they thought I was going to be another Deb Grey. I think I might have disappointed them, but that just goes to show.

The other thing I want to mention... There are so many questions, I know, and there are some good questions, because we have a very good committee, I can see, and I'm really excited about working with the dynamics here. I want you to cite for me in the future other areas where, as you cited in the case of unemployment, there is a problem.

I also want to say something there as well. I think that may have increased the fathers' role a bit. Flipping this over a bit, I have found that new fathers are much different from those of 30 years ago. I can't believe the fathers who are involved in bringing up their young people. In fact, I had one father not complain because his wife said, "You get up with the baby during the night even if you are working in the morning". He works for Nortel. He works very hard, but she needed her rest in the evening because the baby was difficult during the day.

I think sometimes this parental role that they're offering through unemployment for the fathers might even be a very wholesome thing for the family. If you want to, please comment. I think we can go on for more questions, but you may just want to comment.

● (1155)

The Chair: We're really out of time. I'm sorry.

We have rounds of seven minutes to begin, and the rounds include both the questions and answers. I'm going to take Mrs. Yelich's words as comments this time. If you want to incorporate some of what she said into further responses or feedback after—

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: I think what we could commit to is continuing that conversation, because I think we have material, and there are women's organizations that have material, on women's participation in running for election where there are some discriminatory elements we could work on.

The Chair: Thank you.

Who is taking the lead from the Bloc?

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Good morning, ladies. It gives me great pleasure to meet with you. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your action and thank all those women's groups who have worked so hard at the grass-root level.

It is thanks to all those women who came before us that I, who was born in the middle class, managed to become a Member of Parliament and reach a senior level of education.

When you talked about substantive equality, I wondered about de facto equality. Also, when I hear about the various aspects of Status of Women Canada, about this results-based management and how difficult it is to assess how successful we are based on some highly complex problems sometimes which determine behaviour changes, attitude changes, I wonder how we might, through this Committee, try to address those issues individually to try and improve things.

Great hopes were raised when this Committee on the Status of Women was created. We try to tackle all the problems at the same time and we would like to change the world. This may be typical of women and it is all very well, but what is most important, most vital? If you had a suggestion for our Committee, a mandate to suggest for this Committee, what would be the first priority?

[*English*]

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: I would say to look at it in terms of the mechanisms we propose, and not necessarily the issues, although we want to be very cognizant of the issues and support work in those areas, because it is the mechanisms that will be the legacy that not only achieves equality today but will maintain equality throughout the future.

We have noticed, for instance, when Canada commits itself to trade agreements abroad, when you come home you put them into legislation. It seems to us that when we really have the political will, we legislate, including the Official Languages Act, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, and whatever. It's very difficult for women of Canada to understand why, if we are so committed to equality, that wouldn't be legislated with all of the enforcement mechanisms that would flow from it.

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Why don't we have more legislation? This is still a complex issue.

Earlier this week, I had the opportunity to table a Private Member's Bill: I chose the improvement of the Employment Insurance Plan. You mentioned that problem. I know it affects women very much. We try to improve living conditions for women through concrete actions. But it is true that it is sometimes difficult for us to be successful within that huge system where I find it difficult, as a new Member of Parliament, to get things to change. We also have caucuses with a majority of men. As my colleague said earlier, it is not easy as women to find our place and demonstrate our skills. But such is the environment in which we are trying to act.

Ms. Lise Martin: I guess that is the reason why we would like to focus on mechanisms. It is not a question of personality or wishes. We do need to put in place systems which will still be there for the women who will come later.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: What do you think of the French system where a quota of women is required in the political assembly? I think there are also some limits in that system. Have you had the opportunity to look into that?

Ms. Lise Martin: The Coalition has not discussed that issue. I think it could easily become the topic of a discussion or a session. Clearly there has been some research and there is a whole range of opinions on that issue. I think we need to assess the various options. Clearly what we have at the present time is not ideal.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: Also, it's like the food bank or the elimination of poverty. We can't do one or the other. We don't have that luxury as women. So while we're working on the mechanisms, we also need for you to engage with the CEDAW recommendations and to engage with every piece of legislation that goes through the House to make sure there is a substantive gender-based analysis done.

