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Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Thursday, April 7, 2005

•(1525)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)):
Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome.

And a particular welcome to you, Minister Frulla. We're delighted that you're here today to respond to our study on gender-based analysis, which has been going on for a number of weeks, as well as to discuss the estimates. So we're pleased and happy to see you here. Thank you.

Hon. Liza Frulla (Minister responsible for Status of Women):
Thank you very much.

I'm with people you know: Nanci-Jean Waugh, Florence Levers, and Hélène Dwyer-Renaud.

[Translation]

It is an honour to appear before you, members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, as you conclude your study of gender-based analysis. I look forward to your report. I am also pleased to be here to discuss Status of Women Canada's Main Estimates for 2005-2006.

My colleague Florence Levers and I will answer your questions to the extent we are able to do so. Otherwise, we'll be pleased to send you supplementary answers should you require.

As you know, the Standing Committee is playing a key role in keeping gender equality front and centre, both inside and outside of government.

Your report in February addressed increases to Women's Program funding—we're well aware of that—which is a key means of supporting the work of women's and other equality-seeking groups. I very much appreciate your input; the government as well.

In 2005-2006, Status of Women Canada

[English]

will do its part to sustain that momentum by promoting equitable public policy by performing gender-based analysis; coordinating federal government activities and reporting on progress; building knowledge and organizational capacity on gender equality by gathering, generating, and disseminating gender equality information; and funding research and community-based action.

Last month, with a few of you, I led the Canadian delegation to the United Nations Beijing +10 meeting in New York, where the UN looked at progress made on gender equality around the world. I was pleased to have parliamentarians and representatives of non-

governmental organizations in our delegation. They are integral to advancing Canada's domestic and international work in gender equality. To be effective, our work must involve a commitment from across governments and civil society.

[Translation]

Canada's international commitments, such as Beijing and its follow-up meetings, Canada's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW, and others, spur on domestic activity. In Canada, these commitments are reflected in the Federal Plan for Gender Equality, launched in 1995, and in 2000, the Agenda for Gender Equality.

Positive results have been realized and we are committed to achieving further successes. For example: the introduction of a policy on gender-based analysis in government, the development of training, tool development, policy case studies and pilot projects; criminal law reforms aimed at providing increased protection for victims of sexual assault and other violent offences, and the introduction of trafficking as an offence in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act;

•(1530)

[English]

the inclusion of sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act; initiatives including increases to the Canada child tax benefit, the doubling of parental leave, the introduction of compassionate care leave, and the recent commitment to a national child care program; and in the area of health, the creation of centres of excellence for women's health, the establishment of the Institute of Gender and Health, and the launch of Health Canada's women's health strategy.

I am pleased and proud that with Canada's strong support, all countries unanimously reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. At Beijing +10, countries shared experiences and best practices on how they are integrating Beijing and CEDAW commitments. They are all making progress on gender equality, and while Canada compares well, we can learn from others.

[Translation]

For example, the Government of Norway has a legislative framework, which includes a human rights act and a Gender Equality Act.

And the World Bank is an example of an institution that seeks to advance gender equality within its operations. Its initiatives include an operational policy for Gender Mainstreaming and a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy.

At Beijing +10, a resolution was adopted on gender mainstreaming at the national level, setting out what is required to achieve gender equality results—for example, government plans and accountability mechanisms.

In this framework, gender mainstreaming ensures that responsibility for all legislation, policies and programs is shared across government. It also underscores the fact that gender-based analysis is a key tool to accomplish this strategy, bringing a gender lens to the work of government, and ensuring the impacts on diverse groups are fully considered and reflected in federal initiatives.

[English]

To remain the world leader, Canada must continue to advance a federal strategy on gender equality. We must also continue to address key gaps: poverty among those groups of women, the situation of aboriginal women, and the need for greater accountability mechanisms across government to advance gender equality. Toward that end, Status of Women Canada is preparing a *diagnostique* to examine patterns and trends among women and men and to determine where greater efforts are needed to identify and address gender equality policy gaps.

In establishing the strategy direction for the next five-year cycle, Status of Women Canada will be guided by the CEDAW recommendations, along with Canada's Beijing +10 experience. Status of Women Canada will also maintain its leadership in coordinating the development and implementation of a new federal strategy to address this critical gap in Canada and achieve further progress with its partners.

Our federal strategy objectives are to achieve measurable results toward the Government of Canada, to engage Canadians more systematically in the policy process, and to strengthen transparency and accountability.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada now has the opportunity to demonstrate accountability and build on the Agenda for Gender Equality in a more structured way. We will look to address outstanding inequities—particularly for women who face the greatest barriers to equality, including Aboriginal women, immigrant women and lone parents—with relevant targeted initiatives; improve compliance and reporting mechanisms through better coordination and data collection; integrate GBA in policy planning and design; and ensure women's perspectives contribute to future planning.

As we develop a new federal strategy on gender equality, there is a need for ongoing consultations and dialogue, both inside and outside government. This will be a priority over the next few months.

[English]

Status of Women Canada will continue to work with government departments to address the challenges women face. Particular concerns include the situations of lone-parent women, women who must balance paid work and caregiving, and women who experience multiple barriers due to the combination of gender and other factors. These could include measures to improve access to benefits, support children and families, and improve the circumstances of women who are disadvantaged in the labour market.

In addressing issues of particular importance to aboriginal women, Status of Women Canada will continue working with their organizations on economic, social, legal, and political concerns. Status of Women Canada will work with key partners at local, regional, and national levels to support initiatives that increase public awareness, create institutional change, increase the capacity of aboriginal women's organizations, and influence public policy in areas such as violence and poverty.

