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•(1745)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)): Order, please.

Let me begin by welcoming those of you who have come to present. I'm just looking at the list, and I don't know whether any of you have had to travel to get here today, but thank you for doing so. I apologize ahead of time for the short notice we gave you. We're a new committee, and we're feeling our way at the moment and just developing lists.

We are missing one presenter, Lorraine Michael, from Newfoundland.... She's just coming in. Welcome. We know the weather is bad. We're pleased to have you here.

This is a new standing committee of the House of Commons. Before we get into actually addressing the agenda we will be promoting, we're hearing from community groups across the country. Each of us has contributed names of people we would like to hear from, and our researcher has provided us with potential witnesses. We're just trying to gather information.

You will notice there's a large number of you here tonight. There are six. We don't usually have this large a panel. This is a special session of this committee. I don't know how long your presentations are, but if you can keep them brief, five or six minutes, it will allow us more time for questions and to interact with you and expand on your matters.

I think you all have an agenda in front of you. I'm going to do it in order, beginning with Susan Russell from the Canadian Federation of University Women.

Welcome. We're pleased to have you here.

Ms. Susan Russell (Executive Director, Canadian Federation of University Women): Thank you very much, Madam Chair and members of this committee.

The Chair: Can I just interrupt you for one moment? I'm sorry. I just want to advise everybody that we're being televised, so keep that in mind.

Go ahead, Susan.

Ms. Susan Russell: Thank you very much, Madam Chair and members of this committee.

On behalf of the Canadian Federation of University Women, I thank you for this opportunity to share our concerns about issues of importance to the women and girls of Canada.

CFUW believes it is important for Canada to honour its commitments to the various United Nations instruments to which it is a signatory, in particular, a platform for action of the World Conference on Women, Beijing plus 5, and the convention on the elimination of discrimination against women.

CFUW applauded Prime Minister Martin's comments when he said: We must measure our progress by the standard of care that we set for the least privileged among us.... The true challenge of leadership is to rally a nation to its unfulfilled promise. To build a society based on equality, not privilege; on duty, not entitlement.

CFUW believes that a fair and just society permits women and girls to reach their fullest potential on an equal basis with men, and notes complex issues that have inhibited the achievement of that parity. However, we fear in this setting that poverty has become endemic and systemic in our society, and little progress appears to have been made in the areas of food security, housing, and fair wages. There's a real need to ensure that there is access to basic education and literacy training for adults in Canada so all can have access to training programs. Good literacy skills empower people to participate more fully in the workplace and in political issues.

On part-time and contract work, paragraph 151 of the Platform for Action says:

In many regions, women's participation in remunerated work in the formal and non-formal labour market has increased significantly...many women have been forced to accept low pay and poor working conditions...

Women are more likely than men to be engaged in part-time work and contract work. A large portion of those so employed would prefer to be full-time employees. Part-time workers and contract workers do not benefit from full access to Canada Pension Plan contributions or to employment insurance. Women with disabilities continue to be underrepresented in the paid workforce.

On unpaid work, paragraph 156 of the Beijing Platform for Action states that "women still also perform the great majority of unremunerated domestic work and community work." It also states, "Women's contribution to development is seriously underestimated, and thus its social recognition is limited."

The volunteer sector makes a huge contribution to the GDP, as noted by the statistics provided by the volunteer sector initiative. Women perform in excess of 60 unpaid hours of work per week, while men average around 30 hours.

How women participate in the workforce affects their ability to make good and sustainable provisions for their own retirement years. Their contributions to the Canada Pension Plan may be curtailed by dropping out to raise children, by part-time work or contract work, and by caring for relatives and others.

In the area of food security, the Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 58(e), calls upon governments to

Develop agricultural and fishing sectors, where and as necessary, in order to ensure, as appropriate, household and national food security and food self-sufficiency, by allocating the necessary financial, technical and human resources.

• (1750)

We are concerned about the concentration of the food economy in the hands of a few companies. This concentration responds to market forces rather than to human needs. Constant rises in food prices make it difficult for poor families to have access to a safe, high-quality, and nutritionally beneficial food supply.

On child care, CFUW is proud of the Government of Canada's commitment in the Speech from the Throne to expand early learning and child care. Canada's young families need high-quality, accessible child care. The Beijing Platform for Action again says in paragraph 161:

The lack of a family-friendly work environment, including a lack of appropriate and affordable child care, and inflexible working hours further prevent women from achieving their full potential.

Again, it calls upon governments to provide affordable support services, such as high-quality, flexible, and affordable child care services that take into account the needs of working men and women. The need for good child care services continues to be acute, especially in rural and northern Canada.

Good, well-thought-out, pedagogically sound child care programs that pay attention to early learning needs are part of the continuum of lifelong learning and preparedness that can contribute to improved literacy standards. Studies indicate the importance of early childhood and pre-school learning provided by qualified staff. Programs that lay the foundation for high levels of literacy are of great importance to a well-informed electorate and to a healthy society.

The Campaign 2000 report revealed that while child poverty had shown a modest decrease since 1996, it increased this year, with the highest rates being shown in Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, and British Columbia. Almost 45% of poor children lived in families where parents worked all year, and almost 30% of poor children lived in families where at least one parent worked full-time all year long. In at least 70% of poor families, the head of the household was a single mother. Senior disabled women were among the poorest women.

• (1755)

The Chair: I'd like you to bring it to a conclusion in the next minute or two.

Ms. Susan Russell: On affordable housing, CFUW notes that the platform for action is committed to enabling women to obtain affordable housing and access to land, among other things, and removing obstacles to access. Numbers of Canadian families obtain housing they cannot afford. High-rental costs for women, especially single mothers, are primarily caused by lack of social not-for-profit housing units in Canada. There have been some gains, but many

families face poor housing. Women with disabilities experience difficulty in securing appropriate housing.

Again, CFUW believes that violence against women continues to be a serious issue. We have long supported the gun control issue and the establishment of the firearms registry as one way of protecting women. It is significant that only yesterday, right across the land, many events marked the remembrance of the 14 women who died at the École Polytechnique. CFUW continues to support registration.

There have been numerous recommendations towards federally sentenced women and the prison system. CFUW supports the recommendations of the Canadian Human Rights Commission's report, and urges that those recommendations be implemented. We note again the large number of aboriginal women in the prison system.

There are just a couple more points.

On Muslim family law and the Arbitration Act, CFUW has supported a resolution from our international federation. CFUW members are concerned about the current application to apply the use of the Arbitration Act in Muslim family law. I know this is happening in Ontario, but we have had reports from Muslim women who fear the outcome of such actions; we are watching it very carefully with regard to human rights. Where we're coming from is that we would like one family law for all women in Canada.

We support UN Resolution 1325. We believe that women have shown their skill in negotiating and can make a valuable contribution in the peace-building process.

On women in decision-making—

The Chair: Could you bring it to a conclusion now, please?

Ms. Susan Russell: This is more or less my conclusion: that we would like a full minister or cabinet position for the status of women. We really feel very strongly about that.

I would like to thank you very much and all the members of this committee for this opportunity to appear.

The Chair: Thank you.

Joni Simpson, welcome.

Mrs. Joni Simpson (Executive Director of Compagnie F entrepreneuriale pour femmes, Women's Community Economic Development Council): Good evening, Madam Chair, members of the committee, practitioners, and guests.

Thank you for inviting me here this evening. My name is Joni Simpson, and I'm a member of the Women's Community Economic Development Council. I'm pleased to be able to present to this committee and would like to say that this initiative raises hope that women's issues are still of importance in the minds of government officials and citizens alike.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Today I am representing the Women's Community Economic Development Council. I'd like to take a few minutes to present this group.

The WCEDC is a Canada-wide grouping of practitioners and researchers in the sector of women's community economic development.

[*English*]

The mandate of the Women's Community Economic Development Council is to address the systemic exclusion of women by advancing women-centred community economic development. Briefly, women's-centred CED has an overarching goal of providing women with the support and tools to increase their economic security. It has holistic and asset-based approaches, and has women's lives and perspectives as the starting points.

[*Translation*]

The council's objectives are to promote women's community economic development as a means of reducing poverty and improving women's lives as well as the lives of their families and their communities, to bring about a greater understanding of the importance of women's community economic development and related issues, to encourage the presence of women in decision making activities related to economic development, to become involved in research and support activities with government organizations in gender analysis and to take part in research activities aimed at supporting and advancing women's community economic development.

[*English*]

The council is concerned that women's equality is no longer on the agenda and that there is a general belief that women have reached equality. The council claims the right of women to have targeted programs adapted to their specific needs. This is because poverty has more of a woman's face. The most persistent poverty is based in economic disparity.

In Canada, poverty clearly intersects with gender, race, and immigrant status to produce a variety of significant impacts upon our social, economic, political, and cultural environments. We know, for example, that women are more likely to live in poverty than men. They make up a disproportionate share of the low-income population, 2.4 million women in 2001 as compared to 1.9 million men.

Women face unequal power relations in virtually all their day-to-day relations with their families and their communities, whether as members of households trying to meet their basic needs and to negotiate their role in the household, or as workers securing jobs and livelihoods. These power relations contribute to women's reduced

access to work and the benefits of work, and result in economic disempowerment. The average annual pre-tax income of Canadian women from all sources, including government transfers, was \$22,885, or 62% that of men, who averaged \$36,865 according to the latest census.

Another example is the poverty rate of women who started as part of a couple and ended as a lone parent, which is ten times higher than that of women who remained part of a couple; I'm speaking therefore of single mothers. As they age, the picture gets no rosier. The widest gender gap in poverty levels is between senior men and women, with 21% of senior women living in poverty as opposed to 11% of senior men.

Given these facts, the council is distressed by the obvious trend in Canadian public policy and program grant-making to take a gender-neutral approach to promoting social and economic development. This gender neutrality has rendered invisible women's struggles to achieve economic independence.

The council aims to represent a wide range of marginalized and low-income Canadian women, who can benefit from community economic development as a means of reducing the continued waste of their potential, breaking the cycle of poverty, and creating possibilities for women to improve their situation.

Council members unanimously agreed that it will be critical to acknowledge the diversity of Canadian women, their needs, and the choices they make in engaging in the economy. Through this approach, the council expects to enrich its gender perspective on the intersection of poverty and social and political exclusion.

We are particularly concerned that racial discrimination is still one of the major causes of inequality for visible minority and immigrant women, regardless of their education, skills, and abilities.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

Consider the precarious situation of self-employed women and micro-entrepreneurs who enjoy no social benefits. In spite of their contribution to the growth of the Canadian economy, their work remains invisible. And they remain invisible when they slip into poverty. Without an adequate social net, they do not have the necessary resources to look after their own needs and those of their children.

[*English*]

Specifically, the Women's CED Council asks the government to implement gender-based analysis and gender-desegregated data collection at all levels of policy and program-building. Canada is praised for its work in CIDA around gender-based analysis, so tools and expertise exist, and there is a wealth of knowledge on the ground through practitioners and researchers.

Also, to achieve equality, it is essential to provide services adapted to the needs of women. Furthermore, renewed and recurrent funding must be provided for women's groups. In recent years, financing has slowly been falling away, having a negative impact on front-line social services and networks for women. It is also necessary to allocate new funding to women's organizations working in women's-centred CED. This means funding outside of what is already there for women's groups.

It is necessary that policy and programming be based upon research and data collected and analyzed through gender-based analysis.

