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Chair

Ms. Anita Neville

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• (1515)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)): Colleagues, we're going to begin now. I think some of our colleagues are confused about the time. I think the notice did say 3:15, so we're going to go ahead. We have the meeting scheduled until 4:45, but I know there are taxis coming before that for some of us. I'm going to aim to conclude by 4:30, and if it's a little earlier, then so be it, because others will be leaving before that.

I again would like to welcome Florence back with her colleagues. Today we're beginning the study on gender-based analysis.

Perhaps you'd like to begin.

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

I'd like to tell the members of your committee that I'm here today with Hélène Dwyer-Renaud, who's the director of Status of Women Canada's gender-based analysis directorate, and Nanci-Jean Waugh, who is the director of communications and consultations.

It's a real pleasure to be with you today to talk about gender-based analysis, or what we call GBA. As you know, GBA is a tool, and it's only one of the components really necessary to advance equality for women in Canada. Combined with measures to enhance the systematic implementation of GBA, there must be a strong federal machinery to coordinate progress on policy within government, as well as support for women's and equality-seeking organizations.

I'd like to say, Madam Chair, that we did receive on our website your report and your recommendations. Thank you very much.

GBA is part of a dual approach that's called "gender mainstreaming", which was introduced in 1995 as part of the Beijing Platform for Action that countries were expected to pursue in support of gender equality. This approach, unanimously adopted by all countries present, including Canada, includes both a gender perspective in government processes as well as the development of specific policies that are women-specific. Since 1995, with the federal plan for gender equality, followed by the agenda for gender equality, the Government of Canada's actions on gender equality have reflected this dual approach in order to ensure results.

GBA was the overarching commitment of the 1995 federal plan. In the plan, the government committed to ensuring that all future legislation and policies include, where appropriate, an analysis of the potential for different impacts on women and men. This commitment was deemed a shared responsibility between Status of Women

Canada playing a capacity-building role on the one hand and individual departments applying the knowledge to the development of policies and programs on the other.

[Translation]

The Gender-based Analysis Directorate at Status of Women Canada was established in 1999 to provide leadership and vision in this area. The Directorate was assigned the mandate to promote an integrated approach to gender-based analysis and capacity building, for example, through the development of tools and enhanced skills and knowledge.

The Gender-based Analysis Directorate pursues the following aims: to promote a common understanding of concepts and best practices; to promote the use of common tools and indicators; and to demonstrate how to achieve better policy and program outcomes that support gender equality.

GBA is one of five components of the Agenda for Gender Equality. Implementation of the 1995 policy was slow and uneven. Various perceptions, understandings and resource investments within departments have produced different outcomes and more challenges across all departments.

Initially, certain key departments such as the former Human Resources Development, or HRDC, Health Canada, Justice, Indian and Northern Affairs, Citizenship and Immigration and CIDA set the tone by taking the initiative to establish their own training program and their own infrastructure, for example, setting up integration activities coordination offices, to address gender equality considerations, or networks of gender equality experts.

However, the need to accelerate the process of integrating GBA into all government processes was soon recognized. Thus, in 2000, the government reiterated its support for GBA as part of the Agenda for Gender Equality.

At the same time as the Gender-Based Analysis Directorate was created in 1999, SWC also adopted an implementation strategy to facilitate the incorporation of the gender-based analysis approach into the policy and program formulation process across the federal government. Hélène will fill you in on the details of this strategy a little later.

[English]

The agenda for gender equality is meant to be a coordinated, coherent strategy to advance gender equality in two ways: first, in a deliberate or focused fashion, by addressing issues of exclusion and discrimination experienced by women, thus resulting in gender-specific initiatives on issues such as poverty, violence, and aboriginal women; and second, in an engendered way, by visibly reflecting the realities of women compared to those of men in government program and policy design. That's the overall objective of the GBA strategy. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act is a good example of this.

Our approach to GBA is to promote horizontal elements for a broad vision and implementation of GBA practice across departments by providing a conceptual framework supporting institutional structures and promoting good practices based on international experience. This provides part of the consolidated leadership invested in Status of Women Canada under the agenda for gender equality.

The other approach is to work in partnerships with departments to identify projects where gender-based analysis can be introduced in a systematic way in order to tie the theory to the practice.

Hélène.

• (1520)

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud (Director, Gender-Based Analysis, Status of Women Canada): Thank you.

We have indeed developed a six-point strategy consisting of training; tool development; policy case studies; research, information, and education promotion; evaluation and accountability; and coordination. My remarks are highlighted in the slides numbered 4 to 8.

On training, in 1999 we knew that a transfer of knowledge and skills was required for practical implementation, and it needed to go beyond gender experts. We adopted the policy and program development framework familiar to most policy analysts, and through case studies and examples we developed a curriculum whereby participants learned how the socio-economic realities of women and men were different; how to question assumptions about gender roles; and how to integrate gender considerations in all the relevant steps of policy and program development from research, consultation, development of options, and communication, right through to program delivery and evaluation.

