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Chair

Mrs. Susan Kadis

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.)): Good afternoon. I'll bring this meeting to order.

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. Today we have the pleasure of having an expert panel before us. It includes Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz, the chair; Dorianne Rowan-Campbell, a member; and Louise Langevin, also a member.

I understand that you have had extensive consultations across the country, including ones in Ottawa yesterday. You will be telling the committee a little bit about the work you have been doing to date. I believe your timeline to report is approximately the end of November, or somewhere along those lines. I'm sure the members will have questions as well as comments, and will provide additional input into your work and your deliberations.

I welcome you today. If you would like to make some opening remarks, I invite you to proceed. Thank you.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz (Chair, Expert Panel on Accountability Mechanisms for Gender Equality, Status of Women Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's quite a group. Thank you for inviting us.

You probably appreciate that the panel is actually a creature of this committee to some extent. Minister Frulla asked us to take on our work as a result of the report that came from the standing committee to the government.

I thought that the way we'd proceed, if it's all right with you, would be that each of us will make a few opening remarks, and then we would really like to hear more from you.

We would emphasize that we have obviously read the report of the standing committee. Much, if not most, of the testimony that you heard was extremely informative and helpful for us, and of course we are building on that testimony.

To clarify one point, we have not in fact been conducting extensive consultations ourselves. We really had to make a trade-off on meeting the deadline that Minister Frulla set for us, because as you may know, she is very committed to action. She believes that the kind of window for discussing this with her cabinet colleagues is sooner rather than later. We too have been building on the work of others, including this committee.

First of all, I thought I'd talk a little bit about our mandate, to make sure everyone is clear on that mandate. We basically comment on

federal government institutions, taking into account the Canadian Charter of Rights and relevant Canadian jurisprudence, as well as whatever we can learn from models in other countries.

We have been asked to develop options and recommendations, with the object of really improving the legislative and administrative frameworks for dealing with gender-based analysis, which we all know is a tool for encouraging sensitivity to the issue of gender, and then in a way looking at how that can promote the equality of women.

If you look at the three of us, we each represent a slightly different skill set. I thought we'd each outline for you what we have been doing for the past two months that we've been working together as a team, to enable you to give us comments, ask us any questions, etc.

My name is Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz. In my day job, I am currently the president of a national organization called Imagine Canada, which is an umbrella organization in the not-for-profit sector that conducts research about the sector, tries to define it, and provides tools to improve the effectiveness of not-for-profit and charitable organizations.

I also spend quite a bit of time in Ottawa. In fact, this is not the first time that I've testified before a committee. We also make representations to the federal government about broad policy issues and program issues that we believe need to be addressed in order to create a favourable environment for civil society organizations.

It's that perspective that Minister Frulla very much wanted, as a number of you know, and as you heard from a number of civil society organizations that focus particularly on issues related to women's equality. I personally have a strong belief that good government policy and good government legislation must engage with civil society institutions.

I'm going to digress a bit. I personally tell the story that I had the privilege of working in the post-communist Czech Republic in 1990 to 1995. What impressed me at that time was what happens when you don't have civil society organizations. They are extremely important in "disintermediating" and allowing citizens to become engaged in things that are of importance to them. It's one perspective that I'm bringing.

The second perspective that I'm bringing to the panel is that I spent 17 years of my life as a federal public servant, in the 1970s and 1980s, and ended my career in the federal public service as a deputy minister, which has also given me a perspective on how public servants view accountability mechanisms.

What have I been finding? What are some of the things you raised in your report that I have been trying to validate? What are some of the solutions that we might be proposing?

• (1535)

First, you put a great deal of emphasis in your report on the importance of introducing legislation to embed the mechanism of gender-based analysis as an important tool for promoting the equality of women. It is certainly something that we as a panel are looking at, and Louise will probably speak to that a little more.

We all know that legislation takes time and it can be changed. My own view is that there are many things within the existing accountability framework of government that could be done now. That would be one piece of advice that we will probably be giving to Minister Frulla.

We haven't yet formulated all our recommendations, but we have noted, as you have probably noted, that in the last few weeks and months, Minister Alcock, as President of the Treasury Board, has been introducing a number of new mechanisms, including something called the management accountability framework, whereby the Treasury Board is going to be looking at what is called the policy capacity of departments and at the way in which departments deliver services, as well as looking at the processes and the effectiveness with which they do that.

We believe that introducing something like gender as part of the policy analysis capability of departments, as well as the way in which gender is incorporated into the way services are delivered, could fit well within the indicators that the Treasury Board Secretariat will be putting forward when it assesses departmental and deputy minister performance, and when they make recommendations to the clerk of the Privy Council on how a deputy minister should be remunerated and assessed in his or her performance. It is something that could be introduced right now, without legislation.

There are other measures that could also be introduced. Minister Alcock also recently announced that quite a substantial amount of money will be going to the Canadian School of Public Service for training. As I understand it, there is a whole series of new curricula planned and under way to train public servants at different levels. We believe that issues of gender should become part of the culture of the public service, and as that training is redesigned, things like sensitivity to gender in both policy and program design should be incorporated into these curricula. That can also be done right away, with no legislation.

We believe there are other things as well, particularly with respect to the Department of Finance. In your recommendations, you mentioned the importance of the role of central agencies, the Department of Finance, the Privy Council, and the Treasury Board Secretariat. Subsequent to your deliberations with these folks, we've also met with them.

We are also going to be affirming what you were saying on it being important for the Minister of Finance to start the process. We're not convinced that we should immediately leap head-first or that the entire budget must be what in the language is called "a gender budget", but we believe that at least part of the budget should have some factors related to gender, and gradually that could be

expanded over time. Again, it is not something that requires legislation, and it could be done right away.

These are the kinds of things that I believe could be done.

The other factor that I believe is very important is the fact that the government has very key policy instruments whereby it lets the world know what its policy priorities are. We believe that in those instruments, the most important one from a policy point of view is the Speech from the Throne. We believe that in these important policy statements, like the Speech from the Throne and the budget, things like references to setting some priorities around key areas where gender will be a major consideration in policy development and policy priorities that are articulated in the Speech from the Throne should also be brought forward. This is something we're looking at. How could that be done? What is the role of the Privy Council Office in that?

Those are the key areas where we believe action would be possible now.

The other area would be to ensure, as you recommended, that there be an improvement in the amount of resources, specifically money, the dollars available for civil society organizations.

• (1540)

Quite frankly, we also believe that in those areas that are identified as priority areas for departments to be working on, there should be some resourcing there. Because what we have observed, and it came from the testimony before this committee, is that while there have been some very good efforts to introduce gender-based analysis across many departments, I would call what we have mile-wide, inch-deep. I believe that if we're going to have real impact and real change, we need to probably be getting a mile deep and an inch wide.

I'm going to stop there. I'll be happy to answer questions.

I'm going to turn it over to Dorianne, who has been taking a somewhat different perspective, because she has a great deal of experience in the international field and has been looking at what the models are out there internationally that we could perhaps look to and what some of the learnings are from those.

So over to you, my colleague.

Ms. Dorianne Rowan-Campbell (Member, Expert Panel on Accountability Mechanisms for Gender Equality, Status of Women Canada): It's a real privilege to be here today. I'm very honoured to be part of this team. It's a wonderful team to work with. We hope that when we're finished, you'll think so too.