The Chair: Thank you.

You have about two minutes more.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Good morning. I too wish to congratulate you for what you do. It is extraordinary.

On the issue of grants, are you satisfied with the services provided by Status of Women Canada?

A voice: I do not get any grants, so...

Ms. Lise Martin: The funding process is a very lengthy process. Quite frankly, it is a waste of time for a professional to have to spend two months putting together a grant application. Every year, we are told that the process will be shorter the next time. I'm not the only one, so I'm not afraid of saying this. It is not a matter of incompetence on my part either, it is something that all the groups have been experiencing. I think there should be a discussion, because there is a lot of work to do and it is a waste of resources.

[English]

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: You have to realize as well that you see us here presenting substantively on issues and such, but we're also the people who put in the funding requests. And while we're going back and forth with Status of Women Canada for a couple of months, our projects are greatly diminished by that. Also, there is the systematic erosion of the women's movement. All of those gains that I talked about, women made because they did have some funding they could depend upon.

The Status of Women on Tuesday mentioned 100 groups. My God, what we would give for 100 groups who could count on their funding so that they could work with women who didn't have that sustained funding as well, to keep equality moving forward, because I'll tell you, it's being eroded.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Chair, I would like to thank the groups for appearing today. I think this was a valuable start on the education process for the committee.

I'll see how the times goes. I have a number of questions of course.

You did specifically mention this, but I'd like you to elaborate on it because I've now talked about it a couple of different times. It's partly around the gender-based analysis that the government committed to in 1995, and nine years later it is not part of the systemic way in which government conducts business. Treasury Board certainly, when they presented to us, indicated that this is very possible and that other government departments do have this institutionalized in how they operate. So I'd like you to specifically comment on that, but in terms of suggesting ways whereby perhaps we can put pressure on the government to institute this as a policy and incorporate it into the way they allocate resources.

But I'd also like you to comment specifically on the fact that we currently have government programs, not just under Status of Women, that are nominally supposed to deal with women's issues at the provincial level, and yet there's no accountability on how those funds are spent. I'm going to specifically talk about the early development initiative, the framework agreement around child care that has had the province in which I live actually reduce child care spaces. And despite the fact that there is some accountability tied into that agreement, in fact we are seeing women's access to child care, women's and families' access to child care, eroded. So I wonder if you could also comment on provincial accountability.

The Chair: Who wants to take that one on?

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: We have Shelagh Day with us, and Shelagh can speak very well to gender-based analysis. She's representing FAFIA.

Sorry, you weren't here in the beginning, Shelagh, and I didn't see you.

The Chair: Can I just get some concurrence from the committee that they have no problem with other representation coming forward?

A voice: No problem.

The Chair: All right.

Go ahead, Shelagh.

Ms. Shelagh Day (Representative, Coalition for Women's Equality): Thank you very much. Maybe I could take a crack at answering both questions.

About gender-based analysis, I think if we're going to do it properly and thoroughly inside the government, then first of all there has to be a cabinet mandate for it. It has to be said to every department that this is a requirement of doing business. My understanding is that in some other governments, such as South Africa, one of the mechanisms used is to make sure that for any new program or legislation that has any money attached, it's required, when it goes to the finance department, to have a gender analysis attached to it. Before money is allocated, it has to show that in fact this analysis has been done. So there are mechanisms for ensuring that there is a proper internal government system for doing this, and we don't have that at the moment.

As Lise has described, we're working on the trickle-up theory. It's voluntary, essentially. Status of Women Canada is promoting it, saying this is a good idea, but it's on the voluntary trickle-up theory that we're doing it at the moment.

The second thing I would say is that for this committee, and for women across the country, intergovernmental agreements are extraordinarily important. The whole matter of how we get a consistent enjoyment of equality by women across the country has a great deal to do with what we do in intergovernmental agreements. You'll find that the women's movement is one of the best sources in Canada for understanding, and agreement on, the distinctness of Quebec and about the reason why we need to have intergovernmental agreements that recognize the distinctness of Quebec.