Customized training has been delivered to policy and program analysts at Citizenship and Immigration, National Defence, Canadian Heritage, and with the federal committee on women in science and technology that gathers representation from 15 departments. A train the trainer program has also been developed. We now have 11 anglophones and 9 francophone trainers available on a regional basis for both domestic and international training. Discussions in December 2004 with the new Canada School of Public Service have led to an agreement for the inclusion of our GVA training in their curriculum. We are also speaking to them to develop, on a collaborative basis, a senior management awareness tool on gender-based analysis.

In tandem with the training was the need for new tools and aids to support officials in investigating whether a policy and program would alter the situation of women, compared to men, positively or negatively. Tools now in existence, such as departmental guides that help define a policy issue with the aid of questions or checklists, improved data collection, and the use of gender indicators, should eventually provide more valid data, a better understanding of trends, and a more accurate picture of the situation of women compared to men, with the anticipated result that the unintended impacts will be detected early on and not after the fact.

We have been pursuing pilot projects as policy case studies as a valuable method to test the process and the anticipated outcomes. Experience is showing that for best results, gender-based analysis should be introduced gradually in a select number of policy areas. We do encourage departments to go beyond the simple act of obtaining training and that the learning be tied to a concrete project with real results.

We are at the first stages of obtaining a critical mass of projects. We require that a set of selection criteria be followed. For example, we assess projects under probability of achieving concrete results linked to gender equality, and their likelihood of doing that successfully. We require senior management support through a signed memorandum of understanding between us and the senior officials in a department. We also ask for public reporting of results by mentioning it in their annual departmental progress reports.

Examples of pilot projects undertaken to date include work we've been doing with Citizenship and Immigration. We have had a long-term relationship with CIC since 2001. A memorandum of understanding was signed between Status of Women Canada and the department to pursue training and tool development activities. As a result, an impact assessment tool is applied from that department to the legislative regulations under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. A series of hands-on workshops and training courses, with analysts to apply GVA, is ongoing in that department, and we have supported them in the development of a gender-based analysis policy and strategic planning process throughout that department.

At Canadian Heritage, GVA training was delivered in April 2003 to the official languages support programs branch. The training focused on the Canada community agreements and the issues faced by francophone minority women. The program has since reviewed its methods of operation in order to integrate a gender lens, including the evaluation of project proposals, as well as a slight change to the criteria that highlights inclusiveness of the Canada community agreements, and thus expands the process more widely for francophone minority women.

●(1525)

At National Defence, the GBA training focused on the need to increase the knowledge of civilian and military employees on matters pertaining to gender and diversity in a variety of policies and programs, including human resources.

We are in negotiations with the infrastructure department for training in a pilot project. Potential areas being assessed include—and I need to say I am not an expert in the infrastructure department's mandate—governance of construction and construction methods, fire safety, sea water conditions, dike modelling, or permafrost. We are also in discussions with two western federal councils and provincial governments dealing with rural initiatives.

Other interested parties have come knocking at our door for training, including provincial and territorial governments, such as Saskatchewan; NGOs, such as the Ontario Women's Health Council; and other countries, such as two provinces from South Africa.

[*Translation*]

Instinctively, we knew from the outset that the success of the GBA approach depended on having information about best practices available, on compiling that information and on ensuring regular separate promotion and education activities.

It is generally believed that a direct correlation exists between knowledge of gender-based issues within an organization and the successful implementation of the GBA approach. We have worked hard to increase awareness, promote common acceptance of GBA concepts and encourage the use of best practices among our partners.

We have set up a GBA resources centre, distributed 8,000 information kits since 2003, organized two fairs and one public conference, made over 75 presentations at conferences and other events, created an e-bulletin and done 40 case studies.

In terms of evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of GBA and related processes, the GBA Directorate promotes the concept of an evaluation continuum, starting with an individual assessment of knowledge gained from GBA training, continuing with a survey of organizations to be conducted in March and ending with a GBA performance measurement model that provides a means to evaluate how gender-based issues, including racial considerations, diversity, age, disabilities and other factors, are incorporated in a proactive manner into planning and implementation at each phase of policy and program development.

As the organization responsible for carrying out a horizontal and vertical mandate and for promoting GBA implementation, SWC works strategically to enlighten and inform people about the process of GBA implementation across departments and to bring about changes aimed at achieving gender equality.

The GBA Directorate chairs an inter-departmental committee on GBA on which 13 departments are represented. Originally, the committee served as a forum for sharing information on best practices, but the format was altered in 2002-2003 to further enhance the committee's role as a forum for gathering knowledge to assist in the development and coordination of GBA activities across federal government departments.

●(1530)

[*English*]

There is of course progress also being made by other departments. As for training, as you may know, CIDA has been the pioneer in this area for over fifteen years and is currently revamping its training package to make it even better.

Citizenship and Immigration, Indian and Northern Affairs, Health Canada, and the former HRDC all adapted Status of Women Canada's training package to meet their departmental needs. All of the departments mentioned also use programs and policies under their responsibility in all their training in the hope that their trained officials will use their knowledge to improve their work.

But what I really wanted to emphasize here is the building of infrastructure. The key factor for change we have collectively encountered is the realization that organizational structure is just as important for us to integrate and sustain the practice of GBA as individual training. We are focusing more and more of our efforts on having departments move up, if you like, the stairway from individual capacity to organizational capacity.