To close, I would like to extend an offer from the council to participate in any way we can in future committees, discussions, or actions around women's equality issues, and specifically in issues of policy research in women's economic development.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thank you for coming.

Lorraine Michael, you've come a long way.

Ms. Lorraine Michael (Executive Director, Women in Resource Development Inc.): Yes, I came last night. That wasn't why I was late. It was the weather in Ottawa, not in St. John's.

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the standing committee, for the invitation to appear before you and present some of the reality of women in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's obvious that I'm going to be able to touch on just a few points, and because of the shortness of notification to be here, I do not have a brief. But I would like to tell you that we are going to put a brief together to present to you to get into more depth on the issues I will raise here today.

I represent Women in Resource Development, a not-for-profit organization in Newfoundland. We call ourselves WRDC, so I will use that from now on, if that's okay.

WRDC is a not-for-profit feminist organization and we are funded by HRDC to do employment assistance support work under the federal-provincial labour market development agreement. Our mission is to achieve economic equality for women in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We strive to do that in a variety of ways. Our main goal is to increase the numbers of women in trades and technology in the natural resource development sector of the province. We chose this sector because that's where some of the best-paying jobs can be found in the province, yet it is an area where fewer than 2% of women in our province are located.

The primary objective of WRDC is to open doors for women in trades and technology through the orientation to trades and technology program, a hands-on, 24-week program offered since 1999 in partnership with our public provincial college, the College of the North Atlantic. We have been responsible for effecting an increase in the numbers of women in training in trades and technology at the college, as well as the numbers of women entering these fields of work. Our work is equally urban and rural.

WRDC puts a tremendous amount of energy into working with government, industry, the post-secondary institutions, unions, and government-based organizations to develop and put into practice

policies that will encourage the recruitment, hiring, and retention of women in trades and technology. Such policies take into consideration the social milieu in which women exist that impacts profoundly on women's lives. Women's economic equality is linked intricately to their social reality—and that's why I want to do a brief, because I want to really point that out.

We have four community development workers whose main goal is to recruit women for the OTT program, to support the women as they do this program and move into training, and to support them as they move into employment. It's from the mouths of our four community development coordinators that I'm speaking tonight.

The OTT itself is a comprehensive program that deals with every aspect of women's lives from how to deal with child care realities through to what it means to be a woman in a male-dominated occupation or place of work. Consequently, our coordinators work with the women in a variety of aspects of their lives. Once again, the reality is that one cannot separate the economic aspects from the social.

I now want to highlight some of the issues the women deal with. Some of them have been mentioned already by my colleagues here.

First of all, there are child care issues. The women with children deal with a severe lack of publicly funded child care facilities and programs in Newfoundland and Labrador. Sometimes the women have not been able to take part in essential parts of their program because of lack of child care. We are hopeful that the plans for a child care program are going to be such that it will be equally accessible to all women across this country and that women in Newfoundland and Labrador will be able to have as good a child care program as what is developed anywhere else in this country. I think it's incumbent upon you to make sure that happens with the plans that we hope are moving ahead.

Another issue is affordable housing. The lack of affordable housing is a major issue in both the rural and urban settings in Newfoundland and Labrador. Many times our community development staff have to put quite a bit of energy into helping women access a decent place to live so that they and their children will be comfortable as the women prepare themselves to enter training, and subsequently the work force and a well-paying job.

Lack of adequate public transportation is also a major issue for women in our province. It's an urban as well as a rural issue, since our urban centres are too small to offer sophisticated transit systems. So urban has a different meaning in Toronto or Ottawa from what it does in St. John's.

● (1810)

Then, of course, there are the issues of violence. There are women who are dealing with abuse issues in the program. They come into the program either in a situation or with a history of abuse in their lives, and this happens in parts of the province where there are very few supports for women suffering abuse. So again, the supports for women in violence are not universal in this country—they're not universal in our province and they're not universal in the country.

We are concerned, as has been expressed by Ms. Simpson, by an attitude we encounter in our society in general and within the governmental system that implies that women's equality is no longer an issue. We've actually had it said to us by some people even inside of government, "Well, you know, women are off the table." That attitude ignores the fact that the majority of women in this country earn much less than men do; that the majority of women in various categories—and I won't name all the categories—live in poverty and do not have adequate food and shelter; and that there are multiple indicators that women still have to fight for an equal place in society. I would love to get into a discussion of some of those indicators.

It is our hope that the presence of a parliamentary Standing Committee on the Status of Women will mean that once again the federal system will take up the challenge and put the well-being of women front and centre on its agenda. We will be looking to the standing committee to do that.

The loss of money in social programs over the past ten years has meant untold hardship on women. A major reason for the cutbacks to social programs is the changes that were made to federal transfers—the dropping of the Canada Assistance Plan and the established program financing. And the reason I'm coming to this is that all those issues I've just talked about cannot be dealt with in Newfoundland and Labrador unless we have money. I will not go into the politics of all of that; I'll leave that to our government at the moment. But these changes to transfer funding to the provinces reduced greatly the ability of a province like Newfoundland and Labrador to deliver social programs to meet people's needs, and certainly the needs of women.

It's more than time to turn that around. It is unacceptable that Canada should be running a surplus of billions of dollars while we suffer a major social deficit in our province. I cannot emphasize how serious that deficit is. The first step by the federal government should be a restoration of transfers to the 1994-95 levels, adjusted for inflation.

I hope we will also discuss what it would mean to have real gender-based analysis in all of the policy development in government, both fiscal and social. I have a lot to say about that, and I hope we can get to discuss it.

Thank you for your attention, and I hope we do get a discussion before the night is out.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Moving right along, we'll go to MediaWatch, Melanie Cishecki.

●(1815)

Ms. Melanie Cishecki (Executive Director, MediaWatch): Thank you very much, Madam Chair and members of the committee. I'm really pleased to be here tonight.

MediaWatch's objective is to promote social justice and equality by conducting media research and advocating change to government, industry, and the public. Our organization's roots go back to 1978, when the Minister of Communications and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, established a task force on sex role stereotyping in broadcast media. The results showed that women were significantly underrepresented on-air and behind the scenes, and were stereotypically portrayed.

As a direct result of these findings, MediaWatch was formed, initially as a subcommittee of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Our mandate was to transform the media environment from one in which women are either invisible or stereotyped to one in which women are realistically portrayed and equitably represented in all their physical, economic, racial, and cultural diversities. Over the years, MediaWatch has evolved from a grassroots activist organization to our current incarnation as a research-based organization that works with all stakeholders, including government, industry, civil society, and the public, to strengthen media public policy.

The link between media and women's equality may not be obvious to everyone. I'd just like to make some connections here.

Our nation has been premised on the development of communications infrastructure linking us across a vast geographic area and preserving Canadian cultural sovereignty from encroachment by our neighbours to the south. According to a Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage report entitled "Our Cultural Sovereignty", our broadcasting system is one of the primary ways in which we as Canadians have developed a sense of community and identity. Our broadcasting system has always been considered a public resource that must operate in the public interest.

MediaWatch was established because women's interests were not well represented. MediaWatch exists today because there is still much work to do. The women of Canada continue to speak out against sexist and stereotyped images of women. We continue to speak out against violence in the media, particularly sexualized violence against women.

MediaWatch's research shows that Canadian women and men are concerned about material that promotes hatred against identifiable groups, they are concerned about advertising and drama that sexualizes youth, and they worry about the impact this will have on our children. They say that they want to see more women in decision-making positions within media, and that diversity needs to be better reflected, both on-air and behind the scenes. They made the link that a media environment that degrades women influences the way society treats women. Their intuition is backed up by an increasing body of research.

MediaWatch is the only organization dedicated to improving the portrayal of girls and women in the media. We're often the lone voice talking about the differential impact of media racism or violence against women. One of the ways the federal government signals its commitment to the importance of our work is embodied in Status of Women Canada, which provides financial support for our work through the women's program. The government is also a signatory to the Beijing Platform for Action. Section J focuses on women in the media.

Canada has been recognized as a world leader for its policies and regulations governing gender portrayal and violence in the media. MediaWatch conducts research, advocacy, and lobbying here in Canada. As an award-winning organization that has participated in many conferences—Beijing in 1995, and such far-flung places as Bangkok, Fiji, Jamaica, Moscow, Beirut, South Africa, and others—we're recognized as world leaders in gender monitoring. Our concern is that in being slow to respond to the social and technological changes of today's world, Canada is losing its reputation as a leader in media policy and regulation. We urge the government to review how the media and policies governing the media can be strengthened to better reflect the presence and portrayal of women. We offer our research expertise to assist.

• (1820)

MediaWatch is a member of the Coalition for Women's Equality. I think the coalition's concerns have been well presented to the committee, so I won't reiterate them here.

As a final footnote, I do wish to underline that as an equality-seeking organization, MediaWatch would like to express its strongest support for any initiatives that would strengthen Status of Women Canada as a department within government. We also strongly support any changes to the processes and funding mechanisms, especially re-establishment of core funding used by the women's program, that would take some of the pressure off of women's organizations.

Since the shift to project-based funding, MediaWatch, like many groups who've appeared before you, has struggled to survive with only two full-time staff. This is in an era in which increased accountability demands are placed on women's organizations and funding has become even more difficult to obtain. We have experienced, and echo here, the same frustrations that many other presenters have mentioned.

I'd just like to say that it's important to know that although Status of Women Canada encourages women's organizations to seek funds from other government departments, the reality is that these departments see Status of Women as having responsibility for the women's envelope, and do not see the links for their departments.

I know that my board and staff are exhausted and demoralized by the current system. However, we sincerely thank you for your interest in and commitment to addressing the current crisis facing the women's movement.

Thank you very much for this opportunity tonight.

The Chair: Thank you, and we thank you for your commitment as well.

We'll move to Hélène Cornellier. Welcome.

[Translation]

Mrs. Hélène Cornellier (Coordinator of Action Plan and Communications, Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale (AFEAS)): Madam Chair, members of the committee, first of all, I'd like to present AFEAS to you. I'll then tell you something about the main focus of our activities, for 2004 to 2006, that is the major social issues of concern to us.

A non-profit organization with no political affiliation founded in 1966, the AFEAS, or the *Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale*, has 14,000 members in Quebec, that is 14,000 Quebec women working as volunteers in 350 local chapters located in 12 regions. The mission of the AFEAS is to defend the rights of women and to work for the improvement of their living conditions. Through education and joint social action, it works toward the development of a society based on values of peace, equality, equity, justice and respect. In its many endeavours and official stands, the guiding principle of the AFEAS is the equality and independence of women so that they're able to participate as full citizens in the democratic life of Quebec and Canada.

In their annual general assemblies, AFEAS delegates democratically elect their directors and decide on the positions and claims that they will defend on behalf of all their members. Let me note that with the exception of the headquarters, with its seven remunerated staff members, all the work done by the AFEAS is accomplished voluntarily by its 14 000 members. There are some members who volunteer for weeks on end.

For greater effectiveness, the AFEAS is also part of Quebec organizations or grouping as well as Canadian and international ones. The AFEAS is able to carry out its mission because of the commitment of its 14,000 volunteer members and financial resources from three sources: self-funding at the level of 55 per cent, that is from revenue made as contributions to funding activities, 35 per cent government aid shared between Quebec and Canada, including the women's program with Status of Women Canada, as well as 10 per cent of the total budget from private sponsors or partners.