For the other provinces, we need national norms, we need national standards, we need conditions attached to intergovernmental agreements that actually mean that women in the provinces will enjoy some consistent standards. We are really suffering without that. We lost a lot in 1995, when we changed the fiscal arrangements between the federal government and the provinces. I can give you many examples of how that's come down. We're now looking at a Canadian social transfer divided from the Canadian health transfer. In the pot of money transferred to the provinces are a whole lot of things that supposedly matter to women extraordinarily. Child care, social assistance—they all come in that pot. But it's undesignated at the moment. It's an undesignated pot of money that goes from the federal government to the provinces. It's extraordinarily important that we start to talk about what are the values and norms that we attach to the transfer of that money. What do we think we're doing with it if the federal government is to play a role in social policy that actually has to do with the equality of women?

One of the things we're looking for is action on the part of the federal government that shows that in fact it is committed to everyone's human rights; in other words, to the rights of women in every part of the country. We have mechanisms for doing this, but the federal government has withdrawn from using those mechanisms over the last decade. Part of what we need to say to you is that we need to look at those mechanisms again, because they are essential to what women are actually experiencing in the provinces.

Like Jean, I come from British Columbia, and we can tell you stories about what happens when in fact a provincial government decides that it will slash, in a very unconstrained way, social programs and services that are essential to women. We have no place, apparently, as women to say in Canada that there is a social union, we do have values, and we have made commitments, domestically and internationally, that all mean this is not supposed to happen to us. We're not supposed to go backwards, but that is what we've been doing.

•(1210)

The Chair: Thank you.

I think you're going to have to wait until your next round.

Ms. Kadis.

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Thank you.

I do feel quite strongly, and I am sure we all agree, that how a country treats its women and its children does represent its priorities, its values. I very much want to thank you and everyone who has done so much through the years to help advance and improve women's lives and the quality of their lives.

It was referenced by Ms. Martin...

Oh, she just left. I'm sure someone else can answer this.

Ms. Martin talked about some proposed solutions for improving our lives, and about having an actual ministry for the Status of Women, I believe, as well as a full department and all that entails.

To anyone, I'm wondering why you think these actions have not taken place to date, and specifically how taking some of these steps could improve the lives of women.

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: I think there are many different theories for why it hasn't taken place. I do believe it is truly a question of political will, and successive federal governments, while they have espoused both nationally and internationally that they're doing a very good job on equality, have not taken that additional step to make sure there are full accountabilities. We hear a lot about accountabilities, but virtually, we have a formal framework for equality that has no real accountabilities attached to it.

I think that's the job of all of us together, to put the strong mechanisms in place, not the mechanisms like Status of Women Canada, which also has to petition with other departments, but to build alongside that framework for equality the substantive mechanisms to deliver it, and that includes everything we've been talking about today, including strengthened FPT processes.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Again, following along with that, we're not just talking about issues of increased financing of funding. We're talking about policy changes.

I know it's difficult to quantify that, but can you give a brief response as to what you think in general we need to apply more attention to?

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: It's such a difficult one to answer—and perhaps you want to try it, too—but I don't think we have found a policy initiative of government yet that didn't require an in-depth gender-based analysis. Because of the different social locations, there are always unintended negative impacts on different groups if that analysis isn't done.

So it brings us back to the machinery. You'll get sick of hearing us harp on it, but unless you have that as an automatic part of the legislative process, we're not going to get there.

•(1215)

Ms. Shelagh Day: In terms of a policy issue, Bonnie has already said the work that women did in 2000 on the demands for the women's march and then the recommendations that came out of the CEDAW committee—the groundwork is all set out there in terms of what the basic issues for women are that need to be addressed.

We can go down the list for you and say what those things are. Poverty is one of the things that are at the top of the list. It's very much connected, as has already been said here, to violence against women.

We have problems about employment insurance because of the restricted access that women have to it. If we're just talking about poverty, we have problems about social assistance. People will say to you that's a provincial matter. It's also a federal matter because of the transfers. We have problems about legal aid. Again, people will say civil legal aid is a provincial matter, but it's also a federal matter because of the transfers, right?