●(1535)

[Translation]

In creating a federal strategy on gender equality, we have a solid foundation to build upon—the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and other legislation give us a strong legal framework for equality. Gender-based analysis gives life to our ability to follow both the letter and the spirit of the Charter. We are recognized world leaders in the development of gender-based analysis tools and training, and in gender statistics and indicators.

We also have well-established and internationally recognized coordination mechanisms through Status of Women Canada and other focal points, and through our federal-provincial/territorial network of Ministers responsible for Status of Women and we have strong advocates in women's organizations.

We are ideally positioned to establish key federal policy priorities to address the most critical needs, to improve coherence through horizontal coordination, to accelerate mainstreaming and gender-based analysis of all policies and to ensure stronger accountability for results.

We have achieved varying levels of success in applying gender-based analysis across the government. We now need to dig deeper to consider the lessons learned, and the pros and cons of existing accountability mechanisms.

[English]

For determining how to achieve our goals, the work of this committee will be critical. Indeed, your study on gender-based analysis will be an important document for this government to review.

We must also continue our dialogue in consultation with women's and other equality-seeking groups and with government departments and agencies.

[Translation]

We must remain focused on ending violence against women, increasing the economic security of women and improving the situation of Aboriginal women. We must strengthen gender-based analysis, so that we find gaps and emerging issues, and address them with strong government policies. We might also wish to look at our policy-making structures to determine whether gender-based analysis is properly established in the central agencies of Government.

[English]

The old challenges remain and a new one arises. It is a question of individual people, organizations, communities, governments, and nations accepting their responsibilities and getting involved from the grassroots level up. Gender equality is everyone's business. This standing committee is a key element in keeping gender equality on the agenda of parliamentarians and other Canadians and in their hearts and minds too.

Florence, my team, and I are happy to take your questions. I think we'll have certain things we would like to suggest to the committee to have this dialogue go on.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The clerk has advised me the arrangement was that we would deal with the gender-based analysis portion of the meeting up until 4 o'clock or 4:10, and following that we would do a study of the estimates or have questions on the estimates. Is it your understanding that we proceed that way, or are you open to doing it all at once?

Hon. Liza Frulla: That's fine. If it's fine with you, it's fine with me.

The Chair: That's just for clarification.

Ms. Yelich.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): You're saying we'll do both the estimates and gender-based analysis?

The Chair: We'll do gender-based analysis in the first part of the meeting and—

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: That doesn't give us a lot of time.

• (1540)

The Chair: No, it doesn't, but we'll work through.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: However, I do thank you, Madame, for attending.

While you have suggestions for us, I have some questions, and I also have something I would like you to comment on. It is specific to prostitution and also to decriminalizing marijuana, and it's about how you see the committee playing a role in both of those issues. It's not right now I want an answer, but I want you to think about that. I

think it is going to be a very serious issue in the near future, and I would like that brought to your attention.

However, what I did want to ask about gender-based analysis was this. The Department of Finance appeared here last month, and they said they do not generally undertake their own gender-based analysis of the various proposals. They said they relied more on the analysis done by the operational departments in preparing their memorandum to cabinet during the year.

My questions are as follows. Is this department unique to this situation? Can you comment on how often Status of Women Canada comments on the memorandum to cabinet and whether it's possible even to incorporate gender considerations at such a late point if you're developing policy? That's my second question. My third one is, has a memorandum of understanding been developed between the two departments to ensure that the Minister of Finance's commitment to gender-based analysis can be actualized by staff in the Department of Finance?

Hon. Liza Frulla: As you know—and we've discussed it—we developed the tools from 2000 to 2005. Now the challenge is for every department to systematically use those tools to analyze their policies on a gender-based equality form. Some departments are doing it better than others. I have to tell you it does also take the will and the mindset to do it.

That is why I had a discussion with my colleagues, and there is a will to analyze the opportunity to bring forth a bill on gender equality. I have to tell you the discussion I had was with the Minister of Finance. His appearance at this committee and at our women's caucus was quite revealing for him, in the sense that he realized that they tried to do gender-based analysis while presenting the budget, but he also realized—as others realize, being here—that perhaps we could go further.

If the committee wants to be a partner in this, I would really look forward to it. My suggestion would be to explore the opportunity to learn from other countries' experiences of bringing forward a bill on gender equality, so that like England, Germany, and the nordic countries, we would systematically apply this gender-based analysis.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Actually, as I understood the minister's explanation, if you're trying to analyze for the finance department, it seemed it wasn't whether it's gender or not; it's groups and policies. I'm wondering if that's where we should go.

I will let my colleague ask the next question.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

The last time you appeared before this committee, you discussed gender-based analysis and said you were in the convincing mode. Why?

Hon. Liza Frulla: That's a discussion I had today at cabinet. I think it worked.

As for the convincing mode, some departments think they do it, and do it systematically; some, again, mix the concept. Should it be equity versus gender equality? So there was a lot of education to do.

I have to tell you even in my own other department, Canadian Heritage, we really had to sit down and ask ourselves what we're doing. Are we doing it okay? Are we doing it enough? We could do just okay, but we could do more, we could do better, and we could do a perfect job.

Going from one to the other—me, the women's caucus, and the people around me—and coming from the Minister of Finance, and colleagues also, I was extremely pleased to see they were quite open to going as far as some other countries in having a bill on gender equality, which is more than the will. There is also, for those who are more difficult to convince, the obligation to do it.

Mrs. Joy Smith: You also said that in Quebec and in other provinces, this is what happened. You said it could be done automatically. I would concur that convincing is definitely a better way for people to do things than being forced.

What steps has Status of Women Canada taken to copy what the provinces have been able to do automatically, through this convincing?