For 38 years now, as a result of its presence and the sensible approach of its activities within Quebec and Canadian society, AFEAS has acquired credibility in its involvement with decision-making organizations and community groups. In 1968, at the time of the Bird Commission on the status of women, AFEAS was already committed to lessening the persistent inequalities between men and women and maintained that the time that women spent on family members was unrecognized work that penalized them.

Since the 1990s, realizing that there would be no solution to gender inequality without the recognition of the specific contribution of women to society, members of the AFEAS have focused on obtaining the social and economic recognition of the unpaid, so-called invisible work done mainly by women with children and persons with declining autonomy. To this end, AFEAS has taken up several issues, notably the reconciliation of family and work obligations, the effects on family life, professional advancement and level of retirement benefits as well as the impacts of the transformation of the health and social services network on women caregivers.

In spite of the legal equality of men and women, we must recognize that full equality has not yet been achieved in many spheres of social life. I don't think that we would be here if there were full equality. We would probably not feel the need for this special parliamentary committee.

In spite of their massive presence in the paid labour market, women have not seen a resulting decrease in their family responsibilities. The division of labour in the couple and the family that we might have expected has not taken place. Furthermore, both of the evolution of the labour market and the transformation of the health network have resulted in even greater responsibilities, requiring women to become extremely effective in time management and family organization.

In spite of this, they receive very little recognition and even fewer economic and social benefits. Although women's involvement in society is far from negligible, even today it remains hidden from view. The responsibilities and tasks of mothers and caregivers, with little recognition but essential to families and society, are still the significant factor, even in 2004, in the considerable inequalities among men and women.

• (1825)

In these circumstances, AFEAS is calling upon the Government of Canada to quickly conclude, for the sake of parents, an agreement for the implementation of the Quebec parental insurance system; a better program of parental leaves for Canadians outside Quebec, that is an improved system based on that of Quebec; a universal benefit for women and for men who do not have access to the existing benefit program for the birth or the adoption of a child.

In the case of women caregivers, AFEAS is also calling for an agreement for the implementation of the Quebec benefits for caregiving, the so-called compassionate benefits; improved compassionate benefits for Canadians outside Quebec and adequate transfer of funds to Quebec and to the other provinces of course, for health and social services, including front-line services as well as home care.

For women's groups, AFEAS is calling for the maintenance and improvement of financial assistance programs, including a substantial budget increase for, among others, the women's program of Status of Women Canada.

We are asking this committee to be extremely vigilant in insuring that there is no retreat when it comes to the rights of women.

In conclusion, in relation to the failure to recognize the unpaid work of women, it should be noted that there are still too many of us in 2004, forced to live in poverty and with the threat of violence, both in Quebec and in Canada.

It is our desire to take part in the future proceedings of this committee. However, we will have to know ahead of time what your agenda is and be able to table briefs in French since we cannot afford to translate the required documents.

Thank you for your attention.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Darlene Bessey, please go ahead.

Ms. Darlene Bessey (President, YWCA Canada): Thank you.

Good evening. My name is Darlene Bessey. I'm president of the board of directors for YWCA Canada, and I live in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

As a national organization representing 37 member associations across Canada, YWCA Canada is grateful for the opportunity to present to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

You have probably heard of the YWCA at some point in your life. Perhaps you've accessed some of the many services that our members have provided across this country. However, we believe there is not a real awareness of the true work and breadth and depth of the work we do in this country. I want to speak a little bit about that before going on to four key points we would like to make.

In addition to being a national organization, YWCA Canada is a member of the World YWCA, which connects more than 25 million women globally. Providing service to women and their children at critical turning points in their lives, YWCA is the largest multi-service women's organization in Canada, operating programs and services in over 150 communities.

Now in operation for 135 years, YWCA is one of Canada's largest providers of shelters, with 45 facilities at 24 sites—we wish there were fewer, because we wish there was not such a great need for this particular program and service—and subsidized housing for homeless women and women escaping violence. We house over 40,000 women and children annually. We are the second largest provider of child care in the country, providing care for 35,000 children each year. We offer an extensive array of employment, vocational job placement, and life skills training and services to more than 32,000 women and young women every year.

Advocating for women's rights since the early 1900s, the YWCA's political voice is grounded in the experiences of the women for whom we work. We do not speak or advocate on any issue that we do not truly live every day on the front line of the work we do. Assisting women to reach their full potential, to be active participants in all aspects of society, is our overarching goal.

This evening, I would like to focus on four recommendations that are based on our long-term investment in the rights and equality of women in Canada, and are based on our experience of working with millions of Canadian women over our long history. We will be forwarding a full-length brief to this committee in the next week, elaborating on these points.

The four points of particular concern are: one, the need to develop a national plan that will truly reduce the incidence of violence against women and children; two, the importance of housing initiatives to not only alleviate women's poverty, but to also assist a woman in not needing to return to a violent relationship because she and her children have no other place to go; three, sustaining women's equality-seeking organizations in order to support equality for women and girls in Canada; and four, the need for a universally accessible quality child care program.

YWCA Canada recommends that the federal government take leadership in designing a comprehensive national plan that will effectively decrease violence against women in Canada, including discussions with service-providers, policy-makers, legislative bodies, and survivors of violence within a provincial-territorial-federal arena. We recommend support for research that will assist policy-makers in understanding and dealing with the complexity of domestic violence; support for the development and implementation of models of sheltering service that offer seamless and effective services and programs that can effectively reduce conjugal violence, such as the one presently being developed by the YWCA and supported by Status of Women Canada, the Department of Justice, and the National Secretariat on Homelessness; provision of a substantial financial commitment to emergency shelters, second-stage and permanent housing projects dedicated to women fleeing abuse; and provision of adequate legal aid funding for family law assistance.

On a national housing plan, lack of affordable housing in Canada is one of the significant reasons that women return to violent relationships and are kept in the depths of poverty. We recommend that the federal government establish a national housing plan and allocate resources to expand social housing initiatives through programs such as the affordable rental program. Increase political pressure on provinces to hold to the matching funds commitment outlined in the affordable housing framework agreement.

• (1830)

On sustaining women's equality-seeking organizations, women's organizations in Canada have been major contributors to the development of equitable social policy in this country. The last fifteen years, however, have seen a marked decline in the visibility of equity issues on the Canadian social agenda. This decline is directly correlated to the significant funding cuts experienced by women's groups in the early 1990s. There has been no improvement in the status of women in Canada since that time. In fact, we have seen a significant regression in progress. Most notably, this is marked by the lack of women's earning power—70¢ for every dollar earned by men—and the increase in poverty rates for women and children, as well as the ongoing lack of women represented in public office.

These are not coincidences. Therefore, we recommend that the federal government support women's equality-seeking organizations through sustainable funding, so that these organizations can fulfill the important mandate of assisting women in reaching full equality. And we ask that there be a reinstatement of a full senior ministry for women, with realistic resources and funds.

On child care, it is well understood that quality, universally accessible child care and women's economic autonomy are clearly linked. Based on thirty years of active involvement in both the lobby for and delivery of child care, we recommend the following: development of a publicly funded, sustainable system for quality child care that parents can count on and afford, with government providing most of the funding directly to programs, giving them a stable operating base—in Quebec, for example, parents pay a maximum \$7 a day and government pays the rest; a child care act that guarantees standards and the principles of quality, universality, accessibility, developmental programming, and inclusiveness; public accountability tied to provincial and territorial five-year plans that

contain goals, timelines, targets, and a way to measure real progress in developing comprehensive family- and centre-based child care services; and money for children, so that in the future every public dollar goes directly into services—and services should be expanded in the non-profit sector with a transition plan developed for existing commercial centres. And we wish to note that we respect Quebec's right to develop its own program.

As has already been articulated this evening, we, too, are very pleased to see the establishment of this particular committee. We'd like to offer our assistance and support in whatever way we can to make your plans come to fruition.

Thank you.

• (1835)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We've certainly heard much from the groups here tonight.

In our practice here, we have a designated speaking order that we agreed to at the beginning of the session, and we have time allocations within each round of questions. The time allocation includes both the question and the answer. While I am normally fairly generous with the time, I don't think I'm going to be as generous tonight, because we have more of you to hear from than we normally do. I'm going to ask my colleagues to keep their questions as tight as they can, and I'll try to give as many of you an opportunity to respond where appropriate. I also ask my colleagues to direct their questions to whoever they want to hear from.

Ms. Grewal.

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

I would like to thank each and every one of you for taking your time to come here. Certainly your presentations are very useful to us.

My question today is this. This committee in the past has been calling many organizations such as yours to suggest the top issues of concern to women. Could you please just identify three top issues of concern, and what role our committee can play?

The Chair: I'm going to go down the row and ask each of you quickly to identify your top three priorities. I think some of you have identified them in your remarks, but just summarize with the top three priorities.

I'm going to start from the other end this time, and Darlene.

Ms. Darlene Bessey: I think certainly our top three would be the need to develop a national plan that would reduce the incidence of violence against women and children; again, the importance of housing initiatives; and the sustainability of women's equality-seeking organizations.

My hope is that someone else will speak to child care, because I can't not speak to that. Of course, we're all optimistic about the progress that is being made there, but we still have to see the results.

The Chair: Hélène.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Hélène Cornellier: For AFEAS, our first concern is the recognition of the unpaid work of women within the family as mother and caregiver.

The second point would be the issue of violence. We think that it is important to have an action plan against violence. We are thinking about the vote that will be taking place on Thursday. We are concerned by the motion that will be presented in the House on Thursday against the firearms registry. It is important to continue with this effort.

As for the third point, I go along with you, Madam, it is the maintenance of women's organizations so that we will be able to continue our work aimed at improving programs. Status of Women will require a larger budget as well as the various departments.

• (1840)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Melanie.

Ms. Melanie Cishecki: I would have to add child care as one of the primary concerns, and also the issue about housing for women, and in there I include assistance for women escaping violent situations. And the third, of course, would be any mechanisms to strengthen Status of Women Canada, including sustained and increased funding for women's organizations.

The Chair: Thank you.

Lorraine.

Ms. Lorraine Michael: My number one would be to say ditto to everything that was just said, and my number two would be to add something I didn't present. I mentioned that we need an interconnectedness between policies. I'm going to use an example, and this is a very serious one for the women.

Because of the changes with regard to money for training, it has been really hard on women over the last ten years. Changes that have been made inside of HRDC have impacted greatly on women, especially when they changed funding from money for seats in an educational institution to money being given directly to students, who then use the money. What that has meant for women in the orientation to trades and technology program is that because the program costs almost \$10,000, when it came to tax time, all of a sudden they were seen as having \$10,000 in income.

Several times now, we've had to run interference with Revenue Canada trying to deal with that issue. There was nobody looking at what the implications were of putting money into the hands of the

individual instead of paying institutionally. That kind of thing has to be looked at, and I'll be putting that stuff in our brief. The number of ways in which policies are clashing with one another for women trying to do training is a very important issue.

The Chair: Thank you for bringing it to our attention.

Joni.

Mrs. Joni Simpson: I will start with providing service adapted to specific needs of women, which includes a lot of what was said, like child care and things like that. Next is funding for women's organizations. And I'll finish with the overall one, which is gender-based analysis to oversee all policy and program work across all departments.

Thank you.

The Chair: Susan.

Ms. Susan Russell: I would just endorse what has been said. Violence against women is one of our top priorities. Women have to walk the streets safely and they need to be safe in their homes. Affordable housing, access to housing, is second. And the third one is child care. We think this is terribly important, particularly for women's economic equality. That's it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Susan Russell: I have just one more thing. We really think we would like to emphasize that we would like a full minister for women's equality, and any support possible for Status of Women Canada. We're very grateful for what Status has done for us over the years, and we think it's a very important department.