My background is not at the heady levels of the Canadian public service, but I also have a background in the Canadian bureaucracy. I was once in Radio-Canada. I worked there at the head office in Ottawa. It was in a very bureaucratic position, so I do have some insights into how bureaucracy operates. One of my tasks there was to look at how we've changed the portrayal of women in Canada and brought it up to date.

I've done most of my work internationally, so what I've been doing is calling in all those international favours and talking to a number of countries about what they do to ensure accountability on gender equality. It's been quite a wide cross-section of countries with which I have had discussions, and quite intensive discussions.

I've talked to Sweden and to Norway, to the Netherlands, and to the EU itself. I've tried to see what mechanisms they use, what their structures are for advancing gender equality, how those structures are resourced, how we can compare them to what we do, and whether there are any lessons that we can pull from them.

Of course, you know when we go to the United Nations we write up a wonderful report that says we're doing wonderful things, even though it might not be quite as wonderful as we'd like it to be. I've done all my discussions off the record, and I've said, "Look, what I really want is a reality check. I know we all do it, but this is not PR. We really need to get to the guts of what works, what doesn't work, where you have concerns, where you see gaps."

Then I've cross-checked it with a number of policy institutes and said to them, "All right, this is what I'm hearing. Is this the same picture that you have? Is gender equality moving along in this way? What about the accountability mechanisms—are they working? How do they operate? Can you access them? How does the community feel?"

Then I've talked to civil society organizations, groups of women, and said, "How does this relate to you? Is your picture the same picture as the picture I'm getting from these two?"

Out of that, I've then said, "Well, there are these sorts of lessons that we can pull from their experience."

I've also looked at Australia and New Zealand. I've looked at India. I've looked at South Africa, and I've talked to Costa Rica and Brazil. I chose those because they had important rankings in the human development index and in the gender and development index, and because when you talk to people in the United Nations system and so on they say these are the countries that you might want to look at. So I've done that.

From them I've pulled a number of lessons. From Australia and New Zealand, which are actually feeling a little concerned about their own standing and their own forward momentum, the primary lesson on accountability is that they have to keep up their funding and support for national women's organizations and equality-seeking organizations because these are the pressure points; this is where the grounded research emerges from to inform a forward-looking agenda. When you stop doing that, you stop having that interplay between civil society, the people of the country, and the government, and there's a gap. So they find that with all the problems they're having in restructuring, this is the one central force that's keeping their agenda on track.

Interestingly, Norway came first of all the countries in the world in the human development index. They also came first on gender issues. Canada, as you know, came fifth and seventh. It actually came tenth when it came to the empowerment structure, which means there are not enough of you in Parliament.

●(1545)

Norway is going through trying to decide what their structure should be. Even though they're leading, they unfortunately are revisiting the issue. They have been told that good governance demands that you have no institutions within government that actually have a responsibility to give a report card on government. They're changing their structure, and there's a lot of dismay about the approach they're going to be taking. They're very concerned about where they're going to end up on gender equality issues.

At the same time, Sweden, which came below us in the ranking, has said that they really need to do something. They're taking on the Norwegian model. So by next year it will be interesting to see where these two stand.

I think having a point of accountability that reports on and critiques government action is very important, and all the countries will tell you that. The Netherlands tries to do it by funding a research institution that will write a report card saying, "These were your policies. This is what you said to do. These were your targets. This is what has happened so far. This is where you need to improve. This is where you could be stronger. These are the recommendations for action."

We looked at the countries that had been doing gender budgeting, and India is one of those. They're managing to get the message out across the system, but their accountability mechanism for gathering the reports is the ministry for women and child development, and that's a very weak ministry. So what is happening is that people may be doing things, but it's very difficult for that ministry to collect them. Whatever is going on doesn't have good oversight, very much control, and very much input from the oversight institutions. They feel that their accountability mechanisms are not very strong.

South Africa has a very good mix of mechanisms. It's in the constitution. They were lucky they didn't have to have it in the charter; they came with a new slate, and it's very easy to put things into a new slate. They have concern for gender equality slotted into the president's office, at cabinet level, in all of what they call their "cabinet cluster committees". They also move it down by having their national equality machinery, which works through a number of ministries, and they have a requirement to have a gender budget through the Ministry of Finance. They have a great number of consultation mechanisms to make certain that the budget is supposedly influenced by public consultation.

The problem is, when they started, things were going very well, and as you know, when you start something it's easy to start that momentum. Up to about 2000, you would have said they were doing very well. I think there's been a dip. Of course, there's also been a change of president. And if you have a president who has concerns about HIV/AIDS, who doesn't really think that it exists, and you see the numbers of women who are infected, dying, challenged, caring for other people's children because of HIV/AIDS, you can see that one very critical reality of women's lives is completely blotted out in any kind of dialogue, even though they are in the presidency. So they're not operating as well as they might.

But we have some lessons we can learn about the internal mechanisms and about where gender-based analysis fits as a tool for promoting change within the system, where it's been sustainable and where it hasn't. We'll be looking at those sorts of issues.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Dorianne Rowan-Campbell: The other thing I've looked at is which countries have legislation and what types of legislation.

Louise, shall I leave you to talk about that?

The Chair: Ms. Langevin.

Ms. Louise Langevin (Member, Expert Panel on Accountability Mechanisms for Gender Equality, Status of Women Canada): Thank you for giving us some of your time.

I'm a lawyer and member of the Quebec bar, and I'm also a law professor at the faculty of law at Laval University in Quebec City. My area of research is women and the law.

I've read your report, which is very interesting. We're working with it. Your committee is also very important in reminding government and Parliament that women's equality should be a priority in Canada, especially because it doesn't seem to be a priority in Canada any more. I'm surprised to find out or realize that the Canadian government is not respecting section 15 of the Canadian charter—which is part of the Constitution—because it's not doing gender-based analysis of all of its laws, programs and policies. It's not respecting section 15 of the Canadian charter, and I'm surprised that there aren't more actions or suits against the government.

GBA, or gender-based analysis, as you know, has been applied for ten years on a voluntary basis, and it hasn't been very successful. I think we should be at another level now; the voluntary phase is over, and we should be looking at another way of imposing GBA on the government.

Because the government is not applying GBA, it is not respecting its international commitments. I'm thinking of CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

As a solution for GBA, we're thinking of a law on equality for women. We've looked at different laws in Canada that have accountability mechanisms. We've looked at the laws on official languages, environmental assessment, employment equity, and on multiculturalism. We've also looked at the Quebec law on poverty. These laws have accountability mechanisms in them; that's what makes them interesting.

The law we're thinking of should have those accountability mechanisms in it but should also have clear indicators or clear results of what we want. How do we know that women have achieved equality, or how do we know that women are getting closer and closer to equality? That's what we're thinking about in drafting or thinking about the content of the law; that's what we're looking at.

Dorianne, you wanted me to talk about different models of law, such as the U.K. one?

• (1555)

Ms. Dorianne Rowan-Campbell: Yes.

Ms. Louise Langevin: The U.K. is working on a new law on equality for the government, with the obligation or duty to promote equality. We thought that a “duty to promote equality” was quite interesting and thought that we could somehow fit that into a bill or law. That's a very interesting experience.

I don't want to take up all of the time that we have, but I would like us to have an exchange.

The Chair: Thank you very much, all of you, for your presentations today.

We'll go to Ms. Smith.

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

I want to thank the presenters for their very compelling presentations this afternoon. They also included some very interesting challenges.