• (1545)

Hon. Liza Frulla: First of all, you have to understand it's not all provinces. There are three provinces. Quebec is one, Saskatchewan, and.... It's hit and miss.

What we've done, first of all, is develop the tools, because without any tools.... Now what we've asked also is that departments systematically have one person responsible, so that there's a dialogue. This has been done and is in place.

As I said, it has worked in some departments. Other departments are more male gender-based, so they don't feel the same way or don't know how to apply it. It's a question of how to do it and to do it very positively.

We did a lot of educating. It worked, because we came this far, to the point where colleagues are now comfortable enough to say, we wouldn't mind looking at a gender-based equality bill, because we feel comfortable enough to say it's going to be systematic, and it should now be in the system. If the federal level gives the example, then it could be picked up by the other provinces and also by the private sector.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to move along now to the next round.

Madame Lavallée.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert): I want to skip my turn because I'm going to ask questions on the budget.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Kadis.

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

Welcome, Minister and staff.

I'm very eager to understand the process of accountability per se in terms of how you audit specific departments. Over the course of the last several months we've heard a range of the differing extent to which gender-based analysis is being implemented, is beginning to be, and is not being in some cases. That is a very big issue for this committee, and I'm sure for you as well.

What is your process for auditing and assessing the success or failure? If they are not doing it, what concrete steps do you take?

Hon. Liza Frulla: As far as the systematic way we have to audit is concerned, we do audit, but I'll let Héléne talk about it, because Héléne is responsible for doing the auditing and also for working with the different departments.

Ms. Héléne Dwyer-Renaud (Director, Gender-Based Analysis Directorate, Status of Women Canada): Thank you, Madam Minister.

There's not a formal auditing of the different departments; however, with those departments that are active, and there are about 12 or 13 of them, we keep regular contact and try to help them do a better job of integrating GBA in their departments. We also have been trying to invite other departments on board.

I must say we're very happy to have seen the colleagues you've invited to come forward. We have seen a very positive receptivity by those colleagues, who are now interested in doing more than they've been doing. But there has never been a real official auditing, although that would be something that I think in the future, if it's something this committee thought would be useful, we certainly would look favourably on.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: What could you identify as, in your opinion, the impediments to implementing GBA fully or adequately? If you can, prioritize or identify them.

Hon. Liza Frulla: I will let Héléne answer, because Héléne is working with the different departments. We see some progress in some, a will in others, a "how do we do it?" in others. As we said before, it's not equal.

Ms. Héléne Dwyer-Renaud: I think it's mostly not understanding what this is. Perhaps we have not done such a good job at trying to make people understand the difference between employment equity and gender equality, but now I think there is much more openness and receptivity by the different departments. There are some model departments, as you know. You've heard, for example, about Citizenship and Immigration. I think other departments now are seeing this as the right way to go and want to be able to do the same thing and want to be a model. For example, Canadian Heritage just started to implement gender-based analysis in a more systematic way.

• (1550)

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Actually, that brings me to my last question. How is it taking place within your other portfolio?

Hon. Liza Frulla: I asked my officials. When you come to a portfolio, you want to be perfect in that portfolio. The question is, are we perfect? The answer is not quite. So now, systematically, the heritage department is implementing the gender-based analysis. We are going to do audits.

Of course, we do have a certain department.... When you talk about heritage, when you talk about culture, you have to do it. You don't understand why it's not completely perfect, but let's face it, now we're becoming a model department.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: Finally, how can this committee assist you? You did refer to wanting to work with us cooperatively, which I know you do, in terms of perhaps encouraging that potential bill.

Hon. Liza Frulla: First of all, this committee really helped a lot in having those departments coming in and systematically asking the questions, because it really supports us in what we're saying.

When you have a horizontal responsibility, it's a responsibility, yes, but it's not authority. That's why we were asking why you have to convince them, then. That's because it's not an authority; it's a responsibility. So if there are more people there to say take it seriously, it's not only them, but we're there also to check you. It does help.

So continue doing so. I think it's really, really helpful.

Also, I believe in it, but we have to explore, as I said, the possibility of the bill and learn by other countries' experience. What are they doing? What kind of bill? Where do they go? Is it applicable to us? How to, if...? So if the committee would like to help us analyze and go see for itself what has been done in other countries, it would help us.

If we say collectively, after analyzing it, that this is the route to take because it's Canada, because it's our values, because we're sort of a model.... When we went to UNESCO, we found there were a lot of things we could improve, but there were a lot of things that we do right.

We have to analyze and explore. If the committee would like to help us in this task, we'd be more than happy to work with you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: If there is any more time allotted, may I ask a quick question?

The Chair: Yes. You have a wee bit more time.

Mrs. Susan Kadis: As you know, we requested an increase in the budget. Had you also, and what was that? Can you be specific?

Hon. Liza Frulla: Yes.

In regard to increasing the budget, we will be finishing the evaluation of our programs in June 2005. We will be coming up with a new policy during the fall, I would say, for 2005 to 2010. We will finish Beijing, analyze Beijing, how we can compare ourselves, where to go, and then come with an integrated policy from 2005 to 2010.

While doing so, when you go back to the finance department, you have to say we're coming up with a policy and this is what we need. This is basically what the finance department did ask us, and we're proceeding in doing so.

This week I met with the Coalition for Women's Equality. Yesterday we met with the Labour Congress. We all agreed that by also doing a consultation with them and not working in a silo—*en vase clos*—we will come up with this policy for 2005 to 10, and then, as well as policy, different action measures. Of course, then

there's discussion with the finance department. That's why everything should be integrated.

Again, this idea of a bill on equality should perhaps be integrated if this is a route we want to take.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I have Madame Crowder next.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Thank you, Minister Frulla, for your presentation. I also want to say thank you for the opportunity to attend the United Nations' Beijing +10 session, and to thank the staff for their support as well. It was a great opportunity.