The Chair: Thank you.

From the Bloc, Madame Brunelle.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Good evening, ladies. It is a pleasure for me to meet you.

Since we began these hearings in the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, I've been struck by the difficulties experienced by women with respect to poverty and housing. It would often be possible to find the solution by settling the problem of the fiscal imbalance. We know that the requirements are to be found in the provinces. The provinces are the ones closest to the people but the money is in Ottawa. It seems to me then that we must find a solution to the fiscal imbalance and force the government to reinvest in social housing.

Some of you mentioned that the government should show leadership. In order to do so, there must be some political will. My advice to you would be to keep up the pressure on your elected representatives. That is the right way of going about it.

I have a question for Hélène Cornellier. You talked about invisible work. How could this work be remunerated?

Mrs. Hélène Cornellier: In fact, we are talking about economic recognition. We in the AFEAS are not talking about paying wages. We must be clear about that. This is work that is done by women who stay at home with their children, with the elderly or their parents, as well as by women who have paid employment. This situation has been the lot of women for quite a long time.

Our wishes are to be found in the recommendations I made at the end of my presentation. The Quebec system of parental leave insurance that we are asking for, for example, would be an advantage for parents, women and even for men.

• (1845)

Ms. Paule Brunelle: So it would be a matter of having enough money to be able to stay at home.

Mrs. Hélène Cornellier: Exactly.

The present federal system of maternity and parental leave provides for benefits amounting to 55 per cent of one's wages. Only 50 per cent of women, or slightly more, and very few men are able to avail themselves of this. So it is not sufficient. That is why we are asking that the federal system be made independent of employment-insurance and we are calling for the creation of a more family-based system.

In Quebec, parental insurance benefits are part of family policy. We would like to see compassionate leave benefits come under Quebec as well, in the same way, with the same scale as for parental insurance and the same definitions.

In our view, Canadian women are just as entitled to an intelligent program as the women of Quebec, who will have their program, since having children, particularly at a time when demographics are so low, does not constitute withdrawal from the work place because of unemployment but is rather a social contribution. That is an example.

All the measures aimed at reconciling work and family could be organized and supported by the government of Quebec and, in the case of the other provinces, by the Government of Canada.

Day care is also a way of insuring this recognition of women's right to work without being penalized. Day care at \$7 a day in Quebec is a way of serving this objective.

There are various other potential ways.

What our organization is asking for could perhaps apply to Canada but benefits in Canada are more in the nature of universal benefits, which is something different. In Quebec, what we are asking for, among other things, is that such credits be paid into the benefit regime for mothers who choose to stay at home in order to raise their children between the ages of zero and six. They do not always do so as a matter of choice since it is sometimes impossible for them to keep on working when they have one, two or three children and they prefer to take a more active part in their upbringing rather than send them to day care.

These are certain things that we have been asking for in Quebec. Of course, it does not apply to the federal level but there could be a federal equivalent for women with children who stayed at home while they were receiving family allowances. This would be a

supplement to the retirement benefit since this is work of a social nature that, if not done, would result in a problem even greater than the one we are now facing.

The same thing applies to caregivers. Our recommendations also apply to persons who look after the elderly or the disabled, whether it be a spouse, a sister etc.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Next on the Liberal side is Susan Kadis.

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Thank you for coming this evening.

I would like to ask you if there are any new or emerging variables or factors affecting women, improving women's status, improving their health, etc., and their ability to succeed or advance that are sort of typical of the times now. I'm hearing a lot about problems that unfortunately continue to exist and still need to be dealt with better—violence against women, and child care, which we will again hopefully deal with soon in better ways.

Are there any particular trends now that you feel will make it more difficult for women, or will have a more adverse impact?

The Chair: Who wants to go? Lorraine.

Ms. Lorraine Michael: I think Darlene mentioned one, which is that poverty is growing; it's increasing. So poverty is always an issue, but the fact that at this moment it's increasing for women and children is an emerging issue, and one we have to look at. It's related to employment and what has happened to work for women. That's not emerging this year; that's been emerging over about the last ten years—the changes to women's work. I think maybe Susan was referring to that—the growth in temp jobs, part-time work, and contract work in workplaces where these were all permanent positions before.

While some of us have been researching that issue for the last 10 to 12 years, I don't think the urgency around it has been in the public sector the way it needs to be. Within the women's community and within many of our organizations, we've been doing that research for a long time, but I still see it as an emerging issue because it hasn't been dealt with. The work creating that is continuing—the temp work and the low-paying jobs are continuing.

So that's one I would see. That's an urgent thing for us to start paying attention to. The statistics are there, the information is there, and the analysis of why it's happening is there. I hope in the upcoming Beijing plus 10 it's going to be looked at as well. We've got to look at it here in our country.

• (1850)

The Chair: Thank you.

Does anybody else want to comment on this? Joni.

Mrs. Joni Simpson: I'd just like to say that a growing number of women have to create their own employment. A lot of these women are immigrant women, visible minority women, who are the most marginalized. This puts these women in very precarious states with no advantages, as invisible work.... I would just say that, in general.

The Chair: Thank you.

Melanie.

Ms. Melanie Cishecki: I'll just briefly add that with our mandate being the portrayal of women and girls in the media, deregulation, technological change, and the blurring of national boundaries mean that our borders are more open to foreign material that may not necessarily uphold Canadian policies and regulations on violence and the portrayal of girls and women in the media. Concentration of media ownership means that if there is negative portrayal, there are fewer venues to escape. There's much less choice and employment for women.

The Chair: Darlene.

Ms. Darlene Bessey: I'd just like to add that what we hear from the shelters across Canada—all the shelters, not just the ones operated by the YWCA—is that there are increasing numbers of women and children seeking shelter due to violence. I believe the StatsCan report for 2002 also attested to that.

We know that in Toronto alone, 70% of the women who try to access the shelters run by the Toronto YWCA are turned away because there's not enough capacity. I know just from the YWCA in Saskatoon that over 200 children a year seek shelter with their mothers at the YWCA shelter. Many of these children actually consider the shelter their home because they come and go so often.

These are increasing realities in our society. When the shelters were created twenty years ago—I think it's kind of like food banks—we thought they would disappear at some time. In fact, there's a greater need now than ever for those services.

The Chair: Joni, you have a quick comment.

Mrs. Joni Simpson: We also see an increase in women's mental health problems. I would say that this is probably due to overload of all of the pressures: social pressures, work pressures, and the precariousness we see. They're showing up at the organizations with multiple problems that we're not necessarily able to help with. We refer. This seems to be a trend that's growing—mental health.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Chair, are we likely to get only one round of questions?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Okay, that guides what I'm going to ask then.

I want to thank you all for your very thoughtful presentations. I appreciate your coming on such short notice. I know that's a challenge for people who are already overloaded.

I want to comment specifically on a comment Susan made around standard care for the least privileged. A number of you have talked about how you would like to continue to work with the committee on what happens next. My understanding is we're going to continue to hear from witnesses, and at the end of it we'll be developing an action plan.

I wonder if you could talk specifically about how you could see yourselves and other groups continuing to work with the committee to help shape and inform the action plan.

● (1855)

The Chair: Who wants to start?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Sorry. It's not an easy question. If you could be specific as well, I think that will help to guide us in terms of how we continue to consult.

The Chair: Darlene, I think I saw your hand up.

Ms. Darlene Bessey: Well, I think if you could share it with us on an ongoing basis, we could have some input and assist in the process. I don't know what mechanisms could be used, but certainly I think that ongoing consultation is really critical. That's what I believe we would appreciate and value.

I'd also like to draw your attention to the work done by the voluntary sector initiative over the last several years. We are all voluntary sector organizations. There is an accord in place that defines the relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector. There are two codes, one on funding practices and one on policy development. I would also ask that you use those as a framework for the work as you go ahead, because sustainable funding is in fact a commitment made to the sector through the funding code.

I think what you're hearing tonight is frustration with the fact that we don't feel enough is happening. Project-based funding is still the norm, and yet the accord is in place, and it does provide a framework. I think if we were to follow that, we would see some interesting and really positive gains.

The Chair: Joni, do you want to comment?

Mrs. Joni Simpson: I'd only like to say there's a real wealth of knowledge on the ground in all kinds of women's organizations, and I really think you should be tapping into it. We've also branched into thousands of women who are telling us their needs. I really hope there will be an ongoing dialogue.

I'm sure that people like myself will be very enthused at being involved in the process along the way and making ourselves available on short notice, as we did today, but hopefully with a little more notice. It was a pleasure to be here.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Susan and then Lorraine.

Ms. Susan Russell: I share a group that has 10,000 women to tap on. We would be very happy if there was something we could help with—i.e., research or getting back to our communities. Our members are university women, but they come from all disciplines, so that gives us access to doctors, nurses, teachers, and so on and so forth.

We would be happy to help in any way we can to provide you with a conduit into other communities, if that would be helpful to you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Lorraine.

Ms. Lorraine Michael: This is an indirect answer to what you're asking. I think what's going to be important is not only what you come up with after the first consultation round that you're going through—and maybe we can do this together in discussion with the women's community and with the committee—but a mechanism to ensure that the things you come up with are going to make it into Parliament. There needs to be a way in which some decisions are made so that our frustration level comes down a little.

For example, the report of the task force on pay equity has some wonderful recommendations on pay equity, but nothing has been done about those recommendations. We need to see that taking the time to work all weekend, fly out, and get here at two o'clock in the morning to be here today comes to something really fruitful at the end. I don't mind my last four days, but if we only keep going through these kinds of meetings and nothing ever happens, then our level of frustration will go up.

I don't know how helpful that is, Ms. Crowder.

The Chair: Melanie and then me.

Ms. Melanie Cishecki: I concur with everything that has been said at the table.

MediaWatch is a research-based organization with international ties that can provide best practices, and probably all of us in our different mandates can provide best practices. We can provide links with women. Whatever you need, we have the connections to help you do your job. I think we really will move heaven and earth to help you do what needs to be done.

• (1900)

The Chair: Thank you.

We're really out of time, but I'm going to suggest that if any of my colleagues have a quick, short question, we'll hear your questions and ask for a quick, short answer.

We have another panel coming in right after you, so I want to move it along.

I'm going to start down the row.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mine is not short, so I won't ask that question.

What I wouldn't mind is for the committee to make suggestions, as Lorraine did. I thought her point on the taxation of learning and the money allocated for that seat was very interesting. That's something we have to know, but it was not brought to our attention; we always hear of those things happening, but we don't know specifically those things. You can forward that through the mail to the clerk.

And, Darlene, I wouldn't mind a copy of that accord. So perhaps you could submit a copy of it to the clerk, or send us a link to get to it, please.

The Chair: Madame Bonsant.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Good evening, I'm a new member of Parliament. The reason why I am involved in politics is because I want to change things. For the past 10 years, the present government has cut back in social services.

During the same period of time, budget savings amounted to \$66 billion.

You have the opportunity to get across your message. What message would you like to send to the government this evening, taking into account its cumulative surpluses in relation to the general reductions in your overall budget?

Mrs. Hélène Cornellier: AFEAS and Quebec would like to see a resolution of the fiscal imbalance. Once the money is transferred to where it should be, it will be easier for the provinces to organize the services based on the understanding, dating back to the time of Confederation, on the sharing of responsibilities.