There are some interesting examples emerging on the federal scene. At Citizenship, again, in order to meet their IRPA legislative requirement and to continue to strengthen their capacity, they have developed a five-year strategic framework for GBA covering the period 2005-2010 that sets out the department's objectives, principles, activities, and reporting steps tied to branch business plans.

At Health Canada, a five-year implementation plan launched in 2003 under the auspices of its women's health strategy includes a gender-based analysis policy, projects such as the development of women's health indicators, and support for research to provide strategic leadership and analytical support to departmental officials.

The former HRDC had launched a department-wide policy on GBA to provide a framework for the department's commitments and ongoing efforts. It had also created a network of gender advisers, who were individuals trained in GBA and who served as contact points for sharing GBA information with branch officials. HRDC has been reorganized into two departments, and Human Resources and Skills Development and Social Development are now assessing the best way to build on this foundation to advance GBA in their separate departments.

Indian and Northern Affairs' women's issues and gender equality directorate, also known as WIGE, coordinates the implementation of that department's gender equality analysis policy by ensuring that it is reflected throughout the department's business lines across headquarters and regional offices. For example, that department requires that all memoranda to cabinet reflect the application of gender-based analysis. The WIGE directorate is supported by a network of gender equality analysis representatives or GEARS—they're into acronyms—in all branches and regions of that department.

Finally, the justice department adopted its policy on gender equality analysis in 1997, requiring the analysis of every issue with respect to its impact on gender equality. The department is currently considering ways of improving the mainstreaming of the practice of GBA throughout its operations.

Ms. Florence Ievers: For my part, while I've been fortunate to see some progress being made in integrating GBA in the Government of Canada, I think there remain some challenges to overcome before we can really see true sustainability. While no formal obligation is required on the part of departments to report on the practice or integration of gender-based analysis within their organizations, there are informal accountability mechanisms such as monitoring departmental activities via the interdepartmental committee mentioned by Hélène, periodic surveying for international reporting purposes—here I think of the Commonwealth, the OAS, or the United Nations, from when earlier this week we discussed Beijing plus 10—encouraging outcome-based pilot projects with measurable results, and administering evaluations tied to the GBA information kit and to the training delivered.

Presently there is no formal authority or levers to ensure compliance of the 1995 GBA policy. The exception to the rule, as I mentioned earlier, was the introduction of IRPA, with its legislative requirement to report annually to Parliament. The need for greater accountability on gender equality in general within the Government of Canada and the slow progress of implementing GBA across the government were identified by the United Nations CEDAW committee in 2003 as areas that needed improvement.

The 1995 GBA commitment was deemed a shared responsibility between, as I said, Status of Women Canada, playing a capacity-building role, and individual departments, responsible for determining which legislation or policy would have the potential to affect women and men differentially and would therefore be appropriate for the consistent application of a gender lens.

Over the years we've observed willingness on the part of departments to take up the training, but they're not necessarily willing to be held responsible for applying the new knowledge systematically across the board. They wish to do it selectively and most often where there's a direct link to a gender-specific issue such as employment equity or where equality-seeking groups have been successful in pressuring the government to change a policy or program. Here, IRPA comes to mind.

• (1535)

[Translation]

Resistance may stem from the fact that before undertaking a comparative analysis project, it is often necessary for the parties to

set aside the belief that Status of Women Canada and the GBA Directorate will do the work for the department. The situation is further complicated by the fact that, because a GBA initiative supposes a shift in work methods and attitudes and knowledge of gender-based issues, the process is often wrongly interpreted as meaning an increased workload. As a result, departments are often reluctant to make a commitment to the process.

Unfortunately, the lack of obligation, internal resistance and the lack of shared responsibility have led over time to a decrease in departmental capacity to ensure gender equality. There is no incentive for departments to replace the people who champion the cause of gender equality when these individuals leave or to re-establish offices to coordinate and integrate gender-based activities following a restructuring or reorganization.

Gender-based activities coordination and integration offices perform a number of key roles with a department, ranging from promoting equality to strengthening analysis capability to monitoring performance and presenting progress reports. These roles comprise institutional structures and can facilitate organizational capability, both from a gender-equality and from a gender-based analysis perspective.

[English]

A final, although innocuous, challenge that seems to continuously undermine our GBA efforts is that there is confusion created with different terms used since 1995 to describe what we're trying to achieve overall. We tried to make sense of this confusion this way.

In Europe and international fora, gender mainstreaming has been understood to mean that a dual approach is required to address discrimination based on sex and to uphold women's human rights. One strategy is to deliberately focus on addressing issues of discrimination and exclusion experienced by women. The other, a complementary one, is to visibly reflect the realities of women compared to those of men in government policy and program design.

The starting point for the deliberate strategy is a woman-specific issue such as violence. It focuses exclusively on the situation of women, and attention would be given to correcting the situation, thus advancing women's equality. The starting point for the second strategy is a gender-neutral policy or program, where the different socio-economic realities between men and women have gone unnoticed. This is where we see the value added of gender-based analysis, and here again, IRPA is a good example of that. By identifying factors that may impede the achievement of outcomes, GBA should contribute to appropriate courses of action and help reduce, if not eliminate, the potential disparities between women and men in many areas of life, thus advancing gender equality.