I have two questions, and I'm just going to preface them a bit.

We've already referenced the Department of Finance, and I think for some of us it was a bit of a shock when we heard there was going to be a gender analysis of the budget. Yet when we had Finance here, they actually talked about the fact that they don't do it for all of those other items in the budget; they are reliant on other departments. So I think some of us had an image that a gender analysis of the budget actually meant exactly that. The analysis that other organizations have done around the budget talks about the severe lack of gender analysis of the budget.

My second comment about departmental testimony is specifically with regard to the Department of Justice. When we asked them how it worked in their department, they talked about the fact that gender analysis does not mean it's going to be reflected in the actual policy outcome. That's a direct quote from Justice. So they may do the gender analysis, but it won't actually or necessarily be reflected in the actual policy outcome. So I think we've got a huge hill to climb when people acknowledge, yes, we checked the box, but it doesn't really influence the policy outcome. That's a problem.

Professor Rankin came and talked about a couple of specific items, and I just wondered if these were going to be considered. She talked about the fact that what we don't want to do is to turn gender analysis into something that the technocrats do. She talked about the importance of including and involving in a meaningful way grassroots women's advocacy organizations.

I'm going to ask two questions, then I'm going to stop. My first question is, what is the process to include advocacy organizations up front in framing the discussion, not just in consulting them? Often consultation is nice but doesn't actually effect any change.

The second piece is that in your speech you specifically referenced the agenda equality process that's going to unfold over the next while, and that it's time for a new plan. The last plan was a bit disappointing for some of us because it wasn't written down. There were no accountability measures, there were no mechanisms to monitor it, and it wasn't evident to some of us what the consultation looked like in order to develop that plan. So I guess my question is, in this next round of agenda equality, what will that process look like to develop it?

Hon. Liza Frulla: First of all, with respect to the Department of Finance, when they were talking to me, they were sure they were doing a gender-based analysis budget. They were convinced and the Minister of Finance remains convinced. He realized (a) that they talk more about equity than gender-based analysis—that's what they realized—and (b) that to do a gender-based analysis budget.... When we give them our recommendation, they choose—don't forget that they choose. We have to do the work ourselves before it gets to Finance, because they can't do the work for us and we don't want them to.

In the federal government.... It's big and it's heavy, so to implement it is a challenge, as you realize when you're talking to other departments. Everybody has to understand the same thing. Even if we do have the how-tos, the procedures have to be the same in order to have accountability afterwards. I can't tell you the statistics, but the results of the accountability, the questions, and the evaluation of what everybody's doing, have to be on the same base.

So yes, this is a challenge. That's why I'm asking, how can we go further? As far as I'm concerned, a bill is as far as we can go, and then with the equality measure going with it, while we'll try to continue to convince, I think this is the maximum we can do. Let's see what comes up in our consultation analysis, but if it's positive, it could be a big plus.

As far as consultation for the plan goes, what we said to the Coalition for Women's Equality, and we'll work with them and with you, is that we would like to be able to put together experts—I'm not excluding women's groups; on the contrary—like Dr. Rankin, like other people who come from different groups, who come with their different experiences, and ask them to put together a paper on the how-tos, and then consult with women's groups and parliamentarians so that they're part of it. So when we come up with the 2005 policy, for example, we will all be part of it. It's really all of us, and I would say all of them and all of us parliamentarians—all parties, all equal—because this is something that we women have to push.

So this is the how-to.

Florence.

•(1600)

Ms. Florence Ievers (Coordinator, Status of Women Canada): The member mentioned a number of discrepancies in the strategy that the federal government had from 2000 to 2005. In our different appearances before the committee, we did recognize the fact that the strategy not being written out was problematic. It was difficult not only to implement but also to have people realize it was there.

Therefore, the minister's plan, when it is consulted upon, when it is developed—and when we say “consultation” it means consulting

with you, consulting with her colleagues, and obviously consulting with the community.... So we will have a written plan and we will have built into our plan accountability mechanisms, because as you mentioned—you mentioned the example raised by the justice department—even if they do gender-based analysis, it's not necessarily mandatory that they go with the result.

A way to persuade people to move forward and to do the right thing is to publish those gender-based analyses, because then it will be more difficult for departments not to act positively on them. So the more accountability we can build into the future plan, the more sure we will be of gender equality results at the end.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're beginning a second round, and it's four o'clock and we're to begin the estimates piece. Do you have a presentation on the estimates or are you just here to answer questions? I've been advised that you are flexible in terms of melding both the estimates and the gender-based analysis. So we'll proceed on the basis that there'll be some overlap.

I'm coming to Madame Guergis. Ms. Guergis, your turn.

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Thanks very much for being here, Minister. We all appreciate it.

I am sure you can confirm for us here that before and during cabinet, when you're with your colleagues and you're about to make decisions on legislation collectively, you're asking your colleagues if they have done a GBA at that time. I am sure you can confirm that for us. What I'm looking for is one ministry or department that you could say shines as a good example and has a good record, one we could actually sit down with to ask some questions and maybe help develop something that would help the other departments and ministries.

Hon. Liza Frulla: We would say Citizenship and Immigration, because of the kind of portfolio they have. I would say then Heritage Canada, but the portfolio is sort of different, and we do multiple things. Immigration is more continuous policy-wise. I would say Immigration, which is doing a beautiful job.

Ms. Helena Guergis: I don't mean to cut you off, but we have limited time, so I will proceed in that direction.

The other thing is, of course, that we appreciate that Status of Women Canada is engaging with women's organizations.