Let me make an additional point on the previous question. We consider the committee, in its action plan and even outside this action plan, to be a place where women can come to an agreement. We think that women members of Parliament can pass the word to each other so some consideration is given to women, for example, for the vote on the motion scheduled for Thursday. Of course, you still have to convince men. I am very much aware of the fact that most members of Parliament are not women. We would like to see this kind of initiative and this kind of agreement reflected in the committee, among others. We see it as a place where we can occasionally send notes or opinions of upcoming subjects requesting you to make appropriate adjustments as necessary. Otherwise, we are scattered and we would have to contact all the members of Parliament ourselves, both men and women, which would be impossible in a country like Canada for a group such as ours.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Torsney, it's your turn.

Hon. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): First of all, Madame Cornellier,

[Translation]

I hope that everything will work out well for Thursday's vote. This is the committee room where we worked night and day for several months, studying the issue of gun control. No one ever talks about all the lives that have been saved because of gun control. Keep up your work.

[English]

I do have a question, but it's not something you're going to be able to answer right now.

I do caution that there's been lots of talk about the incredible surplus—and thank God we're talking about what to do with a surplus, as opposed to talking about what to do with a deficit. Thank God we erred on the side of caution in terms of underestimating revenues and perhaps in overestimating costs, because the alternative would be devastating to women right across this country if we were still in a position of making cuts. So let's be clear about one thing: it's a good thing that we're in the situation we're in. I don't know that people understand that very small or minor percentages cause a complete swing in the opposite direction in a budget of \$180 billion. All the rest of the G-7 countries are envious that we're in a position where we have invested in national child tax benefits, supports for families, and increased health care. So let's be really clear about where we are.

If we were going to look at some way to core fund organizations—I think it was partly addressed in some of your comments already, Ms. Bessey—how would we come about those decisions? Is it that we would fund the Y because it has so many members? Is it that we would fund CFUW because I'm a member of it? Is there a way we could say it's research-based in terms of MediaWatch? How do we do this? If we are funding the groups that currently exist, do they really service everybody? There are places across this country where we know that the creation of a group would help with social and community cohesion, yet they don't exist yet.

If we're going to make a recommendation to restore core funding, ministers are going to want to know what this is going to cost and how it will be rolled out. This morning's panel suggested that we should have this national consultation. I suggested that I didn't think there was anybody in government who's advocating yet to host such a thing, because they do see big costs. So perhaps it's up to those who want the core funding to try to derive that process and tell us how to do it better, because I recall that there was some concern about which groups got funding last time when we had it. I'm certainly extremely sympathetic to the groups in my constituency and right across the country who spend so much time and money in writing proposals and competing.

I don't know if anyone has a quick answer, but we definitely have to hear from you how to structure such funding.

• (1905)

The Chair: I don't know whether there's a quick answer, but we need a quick reply. If you don't have a chance to respond tonight, and you have some thoughts, please send them in to our clerk.

Melanie.

Ms. Melanie Cishecki: Very, very quickly, there definitely will be some difficult discussions between the groups and government. But I think, as a first step, we do need to talk; whether it's here or some other venue, we do need to have those discussions. That's all I can say.

The Chair: Is there anybody else? Darlene, go ahead.

Ms. Darlene Bessey: I would like to add that I think in recent years there's been a great deal more collaboration within the voluntary sector itself, as well. That is one of the results of the voluntary sector initiative. There are groups collaborating and working together. I guess there's always going to be a certain amount of competition for funding, but I think there's increased collaboration

and relationship-building, because we do want to work together. You see the coalition of women's equality-seeking organizations coming to you as a group of organizations.

Again, the proposed accord provides that sort of framework. I think it's recognizing what the priorities of government are. Those priorities are being created as a result of input from groups such as ourselves. So where's the matching, in terms of being able to achieve what government wants to achieve for the people of this country, and what groups and organizations can assist you in doing that?

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Guergis, you have a question. Go ahead.

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Thanks very much for being here.

Unlike my colleague across the way, I actually don't support the gun registry.

My question is very sincere to all of you. I truly want to understand how it is that we make the link between a registered gun and protecting women. I do have some experience when it comes to violence against women from some work that I have done. I really want you to help me out with this. If you can send it to me at a later date I would appreciate it, because I will read it and want to understand where you're coming from.

How can a registered gun versus a non-registered gun stop someone from using it? That is one of the questions I have. I'm hoping you can shed some light on this, because I fail to see how the billions of dollars being used for the gun registry.... I would rather see that money go to you for the good work you're doing than keep a list of guns.

The Chair: Who wants to make a quick response to that?

Susan Russell.

Ms. Susan Russell: It is my belief that a woman has a right to know if there is going to be a gun in her house. I do not believe that guns should be unregistered; I think it's irresponsible. I know that women are more likely to be killed by a gun in the house than by any other method. I think there's a direct link between registration and violence against women. For me, it's primarily a violence-against-women issue. I just can't see what other issue it is, apart from irresponsible accidents that happen with people who have guns. I truly believe that if you have to register a gun, you will be more responsible with its use than if you just go out and buy one and use it. Deaths in the United States are much higher than they are here.

• (1910)

The Chair: Does anybody else have a quick response?

[Translation]

Mrs. Hélène Cornellier: Yesterday was the 15th anniversary of the École polytechnique massacre in Montreal. You probably are all aware of this fact. It was also the National Day for Commemoration and Action on Violence Against Women. The Coalition for Gun Control came about following the École polytechnique massacre in Montreal and there was a reason for this. For 15 years, we have seen a decline in the number of women dying as a result of family violence along with the drop in gun-related deaths because of the firearms registry. It is not the entire solution. Obviously those who do have a registered firearm can make use of it. But there are people who wouldn't want to have a firearm that they would have to register and will not go buy one on the black market. So that avoids certain arms being used in households and families.

If this register is and remains so expensive, if this program has been poorly organized and money improperly used—I myself am not in a position to judge but this is what I have heard—then corrective measures must be taken but it shouldn't mean the end of the registry. That is our position in Quebec.

[English]

Ms. Helena Guergis: I just have one quick comment. I just want everyone to be clear that I have no problem with gun control, and I support it. I support gun safety. I have my own FAC. So my questions are not along those lines; they simply have to do with registering.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Let me thank all of you for coming. Let me particularly thank you for coming on such short notice. You've heard from all of us that we're open to hearing your ongoing comments, criticisms, suggestions, whatever they are. Any communication can be done through the clerk, Bonnie Charron, who will distribute it to all of us. I hope we'll have an opportunity to discuss things further with you—perhaps not always in such a formal setting.

Thank you again for coming out this evening.

What I'm suggesting to the committee is that we suspend for ten minutes to allow you to take a quick break. We'll be a few minutes behind, and we'll start with the next panel after that.

Thank you.

- _____ (Pause) _____
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- (1925)

The Chair: We'll reconvene.

Let me begin by welcoming you here. I think most of you were sitting in the gallery when we had our first panel here, so you have some idea of how the committee functions.

I've been advised that Maryann Bird, who has submitted a brief to us already, is not here. She may come in later. My guess is the traffic, the weather, or both have had an impact.

I'm going to begin in the order of the agenda we have in front of us.

Darla Campbell, would you begin, please?

Mrs. Darla Campbell (President, Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs): Thank you, Madam Chair, members of the committee, panellists, and guests.

My name is Darla Campbell and I'm the president of Business and Professional Women Canada. We are women working for working women.

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, BPW, is an equality-seeking organization dedicated to improving the political, economic, employment, and social conditions of women in Canada and around the world. We are pleased to have this opportunity to present to the standing committee in the panel of women and work. Following my introductory comments, I will make five specific recommendations to the committee.

It really is absurd that gender equity is still an issue in Canada in the 21st century, but in fact women are under-represented in our Parliament and in political life at all levels in our country and in many countries in the world. Women are also largely absent from boardrooms and decision- and policy-making tables in business, industry, and government bureaucracies. In the workplace women continue to face discrimination, harassment, unfair remuneration, exploitation, and systemic barriers to many professions and occupations. And on yesterday's grim anniversary, we were reminded of the continuing and escalating violence against women—spousal abuse and murder, honour killings and war crimes, rape, and sexual slavery.

It would be enough if we were addressing these issues on the basis of fairness and justice, if we were claiming that because women are at least 50% of the population, we should be entitled to a bigger piece of the pie, more seats at the table, and a better quality of life. In fact, the greater problem is that because of systemic or continuing discrimination, women are not yet making the contributions that they can and must make to build a safer and better world for everyone.

During the research phase of developing a leadership workshop, "Women and Leadership in the 21st Century", BPW Canada found several compelling reasons to promote a new style of leadership based on feminine principles that we call "inclusive leadership". This style of leadership can be practised by men as well as women. Helen Henderson reports in her book *Building a Win-Win World: Life Beyond Economic Warfare* in 1996 that in several major studies done in the last decade, including one of 89 nations, a correlation was found between gender equality and the quality of life of all members of the society.

Another researcher, Sally Helgesen, in her book *The Female Advantage: Women's ways of leadership*, says that—and I quote—"Feminine principles are entering the public realm because we can no longer afford to restrict them to the private domestic sphere, nor allow a public culture obsessed with warrior values to control human destiny if we are to survive."

Those are powerful statements.

As an organization, BPW Canada is committed to the education and empowerment of women in Canada and throughout the world through our programs of advocacy, leadership, networking, personal development, and cooperation. We believe the single, simplest, most direct, and most effective way to address major problems here at home and around the world is the education and empowerment of women.

On overpopulation and child poverty, as women are more literate and able to support themselves, they have fewer children and are better able to provide for them.

On the issue of the spread of AIDS, whose victims are increasingly women and children, women who are better informed and less economically dependent on men can better protect themselves and their children, especially their daughters.

And on war and terrorism, women, especially those with children, are more likely to promote conciliation than retaliation and seek peaceful, collaborative solutions to conflict.

BPW Canada, with nearly 1,000 members in 50 communities across Canada and as a member of an international federation active in over 100 countries through our work on UN committees and on projects with our partner organizations, is dedicated to the education and empowerment of women everywhere.

•(1930)

Issues raised by BPW are not just women's issues; they are issues of concern to our society at large as we move closer toward an equality-based society. We have much to contribute to the future of Canada as we build our future together.

I have five recommendations, if I still have time in my opening statements to address them. I'll touch on them briefly.

Our first recommendation is on the Prime Minister's task force on women entrepreneurs. The research that was conducted in 2003 produced a comprehensive list of some 77 recommendations to improve opportunities for women entrepreneurs. We support all of the recommendations arising from the Prime Minister's task force on women entrepreneurs. The priority—if we had to pick one only, but we really want all 77—would be establishing an office of women's business ownership, which is recommendation 1.01.

Our second recommendation is on the national child care program. This has been an area of great importance to our members who are working women. We have resolutions that date back to the early 1990s advocating for improvements. For example—coming from the task force on women entrepreneurs—the child care expense deduction should be increased to cover the full cost of child care. Right now there's a cap. Why is there a cap? Could it be that the full amount could in fact be deducted? We support initiatives such as that tied to child care and we support the establishment of a national child care program in Canada.

Our third recommendation is an inclusive approach. Consistent with the inclusive style of leadership, we recommend that this committee promote inclusive processes for receiving input from organizations and individuals and that your committee become a model for other committees to follow. So lead by example. An

inclusive approach will ensure that the voice of women will be heard and taken into consideration in developing policies and practices.