So we can go down the list and say to you what all those things are. We have problems about the live-in caregiver program. We have problems about the immigration law still discriminating against women. We have problems about trafficking in women. I can make the list for you. The list has been made several times.

I think part of what we're encouraging this committee to do—and I have to take the opportunity to say how grateful I am that you're here and thank you—is that we really need to work through that list. It's not like we don't know what the list is. We know what the list is, but we need to work through it so we actually get some action on these things. That's what we really need to have happen here.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: I don't know if it's possible to ask a brief question regarding the funding.

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: I think it's important.

I think Ms. Bose mentioned that you were not getting funding—I'm not sure which particular group—from Status of Women Canada.

Dr. Anu Bose: No, we haven't applied to Status of Women Canada, because for the last four years we've been getting money from the mainstream departments.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: That's what I was curious about, where you're getting the funding from.

Dr. Anu Bose: Yes, I said CEDAW for these two years, and before that it was the old Solicitor General. So we haven't had to contend with Status of Women Canada—not yet.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Phinney, do you have a quick question? We have a little bit of time on this side.

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Yes, I was also interested in that.

Why would the Solicitor General fund you? That's not my question, but I'm just following up on that.

Dr. Anu Bose: Oh, that was part of the voluntary sector initiative, and so is the CEDAWone, because CEDAW really does not have a mandate.

Ms. Beth Phinney: Okay.

I want to go back to the last comment you were making here. The Auditor General has said—when I was on the public accounts committee, she mentioned this a number of times in her reports—that with all the money we transfer to the provinces, we should be stating very clearly in those transfers why we're transferring this money, how we intend it to be used. She has said this over and over again.

That doesn't mean, okay, right now I guess we don't have the power to go back in, once we've given it, to say, “Well, you have to spend on this; you can't spend it on roads”. But if the public knew what our intentions were with that money, then you could go after the provincial governments and say, “This is how much was given by Ottawa for this; why are you putting it into roads, or what are you doing with it?” Would that help at all?

The Chair: We can have a quick response and then go on to the next round.

Ms. Beth Phinney: Or are you hoping that we go back and designate it?

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: I think there's no doubt that if we're going to fulfill our equality obligations, we do need some designation of those funds. I know it's a very long and complex political discussion, but we at least have to have those discussions so we can deliver. We have to have them urgently because, literally, there are women in this country who are living in third world conditions.

Ms. Beth Phinney: Are you going after the provincial governments and saying, “You get this much money; why aren't we getting a share of it?”

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: We do have those discussions.

Ms. Beth Phinney: Wouldn't it be better if you knew how we intended it to be spent?

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: It would be much better if we knew. The more transparency in any of this, the better off we all are as civil society.

The Chair: If I could interject, I have to apologize that I unexpectedly have to go to another meeting, but Ms. Grewal has agreed to continue in the chair. I apologize. I did not expect to have to leave.

Thank you.

• (1220)

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: Just before you run, let me say thank you very much for having us.

The Chair: Thank all of us. It's not just me.

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: I know, but you play a role.

The Chair: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Nina Grewal): I think we'll go to the next round.

Helena.

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): I'd like to thank you for being here today.

I'm sure all of us around this table here probably have an incredible story to tell. I would really like to have the opportunity to hear that, because I think we would learn a great deal from each other's personal experiences. We could probably relate to each other in many ways.

Like Lynne, I had a nomination process where I was up against three men. I know they would never admit that the reason they are bitter is that I am a woman, but I do tend to believe that at times, and I will have some challenges in the future.

Also, with respect to Lynne's comments about bringing that into the House for a discussion about the lack of women involved in politics, I tend to agree with her. I think it's something that should be left at the grassroots political process in the riding.

I am more than happy to sit down with any of you at another time that's more appropriate and tell you exactly how that political process works. I can give you some strong advice on how you can support strong female candidates you find who you want to support in the riding, taking you through that process and showing you how it works so you can be most effective—if you're interested.