I am going to go right into estimates, actually. I want to ask you about NAC. It is said that they have been pretty inactive for the past several years, that the membership is dwindling, and they openly admit they have been closed for extended periods and their public visibility has been next to none. Furthermore, supporters such as the Canadian Labour Congress and the Canadian Federation of University Women have publicly stated that it is no longer relevant and no longer in a position to reclaim its crown as a national women's organization.

I find it really troubling as well that there are thousands in interest and penalties stemming from employee tax deductions that the group has never forwarded to Canada Revenue Agency. The money it owes was deducted from employees' pay cheques but never sent to Ottawa.

I want to know why are we making a decision to, I guess, reward them and continue to give them funding. Do you really think it is the best choice for funding?

•(1605)

Hon. Liza Frulla: First of all, it is not a reward. It is really to help the NAC initiative; their initiative is how NAC relates. It is also for them to examine NAC's future direction with its members and key stakeholders. But we are not giving them the money right up front. It is a work in progress with them.

Florence, do you want to comment?

Ms. Florence Ievers: NAC is an umbrella organization that has existed since 1972 and over the years has been very effective in bringing issues of women's equality to public attention.

Over the last few years NAC has run into some difficulties. I do not want to get into some of the issues you raise that involve internal matters related to NAC. But my understanding is that NAC has reduced its deficit situation considerably over the next two years.

In order for NAC to evaluate its relevance in the current environment—and you mentioned that NAC has become less effective, perhaps, in the last few years—we decided to continue to invest in NAC so they could look at themselves, consult with their membership, and consult with stakeholders to look at the relevance of NAC for now and in the coming years. To that end we decided to enter into a contribution agreement with NAC where we will.... As you know, the nature of a contribution agreement is not to do as we do with a grant—give out the money and then get a report at the end. We follow developments in this initiative at every step of the way. This is what we have been doing.

The Chair: You have about a minute and a half.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Rather than talk about funding for NAC or anything else, I want to go on to another issue. I understand that \$1.2 million goes toward the policy research fund, and this does not come out of the \$10.75 million in grants but out of the \$12.6 million of operating expenditures.

I have three questions. There seems to be no breakdown in estimates showing this, so—

The Chair: May I interrupt you, Ms. Smith, and can I put you off until the next round? We're out of time on this round. I'm trying to keep it flexible, but firm, if that makes sense.

Madame Lavallée, I know you have some questions.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Thank you.

Organizations for the defence and promotion of status of women have come and testified and said that they need a basic budget, a recurring grant for their administration. Some of those organizations had that, but it was withdrawn from them. They're being given grants for projects, but often, when those organizations have a lot of talent and ability to carry out those projects, they have much less for administration. They therefore need grants for administration purposes.

Do you intend to restore this kind of basic recurring budget in some way, precisely to ensure that these organizations can continue?

Hon. Liza Frulla: I in fact just spoke with some of those organizations, including the Fédération des femmes du Québec, two days ago. In 1998, the programs were changed: we dropped continuing grants or grants for operations and focused more on programs. However, we now realize that, in some cases, people do need assistance or support, if only at the administrative level, as you say, so they can be more effective in the field.

We'll be conducting evaluations of our programs in August of this year. That's why the people at the Department of Finance told us to finish our program evaluations and then to go back and see them. So we'll complete our program evaluations in August of this year and, at the same time, we'll establish a procedure for overall policies for 2005 to 2010 under which, if we decide to take part in the operation, we'll determine how we do so that contribution is as useful as possible and so these women can be in the field rather than in their offices making calculations.

•(1610)

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: So I'm going to suggest to you, Madam Minister, that you study the situation with a great deal of attention and especially that you meet the deadline you've set for yourself because it's important for these organizations that that happen and that it happen quickly.

Hon. Liza Frulla: Indeed. We usually meet our deadlines, regardless of the field. We set schedules precisely in order to force ourselves to meet them.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame.

Mr. Powers.

Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.): Thank you, Minister, for not only your interest in this committee but also for the willingness to come at whatever time.

I'm just going to talk now about the estimates. I'll be very candid. I'm somewhat upset with them, and I'm sure you are, probably from the standpoint of...more than likely, you have a spending envelope that you had to operate within.

What I'm upset with is that the estimates are almost 2% less than last year and the fact that there are about \$450,000 in reductions. We've been able to maintain the grants portion. I'm sure you've achieved efficiencies within the operating budgets that generated this differential. I'm disappointed we weren't in a position, with those efficiencies, to transfer the \$450,000 over to perhaps the enhancements in the grants. At least put the money there, subject to the review coming through, and put that in.

Progressively over the last number of years there has been, perhaps through outside intervention and certainly not through your involvement, a steady decline in the funding for Status of Women Canada. From that standpoint, I'm disappointed that we can't maintain at least the status quo.

As you're probably aware, in February this year in this committee, and certainly it was in advance of the budget, we actually asked for an enhancement of 25% in order to make your job and our involvement that much better. So perhaps there's a very good reason.

I must be candid that I have a problem truly supporting the estimates when there is indeed a continued decrease in the ability for you to do the job.

Hon. Liza Frulla: First of all, we have to say, though, that because of the gender-based initiative, the Agenda for Gender Equality, there has been an increase of \$20.5 million since 2000, over the last five years.

You're right, our agencies weren't touched by the reallocation process at all, and the diminution we had—the \$200,000, for example—was a contribution to the government-wide reallocation exercise last year, not this year. Do you remember when the government asked for \$1 billion two years ago? This year we refused to do it, because all departments were asked again, and I would have to say we made a case—we can't say no—that for us it was not applicable.