As you know, when countries around the world gather in New York for Beijing plus 10, Canada will be in the spotlight to demonstrate what progress has been made on gender equality and the practice of gender-based analysis. The Government of Canada has the opportunity to build upon the agenda for gender equality and undertake the next phase in its efforts to advance women's and gender equality by formalizing the obligation to achieve gender equality results and the use of GBA. To achieve this result, a clear set of goals and anticipated outcomes need to be linked to major gaps, key indicators, and benchmarks need to be developed. A formal reporting mechanism needs to be established and horizontal coordination of government actions needs to be strengthened.

We're really halfway there. We have elected officials who can provide the leadership and vision by defining policy priorities and give the thrust to gender equality and gender-based analysis. The CEDAW committee recommendations highlighted key priorities for Canada to act on. Status of Women leads an interdepartmental effort in the development of gender equality indicators, and our gender-based analysis training and tools are really of world-class quality.

I believe what is really needed is to place all these ingredients in a formal accountability framework for Canada to retain its leadership, which is recognized internationally, on gender equality.

I understand that your committee, Madam Chair, will be undertaking a study on gender-based analysis. We will be watching closely the results of this endeavour, since it will consist of an important source of information for us as we lead the development of the future direction for Canada's plan and priorities on women's equality and gender equality for 2005 and beyond.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

With your permission, colleagues, I'm going to suggest that rather than the first rounds being seven minutes, we confine them to five minutes so that we can move it along.

Ms. Grewal, are you beginning for your side?

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

Thank you, witnesses, for your presentation.

My question is very simple. Gender-based analysis is not an end in itself, but rather a tool to be used to attain greater equality between men and women. In which areas are gender equality gaps the greatest? How have equality indicators been developed to determine whether the equality gap is closing in these areas? If so, how have these been communicated throughout the federal government and the public? How do gender-based analysis methodologies and tools incorporate the differences between different groups of women, such as new immigrant women, aboriginal women, and women with disabilities?

Ms. Florence Ievers: Thank you very much.

You talked about the gaps. Through our encounters and our dialogue over the last few meetings that we've had, we have mentioned some of them. I'll mention just a few now. Poverty among

women is very high, especially among certain groups of women: lone-parent families led by women; groups of immigrant women; some women who face double and triple barriers.

There's still a lot of concern, as we discussed on Tuesday, about violence against women and about particularly the plight of aboriginal women. And when I talk about aboriginal women, I don't limit it to violence, but also to their legal and human rights. Those were issues that were identified by the CEDAW committee but are recognized, and I'm sure groups have told you their perspectives on some of these issues.

How do we develop indicators? We work very closely with Statistics Canada. We have a number of publications that we've done over the years called "Women in Canada". At times we have put out publications called "Women and Men in Canada". As we end the five years of the agenda for gender equality, we are now in the process of preparing a more detailed analysis of the gaps, of the challenges that remain for women, and we are developing a set of indicators with Statistics Canada and our colleagues across the federal government.

On the application of gender-based analysis and how it impacts on race and other factors, I'll ask H el ene to give you more information.

Ms. H el ene Dwyer-Renaud: Thank you.

In terms of the way the tool works, as I mentioned in the presentation, we basically follow the policy framework that is familiar to all policy analysts. Depending on where you are in the policy development process, if you're doing consultations or developing options, or if you're doing data collection, it is understood that you will also take into consideration the diversity among women and the diversity between women and men in what you're doing. That's an understood process within gender-based analysis.

I think I mentioned a tool we've developed, the performance measurement template. The performance measurement template tries to see the impact GBA does have in the different steps of policy development, and it does do it with intersection with race, diversity, age, and all of the different factors. That is part and parcel of the gender-based analysis methodology.

• (1545)

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Is there still time?

The Chair: You have a little time, yes.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: I'll give it to Joy.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): I'm going to ask something that has been on my mind since Tuesday, when we met last. When you talk about gender-based analysis and these wonderful tools that you're trying to produce to analyze this whole area, how do you prove discrimination and exclusion in areas such as whether or not a person gets a job or whether or not a person is selected for something like that?

We've talked about violence and very tangible kinds of things that we can see when women are put in compromising situations like that, but in this day and age there are a lot of shortfalls in the gender analysis tools when we look at things that are not so easy to analyze. Is there anything there that you've been looking at to see if you can have some concrete data on those things?

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: I hope I'm going to answer your question, but perhaps what you're looking for are the kinds of examples we would talk about in terms of a gender neutral policy, where the differences are not that obvious. There are several examples used by the different departments, but a good one that I have with me here is cardiovascular disease. This is one of the examples developed by Health Canada, and it's interesting to see how they show the difference between men and women and how—if we pay attention to things like smoking tendencies between men and women, the kind of exercise they do or do not do—these will make a difference in saving the lives of women who have the disease compared to men. And it also makes a difference in terms of how they are treated when they arrive with their first heart attack at the hospital. I think people probably have seen this in the press recently, that women are not treated the same way as men are when they arrive at a hospital, because they don't have the same symptoms; they don't reflect the same symptoms.