One of you had commented on the lack of participation in the policy process. My understanding is that Status of Women manages a policy research fund. In my notes here it says “Decisions on selecting emerging issues and projects to be funded are taken by an external committee made up of academic and community experts”. Could you comment on whether your organization is consulted about the membership of this external committee?

Dr. Anu Bose: Yes, we certainly are. They send around things asking who would like to let their names stand for this committee. You should also be aware that at some stage or other we have all had successful bids with this committee. In fact, there is one CRIAW and NOIVMWC have just finished. That is now going through their internal processes.

We did get a successful bid. We did do a successful study for them. I think you've had one in the past, and you've had another.

Ms. Lise Martin: Since you opened the door in terms of the research directorate and there was limited time... One of the factors I've noticed is that because Status of Women is under-resourced as well, excellent papers are being done through the research directorate, but they're definitely not being used to their potential. The take-up on them is limited for various reasons, which is unfortunate.

Dr. Anu Bose: Plus, from the time the project is completed to the time it should go on stream to be accessed by the public or whosoever, it is very long.

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: Often the political opportunity to use the research has passed by the time it is actually produced. Also, since we're talking about anticipating any cuts to Status of Women, I might say we find that research very valuable. I think you might want to watch very carefully where any cuts would come from.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Nina Grewal): Ms. Brunelle.

[Translation]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: You said earlier that we are aware of the problems, especially poverty and violence which, as we know, are often interrelated, and that we should take concrete steps to deal with those problems. What are those steps?

We are in the planning stage for the Beijing + 10 Conference. Is there an action plan? Do you still think that the priorities of that action plan are correct? Are there things that you feel should be added to it?

Also, I believe that to deal with women's problems, it is important to provide even more funding to grass-root groups which know the problems first-hand and can intervene directly.

You said that operational funding is not sufficient, but is the core funding of the groups sufficient? I am sure you are going to say no. By how much could that funding be increased?

● (1225)

[English]

Ms. Shelagh Day: With respect to Beijing +10, there is a process that's in place. The United Nations has sent out to all the governments that participated in the Beijing process and adopted the *Beijing Platform for Action* a questionnaire asking them to report on measures they've taken and progress they've made in implementing the *Beijing Platform for Action*. Status of Women Canada has prepared a response for the federal government that's online. I encourage you to look at it if you have not seen it.

Women's organizations are also engaged in an alternative process, which is to prepare our own reports. One extremely important thing the Feminist Alliance For International Action is now engaged in, and that we hope to be able to present to you very shortly as part of our Beijing +10 work, is an analysis of the last 10 federal budgets. It shows how money has been allocated by the federal government and gives an analysis of whether that has benefited women or not over the past 10 years.

We're very excited about that, because the federal government has never done a gendered budget analysis. It's done, as we've discussed, some analysis of particular pieces of legislation, but never of its budgetary allocations and how they benefit or do not benefit women. That's a major piece of what we're doing, and as I say, we're looking forward to being able to present it to you shortly.

There is a preparatory conference in Geneva, and then in March the Commission on the Status of Women will be holding a meeting essentially to consider what's happened in this period of time.

That's very briefly the schedule that's in place, and we'd be very happy to talk with you more about what's in the government's documents about what it has done and what is in our documents about what we've seen over this last decade.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Nina Grewal): You have one and a half minutes.

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: I'd just like to address the question asked on the funding issue. Of course, Lise has pointed out that we're talking about 54¢ for every woman and child in Canada in terms of the overall budget that is allocated for distribution amongst women's groups.

Even more fundamentally, that pot of money of Status of Women in the last few years is going less and less to autonomous women's groups and more and more to institutions. In the drive towards policy you will find research institutes. You will find more money going to university types of organizations, to people like the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and that sort of thing, who can access funds other ways. Some of that money is being diverted away from the autonomous women's movement.