Also, there was some reduced funding, but it was because the programs were finishing, so in fact we're not working with less. Do you know what? I'm going to tell you very honestly here, especially to this committee, that if I were working with less, I would tell you. I know you meet with all of our colleagues, and since I say it's horizontal...then you can help me out. But I have to be honest: this year we're not working with less; we're working with equal money.

Again, the evaluation of our programs finishes in August 2005; there are needs and we know that. That's why we're coming up with an integrated policy; all together we could make a very good and solid case to have this budget increased now, especially if we want to have massive initiatives, like considering a bill on gender equality.

•(1615)

Ms. Florence Ievers: If I could, I'll just focus for a moment on the seeming \$500,000 reduction in our budget. I think that was your question?

Mr. Russ Powers: Correct.

Ms. Florence Ievers: Last year our reference level was \$23.9 million and this year it's \$23.4 million. The minister touched—

Mr. Russ Powers: Could you help me with the numbers? I'm looking at page 3, which has the total funding as listed out in.... This

is the document that was provided to us. On page 3, this document has a summation—

Ms. Florence Ievers: I don't have that.

Mr. Russ Powers:—that shows a total blending of \$23.4 million, and then it splits out between operating and.... If the information is incorrect, then please correct it.

Ms. Florence Ievers: We don't have the information that is before you.

The Chair: They're briefing notes, Madame Ievers.

Hon. Liza Frulla: We do have the information that this year it's \$23.4 million; that is correct. When we talk about operation expenditures—then we can ventilate the whole thing—it includes the research, and it's \$11.3 million; grants and contributions are \$10.8 million, and also contributions to employees and other social benefits are \$1.3 million, so this is the total sum of the budget.

Now, last year it was \$11.6 million versus \$11.3 million as far as operating expenditures are concerned, and this is where you can see the difference.

The Chair: Madame Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I have a couple of questions about the priorities that are set out.

On page 10 it talks about expected results the government develops and implements, federal initiatives that narrow inequalities, and so on, and then it talks about performance indicators. It mentions the number of federal initiatives that significantly advance gender equality, and there are a couple of places where these expected results are fairly vague.

I wondered how you are going to talk about setting targets and measuring those targets, because it just seems that we've talked about things in the past but we don't actually get to a place where we can say we've achieved things. I wonder if you could comment on that specifically.

Hon. Liza Frulla: First of all, as you said, and with very good reason, we don't have a written plan. We are going to come up with a written plan. It was noticed by us and by you that the accountability measures are not there or are not sufficient. We are going to put accountability measures to the point where we want to have a bill.

Also, we are coming up now with a definite policy. I think that now for 2005 to 2010 we need a definite policy. We know we have made some progress, but we need better tools to evaluate them very strongly and strictly. That's where we are now. That's why we're saying we are in the process of developing this policy with all of you and the groups, and together we will push for it.

•(1620)

Ms. Jean Crowder: This is probably more a matter of interpretation. I may not be reading it correctly. But halfway down page 11 it says, "SWC will continue to review and provide gender-based analysis on existing and proposed government policies, legislation, programs and initiatives". That sounds a lot broader than what I thought you were doing. I had thought that individual government departments were doing the gender analysis.

Hon. Liza Frulla: What happened is that we had to take part in interdepartmental committees in order (a) to present the tools, (b) to explain the tools, and (c) also to convince all the departments to have at least one person responsible so that we would have a direct intervention with the whole of the government.

Ms. Jean Crowder: In this particular piece, though, it sounds as if you're doing it.

Ms. Florence Ievers: We do it to a certain extent. Status of Women Canada policy officers take part in a wide range of interdepartmental committees and processes where policies, programs, and new legislation are examined. But we are but one voice at that table. That's why we feel that if we had stronger accountability mechanisms regarding gender-based analysis, our voice would have so much more strength and our views would be much more enforceable.

Ms. Jean Crowder: So the question then becomes, do you have adequate resources to fulfill that role?

Hon. Liza Frulla: We're stretched.

Ms. Jean Crowder: So one of the things the committee could do is work with your department on what that might look like and develop an adequate budget that would reflect it as a priority for the government to implement.

Hon. Liza Frulla: With a new plan that is, of course, properly funded, if we're very serious about this, and I think we are.... After the discussion I had in cabinet today, I can say that my colleagues also are.

You're talking about looking at the overall picture and going as far as exploring the bill, and colleagues applaud you, including the Minister of Finance. You can say that perhaps we're now there. There is a good chance for all of us to really make a significant difference in this gender-based equality principle that we should have. I can't say that we should provide the leadership, because other countries had bills before us, but we should at least learn from them and from what's working well and come up with a really good Canadian bill for us.

The Chair: Thank you. We're at the time limit.

Next is Ms. Jennings, and then I'll go back to Mrs. Smith.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

I want to come back to the gender-based analysis. I note that in your estimates report, the report on plans and priorities, pages 4 and 5, you describe some of the census data on women. You break it down according to, for instance, how many women within a certain age group are in the labour force. You break it down further into women who are immigrants, visible minorities, aboriginals, women who have disabilities. It goes to show that one can't treat all women the same way.

On page 5, in the third paragraph, you talk about the census figures on poverty, after-tax poverty rates. It's striking that poverty rates for immigrant women are significantly higher than those for women in general. The statistics show that rates for visible minority

women are higher still, and rates for aboriginal women are almost double.

I have two questions. First, when you do your gender-based analysis of policies, do you break it down into these subcategories? In fact, gender-based analysis may show that overall a particular policy is not that bad for women compared to its impact on men, that it's fairly similar. There might be a difference of only one or two percentage points. But if you then break it down into the subcategories, it could have a major negative impact on visible minority women, for instance, or women with disabilities. So I'd like to know if that is part of what you do with the gender-based analysis

Second, the government commission had a Task Force on the Participation of Visible Minorities in the Federal Public Service, the Lewis Perinbam task force. The report that came out was called *Embracing Change in the Federal Public Service*. One of the recommendations was that one in every five hires and one in every five promotions should be a visible minority. When you do your analysis, are you looking at that as well? How has your own department or section responded to *Embracing Change*? What's your record on that?