Fourth, enhance the spirit of cooperation. We urge your standing committee to cooperate with other standing committees and ministries to improve the equality of opportunity for women. We don't want women's issues to be marginalized. We want them to be mainstreamed, because they affect everyone.

Fifth is to maintain standards already achieved. We urge the standing committee to monitor the level of equality achieved for women and develop practices to ensure that women do not lose ground as other priorities might arise. Equality is not an option to be promoted only when convenient or when the fiscal environment can support it. In fact, a strong case can be made for the economic benefits to society in general when women achieve equitable remuneration.

Thank you.

•(1935)

The Chair: Thank you, Darla Campbell.

I just want to remind both colleagues and presenters that we are being televised.

Lorraine Leslie, founder of *Women With Vision Magazine*.

Ms. Lorraine Leslie (Founder / Publisher, Women with Vision Magazine): Madam Chair, members of the committee on the status of women, ladies, and colleagues, good evening. My name is Lorraine Leslie and I am the founder-publisher of *Women with Vision Magazine*. I thank you for inviting me to present to you this evening.

I stood here 404 days ago on Parliament Hill as history was in the making. I was with over 400 women who came to Ottawa at their own expense to represent women entrepreneurs from across Canada and to hear the report and recommendations brought forth by the committee on the Prime Minister's task force on women entrepreneurs.

My company, Women with Vision, publishes a quarterly magazine and holds monthly networking luncheons in a number of cities throughout parts of central Ontario and the Georgian Triangle.

The one-page black and white newsletter that I created in 1999 complemented the first networking luncheon and has grown very quickly. I am proud to say today that the *Women with Vision Magazine* is now an 88-page full-glossy magazine with 29 female columnists and a readership of more than 20,000. My *Women with Vision* mission statement reads: "Your vision is my mission and my mission is your vision."

The *Women with Vision* mandate is to provide networking events in a magazine designed to educate, promote, and inspire women in business and daily living. How did this all come about? In 1996 I was one of 52 female metropolitan Toronto police officers. I challenged the board of commissioners and the City of Toronto to change an outdated rule. Members of the police force, hospital employees, school boards, and financial institutions could not marry each other. This rule prevented these organizations from having to pay a double income to any one family.

In 1968 the rule was changed and I was the first police woman to marry a fellow police officer in Canada. Since then the doors of opportunity have been opened for thousands of people. In 1970 I resigned from the force to raise my first of three sons. My husband eventually left the force and his new job transferred us to St. John's, Newfoundland.

From 1980 to 1984, after becoming a certified fitness professional I personally secured 32 fitness rental locations throughout the maritime provinces, trained 24 instructors, and had a total of 6,000 students. I hosted a cable TV show and wrote many newspaper columns. Doing all of this taught me many sales and marketing skills.

Prior to moving back to Ontario my husband suffered an almost fatal car accident. Over time we became more and more estranged. In 1988 I fled our marriage for reasons of personal safety. As many other women have discovered, there was little support, shelter, or money available to help. With only \$152 to my name and the clothes on my back, I started putting my life back together. I had to learn all over again to believe in myself.

When I left my marriage there were no government training programs I could take. There were no small-business loans available to women entrepreneurs living in their cars with no means of support. When I went for job interviews the story was the same: you are over-qualified.

It took me ten years to rebuild my fitness business by starting in-house fitness classes in several large corporations in Ontario and three major school boards. Again, there were no government funding programs available for my small-business interest and no safety net benefits were available.

In 1992, at the age of 46, I returned to school on a part-time basis and attended Sheridan College in Oakville, where I completed a three-year program in gerontology, working with the aged. I completed the program in 18 months and graduated with honours, yet when faced with working with the elderly on a day-to-day basis, to be honest with you, I was not comfortable with my surroundings.

When I moved to Collingwood in 1994, I took a course through the Enterprise Centre, sponsored by the Economic Development Corporation, which is funded through Industry Canada. Again I sent out 150 more résumés to cities and towns in the area and again received the same response: over-qualified.

By this time all small-business grants had been stopped through the Government of Canada. In 1998, as my financial status was slowing dwindling after the failure of a second common-law relationship, I quickly recognized that I had to create another small business and make it happen.

As fate had it, I began a new journey in a travel agency in the town of Collingwood. It capitalized on my creative skills and development in sales and marketing.

• (1940)

I was hired on a contractual basis to bring more awareness to this business and I created an event called the Collingwood Women's Show, which was the foundation of the reason I'm here today, *Women with Vision*.

Five years have passed since that first event. At the first conference I had eight speakers and 142 attendees. One week later I called 18 women in the community together and attended a networking luncheon. As a result, I created a one-page newsletter and I handed it out at the next luncheon, a distribution of 50.

My life was moving forward and I was settled for the first time in years. The Women with Vision networking luncheons grew steadily to communities throughout Ontario. Then, along with thousands of others, the fallout from September 11 brought about numerous travel agencies needing to downsize, and I was the last hired. Jobs were scarce in a small town with a population of 16,000. It became obvious throughout my job searching that I was again over-qualified for most jobs. All I had was a one-page newsletter.

I started cleaning houses to make a living. Today I still clean houses. I sell advertising, interview, and write articles for my magazine. Everything I have earned from developing the *Women with Vision Magazine* I have turned back into making it what it is today. I have no savings or pension to fall back on. At the age of 58, I continue to create a new role for myself.

After reading the report and recommendations put forth in October 2003 by the Prime Minister's task force on women entrepreneurs, it is still evident through my discussions with women between the ages of 35 and 65 who have left marriages, often raising or leaving children behind as I had to, that trying to get back into the workforce is very difficult. Single mothers with teenaged children whose job skills are not up to date are in a catch-22 situation. Women who are well educated find, through unfortunate circumstances, that their job skills today are not acceptable. Working part-time for minimum wage just doesn't cut it. That's one of the reasons women are on welfare.

In my case, I had done everything possible to avoid welfare, bankruptcy, and social assistance to keep my personal and business life respectful and professional. To get a bank loan, one needs a clean line of credit, and this is not the case for most entrepreneurs, both men and women. What route do they take? Personal backing is a second choice, but one needs capital to put together a business plan. It takes time and money. It becomes a vicious circle.

In closing, I envision managing my cleaning business in 2005 while continuing to publish *Women with Vision Magazine* in hopes that one day it becomes a bilingual nationally recognized publication. I do all of this while living on \$1,600 a month with no partnership, spousal support, or government support.

I thank you again for this opportunity to present.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Matsui, you're with the Canadian Coalition of Women in Science, Engineering, Trades and Technology. Welcome.

Ms. Hiromi Matsui (Past President, Co-Chair, Working Group, Women in Science, Engineering, Trades & Technology, Canadian Coalition of Women in Science, Engineering, Trades and Technology): Thank you. I love the way these lights come on by themselves. Technology? I'm for it.

The Chair: It's all done for you.

Ms. Hiromi Matsui: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of CCWESTT, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to address the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

I am Hiromi Matsui; I'm a past president of CCWESTT. My colleague Lorraine Michael and I co-chair the CCWESTT WinSETT project. It's just one of those things that I live in British Columbia and Lorraine is in Newfoundland. I think this symbolizes the range of our membership from coast to coast, B.C. and the Yukon through to Newfoundland and Labrador. Our topic is women in science and technology in Canada and the importance of diversity in that community.

CCWESTT is the Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology. This coalition is a pan-Canadian network of 24 organizations, academe, business, government, professional organizations, trades, and NGOs. Our mandate is to influence policy, to increase women's participation, retention, and leadership in SETT—science, engineering, trades, and technology. The issue we bring forward is the importance of diversity in science and technology in Canada.

Canadian women in SETT are a resource that can help build Canada's economy. This resource is presently underutilized. We request your help to make our labour force more productive by encouraging it to become more diverse. The member organizations of CCWESTT are actively involved in science promotion and outreach. We hold workshops to educate and encourage women in SETT careers. We have a broad membership base across the country, from British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador. Our membership includes a range of sectors, from organizations like Women Building Futures, training women in trades in Alberta, to professional organizations like the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers in Ottawa.

In British Columbia, a CCWESTT member group, SCWIST—Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology—has developed a unique program called “Immigrating Women in Science”. This is a program to help and support immigrant women in science, women who are trained professionals who come to Canada and face the challenge of breaking into the labour force. CCWESTT has just completed the first phase of a project called WinSETT, Women in SETT, where we held regional consultations across the country to document the concerns and issues of women in SETT. We have built networks and collaborations with grassroots organizations, with a range of groups, including women through to professional organizations.

CCWESTT is well positioned to address the complex and varied reasons why there is a low representation of women in SETT, in particular, the low numbers of women in trades—for example, only 3.2% in the construction industry. This means that many young women are not choosing options to get training in construction and trades, which could give them very good jobs. They're opting instead for paths that often end in low-paying service careers. Women in SETT are a significant national resource, which is not being used to its full potential.

Scientific research and innovation are critical to building Canada's future. CCWESTT supports implementation of the action plan of the working group on women in the federal science and technology

community. We recommend further support for women entrepreneurs in SETT. We support increased use of gender-based analysis in groups.

Within the federal government, there are no female cabinet ministers in SETT-related portfolios. There is one female deputy head in SETT-related departments. The absence of women in many science and research advisory bodies is a telling comment on our values. While a start on progress has been made, we're now at that plateau where new actions and leadership are needed. CCWESTT recommends that a new body—whether you call it a council or whatever—be developed at the national level for women in SETT to promote new policies and actions so women can contribute fully to the economy. The model could be a collaboration of industry, government, education, and civil society. We ask for your support to establish linkages with your constituencies as we enter the second phase of our study funded by Status of Women Canada.

● (1945)

This body could serve in an advisory capacity to groups such as government policy-makers and sector council members. The national body could develop reports based on Canadian data to show the business advantages of diversity and disseminate case studies based on best practices. There are lots of reports out there, but we have to do the marketing to let people know the advantages. So there's a clear need for more education and awareness on the benefits of diversity amongst Canadian science and technology organizations. Canada's efforts to build its economy are challenged by the skills shortage of highly qualified people. Canada has women trained in SETT who can help make Canada more competitive.

Our second recommendation is for the federal government to provide funds to increase women's access to SETT training, education, and work re-entry. Canada will benefit from a new pool of leaders in SETT. Increased diversity leads to a more productive workplace. We will be able to produce more innovative solutions to problems. As Ursula Franklin and Margaret-Ann Armour have told us, women ask different questions. We know that women learn in different ways. Women bring different strengths to the table. If Canada works to create a more diverse science and technology community, we will be a stronger nation.

So here's the part where the third recommendation comes in: that the federal government undertake and strengthen initiatives to increase women's participation and contributions to scientific research and innovation.

Lorraine and I would be pleased to speak to you and answer any further questions.

Thank you for this opportunity, and thank you for staying late at night when I know you have very long and full days. We appreciate this.

● (1950)

The Chair: Thank you very much for coming late at night too.

Pirjo Friedman, welcome. It's your turn.

Dr. Pirjo Friedman (President, Women Entrepreneurs of Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair, and good evening, everybody.

On behalf of the WEC, Women Entrepreneurs of Canada, I thank you for the invitation, though I apologize. I just learned about it yesterday, so it really gave me not much time to prepare. But this is important, so I'm here.

WEC is a non-profit organization founded in 1992. In terms of our business statement, Women Entrepreneurs of Canada is the leading organization that champions and facilitates women's entrepreneurship. WEC members value and actively support women's entrepreneurship as a definitive career path. Our members are required to be at least one year in business and have their own capital at risk.