A lot of the examples we use in training are like those, so people can understand that it may seem neutral at the front end, but once you start scratching the surface there are a lot of differences. And that can certainly go through the whole economic area and the social areas; we can pool some examples of that from pretty much all areas of society.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Brunelle.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Good afternoon, ladies. It's a pleasure to see you again.

With respect to this GBA process, I've tried to take some concrete examples and to see what we can do. I also sit on the Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws which is doing a study of prostitution and solicitation. You stated before that committee that Citizenship and Immigration Canada —and you confirm this — has adopted the GBA approach.

The following question was raised at the time when we heard that there were many immigrant women and that the majority of them worked in the sex trade. Do we have the capacity at this time to compile the data needed to back up the departments' claims?

I also had a question concerning wage parity, which I believe is one objective that Canada is committed to achieving. In so far as federal government workers are concerned, do we have sufficient

capability to conduct a detailed analysis which would show that departments still have a way to go before wage parity becomes a reality?

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: As far as data on prostitution is concerned, I'm really not an expert on the subject. However, if we take the example of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, I know this department has undertaken to review all of its practices and to itemize gender-based activities. I assume it's now doing this, although if we look at its latest report on the Act, we note that its reporting practices are still a little lax. In my view, for a department of this size, it's a real challenge to undertake a review of the various data collected over many years and to improve upon its data collection methods.

However, I have to say that departments have demonstrated their good faith. We are currently conducting an exercise with gender equality indicators and departments wishing to have sound data to do their work are well represented. If we do not currently have this data, we will shortly, because we are committed to this process.

• (1550)

Ms. Florence Ievers: As far as wage parity is concerned, without question the government and Status of Women Canada support wage parity because it is the key to improving economic self-sufficiency among women. The government set up a committee to examine this issue and SWC participated in this initiative. The government has received the committee's report and is now examining it. SWC is involved in this process which is extremely important to women.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Your job, which consists of integrating this gender-based analysis approach, is formidable. Does the fact that departments are under no obligation to comply constitute a problem that the committee should attempt to rectify? Given the lack of obligation, persuasive tactics may be well and good, but isn't implementation likely to be a protracted process?

Ms. Florence Ievers: The government first committed to the GBA process ten years ago. We have tackled the various stages of this process one at a time. In 1995, a federal plan involving 24 departments was unveiled. The role of SWC was to build capacity to assist departments in their work. As I said, it was a dual responsibility. We had our job to do, while the departments had theirs as well.

Several years into the process, we came to the realization that it was difficult for the departments, even with the guidelines in place, to achieve this objective. Therefore, in 1999, SWC created the Gender-based Analysis Directorate to reaffirm the need to step up the pace of capacity building within SWC between 2000 and 2005.

We are now reaching the end of this strategy and realizing — as you've heard us say — that progress is very encouraging in some areas, but less so in others. I think we've reached a point where persuasion is less effective. In the course of working and cooperating with several departments, I've observed that there is more desire and awareness than there was five years ago. I think we've reached the point where we need accountability mechanisms with some teeth to ensure that departments across government can do their work.

We've also stated that it might not necessarily be a good thing to implement this process in all departments. I believe a phased-in approach is preferable. For example, a department such as Citizenship and Immigration has developed a five-year plan, as H el ene mentioned, to sustain its GBA efforts, in keeping with the Act and the requirement to report to Parliament. Given this example of a policy requirement, I think the department realized that there was no real mystery here. Sound practices, sound examples and pilot projects within a department often have a snowball effect.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Kadis.

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

Following up on the last comments, are you aware of countries where it is mandatory, not optional or incremental? Has that been successfully implemented?

Ms. H el ene Dwyer-Renaud: There are some countries that do have it as an obligation. For example, they have included it in an act. But from what we can observe from far away, either through Internet research or interactions with delegations from Canada, it still looks like a lot of it is on paper and not really practised yet. It all depends on how a country has taken on the perspective. They may have decided to have this kind of obligation, but they have no training, tools, or information, so they find themselves with public servants who don't really know how to do that. Or you have situations such as in Canada, where we've maybe gone the other way and developed the tools but have come to a juncture where we could use the obligation. To answer your question, paradise does not seem to exist yet in terms of GBA.

• (1555)

Mrs. Susan Kadis: You referred to the need for an accountability framework or mechanism. I agree with that very much. Would you see this committee as a vehicle to recommend that? Has your department recommended that or highlighted that need?

Ms. Florence Ievers: I believe we're in the process of ending the agenda for gender equality. We are reflecting on how best to go forward. We are doing it internally and with our colleagues in other federal departments. But we certainly see a major role in the work the committee is undertaking on gender-based analysis, and we look forward to the recommendations you will come up with.