• (1625)

Hon. Liza Frulla: Immigration, for example, does it. They're good at doing it and at breaking it down. They serve as a model. Is it done systematically? The answer is no. Gender-based analysis is not done systematically. We still have to continue to educate and convince.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: What I'm asking is, first, when gender-based analysis is in fact being done, are these subcategories being included in that analysis? Second, I want to make a point that I know you know very well—not all visible minority women are immigrants.

Hon. Liza Frulla: It is done by us, but it's one voice at the table. If you look at Heritage, yes. If you look at the board of the CBC, it is there. In our policies we try to implement it, but this is only one department. Immigration does it beautifully. As I said, it's one voice. We have to do something well, do something better, and do the best. But now we have the statistics. So you can use them. When you look at it, it is very clear that you can't really treat all women equally.

Ms. Florence Ievers: At Status of Women Canada, we exceed the targets in all of the categories in the employment equity program. We're very proud of that. Of course, this doesn't stop us from being proactive in recruiting and trying to exceed the numbers we already have.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: So if I may just wrap up, this committee may wish to use Status of Women as a model of excellence in terms of both gender-based analysis and implementation of embracing change recommendations to all of the other departments.

Ms. Florence Ievers: If we're looking at a model, I would go with a department that controls its own programs. We control no programs or activities. We can give advice, and as the minister said, we try to influence. A good model of a department that does it well is Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: But when you're saying that, are you also answering my piece on *Embracing Change*?

Ms. Florence Ievers: There are two parts to that. With regard to *Embracing Change*, we exceed. We are a model there, for sure.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Mrs. Smith, you're first. Go ahead.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Okay. Why does the \$1.2 million that goes toward the policy research fund come out of the \$12.6 million of the operating expenditures instead of out of the \$10.75 million in grants? There are no breakdown estimates showing this. And considering that these are somewhat like grants, should they not be subject to the same accountability as grants? And what else falls under operation expenditures that is not shown in the estimates? I think these are questions that need to be answered.

We're sharing our questions.

The Chair: Okay, yes, you're sharing the time for all the questions.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: First of all, we talked about the funding that was increased with this department. I did not agree that we should increase funding without the evaluation being done first. So you agree? I can see you're nodding that you agree with me.

I was alarmed when this came out, as was brought up earlier, by the statement made by a prominent individual about the viability or lack thereof of NAC serving as a national women's organization, because there were many organizations that came here, and that \$150,000 would have been well served. Did you agree with the assessment about NAC? I'm sure you had heard about it, or I could read you more, but we don't have a lot of time.

In the words of a colleague, the honourable member for Vancouver Centre, "NAC proposed the project in 2002 and it was denied then. So why was it approved at this time and why did the government feel it necessary to give \$150,000 when in fact we did have very many organizations here petitioning for funding and it would have gone a long way?"

Thank you.

•(1630)

Hon. Liza Frulla: Okay. First of all, I just want to comment on what you were saying about the evaluation. Yes, I do agree. I agree, and we're doing it systematically in Heritage, for example, in all our programs, in Tomorrow Starts Today and whatever, and in this one. What we want also is to make sure the money we have is well invested. I think we do have a very good record in both departments on this. So that's why I'm saying that after the evaluation, then we'll see if we go with the core funding, and the how-to. So for us it's very important.

As far as the \$1.3 million goes, yes, we do research. We also are asked by other departments to do research. Justice uses us, and sometimes Immigration uses us. So we're sort of the research

department. If you want to have a list of all the research that we do, it would be a pleasure for us to give it to you, because it's really quite interesting.

Regarding NAC, as I said, the money that was given for NAC—and of course I'm not distributing grants—is mostly in progress. No organization has a lump sum, but they do have to perform to get the full sum of money. NAC was very helpful. If NAC wants to do a housecleaning or reposition itself and really be a very active part and continue to be an active organization—and we knew from assessing it that its problem was that it needed to reorient itself—then on that basis we would say, okay, for what you've done up to now and because you've accepted the fact that you need reorientation, we will be a partner. We are not giving it up front, but we will be a partner.

I'll let Florence continue, because they're really the ones, on a day-to-day basis....

Ms. Florence Ievers: At the end of this initiative we will all have to evaluate. NAC will have to evaluate how it wants to continue, whether it wants to continue, and the government will have to see what kind of collaboration we have with that organization.

However, as it is an organization that has existed since 1972, we felt it wanted to look at its relevance and we felt it was a good investment to do that. We will have to see at the end of the initiative.

If you would allow me, I would like to answer your question on research.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: We don't get the minister here very often, so it's nice to be able to hear her answer the questions.

I just want to hear whether this funding was in the 2004-05 budget or the 2005-06 budget. There was the reference of this contribution.

I would just like to know, because this is a program that was cut. It was finished because it did not have.... Certainly there was good reason that it was cut. I am not sure what its reputation was, but obviously there were some reputable people who had given it a fairly low mark.

How could it get the funding back so easily?

Hon. Liza Frulla: Well, (a), it's a judgment call to say "so easily"; (b), it was in March 2004 that the project was accepted; and (c), there are projects and programs coming before us and an independent evaluation that is of course done. There are programs that work better than others all the time, but you're there to help. If there is a partner who has been there for years and years and this organization, who really has done a very good job since 1972, decides to say, "Okay, we assessed the problem, we do have problems, and we are putting this in front of you because we want to prove to you that we are still relevant", then it's very hard for all of us to say we are discarding them. That is most probably, I think, the way it was accepted at that point, I can assume.