I really think that has to be re-examined as to the size of the pot, how the pot is allocated, and whether or not it has been a good decision. There should be a study on whether it's been a good decision to move away from sustained funding for women's organizations. We might be surprised at what the results of such an analysis would bring. The drive to move forward will always be supplied from the outside, from the autonomous women's movement.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant: I have a brief comment to make; it is not a question. The government has been making cuts for ten years. We now have colleagues from the government's side with us. Now, we need to get the government to understand that managing poverty is not an easy task.

● (1230)

[English]

Ms. Beth Phinney: I'm going to ask a very provocative question now that we're online, and even considering the people that are in the room today. Thinking back to when Status of Women was set up—not this committee; I'm hoping we change our name for the committee, because it gets confusing—and I need to ask the Status of Women this too, is it difficult to do some work because they're in the government rather than outside of the government?

I always thought when Status of Women started that they were there to look at things and then suggest to the government. I didn't see them myself, because I guess I didn't know enough about them, as being sources of money for groups and funding things that came up that are women's issues. I saw them more as advising the government. That would include research. But I'm wondering, if we have to look at the whole situation, then, does the best advice come from a group that is within government?

You just said that changes are only going to come if it's from women outside government. Status of Women is inside government.

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: That's one of the diminishment of the mechanism I first described to you. The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, which was constituted with independent people from across the country, was a very vibrant and necessary part of the machinery that has been abandoned. Along with it, we lost not only the research capability but the capability for an organization that was connected to the grassroots to declare the priority on the agenda for the government to address. It was a huge loss. In terms of diminishment, their research capability went over into the research fund in Status of Women.

When you were directing questions to Status of Women on Tuesday, I was sitting there thinking, they can't answer that; they have political masters, and they have a certain line that has to be put forward. You need the autonomous women's movement and you need, outside government, well-funded bodies to be able to drive the agenda. What we take for granted today, if you look back, if you're as old as I am, looked like really radical notions back when—

Ms. Beth Phinney: The Status of Women?

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: No, some of the ideas that were put forward at the time in terms of inequality and what it would take to overcome it.

Right now, we take many of those things for granted, because education happens and things move forward, but you have to continually drive towards the attainment of equality. That will not happen from an inside body with the best personnel—even with an enhanced budget. You will need a complementary external force.

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Nina Grewal): I believe you had something to say.

Dr. Anu Bose: I was going to reinforce what Bonnie just said. There is a role for Status of Women in advising government, but there is also a role for Status of Women in creating access for expert groups like ours to be able to provide advice or assistance to government.

Ms. Beth Phinney: You mean advice to the advisers?

Dr. Anu Bose: No, we would like to go directly, but that hasn't happened, at least—

Ms. Beth Phinney: Do you have to go always through the Status of Women?

Dr. Anu Bose: I have never had to go through Status of Women, but that's because I've always related through Immigration. But I think getting access to the powers that be is very difficult for groups like ours, because we are seen to be giving experiential advice as opposed to expert advice, which is not often the case—you know, that these people are speaking from a visceral level.

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: I would like to give you a concrete example of what can happen.

There's an issue we, as the National Association of Women and the Law, have worked very hard with women across the country on: the Divorce Act and custody, and access in particular. We have a very large consensus on what women of Canada believe is necessary there. One is a preamble in the Divorce Act that addresses violence against women, and women's equality.

What happens is, you have internal policy people at Status of Women Canada who are detached from women across the country

and have not looked at the issue very deeply, who will advise the Department of Justice that it's not possible to have a preamble, when in fact we have spent almost 10 years consulting with women across the country and have developed a consensus. The women of this country want a preamble in the Divorce Act that addresses those things.

So not only are they not supporting what the independent women's movement is saying; they are actually contradicting it with the people who make the policy, and that's problematic. The consultation mechanism in Status of Women is not attached enough to the independent women's movement that they fully understand the discourse and the decisions that come to bear.

These are serious problems, and we somehow have to find a way to work them out.

● (1235)

Ms. Beth Phinney: Thank you.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I have two questions and I'm going to ask them both before you answer.

One is that I just want to make sure we're clear on what we're talking about, that you're still advocating for an independent status of women department that would work collaboratively with the women's networks across Canada. We would not want to see that function diminished in any way. We want to in fact see it enhanced. I just want to make sure we're really clear around that.