I have several questions. The first one I would like to direct to Georgina, if that is all right.

Georgina, could you tell me if women's groups and equality-seeking organizations generally are in favour of developing equality legislation? In answering that, could you outline what organizations you have been in touch with to get this kind of information?

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: I would say the general view would be that people want mechanisms that are going to start to show some real progress in achieving women's equality.

As I mentioned at the beginning, we really haven't done extensive consultations. We have touched base with some of the Inuit groups and some of the aboriginal women's groups. We have also met with some of the umbrella organizations such as FAFIA. We participated in the consultative meeting held this week in Ottawa by the office of the Status of Women Canada, where there are about 80 groups represented.

I would say that with respect to legislation, some groups would support it. There are people who are more focused on legal issues specifically. As you know, a number of groups focus on legal issues that affect women and the law. They are puzzling, somewhat in the way that Louise reflected we are, on what the content of effective legislation is. Sometimes if you don't have well-written or well-thought-out legislation, it can also have some unintended consequences and can actually be used against you. This is what people are concerned about. I think the answer would be that it's not unqualified support.

I think the answer is that in terms of your recommendations, recognizing that something has to change, there's certainly a great deal of support for change, greater sensitivity in the federal government, and also, quite frankly, political leadership to particularly put issues of women's equality on the agenda. I think there has been quite a bit of discussion that we've heard on the fact that the agenda has changed.

I guess one of the alarming things that some of us have heard is on where the problem is. We're saying that there are still many issues and many of these issues may be on sub-groups of certain women, whether it's immigrant women or whether it's aboriginal women.

I think there is clearly a need for new mechanisms. Gender-based analysis is again seen as a potentially useful tool, but as you saw in the testimony, people say that we need to better understand what gender-based analysis is.

I'm sorry, it's not black and white.

• (1600)

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you.

Dorienne, reporting on what has been heard over the past two months, the expert panel notes on its website that the potential for legislation to reinforce Canada's international obligations is something that should be considered. You talked about international examples of legislation. Do you have a paper to present or share with us in terms of the specific countries and international examples of legislation to reinforce international obligations in gender equality? Do you have any kind of information that is documented?

I always like general statements—for example, generally here in Australia, this is what we've found or generally here is what we found. I'm a little uncomfortable. I like documentation so that I can look back to it. You sound like you have an awful lot of experience with this and you have seen an awful lot of things. Do you have a paper that has this kind of documentation so that we can study it, examine it, and go back over it?

Ms. Dorienne Rowan-Campbell: There are a lot of documents available with that type of information in it. If you look under the CIDA website, you see all the reports from other countries on their instruments. I tried to pick out a few of them, because of those reports.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Yes.

Ms. Dorienne Rowan-Campbell: I then have a discussion with them, asking whether or not this really works or asking how it works.

I think that one of our major challenges here in Canada is actually with the CIDA report, which tells us that we haven't done a good job.

Mrs. Joy Smith: May I clarify my question?

Ms. Dorienne Rowan-Campbell: Yes.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Perhaps I wasn't clear in what I asked.

We know about all those reports, but you were saying something that was very interesting. You said that you sat down informally and asked them to tell you about what really works. We know what it's like. Everyone reads all those reports, and it's all documented.

After sitting down, did you actually write down what you heard? Can you give us more insight into what you learned that might be different from what the normal reports said?

Ms. Dorienne Rowan-Campbell: I'm trying to pull it together into something that's actually useful. As a group we have been trying to say we have this information, now how can we put it together so that it's easily readable, so that people can compare it, and in fact it's one of the tasks that I have ahead of me right now to try to put it together.

But there will be something there. It will be one of the annexes, we think.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you.

Do I have more time, Madam Chair?

The Chair: You have a little less than a minute.

Mrs. Joy Smith: All right.

Just very quickly, Louise, could I just ask you to expand little bit more on accountability mechanisms? We talked about gender-based analysis, and from what I can tell—and I've read many studies—we can't really measure the outcomes.

Could you make some comment on that from what you have seen or heard?

Ms. Louise Langevin: By mechanisms, do you mean an example of accountability mechanisms that we can find in the law? Is that what you'd like to explore?

Plans of action would be one. Every department or agency should have a plan of action on what they'll do this year about gender-based analysis.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Sorry to interrupt you, but I'm running out of time and I want to get this answer. What I'm talking about is that with a lot of these things we've seen, you see the plans but you don't actually have the evaluation or the documentation.

Ms. Louise Langevin: You're talking about indicators, and how do you measure that women are achieving equality. I think that we have to think about indicators, but indicators exist. For example, the difference in salary between men and women could be an indicator. An indicator on the level of poverty of women in Canada could be another indicator. The level of poverty of women who are lone parents—is that what you say in English?

A voice: Single mothers.

Ms. Louise Langevin: Single mothers, yes, thank you. Single parents are usually single mothers. We have to sit down and think of how you measure equality, because it's not that easy, but there exist some indicators of women and equality.

•(1605)

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madam Gagnon.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to have you here. You mentioned that you have two months to complete your analysis. Do you think that is a realistic timeframe, considering the broad mandate you have been given? I realize that the Minister is anxious to proceed and give direction on this across government. But do you think that is realistic, and will you be able to complete your work on time?

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: We will complete it on time. That really is our mandate. Our mandate is not to carry out an in-depth study and analysis. There is already a great deal of research available, including the work carried out by this Committee. Our mandate is really to think about this one last time to see whether — and we already have your Committee's recommendations — there is anything that we, as experts, feel should be added. As far as I'm concerned, based on the mandate we've been given, the timeframe is appropriate. What is needed now is action. As you know, you can always do more studies. But there have already been a lot, and now it is time to actually do something.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: In terms of what you will be suggesting to the Minister, based on your your mandate, you are being asked to provide some direction. Do you have any specific thoughts on that? This afternoon, you said that other countries have enacted legislation and that some mechanisms do exist in Canada. I was just looking at the various mechanisms that are already in place with respect to official languages, the Multiculturalism Act, and sustainable development. But we still don't have employment equity when it comes to pay. What are the positive aspects of these laws that we might want to include in a gender equality bill?

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Would you like to comment?

Ms. Louise Langevin: Well, first of all, there is the requirement to adopt an action plan and, secondly, to present annual reports. Those annual reports are tabled in Parliament. These different pieces of legislation make provision for someone to act as a watchdog, so to speak. The Official Languages Commissioner reviews the situation, produces a report, and sounds the alarm bell when something is not working properly. The Commissioner of the Environment conducts reviews. There is an Environment Bureau. Every government policy has to be analyzed from the standpoint of its impact on the environment.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Do you see there possibly being a need for a commissioner, for example?

Ms. Louise Langevin: Well, ideally, yes; we could see there being a commissioner of gender equality. Of course, in a perfect world, we wouldn't need one. But if we want to have the proper tools, we would need a watchdog to keep track of whether or not the

government is doing what it is supposed to when it comes to gender equality.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: A little earlier, you were saying that looking at the different mechanisms or possible legislation, there has to be some balance in terms of providing an appropriate budget. There is what the government does, but you say there is also the Speech from the Throne. In other legislatures where there are better results, you're saying that the reason for their success is that they are tackling this from a number of different angles, rather than focussing on one isolated initiative. We're really talking about interdependent actions to reflect the kind of effort that is required. That is sort of what you have been saying this afternoon.