Now, the evaluation will tell us if, yes or no, we should continue with NAC. If the evaluation says no, this organization is not relevant anymore, then we will take a decision for it. We need to have the evaluation, and we cannot just say we think that, based on numbers. There is always a very humane—

•(1635)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I guess I just want to say that you wouldn't cut their funding, but yet you didn't give funding to some organizations that had come—

Hon. Liza Frulla: Wait a minute. We gave funding. This is for a program. We also give funding to organizations for other programs.

What we are not doing anymore—that is, assessing, asking whether or not we should—is the core funding. Since 1998 we do not finance core funding. Is it good, is it not? Was it the way to go in 2005? We are saying we should really get into it.... That is what we are going to assess. But all the groups now in front of us are into initiatives, but not into core funding.

As I said, we are ready to review this if this is the future way to go.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I will go back to my original question. Was it 2004-05 or 2005-06? And Joy's question wasn't answered yet.

The Chair: Please, very briefly, because we're well over the time. I've been generous with more time.

Hon. Liza Frulla: Your question was on the total operational budget. It's \$1.2 million for the policy research fund. It's \$5.8 million for the key functional operations, which includes \$3.5 million for the women's program and regional operation, because you know that we do have regional operations all over Canada; \$1.5 million for policy and external relations; \$0.5 million to work with either a department or a province, or whatever; \$0.5 million for gender-based analysis; and \$0.3 million for the research directorate.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Was it in the funding for NAC?

Hon. Liza Frulla: No, the funding for NAC was—

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: In 2004-05?

Ms. Florence Ievers: It was 2004-05, and grants and contributions are a different vote. That's why you find the operations on one side, including the research, and you find the grants and contribution programs stand alone. It's two different votes.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Well, then we need a breakdown.

Mrs. Joy Smith: There's no breakdown in the estimates and so we can't see.... It falls under the operating expenditures and we can't see

why they did it, who did it. I mean, there's a camouflage there, and so this is why I was asking. Considering that the policy research is somewhat like grants, why isn't it subject to the same accountability as the grants instead of being put under the operating...?

Hon. Liza Frulla: First of all, the policy research fund is done by the department, and don't forget that all the departments have audits. So it's within our operational.... As I said, we do the research because either somebody demands it or a department demands it. So it's within our

[Translation]

way of doing things.

•(1640)

[English]

The grants and contributions that we give to programs in different organizations goes to evaluation. If you want to have the whole list of all the programs that we've been giving to, we can—

Mrs. Joy Smith: Where do we connect with the programs is what I'm getting at?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Back to the NAC, you're saying the \$150,000 was in the 2004-05 year, and it's under what? We couldn't find it.

Ms. Florence Ievers: It's under grants and contributions.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: It's under grants and contributions and it's under NAC.

Ms. Florence Ievers: I'm sorry, the director of the program is telling me that the NAC's \$150,000 was in 2003-04. That's when it was approved.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: But wasn't there funding allocated this year?

Ms. Florence Ievers: No more money was allocated this year.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: That's it, that's the last time they got funding. Just because it—

Ms. Florence Ievers: Yes. We don't fund the researchers through grants or contributions; we fund them through contracts. That's why you don't find them with our grants and contributions. That's why they fall into our operations.

The Chair: We're at the end of this round and we're at the end of the meeting, but I would encourage you to sit down.... This comes under a special line under grants and contributions. It's not in the main—

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but we have had meetings with people who are trying to help us read these estimates.

The Chair: Have you met with the department?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: We met with the estimates people.

Ms. Florence Ievers: We would be pleased to forward you the information with all the details and to meet with you.

Hon. Liza Frulla: Yes, and sit with us, because at the end I would say there are certain departments....

[*Translation*]

There are some elements

[*English*]

within the government that.... When I was in Quebec, for example, all the women worked together, and I think that at the federal level we have this same will of working together. If you have any questions...it's Treasury Board's estimates, but it's us also. So please pick up the phone and either go through my cabinet or Florence. We would really be pleased to sit with you and see if there are needs or whatever, because let's face it, we don't have unlimited resources and we want to help. It's not unlimited resources, but it's unlimited needs. So if we can better ourselves, then let's do it. We're really ready to collaborate with all of you, and if you have particular...tell us right here, so that either we can answer questions or, as I said, be part of the process.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: That's why we ask these questions, and you've given us whatever you could for answers.

The Chair: I'm going to thank the members of the committee who are here, and I want to particularly thank you, Minister, and your team. I think you summed up how the committee is trying to work in a collaborative way so that we can work together to advance the agenda for women in this country. We've tried to work here in an open and collaborative and consultative way, and all members of the committee have been encouraged to investigate, negotiate, find out.

We welcome and thank you for your offer to members today.

Did you want to add something?

Hon. Liza Frulla: Yes, I want to add an invitation.

We met the Canadian Labour Congress yesterday, the women, on the issue of pay equity. They're here on May 4. They would like to meet individual caucuses, because May 4 is on a Wednesday. I know that on Wednesday we all have that agenda. They will come to all of you to meet your women's caucuses individually, be it the Bloc, you yourselves, or the NDP. And we'll do our part.

At night, what I've offered is that at 5 o'clock or 5:30 we can all get together, all the women. We'll organize it. We'll have a little cocktail together with them. As I said, it's going to be one year after the committee brought the task force recommendations on pay equity, and we're not there yet.

The Chair: Again, thank you.

Thank you to committee members. We will begin again next Tuesday. Thank you all for coming.

We're adjourned.

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