We are a national organization and a member of the international FCEM, Les Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises Mondiales, which has 40 member countries and about 60,000 members, and was founded 52 years ago in France. We are also affiliated with NAWBO, the National Association of Women Business Owners, in the U.S.

I am the president. My business is a dental practice. I am a dentist.

Our issues are financing, statistical research, day care, and maternity leave.

About financing, while attending an FCEM congress in Scotland about two months ago, I came across research from a number of organizations, presented by the Bank of Scotland, indicating that women tend to undercapitalize their businesses at start-up, have a disinclination to use debt financing, are more risk averse than their male counterparts, and use a higher proportion of their personal savings within their businesses both at start-up and during development. They're less confident than men about their knowledge and understanding of financial products and services.

In my experience, it applies in Canada as well. Financing is crucial to all commerce, and perhaps managing money is most critical among small businesses, whether at the start or when expanding existing enterprises. The struggle to maintain adequate cashflow is constant among entrepreneurs.

Among our members are women with small businesses with cashflow problems where lenders are reluctant to take a chance. There is not enough history of credit, especially for immigrants being away from the country, and a lack of showing a regular income. In the health service sector, for example, there is not yet a reliable client base, no equity, not enough collateral, no guarantors, and perhaps credit scores that are not perfect.

Women Entrepreneurs of Canada recommends micro loans, where the government is a guarantor, much like student loans, and assistance with the expansion and development of community-based credit organizations.

Problems with finances are also a health issue. They are the biggest reason for women to suffer from insomnia and stress.

Concerning research, women-owned and women-run businesses are a growing force in the Canadian economy. There are statistics, but not enough and not recent enough. The WEC recommends increased women's business research. It would create more opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Reconciling work and family life poses a special challenge to women entrepreneurs. The issue is an affordable day care system.

Regarding maternity leave, women as employers do not have the same benefits as their employees.

• (1955)

In closing, I can say I am now Canadian, but I come originally from Finland. In Finland women who run small and medium-sized businesses have an important role as both promoters of economic development and providers of jobs. Finland is also a model of gender equality, and Finland currently is also number one in global growth and number two in business competitiveness, according to the World Economic Forum, so that is something to learn from.

WEC also supports the recommendations of the Prime Minister's task force on women entrepreneurs, which was chaired by Sarmite Bulte.

I thank you for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

As you saw with our previous panel, we have a round of questions from members of the committee who are here. It's a prescribed round and I'm going to ask Ms. Guergis from the Conservatives to begin.

Pardon?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I just wanted to say I apologize, but I have to leave; I can't bear this cold any longer. But I did enjoy the presentations.

The Chair: We have a number of members of the committee who are ill, and Lynne is one of them. I hope it's not contagious.

Ms. Helena Guergis: So do we.

Thank you very much, all of you, for taking the time to be here. I appreciate it.

My question will specifically be toward Lorraine Leslie. Lorraine is from my riding of Simcoe—Grey, and I would really like to thank Lorraine for being here. I appreciate you telling your story. It's a personal story, and it's important because it reminds all of us of the brutal reality women are facing out there. To hear it directly from you is very helpful, and I know it is very difficult for you to do that, so thank you very much for taking the time to be here.

I also have her magazine here. She did indicate she hopes for it to be a national magazine one day. It is bilingual. If anybody would like a copy, I'd love to provide you with one afterwards.

My question for you is, can you elaborate for us on what you think your biggest challenge was in going through all of that?

Nina also has a question for all of you, and I hope you can answer her question as well, but mine is specifically for you on your biggest challenge. Then I'm going to ask Nina to ask her question.

Ms. Lorraine Leslie: My biggest challenge was getting through on a day-to-day basis. I had no safety net and no health insurance. I wasn't eligible for EI benefits because I had been an entrepreneur all my life, basically. One of the other large challenges was that when I was interviewed, people saw very quickly that I had an entrepreneurial spirit, and it wasn't until later years that I knew I had to follow through on that.

There is no funding for entrepreneurs. You have to be creative and you have to step out there, and if you don't have any capital to support you, it's a tough road. The banks will not look at you and you have no line of credit. It's sad to say, but if you're a woman, they just consider you second. If it's a man applying for financing, he gets it.

• (2000)

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all for your presentations.

Women in Canada have made lots of progress on many fronts, but still they continue to face inequalities. My question is, what are the main obstacles today to equality between men and women?

Ms. Lorraine Leslie: I'd have to say it is with the financial institutions and getting funding to start a small business.

The Chair: Who else would like to respond to that? Darla?

Mrs. Darla Campbell: There are really still so many inequalities, and it's unfortunate. Certainly in the membership we represent there are inequalities related to financing. We hear that all the time, and I echo what Lorraine has shared with us. There are challenges at every step of the way.

We haven't used the term "glass ceiling" in any of our presentations, but that still does exist. The challenge we have is that people believe it doesn't exist any more because it's an invisible ceiling. We want to move forward on our strengths. We don't want to be stopped because of systemic problems that are challenging us, but every time we take one step forward, we seem to be pushed back, sometimes as far as two steps, so the challenges are there.

I think they sneak up on us. Businesswomen will tend to think maybe they weren't qualified enough for a promotion; maybe there was a reason. In reality it may be based on the discomfort a company has in promoting women within the company because there's a perceived risk for companies to do that. There doesn't seem to be a way to encourage employers to promote women into the higher levels of the organization.

As to being around the table in boardrooms, there are some great studies out there now are saying that having a minimum of two women—one isn't good enough because it's a little too frightening to be at a table by yourself—and ideally three or more women on a board of directors actually results in better decisions that are taken and greater profitability for the company. I don't have the statistics right in front of me, but it is encouraging. But there seem to be so few companies out there that are taking those risks, yet it's not really risky.

That's what I refer to, that inequality, as the glass ceiling.

The Chair: Would either of you like to respond?

Ms. Hiromi Matsui: I'd like to say that if you look at that picture up there on the wall and you look at the people who are around this table, you'll see there are some fundamental facts in the composition of our governing bodies—which you all know, of course. The fact is that we need more women in leadership positions, women like all of you, only we need you multiplied many times over.

I would ask that you take this opportunity to work with us, because we all have links to many thousands of women. They may not all agree with everything you say, but there is a commonality to the experience.

Being Canadians, we have been polite far too long. It is not right in this wonderful country of ours that women are in poverty the way you have heard tonight. It is not right that most of the women are working in service jobs. We look to you for leadership to help us make these changes.

You ask about core funding. Give us a chance. We will work actively with you to help organize and establish a presence for women at the national level. That's what we need, and we need some vision and leadership. We call for your support.

• (2005)

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there anybody else? Go ahead.

Ms. Lorraine Leslie: I would just like to share this with you. Recently, through Helena Guergis' office, I met a young woman who has now volunteered her time to work with me in Helena's office to put together a localized survey to find out what the women in our Georgian Triangle area would like to bring forward to the government.

Secondly, being entrepreneurs, we don't have access to health benefits, EI, or whatever. Women with Vision has taken the initiative, through its association and its membership, to offer women entrepreneurs an opportunity to purchase a health plan. As far as I understand, we are the first women's organization that now has its own health plan.

The Chair: Madame Bonsant.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: Good evening.

I'd like to know how you intend to go about interesting and encouraging young women to take up non traditional trades. It's not that easy. Do you have any ideas on this?

[*English*]

Ms. Hiromi Matsui: We have several models of member organizations of CCWEST. As I mentioned, we have Women Building Futures in Alberta, and Lorraine Michael works with Women in Resource Development in Newfoundland. One of our members is Valerie Overend, who is on the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum.

There's no simple answer. It is a complex thing. Role models, training programs, and encouragement is a huge thing. There's a huge amount of education, breaking down stereotypes, and showing young women that they can have fun, earn a lot of money, and it can be in a non-traditional career. We are looking for partnerships and collaborations with other government agencies to help develop more education and awareness, so that young women coming through the system will not be closing the doors on these opportunities.

Some of our members are developing material at the day care stage. This is when children are learning about hammers and sewing, and getting ideas in their heads about what a male does and what a female does. We feel that tremendous education and awareness need to be done. It is happening, but very slowly.

The Chair: Madam Bonsant, I apologize. Apparently, I addressed you incorrectly, according to Ms. Torsney, and I apologize.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: Don't worry. I think we're all a little tired.

The Chair: Okay.

Darla Campbell.

Mrs. Darla Campbell: Thank you.

[Translation]

I am an engineer.

[English]

That's about the limit of my French this evening.

As a role model, I think it's important that I tell people I'm engineer and can share that experience, but I also wonder about the impact of the media.

We had that speaker in the earlier session. We know that students are fairly equal, men and women, at the university level in medicine and law. I don't have the research, but I wonder if it's an influence of TV, programs and entertainment on TV that talk about the roles of doctors on *ER* and all those programs. There are lots of programs on lawyers. People understand what these people do as professionals.

I don't see any really positive role models on TV shows for engineers. I don't know if there's a role for the committee to be able to encourage that kind of drama and entertainment, but we actually have negative stereotypes. We have the Dilbert cartoon, which is not particularly encouraging anyone to choose engineering as a profession, or technology or the trades. We need to look at the role of telling the story in a positive way, because it is an excellent career opportunity and excellent work for women.

The Chair: Anyone else?

Ms. Torsney.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: Absolutely. I think it's terrific that we're talking about some of the issues related to women and technology and trades. Certainly all the women around this table have pursued some non-traditional job for women.

A couple of you mentioned the issues of access to EI and maternity benefits particularly. There have been some women—some men too—who have suggested that they don't want to pay into a plan for those benefits. Is it something where you think we should offer a choice to people, because you do have to pay in to become

eligible for those benefits? Some entrepreneurs think that the safety net of an EI program may not make them hungry enough should their business fail. Others have a different perspective, perhaps.

In terms of access to capital, are some of the issues for women entrepreneurs partly a function of the choice of the business they pursue? Banks like to invest in equipment, and women tend to focus on service industry jobs, which are great jobs and provide something, but it's all human capital and there aren't things you can sell off if it doesn't work, for instance. I know that has been a bit of a challenge for people pursuing service sector jobs. It wouldn't be the same exactly, I don't think, in dentistry because it's very capital-intensive, but there is certainly some aspect of it.

If we make changes, should we be offering people choices on EI? Now of course it also includes compassionate leave.

I wonder, Ms. Leslie, if you're aware that now, unlike when you first needed training support, a woman who's left the workplace to have children is eligible for some training out of EI within a certain time period. It's a much longer reach-back than existed before, and that could be something we expand. Many women are always with their children on a full-time basis and are out of the paid labour force for longer than five years, and I think that's when the reach-back stops. Is that something we should be looking at expanding? Now that there are more men taking parental leave, should we also be looking at trying to increase their opportunity for reach-back training as well?

Those are some issues for you in terms of the EI portfolio.

• (2010)

The Chair: Who wants to respond?

Go ahead, Ms. Leslie.

Ms. Lorraine Leslie: This is just to share with you that throughout the years I was being transferred with my husband at the time, I worked part-time or I did what I could, but when it came to moving into a new community, I hadn't worked long enough, so I wasn't eligible for benefits. We're looking at a career path here from 1966 to the present, and the rules have changed so many times.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: For the better.

Ms. Lorraine Leslie: Well, they've changed so many times.