•(1610)

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: If you don't mind, I'd like to answer in English. Is that all right?

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Yes.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: All right.

[English]

It's getting a little bit *compliqué*.

We are looking at a range of things, and at the mechanisms that are not now in legislation but which are really enabled by it. Well, they are, in a sense, as they're in other forms of law, for example, the law that would be governing how the Treasury Board functions. We think there are many things that could be done without necessarily having a law specifically targeting the equality of women. These include the government stating as a priority issues affecting gender as part of the Speech from the Throne. The Speech from the Throne is just a part of a government process that exists today.

So what we're really trying to do is to give the minister a range of options, depending on how far the government wishes to go and whether it wishes to introduce legislation, and to make the point that you can do certain things today without needing to introduce new legislation, because as parliamentarians you know that legislation takes time—Parliament has to study it, and it could take another two or three years before we have a law.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: But we could do both, right? There could be concrete actions taken.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Yes. That's right.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: And we could do that at the same time we are working on legislation, whether or not it's passed by the next Parliament or an election is called. We obviously can't say we're taking concrete actions if we are just going to wait. There is no legislation. Ten years from now, there may still not be any legislation.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Yes, that's right. There are concrete actions that need to be taken now. And there are also other things that we can include in legislation.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We move now to Mr. Powers.

Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.): Thank you, ladies, for coming. I commend you for your contribution. It's hard to believe that you've only been in place for about six weeks or so, and are probably coming into your seventh week, and are expected to table a report shortly, or some time this month. From a logistical standpoint, you're obviously not doing anything else other than focusing your attention.

Your presentations thus far and your information about what's going on are extraordinary, but given the challenges that you've imposed upon yourselves, and Ms. Rowan-Campbell and Ms. Langevin—the things that you are working on to be included in the report—just help me to know if you are going to be able to meet the target, or are we perhaps going to have an interim report and then some other things?

Help me with that.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: We are proposing to have a full report. Now, it is not going to be as long as your report. You had a lot more time, you had a lot more staff, and you had a lot more witnesses. We are quite humble, saying that we are people with a few things behind us—and we tried to outline our experience to you—so we're really hitting the ground running. I just want to emphasize that we're hitting the ground running, based on the experience we've got; we've got a nose for some of these things, which is why we're able to deliver the report pretty quickly.

The other thing, I guess, is that we are all seized of the fact that people get tired of studies and studies. You're never going to have the perfect answer. At some point you just have to get on with it and do something, so that's what we're really trying to get across in saying that we're trying to hit the ground running. We believe that we were chosen because there was a feeling that we came equipped with something already.

Mr. Russ Powers: Not to be self-congratulatory in our case, what I found with the four reports that we tabled is that they're succinct, to the point, and don't waste a lot of verbiage. We get right to the point, backed up with what we need, and I'm anticipating that will likely be the case with you.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: We're hoping to do that. That's correct.

Mr. Russ Powers: From that standpoint, and certainly from the biographies that you provided us, you are all very qualified contributors to do this, so I just wanted to—how shall I say it—be assured that you had the time to do the job properly. I don't think any of us would have been surprised if you had asked for some more time, and certainly if there's a second step that needs to be forwarded, I think we would look favourably upon that.

Any time I have left will be transferred over to Ms. Torsney.

•(1615)

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Mr. Powers, I'd like to ask the committee that at some point after we do table our report, please feel free to invite us back, when we'd be happy to talk about it. At that point the pudding will be there, so you'll have to taste it and tell us what you think.

Mr. Russ Powers: You can probably rest assured that we'll likely have you back.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Powers.

Ms. Torsney, you have just under four minutes.

Thank you.

Hon. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): When I was coming in I think you were talking about people who think there isn't a need for this through the environment. I saw an article in the *International Herald Tribune* a couple of weeks ago about Sweden having a new party called the feminist party, and actually they're seeing a retraction on issues affecting gender equality and there's concern that they're going to lose the ground that we all have been so inspired by.

To my way of thinking, an economy that's going to be successful is going to have the best policies for everyone so that men and women can achieve their goals and we will all benefit from that.

In terms of creating the context and ensuring that takes place so we don't have people concerned that equality for women means young boys don't have opportunities any more, are you hearing some of that feedback through your experience? How are we going to guard against that when we say gender-based analysis doesn't mean you don't do something; it means you figure out how to make sure it has the best impact for everybody?

Ms. Dorienne Rowan-Campbell: There are a lot of movements now using gender-based analysis that say the problem has shifted. I'll give you an example from the Caribbean. They're saying young boys are dropping out of school. That's a problem. Girls are staying in school. So if you visualize your analysis as being those justice scales and they move up and down, the weighting is definitely on the side of the young women at that point.

If you just looked at a sex-disaggregated breakdown, that's what you'd see, and you'd immediately say we have to fix this. Gender-based analysis requires that you go a little further and track what's happening. Then you find that more young women are going into universities, so the scales still stay down, except you begin to notice that those women tend to be in the arts, in medicine, in law, and they're not in the pure sciences or in engineering. So the scales change a bit more.

Then you look at employment, and you find that those same boys who have left school are getting the jobs and the young women aren't. So there's a continuum of change, and gender-based analysis gives you an opportunity not to look at something that's fixed at one moment in time, but to look at the continuum of what happens over people's lives.

If you looked at that in Canada, you'd then have to look other issues, such as immigrant populations, and how that affects it. What happens to immigrant women vis-à-vis immigrant men? Are the boys who are dropping out of school immigrant boys, or is it happening right across the board? And what's happening to the girls? Are they getting pregnant very early? Are they trapped in low-level jobs? And you'd look at what happens to our aboriginal people. You'd have to use gender analysis to look across that whole broad spectrum, and it's not just as simple as taking one quick photograph. Gender analysis means taking a picture, keeping it as a negative, then putting the next negative, and the next negative, and the next negative on top of it, until you begin to have a better picture of what your policy options might be.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Crowder.

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

I want to thank you for your appearance today, and I particularly appreciated your remarks around section 15 of the charter. I just want to throw in section 67 of the Human Rights Act for the tribunal, which doesn't allow first nations people to file a complaint of discrimination against human rights. And although that applies more broadly to men and women, women are particularly disadvantaged with things like matrimonial property law.

There were a couple of points I wanted to make. When you talk about the fact that government, whichever government it is, could make almost a policy statement or a statement of intent in a throne speech, I think for some of us that doesn't actually hold a great degree of comfort, because in 1995 we had an agenda for gender equality—that's not the name of it—that was in writing.

A voice: Not the Beijing platform for action.

•(1620)

Ms. Dorianne Rowan-Campbell: No, it was a book.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Yes. But in 2000 we then had the agenda for gender equality that was never written down, and none of us could determine whether anything had actually been implemented. I think there's a level of discomfort with statements and throne speeches that actually translate into any meaningful action.

I want to come back for a second to evidence from Dr. Rankin on Thursday, February 24. I know that you're well aware of this fact, but I want to put this into context, and I have a question on it. She basically said that we have the elements in place in Canada, except for two pieces: one was political will at the highest level of government, and the other one was accountability mechanisms. In that context, could you comment on what you saw as successful accountability mechanisms that might help to move the agenda forward?

I'll throw it out to whoever feels like answering.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: I think we'll probably share the answer.

I'd like to deal with the issue of the Speech from the Throne. In my mind, the reason things like the Speech from the Throne are

important is because they launch a process. They are only one of a series of levers that exist.