In our view, the time has come to be more forceful on this practice. You had before you the minister responsible for expenditure review, who said he's taking gender into consideration in his work. The Minister of Finance recently answered a question in the House about his department looking at gender as they're looking at policies. I don't want to presume what the results of your discussion will be,

nor the discussions we're going to be having internally with our minister and our partners in the federal government, but I think the time has come to move more strongly on this issue.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Following on that, the lack of full implementation is obviously due to many factors, which you've identified today. Would you say it's more a function of a need for a strength and accountability mechanism or would it be financial resources? I'm only trying to get a gauge here. If you had to prioritize, what really are the true impediments or the avenues to being successful in this area?

Ms. Florence Ievers: H el ene might correct me, but I would venture to say that I don't think it's necessarily a question of money, except if you need data and you need to develop the data in order to be able to see the difference of a policy or the impact on women and men. Some departments that don't collect data that way perhaps might find it something they need to add.

We haven't progressed as much as we would have liked to, certainly not when we were looking at this as a concept that would make a big difference in gender equality when the government bought in this policy in 1995. But what we realized, and what still needs ongoing work, is that capacity-building needs to be done in order to demystify the challenges that are related to applying gender-based analysis when developing a program or a policy.

This should be ongoing, with the work that we've done and that many departments have done in developing their own frameworks, like Citizenship and Immigration. The fact is that the school at the Public Service of Canada has accepted adding gender-based analysis to its curriculum. We're now working with them to see how that training could be applied to executives, because the commitment to do this has to come from the top.

IRPA did not happen by accident. It happened because the minister responsible wanted this to happen and told her department she wanted this to happen. The department asked how to do it. We partnered with Citizenship and Immigration, and they were then able to develop what I find is groundbreaking legislation that really addresses accountability on gender-based analysis.

If commitment does not come from the top—I'm talking about ministers, deputy ministers, and assistant deputy ministers—it's very difficult for the rest of the apparatus to do it properly.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): I want to thank you again for your presentation and also to acknowledge the fact that I understand much of the work the department has done is acknowledged internationally as being groundbreaking, leading-edge work, and people do come and talk about it.

This follows along on my colleagues' questions. As you noted, CEDAW has cited us for our lack of progress. Canada's annual performance report doesn't include gender-based analysis as something we report on.

You've referenced a number of issues. I'm hearing really loudly and clearly that the leadership for this initiative needs to come politically, but at senior levels of the bureaucracy. I think most of us would agree with this.

I think many of us who have experienced employment equity over the last 20 years understand that it's very easy to pay lip service. I worked for the federal government at one point in time. We developed employment equity plans that looked great on paper, but it didn't generate the results that we'd hoped it would.

A couple of the witnesses who came forward cautioned us about developing a gender-based analysis approach that really didn't have any teeth to it. Part of it is the attitudinal change, but I'm wondering whether you see some other things the department could be doing if it had the support at the political level or the resources. Are there some specifics you could think of?

• (1600)

Ms. Florence Ievers: As I said, our role is not to do gender-based analysis for departments.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Right.

Ms. Florence Ievers: Departments must do it by themselves.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Are there some things you could do that might help support that initiative if you had either the political will or the resources?

Ms. Florence Ievers: I think if there was an accountability mechanism in place, perhaps there could be a role for Status of Women Canada to more closely monitor the results that are achieved in the application of gender-based analysis. At this point in time, those mechanisms are not in place. That's why we feel that mechanisms of accountability need to be strengthened in order to get to that level. It could be Status of Women or it could be somebody else.

Ms. Jean Crowder: But you've developed such expertise around gender-based analysis that it would seem a good fit.

Ms. Florence Ievers: I want to say that we have developed good expertise, but a number of departments have developed good expertise as well, and they're rather efficient at applying it. The Status of Women acts as a capacity builder and as a catalyst to move things around. We coordinate, we get officials together, and we try to see the way forward. Others are doing a good job as well.

The Chair: Yes, you have more time.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I have a question around some of the departments, and Immigration is one that comes up quite often. When I looked at their plan from about two years ago—and unfortunately I didn't bring it with me today—I wondered if there had been the kind of work to follow up on that that talks about the concrete results that are making a difference in the policy. Are there actually tangibles we can point to? They had a list of things about training staff and those kinds of things, but is there a concrete translation into making a difference in women's and children's lives?

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: My understanding is that they have been developing business plans. That means that basically each branch is actually setting out objectives from a gender-based analysis perspective, or a gender-equality perspective, in its own program areas. Their plan is starting this year—it's going from 2005 to

2010—so I don't know if we'll be able to see things that quickly, but I would say within a year you probably will be able to see that kind of very concrete result that you can monitor practically.

I know they're very open with their information. They have provided the information on their website, and I'd encourage members to go and see that if they wish. They do communicate a lot of what they've been doing, but I know they have felt they needed to get a little bit more aggressive, perhaps, in terms of results, and they have come up with this plan.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Yelich.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Thank you.

When Minister Frulla was here, she mentioned to this committee that the Government of Quebec does gender-based analysis quite successfully and automatically, and without having been required to do so. I'm wondering if Status of Women Canada knows how long it took for Quebec to do this, and what are your thoughts on this?