I know of approximately twenty women between the ages of 45 and 60 who are in situations similar to the one I'm in. Some of them are very well educated, but they're overlooked now because they've moved past the young-thirties employable years and they're not accepted into the job force.

Yet we still have a lot of go-get and a good 10 to 15 years we can work and bring our knowledge to the table, and we can also mentor these people. I think it's very important that we develop mentorship programs for everyone involved, whether it's in dentistry, engineering, or whatever. A mentorship program is very important today, and we can be part of that.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: EI and parental leave: I think, Dr. Friedman, you mentioned that as well.

Dr. Pirjo Friedman: I don't have enough information personally to discuss that. You were asking my opinion about—

Hon. Paddy Torsney: You had mentioned in your presentation, I believe, that women entrepreneurs needed access to maternity leave benefits. Would that have been something you would have wanted to pay into in order to have access to maternity leave benefits? It's not a short-term payment. It would have been a choice for you—

• (2015)

Dr. Pirjo Friedman: I would have opted to pay for it, yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Matsui.

Ms. Hiromi Matsui: I'd just like to comment about maternity benefits. The fact is that we need to have flexible policies in the workplace so men and women can move in and out of the workforce as needed to deal with family responsibilities. The thing is, things are changing so quickly that if you're working in a technology-related field, you cannot afford to take a year off because you're going to be too far behind. I know that some of my friends who are engineers and entrepreneurs will limit the amount of time they take off because they get too far behind. You can't be competitive and keep up.

What we need is for the employers to be more flexible in the kinds of maternity and paternity arrangements they offer, because things are changing very fast. A year out of the workforce means a tremendous amount of time lost, say in an engineering or a technology-related position.

The Chair: Ms. Campbell, did you want to add something?

Mrs. Darla Campbell: Actually, that ties in quite nicely with my comment about part-time work and flexibility in the workplace for men and women. For mothers and fathers to contribute and stay current, there could be an opportunity to work part-time. As it relates to EI, there are inequities in the way the Employment Insurance Act is currently written. It is negative towards part-time workers in that they need to get that minimum threshold in order to apply. There needs to be some work done to better balance the contribution of part-time workers, predominantly women, so they can meet that threshold and seek EI as a benefit somewhere down the road.

I have some statistics and information on that, which I'd be pleased to share with you.

The Chair: Thank you.

If the Conservatives don't have another question now, I'll come back to you.

Madame Brunelle.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Good evening, ladies. It is a pleasure to meet women who are fighters, who are ready to enter into combat and who are successful. It is very stimulating.

In my constituency, as a member of a women's business association, I have heard about and seen lots of women who experience difficulties in financing their businesses, in some cases, even with the local economic development corporation that is responsible for providing loans to small businesses. They often hesitate to provide funding to businesses run by women since supposedly they are often in the service sector.

You could perhaps confirm the fact that fewer women go bankrupt than men. That would appear to be the case.

You talk about a bureau for women owners of businesses. Why do you believe in that approach? What would the mandate of this bureau be? What are the other problems? Having had a small business myself, I know it is difficult to reconcile family responsibilities and work. The management of a business means no limit to the number of hours worked and it can become difficult. But I'm sure that there are problems other than funding and reconciling family and work. Do you have anything to tell us about this?

[*English*]

The Chair: Lorraine.

Ms. Lorraine Leslie: I think your question is very valid, but I think we also have a demographic of the young working mother. We have the ones whose children have left the home and are off to university, and then you have another group of women who are still able to be a very big part of the workforce. You have three generations here that you're working with, so I think the answer has to be split in three different ways.

I think the government has to take a look at it that way. We are moving into a situation where we have a lot of mature women out there who still want to work. They don't have the backup of a pension because they have been downsized. They don't have the opportunity to collect EI for a while, just to get them back on their feet.

I mean, 9/11 was devastating—and look what I'm doing to make a living. I'm 58 years old. I have seven years until Canada Pension, and I don't even have the money to contribute to that.

• (2020)

The Chair: Is there anybody else?

Ms. Matsui.

Ms. Hiromi Matsui: You were asking about women entrepreneurs. I speak of one female engineer I know who after working ten years with a consulting engineering firm decided to set up her own firm. She ended up building a small company and hiring many part-time workers. She, during that time, has had three children, and she's been able to run the company successfully and manage all these part-time workers.

So what I say is women can offer creative solutions to workplace rules and functions, which I think means we need a chance to have these voices give the suggestions forward to people who can make a difference. Because we are starting to see very slowly... Business does see. Companies like Golder Associates, for example, a leading international engineering firm, see the business case for diversity, and they are leading the way in a very conservative field.

But we need to get the message out much more strongly to companies so they realize that having a mix of people around the board table means your company is going to do better. The smart ones are catching on really fast. They say, "How can we do it? We want to make more money."

There are systemic problems in the infrastructure, as you all know. To make the kinds of shifts we're talking about—these are big changes we're looking toward. But I am encouraged. I worked for several years with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia, and for many years I was the only lay appointee around the council table. That demographic has changed. Now there's a mix in terms of gender, in terms of racial background.

This is happening throughout Canada. We just need your help to facilitate it going more quickly.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Campbell.

Mrs. Darla Campbell: Perhaps I can answer the question in this way. What can companies do to create more family-friendly environments for their employees? In the *National Post* today there was an article about the CIBC and what the bank is doing to create emergency child care facilities for their employees right at the office. I thought that was quite a clever idea. And they have a business case for it. The program is set up so that if your caregiver calls in sick, you're able to bring your child to work and use the facilities at work. That's convenient. The business case is simply that if the workers take off fewer days sick to take care of the children, if they're actually productive and in the office working, in fact the bank does better. That was today's newspaper, so it's current. This is what's coming out.

There are great success stories with respect to full child care development centres in workplaces. I've recently heard of initiatives where employees are provided opportunities for the cafeteria to provide home-cooked meals at the end of the day on a takeout basis. I thought that was quite clever. They have the staff; they have the food anyway. They just place the orders. What a great way for working parents to be able to go home and not have to worry about the food preparation at home.

So there are a lot of innovations that can be implemented in companies and organizations to create a more family-friendly approach.

I don't know what the government can do to encourage that sort of thing, but perhaps the standing committee could establish or document what the best practices are out there and encourage companies to seek those types of solutions for the benefit of women first, and mothers, but also for families.

• (2025)

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms. Lorraine Leslie: I agree with my colleague Darla on that. However, that's in the metropolitan area. What about the women in rural areas? A lot of your entrepreneurial women are in the rural sectors, rural communities, and they're facing the same situation.

The Chair: Thank you.

Anything further, Madam Brunelle?

Ms. Torsney, do you have anything further?

Hon. Paddy Torsney: There's been some talk tonight about how the government needs to change some things, and I think, Ms. Leslie, there's some tinkering with EI that really has changed for the better some of the issues you've raised, but there are still some ways we could improve it further.

Ms. Matsui, you're talking about the very issue that companies that are going to be successful are going to reflect their workplace. I thought your Golder Associates response to the question was interesting, because I was thinking that the engineer who's taken time off to care for a child has obviously thought about problems from a different perspective. If you're going to be innovative, you need to really think creatively.

While I understand being home with a child sometimes creates an impossibly tiring situation, I think people approach problems differently with different experiences. And that's what engineering is really about.

We do need to create an atmosphere where people understand the value that parents can bring to the workforce, that older workers can bring into the workforce. We need to make sure our workplaces are more inclusive, and then highlight the examples of those who provide onsite day care, those who provide better economies of scale for their kitchen facilities. Small companies may have access to some of that as well...the role of benefits, particularly as something that's important to women workers.

As one individual, I'm often asked to sign off on different proposals for things. For years I've been saying, "Wait a minute, where's the benefits calculation?" And they say, "Oh no, they're going to be contractors. We don't have to worry." And I've said, "No, you have to worry about those things." The people who don't need them can apply for these jobs. The people who need them—and everyone technically needs them—we're putting at a competitive disadvantage.

I think it's a question of everyone being more aware and asking. Thankfully, you're there and at the table, pushing these issues for the various organizations that you're members of, and highlighting opportunities. Workplace day care makes a huge difference. I've already spoken to the Minister of Social Development to say don't forget workplace day care, because it's really a great opportunity for parents.

I worked for a very progressive company before I was elected. You could bring your child to work if they were sick. Some people had couches in their office and the child could rest there, or they would just automatically make these arrangements. Mothers and fathers took parental leave, even at that time. So I was very lucky.

It really is a question of education and encouraging women to pursue non-traditional careers. You're fine examples of that. I have five nieces and at least one is an electrical engineer already.

It's an opportunity for all of us, and hopefully there are some young people who are out there tonight or as this is aired again who are going to become members of Parliament or dentists or engineers or entrepreneurs, because that makes a huge difference. I think there are good qualities of life, if they see that opportunity.

It's not really a question, it's more of a comment.

The Chair: Thank you.

Our challenge is going to be to make this a family-friendly workplace.

I'm going to conclude with a question by Ms. Guergis, and then we'll wind it up.

Ms. Helena Guergis: Thank you.

I apologize for not being ready. I was so caught up in the conversation I wasn't paying attention to when I was up.

My question was actually for Maryann Bird, and I know she's not here. I'm hoping all of you can answer it. Is it possible to pass the question to her and have her formally answer it at some other time? Can we pass the question on?

• (2030)

The Chair: We can pass the question on. We have a brief from her that's been circulated. She may yet come to another session. We'll find out what happens.

Ms. Helena Guergis: Good, but I think the others may want to pass a comment on it.

We're talking about publicly funded child care in publicly funded institutions. I'm just wondering if you see any room for tax credits for those who don't want to use a public child care institution; maybe they want to hire someone outside of that, maybe a grandparent or someone like that. I'm just wondering if you see room for tax credits.

The Chair: Does anyone want to answer?

Lorraine.

Ms. Lorraine Leslie: To my understanding, in the Georgian Triangle school board system, if you don't want to do it in your

district, you can send your child to a different school and there is a tax credit. In the same circumstance, I think that should be available.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: On a point of order, I have to say child care expenses are already part of your tax deductibility. Are you asking for something specifically different?

Ms. Helena Guergis: Perhaps an increase.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: This is just so the record is clear: you do have that.

Ms. Helena Guergis: I should have specified an increase.

The Chair: Does anybody else want to comment on this?

Ms. Matsui.

Ms. Hiromi Matsui: The important thing is that there be flexibility and options offered to parents for child care. Many people are not fortunate enough to have extended families with them any more, so they have to look at what is available. I work at Simon Fraser University, which has an excellent child care system, and in fact they use that as a recruiting tool to hire new faculty, because it's so good. There should be an option for people who want to make different choices.

The Chair: Anybody else?

Well, I'm going to say thank you very much for coming out here. Thank you for staying to this late hour.

Your perspectives have been quite different from what we've heard during some of the other panels, and I think it's very important for us to have heard them.

As with the previous panel, I hope we can take advantage of your experience and your knowledge when we move into the next step of our activities here. This is a new committee of the House of Commons and we're very much feeling our way at the moment too.

Thank you again for coming and thank you for staying so late.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: And thanks to all our staff who stayed so late.

The Chair: I was just going to go there, Paddy.

I want to thank everybody on the parliamentary staff and say a particular thank you to Bonnie Charron, our clerk, and Julie Cool, our researcher. This is the third panel we've sat with today. It's been a long day, and thank you to everybody who's here working tonight. It's important to us, and we're trying to get our work done.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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