Ms. Jean Crowder: When you're suggesting the Speech from the Throne, you would use that in the context of other initiatives, not just as a statement.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Exactly. It's not an isolated thing. If a department wants to do something, and it doesn't have policy direction from an instrument like the Speech from the Throne, it gets more difficult to launch an initiative. The Speech from the Throne is very much a statement of policy. It's also a statement of the government's political will, as you were mentioning, but it clearly has to be linked to other things.

With respect to the issue of mechanisms, I'll again come back to what Minister Alcock has been doing. A lot of mechanisms have evolved over the last few years to try to bring what people call modern management systems into government, whereby once the political will is expressed, deputy ministers and their departments are then expected to execute things. I'm not sure that it's totally an absence of the existence of mechanisms; it's really more a question of resourcing those mechanisms.

For example, if you look at the way gender-based analysis has been implemented across the government, one challenge has been that the activity has not been resourced and you only have a very few people in each department. If you're in a resource-constrained environment, where everyone is asked to watch how much they're spending, perhaps it might be better to phase in things like the implementation of these accountability mechanisms, so that you actually resource a few initiatives in-depth and get some results out of it.

It's not only the mechanism. It's the resources that you put behind it and the leadership that is exercised in really promoting it to say this is important. I would suggest there that it is political will. But how do you bring visibility to whether people are doing this or not?

That is why the issue of reporting is important. Who is going to look at the reports? For example, is this committee going to want to get reports from whomever? Are there mechanisms for committees or someone to look at things?

This has been the role that the Auditor General has played in some places. When you look at the official languages legislation, it's the Commissioner of Official Languages who really looks at and comments on things.

But in the end, the mechanisms are often there, and it's more a question of how you make them work and grease them. They need leadership, resources, and political will.

The Chair: You have more time.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Do I?

The Chair: Yes, you have two minutes.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Do you have anything to add to that?

Ms. Dorianne Rowan-Campbell: Yes, actually.

I think what we've learned from the countries we work with is that there need to be some significant resources placed behind a point in the government that has oversight and has the authority to say something. As you were saying, here it might be something like the Auditor General. It could be a number of things, but it has to be a body that has the competence to look at the gender analysis that's undertaken and critique it. It has to be a body that actually has those skills. It can't just be the Auditor General doing a kind of fiscal scan. It has to be skill based. I think that's very important. Otherwise—and this has been happening—people can say, well, we did gender-based analysis. Okay, so that was great, but what did it do? If you check that box, what we really want to know is what were the results? What were the implications for the women of Canada, for the men of Canada, for the budget of the government, for the policies and programs? Did it help to improve them? Did it have reach? What happened?

So they're people who can look at the gender-based analysis, ask some more policy-related questions, and look at some of the outcomes.

I think the Treasury Board right now is looking not only at the management framework, but also at an output framework, so it might be very useful to have them tracking everything the whole way along. Because outcomes are what we're really looking at. Gender-based analysis is just the tool.

I think the problem with citizenship and immigration is that yes, it's very good that they're required to do it, but in terms of actually reporting on what they've done, when you read the reports you say, oh, I'm really glad you're there, but then what are some of the outcomes? They've found a lot of difficulty in finding those outcomes.

• (1625)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Yelich.

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

In our study on gender-based analysis this committee heard that there was an interdepartmental committee on gender-based analysis, but that it was difficult to determine how active the committee was. It was recommended that the Status of Women reactivate the committee on gender-based analysis to provide a full assessment.

Has this expert panel met with the interdepartmental committee to find out what the challenges were and whether they are, indeed, assessing existing accountability mechanisms? Have you met with the interdepartmental committee in finding out the challenges?

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: There has not been a meeting of the committee since we've been working, so what we have done is we've actually gone through the testimony and have met with a number of the people who testified before you who would have been members of that committee.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: So we'll be able to see this in your report, some of the challenges that they had, or we're going to be hearing about some of the challenges?

Okay.

The other question is for Ms. Steinsky-Schwartz.

You've served on a lot of boards and non-profit organizations. One of them was Bell Canada, which I believe, if memory serves me, actually has had some issues with gender-based analysis, has it not?

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: I was not on a board. I was an employee of Bell Canada. I was the chief human resource officer at Bell Canada.

As you know, Bell Canada is a federally regulated company. There it was specifically around issues regarding pay equity. There was subsequently a settlement with most of the female employees. There is still one outstanding piece that was not settled, but there was a settlement in that area.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: So you have learned a lot. With your background, you will probably have observed some good suggestions on gender-based analysis.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: I just want to clarify, though, that I think we have to differentiate between employment equity, which is very much focused on the labour force and the labour market, versus these broader issues in all policies and programs and looking at the impact of gender and gender differences. I think they really are quite different things.

But I hope I can contribute, yes.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: To define gender-based analysis, then, is the first and foremost, I guess. What I see is we're going to be concentrating a lot on examining and checking accountability, but we still haven't really understood what gender-based analysis looks like or what we want for an outcome.

I guess I'm asking you what your definition of gender-based analysis is. What do you want to see?

• (1630)

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Well, in the very simplest terms—and we're trying to keep this simple—when there are government policies or programs, it's really ensuring that they probe the differences of impact by gender and also often by groups within the gender, in the way that Dorienne was describing earlier to the committee.

For example, we've been hearing from a lot of the NGOs that today one really has to look not only at women and men but also, for example, at immigrant women or aboriginal women. It's a broader set of issues.

We are in fact looking at the definition of gender-based analysis that the committee has given us, because you gave a very good definition of it.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you for your response.

We'll move on to Ms. Torsney.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: On behalf of all of us, we apologize. I think there's something going on in the House, which is why Ms. Yelich ran off.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: That's okay.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: I think that gender-based analysis is an amazing tool, and you've identified some of the ways in which it can work. Some of us who've been around for a while have been working on trying to advance these issues. The women's caucus of the Liberal Party has particularly taken quite a leadership role on this, and we've got some former chairs sitting here.

I recall doing changes to CPP and being one of the female members of the committee. Russ wasn't elected at the time, or he would have been asking these questions. But we asked about the impact of the changes. Somebody had done some analysis and said that instead of getting \$2.30 per \$1 invested, it was now going to be \$2.19. The men were reassured that it was probably a fairer deal.

But oh my God, as you say, what were the retirement incomes? That was one piece of information, but you now needed to cut it in a multi-layered way. Telling us that it was \$2.19 was very interesting, but was that a good thing or a bad thing? Should it have been \$2.50 or should it have been \$1.95? How was that relevant to anything? At the time, the department was able to say that they tried to do what we asked them to do, but they didn't necessarily have the tools.

Therefore, yes, we need accountability to make sure that it's done, but we're definitely going to need a tool kit. I sense that different departments are very interested because they understand that good policy opportunities exist. We can make our immigration policies more effective. We can achieve what we want to achieve, if we have the capability. It's not only making sure that it's done, but it's making sure that what is done is done well and has the checks and balances that come with that, and we need lots of people to be asking for that.

I'm hoping that in your search you will not only be recommending some kind of a legislative mandate and a process. I think that our committee had recommended a number of places where we could put people who would be accountable and that we'd actually help to develop this tool.

I know that CIDA, which you're familiar with, Dorienne, has some leadership on this, but other departments need to understand this, embrace this, and not be afraid of it.