Ms. Florence Ievers: I would say Quebec has put considerable effort into this area. I know they have done a number of pilot projects with certain departments, much like we have been doing on our end. I can't say personally if gender-based analysis is used systematically throughout the government, but I know there is a high-level committee—I think it still exists—made up of ministers and deputy ministers who monitor the progress the Quebec government is making on gender equality. I would think part of the information that comes to this committee is probably the result of how gender-based analysis is applied, but I say that not knowing exactly what is happening in the Government of Quebec today.

• (1605)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I would like to know what policy case studies you're doing in Saskatchewan and throughout the Saskatchewan government. Is gender-based analysis what you're doing? When you say “policy case studies through pilot projects”, what's the pilot project you're doing in the province of Saskatchewan?

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: In the province of Saskatchewan, it has been training. If you're familiar with the way they reorganized the women's machinery in Saskatchewan, the responsibility for gender-based analysis is now inside the premier's office. They have decided they will bring on board trainers who will train pretty much every public servant in the Saskatchewan government, and that's what they've been trying to do.

For the training that happens, they do use different case studies and examples. I can provide those to you, because I don't have them here.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: So here we have somebody analyzing gender in the Saskatchewan government. Walk me through exactly what they do. I gather statistics is the tool used most, but what do they do when they train people to do gender analysis?

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: It depends on where that public servant sits. On policy development, although the training is done in a linear way, we all know it doesn't get done that way. Basically the training the individuals will go through is to understand how to apply GBA in different areas. So if they're into data collection, if they are researchers, if they're statisticians, they will understand or they will learn how to do the research better in terms of the questions, do better questioning, look at the different areas, the data banks, and do a better job of collecting data.

But it doesn't stop there. If they're in a communications branch, they will learn how they need to be more receptive to the needs of certain groups in the community that might not have always been the main client groups of the government, to announce certain things or to bring on board when they're doing focus groups. They may have done consultations for the past 30 years with the same group of people and never thought they could actually open the consultations to the real people who are benefiting or will benefit or be impacted by the policy or the program they are developing.

So it's really looking at policy in all its aspects, not just in data collection. If you're evaluating a program after it has been in existence for five years, what kinds of questions are you looking at in terms of evaluation?

Evaluation is a good example, because government usually does a cost-benefit analysis, but it is not doing good impact analysis to find out if the policy actually made a difference for the people who were benefiting or receiving a benefit. So it's that kind of training. It's really on a day-to-day basis. As a public official, when you are dealing in your work, how are you taking gender into consideration in each of those steps?

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Torsney.

Hon. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): I hate when people apologize for being late for a meeting, but I just had a big group of school children and explained what this committee would be doing and why it was important. They were actually interested. They were all in about grade seven or eight.

I do wonder if we have some examples—as I tend to think money talks in lots of places in Ottawa and elsewhere—of where, in fact, on the one hand, if the Saskatchewan government is obviously going to invest a lot of money in all this training, we can show that it actually saves them money in the end or that there is a real economic benefit to having gone through the process of gender-based analysis.

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: I don't know if we're at that point yet in terms of showing that kind of economic benefit. We could probably go through some of the things that we may have seen from the Quebec government, for example, that might have done some kind of analysis when they brought in the analysis. I know there's an example they used to use about some of the health care insurance, things that were insured and then de-insured and how they impacted on men differently than on women, and then there was a cost at the end of the day.

So there are a few of those examples that, if the committee is interested in receiving them, we can certainly compile and send forward.

•(1610)

Hon. Paddy Torsney: It's possible that some of them could be sort of near-death experiences, meaning that the policy was headed in one direction and by doing the analysis it went the other and the government actually was shown to have saved money. I think that would be helpful for those who doubt the benefits.

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: Just to add one more thing, there are a lot of international types of examples also.

For example, the World Bank has that kind of economic analysis that it has been doing over the years in terms of when you don't add gender into the mix. If the committee is interested in those, we can provide those as well.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: I can't speak for the whole committee, but I'd be fascinated. I guess I was one of the ones, too, who hoped that we'd actually be, at some point, taken though an exact example of how it works and what it means. People are just getting caught up in the lingo but not necessarily seeing its benefits, and I think concrete examples would be helpful for all of us.

The Chair: Thank you. We're just working on that.

Madame Bonsant.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Good afternoon.

What kind of challenges, whether new or existing, do you see to the implementation of gender-based analysis across federal government departments and agencies?

I know people who championed the cause of wage parity. Some departments managed to achieve this for their employees, but others are still waiting. Can you give us some examples of obstacles that you have encountered?

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: Florence mentioned several in her presentation. If political will from the top is lacking and if no one is demanding this approach, it's difficult for people to understand that they must follow through on gender equality issues.

The departments I mentioned have issued statements. A deputy minister may want to know how a bill will impact men and women differently. If he does not specify this clearly, it's difficult for people to do the proper type of gender-based analysis. Some people actually receive the training to do this kind of analysis, but once they are back on the job, no such requests may come their way because of the way in which their organization is structured. That's one example of an obstacle that can be encountered.

Ms. Florence Ievers: There are those who believe that gender-based analysis entails additional costs. As Ms. Torsney mentioned, the cost to government can be substantially higher if such an analysis is done. However, in the absence of GBA, certain consequences can be felt many years down the road.