The second piece I wanted to talk about is one you touched on: core versus project-based funding. Status of Women on Tuesday specifically said it was not within their mandate to deliver services.

When I look at things like the CEDAW report and a number of other recommendations that say what we need to do is get back to some core funding, implicit in that core funding is that there would actually be some delivery of services that would take into account the values and norms Shelagh referenced earlier.

I wonder if you could comment on whether you would see that, with an enhanced mandate, it might be viable for Status of Women to look at actual delivery of services.

If I could just answer one—I mean, just add one—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Jean Crowder: Yes, I'd like to answer the question.

No, the reason I'm asking this is that right now services are at the whim of other departments, because there's no mandate. For example, employment insurance offers a really good example of a department that delivers services that don't always take into consideration programs that are specific to women's needs. Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't, but it's at the whim of their particular policy direction.

If there were a mandate for Status of Women to either have some influence on those departments or to actually deliver services... I just wondered if you'd comment on which way you could see that going.

Ms. Shelagh Day: I don't think we're looking for an enhanced status of women department that would directly deliver services. I think we're looking for an enhanced department of the status of women that would have a real seat at the cabinet table, and real influence in terms of what happens in other departments, and a real way of ensuring that what happens in every other department actually is serving the women of the country equally. I don't think it's a question of delivering direct services. There is a question about their having funds that permit them to fund non-governmental organizations to provide direct services in some cases.

One of the things that have happened there is, as we have already said, that the capacity to provide core funding is gone completely, with huge damage to the non-profit women's organizations in the country. The volunteer sector initiative has written an excellent report about this called *Funding Matters*, which says what happens when you take away core funding.

The federal government used to provide funding to things like women's shelters and to women's centres across the country. It doesn't do that anymore, and there's been a huge diminishment of the capacity of women's organizations because of it.

I know that's slightly different from what you were asking, but it's an important piece of the picture.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Actually, I wasn't as clear about that.

I wasn't actually intending that Status of Women would be the direct deliverer of services. I would agree with you; I think it needs to continue to be through autonomous organizations. But my understanding is that they've even pulled out of autonomous organizations delivering those services, or the funding that comes through the provinces for some of the initiatives isn't specifically tied to some outcomes, as we've seen in British Columbia.

One of the other comments around access to resources is that one thing that gets overlooked is that if we were looking at an equality-seeking agenda, what we would actually look at is capacity building of women's organizations, and then, even more important, at funding a diverse group of organizations, not just the big institutional ones.

I wonder if you could say something about that.

•(1240)

Ms. Shelagh Day: Could I just say one thing about this?

In terms of thinking about this question of core funding for women's non-governmental organizations, we do have to look at it in the whole democratic big picture. Part of what we think this is about is that women are in fact under-represented in the formal institutions of government, right? And because of that under-representation in the formal institutions, the government needs to help women get more participation through actually ensuring that there's some real strength in the community organizations.

So we see this not as a question of our coming here, cup in hands, "Would you please put a nickel in our cup?", but as our saying we should be equal in our citizenship enjoyment in the country. And we do see core funding to the women's non-governmental organizations as a part of that picture, for now.

Dr. Anu Bose: Thank you.

But, you see, capacity building does not happen overnight. We need sustained funding to build this capacity over *x* amount of time. But if we are left with these time-bound projects—18 months, two years, max—it isn't really going to be very helpful.

The capacity to do what and capacity for whom is another question, which has not been adequately answered.

Ms. Lise Martin: I just want to make a little clarification in terms of the—I'm not sure what term you used—big groups or the institutional groups. As I said in my presentation, those groups have three employees and annual budgets of about \$300,000. That's what "big" means in the women's movement.

That's just information.

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: I don't think that's what was meant by "institutional".

Ms. Jean Crowder: No.

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, colleges and universities, the Red Cross...

Ms. Lise Martin: Okay.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: I have just a couple of issues. I gather we only have about five minutes left in this section.