Hopefully, on top of everything else, your report being delivered rather quickly will be able to point policy-makers in some of the directions where there have been some real successes.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: If I can comment, I think that even in the international examples that Dorienne has looked at, there is not really one simple formula for saying here's a little tool kit. It's one of the reasons that we've been saying in our discussions that we maybe need to encourage a few key areas of policy activity to go really deeply into developing this tool very well.

It's also what I would say is a cultural change inside the organization. We need people to really understand it in depth. I guess that our concern up to now and what we're hearing has been that the in-depth development, with perhaps some notable exceptions, hasn't occurred to the same extent.

Ms. Dorienne Rowan-Campbell: Could I also add something?

I think one of the critical things, if you're going to do a good gender analysis, is you have to do it against something. One of the things I think we're missing now in Canada is a framework for action: where do the priorities on gender equality lie; where should they lie; what's the guidance that a government department has? It's not very fair to say to a department you need to do gender-based analysis and look at gender equality, if they don't have a sense that this is a framework against which they're reacting.

So many of them see a lot of women in their offices every day and a lot of young women coming in. They think that this was the issue, so the issue was solved. It's not the first thing that they think about. I think we have to delineate some objectives so people can understand why this is important for their department, why this relates to their policies and programs, and to their service delivery—those sorts of things. Until we have that, the tool is not going to be used as effectively as it might be because it's just general and people are scratching their heads and saying “Well, we'll count the number of women who are doing this and the number of men who are doing that, and then what will we do?”

One example was with respect to reporting on the changes in unemployment insurance. They said that now two-thirds of the people getting unemployment insurance are women; before, it was 80%. But nobody said that. They haven't put the two things together and asked, why is that happening? Is there a gap? Is there a problem?

• (1635)

Hon. Paddy Torsney: On the example of pay equity that you refer to, Georgina, we have seen that the different provinces that have brought in pay equity have learned from the previous province. Quebec now has the best model, but it was based on a lot of tears and sweat in Ontario, and B.C. still doesn't have one.

Hopefully, if we can't get legislation, you'll be able to give some direction or a recommendation to go deeper and to show that it offers opportunities. That's what has been frustrating, that some people think of it as an onerous task rather than something you can open up.

In the same way, everyone wants to combat child poverty. Well, what were all the tools? The child tax benefit is doing an enormous job—it may not be perfect, but it's addressing a real issue. Some of the provinces didn't implement it in the way we would have liked, but it was a tool and people saw it as a possibility.

We need that kind of creative thinking. Hopefully your guidance will be able to show them the way.

Ms. Louise Langevin: Can I just add a little short thing here?

On that \$2.19, maybe the person who did that research didn't have a background in women's studies. Maybe we should think about hiring civil servants who know about women's studies, who have a background in that area, and who will be able to do those in-depth studies.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: Exactly.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: I think what Louise is saying is that there are a number of things you have to do to bring about that change. You can have the tool. It depends on your staffing policies and the kinds of people you recruit, and how you train them, how you lead them.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: If I can give you an example of legislation, in environment now we're actually incorporating aboriginal knowledge into many pieces of legislation. The people who have aboriginal knowledge are saying "Whoa, you're giving us too many jobs. There aren't enough people who are trained in this field to deliver on what you're asking." But you'll get people who want to study that if they know there's a job opportunity.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Torsney.

We'll move on to Madame Gagnon.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: I'm not sure my question will be that clear. In terms of gender-based analysis at the departmental level, are you aware of specific departments where there may be a greater urgency to proceed?

Some departments serve clients, while others handle mainly policy issues. And there there are others again, like the Department of Finance or the Treasury Board. Are we talking about applying this across the board and in exactly the same way? Earlier you referred to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. Its client base includes more women, doesn't it? However, some departments may be less affected by gender-based analysis. Are you saying: "No, it's across the board, and we'll see what happens"? Do you have ideas in that regard?

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Well, theoretically, gender-based analysis should apply to everything the government does in every area where it is involved.

At the same time, we can't do everything. There are also other demands — for example, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages or the Department of the Environment. The question is whether we can set priorities. That's why we are talking about things

like the Speech from the Throne, which is important, because it does set out certain priorities.

So, theoretically, it should apply across the board. We are giving thought to the development of specific tools that would allow us to identify priorities, so that we can do more in-depth analysis. Also, it is really important to create a culture where people understand what gender-based analysis involves. It really is something that must be learned.

We saw that with the CPP.

• (1640)

[*English*]

That's just over-simplifying it. That's really not a gender-based analysis.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Langevin: Could I add something? All departments and agencies would obviously have to do that analysis, because gender equality is something that applies to every area of endeavour.

If Canada's wetlands can be protected through our environmental legislation, women should also be protected. If a forest is worth protecting, women are also worth protecting. If there were one area or one department I could choose, it would be the Department of Finance. When the budget is brought down, there needs to be a budget for women, so that we can see exactly how much of Canada's money is being spent on the Armed Forces, roads, social programs, poor Aboriginal women, health issues affecting women, and so on. When it comes to women, we have no idea. Also, FAFIA, a women's group, has studied the budget. What we need is for the government to also study the budget in relation to women. That would already be a major step forward.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: You said that you have met with people who have asked that there be a closer connection with the civil society, in order to develop a better policy on gender-based analysis. Have you obtained feedback from a women's group in that regard or from people outside women's groups?

What specific measures do you think would be necessary? What kind of framework should be developed for this collaboration with the civil society, so that it can make a positive contribution?

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: In order to provide a framework for that commitment, an agreement has already been signed between the federal government and the volunteer sector. It is called the "Voluntary Sector Accord". I believe it was signed in 2000. It does provide a framework for the relationship between the volunteer sector and the federal government. There is also

[*English*]

the accord on financing and the accord on public policy dialogue.

[*Translation*]

So, they do provide a framework.

I believe your second question was how can this be accomplished? So far, we have heard mainly from women's groups because, as I was saying, we have not consulted extensively and have certainly benefited from the consultations undertaken by Status of Women Canada. I believe one part of the analysis also involves getting feedback from these groups, because they are often the ones providing services to women. So, they can certainly contribute to and improve our analysis.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: When you referred earlier to a commissioner with the authority to act as a watchdog and track what departments are doing, I guess you see this as someone who would be operating independently of government, rather than from within government. It needs to be someone who is completely independent that can critique the government, and give it a good or bad mark, as required.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: That is something we are discussing. We have not yet reached a consensus on that. Parliamentarians should also be asking questions about this. I believe you and your colleagues also have a role to play.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame Gagnon.

Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thank you.

I want to thank Ms. Torsney for pointing out the lack of pay equity in British Columbia. I also might add that they were also cited under CEDAW for their closure of women's centres and their treatment of aboriginal women and their lack of legal aid for family matters. So British Columbia has a dismal record.

When it comes to visuals, I want to comment on your point around the fact that we think we've often got there because we see women in various positions. I was reminded of that a couple of months ago when I saw a picture of 130 countries from the United Nations and there was this sea of men. There were very few women at that level. I want to look at Canada. How many premiers from provinces and northern territories are women? None. When we look at Fortune 500 companies, women are still, I think, roughly 2% of the numbers. Women aren't there. They're not in those positions of authority and responsibility that really get to make the decisions.