Consider, for example, pension policies. If women were not able to benefit from the pension system's child rearing drop-out provision, they could find themselves much worse off over the course of their lifetime. This provision is therefore a benefit to them.

Studies were done to determine how this provision impacts men and women. It was found that in the case of women who are absent from the labour force for five or six years, these years did not count as such, but were nevertheless taken into account when the total number of years of employment were calculated, which meant that their pension was reduced considerably. By conducting this type of analysis at the policy formulation stage, the government is thus spared the trouble of having to create other programs or spend additional money for women who will find themselves poorer when they reach retirement age.

However, departments do not view things in the same light. They imagine that they have neither the resources and means nor the time to consider GBA in addition to everything else that is involved in program or policy development. The role of SWC, especially over the past five years, has been to develop the tools, mechanisms and training programs to facilitate the departments' job and to demystify the challenges associated with the more uniform application of this policy.

• (1615)

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: "Demystify" is indeed a good word. It's not that departments are acting in bad faith, it's just that people haven't really understood that situations can be different for men and women.

With respect to wage parity or employment equity, it's interesting to note that departments that have instituted parity can easily make the transition to a GBA approach. The process is much simpler when awareness-raising efforts have already proven successful.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: To implement the process, it is often necessary to have political support from the top.

Could SWC not focus its attention on priority issues of major concern to women? This might convince the politicians that this area is important because it affects many people. It could be viewed as a different way of approaching the work to be done.

Ms. Florence Ievers: Take child care, for example. The federal government is developing a child care policy that involves the provinces and territories. It's important to take women into account in the policy formulation process, but that is not a given in a world where everything is neutral.

We are currently working with the federal minister on policy formulation. We believe we have something to contribute to the process. A child care policy will have a major impact, not only on women, but also on men, families and children in Canada.

Other priority issues, as mentioned earlier, include poverty among women, violence, aboriginal women and non-standard employment fields where women are poorly served.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: With respect to the analysis of government policy, FAFIA just recently released an analysis of the last ten years of federal budgets. I don't know whether you're familiar with that report. It highlights the fact that women's issues are often not on the table in a meaningful kind of way. You reference the drop-out

provisions around CPP, but what hasn't been done in a meaningful way is the analysis.

We have a large number of women who are going to retire over the next 10 to 15 years. Women have been working in non-standard employment and continue to earn 30¢ less on the dollar than men do on average. There's a significant looming challenge coming for senior women, who could potentially be living in poverty if we don't do some analysis on this.

I think it's just an example of how women have really not been included in a meaningful way in policy analysis. I know you're familiar with that. I think part of our challenge is that it often feels as if we're rolling the boulder uphill, because if we look at the representation in Parliament, out of 308 seats, there are still only 65 women. To have the women and children agenda on the national agenda in a meaningful way is a real challenge, because you still have decision-makers who predominantly don't get it.

I wonder if you have any hints for the committee. I'm not asking you to tell us what to do, but are there tools or mechanisms you could provide for us that help us make our case in a stronger way?

Ms. Florence Ievers: From what I've just heard, you know exactly where you want to go, and I would not want to venture in that territory.

I think the challenges are there. We know where the gaps are. They've been identified by the CIDA committee, FAFIA, and a number of others. Your constituents, I'm sure, communicate those to you. Our statistics, as we develop them, as we look at the gaps, as we look at the results of the agenda for gender equality and how we move forward, are giving us the same information.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I think the point earlier about providing us with an example and maybe walking us through a particular piece would be helpful, because it's very telling. If we used a piece of legislation.... For example, the Employment Insurance Act clearly disadvantages women and children, and men who are in part-time seasonal work, which is not your standard employment. Doing a GBA on that particular piece of legislation would probably help us look at ways that it could have been handled differently. It's a very telling example of how women are disadvantaged.

• (1620)

Ms. Florence Ievers: If it's the wish of the committee to systematically go through how to apply gender-based analysis, we'd be prepared to do it, but we're in your hands on that.

The Chair: We're certainly hearing that and will probably get back to you.

I'm watching the clock very carefully. I have one short question.

In the House the other day Mr. Goodale referred to the fact that he has asked departments to do a gender-based analysis on all policy papers coming to Finance. Has your workload increased, or have the demands on you increased?

Ms. Florence Ievers: If departments were asked to do it, departments would be the ones doing it. They would not necessarily come to us, as the capacity-building entity, to do the gender-based analysis for them. If the Minister of Finance said he's expecting departments to do that—and we mentioned a number of departments that are equipped to do it—I would presume they have taken that into account as they put things forward.

The Chair: That was my concern: whether they have the tools.

Ms. Florence Ievers: Many of them have the tools. Some are not as well-equipped as others, but if that's what they were asked to do, I hope they're doing it.

The Chair: Thank you.

On that note I'm going to conclude the meeting.

Thank you very much for coming back. I think quite clearly we heard a request to have you back for more information on this, and we'll be back in touch with you.

Thank you to all my colleagues. The meeting is adjourned.

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