I think the issues with regard to funding and how long it's taking to get projects approved, and what have you, are an unfortunate outcome of a government-wide initiative to make sure everything passes the test that's coming down the road from the Auditor General. Unfortunately, many departments have probably over-corrected, and there are lots of fearful bureaucrats who are applying the rules. We've created a climate where, if the Auditor General says you need to improve processes—which is fine and a good suggestion—we get incredible headlines and lots of stuff going on. Then you have people who are petrified and are going to make sure nothing moves without 15 layers of paper. Frankly, I'm thrilled it's only taking you two months, because I'm hearing from all the groups that it takes even longer to get things done. But we definitely need to work on that.

On the issue of core funding, clearly Catherine Scott's proposal on funding matters is there, and we're seeing it across a whole series of groups. Yes, perhaps we could argue it's more important at this committee because it relates to women's full participation. There are other things. Lots of people would like to core fund, yet it's a real challenge how to manage that when you're in government. When you have limited dollars, do you then deal with the next group that wants in? So they're competing with each other.

But I do appreciate that you need a certain amount of money. If I'd had a chance when they were here earlier this week, I would have asked them about the issue of core funding. We need to have some discussions about it as a Parliament. There are certain things we want to exist in our community, and yours arguably is a very good part of that. There are social networks in our communities that we want to fund because they enhance the quality. They need to be able to turn on the lights and pay the heat, yet government has moved away from that.

We're also starting to have people compete to deliver services in different areas, because competition's a good thing. Well, I'm not sure it is always. If the Toronto School Board ends up delivering all the programs in my community because of a competition—they were able to do something—they're not from our area. Sometimes you need to keep local organizations going. So we are in a period of transition, and I hope you'll do that.

The other challenge is in terms of gender analysis and helping people understand the issues—and the members of this committee. We all sit on at least one other committee, and with every policy that comes forward, every law that comes forward, there is the possibility to ask the question, where is the gender analysis? It is supposed to be a government-wide initiative. But we need everybody asking the questions, because a core group of us always asks the question. Then they say, there goes the girl question again. Everybody has the capacity to ask where it is, and the more questions that get asked at the various committees, the more opportunity for people to say, this is serious and we have to make sure it's done. On our side, anyway, we're definitely encouraging the cabinet ministers to do it.

Last, there have been some changes. I'm not sure everyone is aware, Ms. Bose, in terms of getting more participation from women... Sorry?

Dr. Anu Bose: Yes, I am aware.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: No, but actually it was women in our party particularly who worked with others who pushed to get changes in the nomination process to control the spending. That will help, but each of us is a member of a political party that has policies. Our policy is that we have a target for the number of women. We've met that, and we'll continue, I hope, to move it forward. But each of the parties within their own structures has an obligation to determine what those goals are and to make sure the structures are in place so the party structure says, before any nominations are called in each province, "Did you actually canvass, and were there women who wanted to run in each of the ridings?"

That's what we've tried to institute in ours. I'm not sure it's perfect, but in our own party facilities we can enhance the number of women. The numbers would be better if some of the parties had more women running; we know that. But the number of women as a group was down in the last election, right across the political parties.

I think we also have to make sure we're creating the environment that women want to succeed in. It's a real challenge, and there are other places where women are saying, fine, at the law firms, or wherever else, I can be an equal, and the lifestyle is more conducive to other things I want out of life. So we're in danger, I think, of backtracking, so I was pleased we even got a couple more.

There's no real need to comment, but I encourage having this debate about core funding and figuring out if there's a way we could do more.

● (1245)

The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Nina Grewal): I thank you, ladies, for your valuable time in coming here to give us your presentations. Certainly the information was very useful to all of us as parliamentarians. We highly appreciate that, and we will look forward to your next presentation.

If you could provide each of us a copy of your presentation, it would be very helpful.

A witness: We have provided them to the clerk.

Ms. Bonnie Diamond: We would like to take the opportunity to thank you, and to again say how glad we are that you're all here.

If we can be of any assistance in bringing information to you formally here, or providing information that our organizations have, just call upon us.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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