The other thing is that in a former job we used to laugh, rather self-deprecatingly, I think, that we were now in a pink ghetto; that as more women moved into middle management, what we were seeing—this is anecdotal, and I don't know if there's research being done on this—were our wages and our benefits stalled and sometimes beginning to be eroded. It really does feel that as we move on, we also lose benefits.

I want to actually ask you this. You mentioned that you had talked to FAFIA and they have proposed guiding principles regarding the possibility of a gender equality act, status of women. I know you're saying that an act is only one possibility, but they did mention a couple of things I'd like you to comment on.

They outlined some principles. One of them was adopting the language of women's equality. They are talking about the fact that

the term “gender equality” is really being used to mask that what we're talking about is women's equality. We seem to be losing that fact.

There are a couple of other principles, and I think you've touched on some of these: acknowledging the full diversity of women—women of colour, aboriginal women, women with disabilities; making the connection with Canada's human rights obligations to women, and CEDAW was one example; addressing longstanding deficiencies at the current mechanisms; incorporating a public reporting component; and ensuring a consultative relationship with organizations seeking women's equality. These are principles they feel need to underline either an act or some.... Can you comment specifically on areas where you may agree or disagree with the principles they've outlined?

• (1645)

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: We've met with FAFIA a couple of times. I don't think we have any disagreement with the principles. It's often a question of how you implement them, and quite frankly, we're still debating among ourselves. In terms of the principles, I think the one area we've encountered—and I'm a little less skilled in the terminology than my colleague Dorianne—is we understand that it's important to be clear about the objective. The objective is around achieving improvements in the status of women and achieving women's equality.

We're still working our way through the history of the terminology, but overall—and in fact we've stated this to FAFIA—we very much appreciated getting that input. There isn't anything fundamentally we'd disagree with at the level of principle.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Did you have anything to add on that?

Ms. Louise Langevin: I personally agree with all these six guiding principles. I have no problems with them. It's obvious that an act on equality for women would have these guiding principles as a basis.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Earlier you were suggesting that it may not need to go to legislation, that there might be other mechanisms that were more effective.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: No, I don't think we said that they might be more effective. I think what we said is if you don't have legislation, it doesn't stop you from doing certain things now.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Okay, so the legislation could ultimately be where we want to end up.

Ms. Dorianne Rowan-Campbell: It may be more immediate.

Ms. Jean Crowder: It would be more immediate with other actions.

And I agree, legislation.... Although we have had examples in this past year where legislation was expedited, so if there were political will among all parties—

Ms. Dorianne Rowan-Campbell: Yes, it's possible.

Ms. Jean Crowder: —we could expedite this.

I actually wanted to correct one piece of information. My colleague mentioned Bell Canada. The issue that is outstanding around pay equity concerns the women who are telephone operators. I just want it to be clear on the record, because it seemed like there was some confusion. It's been ongoing for approximately ten years, and at the rate it's going it could be 2009 before there's any kind of settlement. If it follows the route that happened with the postal workers and the union and the women are found entitled.... What happened with the postal workers is the federal government immediately, within 30 minutes, filed an appeal on the Human Rights Tribunal findings. I just think it's an example of how long it takes women to get equity in terms of pay, and I know many of us are shocked by it.

I just wanted that to be clear, because it seemed like it was a bit fuzzy.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Crowder.

Moving on, I'll welcome back Ms. Neville, our parliamentary secretary. I also want to welcome Madam Brunelle back to the committee.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you very much for what you're doing. I'm dazzled just sitting and listening to what you've accomplished in such a short time.

Some of my questions have been asked already, but let me just throw you a scattering of questions and you can choose how you want to answer them.

You've obviously looked at official languages, multiculturalism, and employment equity in terms of accountabilities. I assume you'll be making recommendations, in part referencing those, and I'd be interested to know that.

You talked a lot about political will, and we know the importance of political will. I think, Ms. Steinsky-Schwartz, you referenced the under-representation of women, which may be some piece of it or not, I don't know. Can you give us examples of where political will internationally has been key to making the difference? I would be interested in that.

I have a number of questions. You know what the role of Status of Women has been to date in terms of gender-based analysis. It's been largely an education piece by the Status of Women. How would you see Status of Women fitting into this whole picture of gender-based analysis, whether it's the role they take, the structure they have? Will you be making any recommendations on that?

If we have more time, I have other questions.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Why don't you start with the international examples?

Ms. Dorianne Rowan-Campbell: I think there have been a number of countries that situated their machinery for women in the Prime Minister's Office because the Prime Minister was interested. It works when the Prime Minister's interested; it doesn't work when the Prime Minister isn't interested. When Nelson Mandela was president, things moved forward. Now we have Thabo Mbeki, and it's not moving forward at the same rate. But you do get more visibility there, even if there is not the vigour of as much political will. If you read from 1975, every single meeting talks about the need for political will, and that's really what's missing. The machinery is there, but political will is what oils the wheels.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: You asked specifically about the Status of Women office. We really haven't been asked in our mandate to comment on that. Our own sense would be that with respect to gender-based analysis, there is a pool of expertise there that can be useful to other departments. We haven't really made up our minds yet in terms of how that should be structured; we're still thinking about it. We probably will say something about that in our report, though.

Hon. Anita Neville: This is perhaps asking you to go out on a limb, but can you comment on how this committee and those interested can sustain the efforts on equity issues within government?

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: I don't think that's going out on a limb. We have a Westminster model of government, and the role of Parliament is to scrutinize what the government does.

For example, let's say the Minister of Immigration now has a requirement that gender-based analysis be a factor when he or she is doing immigration policy. There's nothing stopping you from asking questions and making comments on that; it's your role as elected officials. That's only one example.

I think that when we looked at the other pieces of legislation, most of the pieces of legislation had a requirement that the minister give some kind of a report to somebody. In some cases it goes directly to Parliament, and in those cases it is these kinds of committees that are really quite critical. In other cases you have a tribunal that will oversee and make comments.

It depends on what goal is being pursued, but Parliament clearly has a very important role to play.

• (1655)

Hon. Anita Neville: Will you take recommendations from these other institutes or the other bodies for official languages and employment equity that I mentioned? Will you use any of those as a model in your recommendations?

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: We would certainly say what we have heard about their effectiveness or lack thereof. I think that the short answer is yes, we have to look at that.

These are also models for trying to promote change, and that's really what this is about. How do you promote societal change?

Hon. Anita Neville: Could you expand as well on some comments that you made on a framework for action?

I think you spoke about it, Ms. Rowan-Campbell. I'm assuming that you're talking about a department internally prioritizing activities that relate to gender-based analysis. Is that what you're talking about, or are you talking about government-wide?

Ms. Dorianne Rowan-Campbell: I'm talking about a much wider level. If you had a statement in the Speech from the Throne signifying this was important, you'd also have to match it with something probably from Status of Women, which is having a consultation right now to look at a new strategy.

The strategy needs to be a forward-looking strategy saying that in the next three years, these are the things that are going to be critical to the women of Canada, these are the issues the government is dealing with that have serious implications for women, and these are the things that we need to continue doing because we haven't got there yet.

If you had a guidance statement like that, every department would be able to say that this relates to them in this way. We haven't had that. As we were saying, we had it in 1995, when we had the government-wide booklet that said what to do.

Unfortunately, we're still telling people internationally that this is what we do. People ask CIDA if they can go to Canada and see what we're doing. We're a little embarrassed when people come, because we have to say yes, we were doing it, but actually we're not doing it now, and yes, we have the same kinds of problems.

It would be very good to have something like that.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

The Chair: We'll move on to Ms. Yelich.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I have to apologize for running out. Emergencies on my phone are sometimes emergencies only for my 16-year-old. She never phones me on this line, so I thought it was really an emergency—and it was, to her. I apologize.

The only reason I cited Bell and your experience is because I think gender-based analysis is really important. I think that finding out the impact of legislation is important. What expertise or observations have you made, with the kinds of experiences you went through, whether it be on pay equity or gender-based analysis? If there had been something in place or you had seen a good piece of legislation somewhere in the private sector, do you have some kind of example? Would your experiences there have been something that you might have been able to use as a framework?

There are a few things I would ask. For example, are you going to be talking to the finance committee or the Department of Finance? They were here, and they talked about how difficult gender-based analysis is in certain areas. However, they have been successful in certain areas, and in other areas they have not. I want to know whether you are going to have an in-depth discussion with them, because I think what they have to tell us is really important.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage spoke about Quebec and the fact that it does gender-based analysis without legislation. What do you say to that? What is Quebec doing right? Maybe we don't have to go as far as having legislation. Have you observed what they're doing, in that she can actually cite Quebec as being successful at gender-based analysis without legislation?

I just want to hear some of your thoughts.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Those are a lot of questions.

With respect to the issue of our experience, I did answer that a bit when you left the room. What we have been saying—and this comes back to Dorianne's comments about the need for a framework—is that setting priorities is helpful, that leadership is important, and that other things, like training people and getting the right people in place doing the work, are all important factors. It's really a series of factors that bring about change; it's not simply a mechanism. But gender-based analysis can be a useful tool to start, if you have those other things in place as well.

With respect to the Department of Finance, yes, we have met with people there and had more in-depth discussions, and I guess I think they are getting seized of the issue. I think their minister has made some public statements, and I think we will be following up again to see what can be done.

With respect to your last question on—

• (1700)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: On the minister herself, our minister.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Oh, in Quebec. I think I'll let Louise comment on that, because she is closer to that than I am.

Ms. Louise Langevin: Quebec's report on their experience with gender-based analysis was just rendered public two or three weeks ago. And when you go through the report, at the end they give you a recipe of sorts for what it takes to get gender-based analysis really working. The first thing is political will and leadership, and then they say how they did it. It wasn't as if Status of Women Quebec was doing the whole thing, but it was a committee of high-level civil servants that was supervising what was going on in the few departments that were applying gender-based analysis. So here we're talking not about gender-based analysis applying everywhere. Instead, they've chosen a couple of areas or departments where they're applying it, and you've got this committee on the top, made up of high-level civil servants—people with knowledge of gender-based analysis—overlooking what's going on.

So it's different from Canada's strategy, because here it's Status of Women Canada that has the tools, that is doing the training, and that is trying to convince.... They don't have a lot of authority or power, so it's not really, really working.

So the Quebec government has decided to do it in a different way, and it seems to be more successful. In fact they're afraid of adopting a law, because they don't know how that law could be used by men's groups or fathers' groups. I don't really agree with that, because I think they're being too cautious, but that's why they're not adopting a law right now. They might change their opinion, but they're afraid of these groups of women who seem to be organized. They're quite vocal, though.

The Chair: That's used up our time. Thank you very much.

Ms. Karetak-Lindell, please.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Thank you.

From what I'm understanding, gender-based analysis is a tool in the same way that I've been told PowerPoint is a good tool and Excel is a good tool, but I have no idea how to use them. It's great for us to talk about gender-based analysis, but if people don't know how to use the tool, then they're not going to use it. From what I've heard—and some of my questions have been asked by other people—my conclusion is that if you use this tool well, you can create the policies that really target the specifics, which is what we're trying to do, I understand, with gender-based analysis, and you're making the right policy decisions based on factual information that you're gathering using this analysis. If people don't know how to use it, then we're not going to get the results. So I'm trying to understand how your accountability measures would ensure that people are using the tool properly.

My second comment is that when you were talking about examples, it almost sounded like you were talking about Nunavut, because right now our young men are dropping out of school and all the young women are the ones finishing high school and taking college courses. But it's a territorial jurisdiction, and in my communities it's the municipal jurisdiction.

Whenever I hear of a new initiative that we are going to do at the federal level, I always try to figure out what that means for the communities in the north, where I represent people. If you do it federally, how do you practise that, let's say, at the territorial government and the municipal government level? How do you share that information? Our jurisdiction is federal, but how do you pass that knowledge on to some smaller communities where there isn't a lot of federal presence? Where do you go with the tool?

• (1705)

Ms. Dorianne Rowan-Campbell: What I found, not here in Canada but in other places, is if people in the community have some of those skills, then anything that happens, say, at the federal level, that moves down to them, they can critique. It's not that the tool is so highly skilled that people can't access it—it doesn't take a university degree to do some level of gender analysis. I have found that when communities understand enough to be able to ask questions or to be able to push for more clarity on what has been done, then you find that even if something is happening at a national level, when it pulls down to the municipal level they can talk to the local government and say that was done there, but if we applied it here, this and this

would be what you would see. It means that communities do have to take some responsibility, as we do on a whole range of issues, such as being watchdogs on our local environment and looking at sustainability issues in our local situations.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: That's why one of our considerations has been the whole role of civil society organizations.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: That was my next question, about giving resources to the groups we talked about.

Ms. Dorianne Rowan-Campbell: Yes, it's very important.

The other thing is we need to target who in the federal government really needs to have the skills to do gender analysis. If you really think about that, it's the policy shops. Those are the people who should be skilled. If I were a deputy minister, I would want to know that my policy analysts could analyze gender and environmental impact issues and would be able to underline sustainability issues. If they had those three sets of skills, I would think I had a really good policy shop.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Gagnon.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: I would like to come back to Canada Post and the litigation that resulted in a settlement. The Canadian tribunal sided with them. Some \$150 million was awarded for pay equity for women. But the government decided to appeal the decision to the Federal Court. We are saying that concrete action needs to be taken immediately. There are things that can be done. The reason I'm bringing this up is that the Committee asked Minister Alcock to table a pay equity bill before October 31st. However, October 31st came and went, and we still don't have a bill. His argument is that there is still a need for study and analysis and for other things to be in place before moving forward with legislation.

Have you been following this discussion? What resources does he not have that are preventing him from tabling a pay equity bill?

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Ms. Gagnon, that is not at all part of our mandate.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: At the same time, this is what gender-based analysis is all about, if we're saying that women are not as well paid in a given sector, where there are too few women. That is really what it's all about. Earlier, you said that if we have to wait for a bill to improve women's quality of life and achieve gender equality, then that the process will take time. That is just one example. I thought you might have been following the struggle with respect to pay equity.

• (1710)

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Personally, I am not aware of the details. So, I really cannot comment.

Ms. Louise Langevin: Perhaps I could add something. What we are seeing now is that the government has decided to appeal these rulings. The government is supposed to meet its international commitments and comply with the Charter. And yet it is forever appealing these decisions. Its behaviour is rather schizophrenic, in a sense, because on the one hand, it says it is defending gender equality, but on the other, it is appealing these rulings.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: I mention this in the context of today's discussion because people were saying there needs to be political will. But political will is also needed there. We're talking about a small gesture. Right now we are looking at a fundamental piece of this, with gender-based analysis. But, at the same time, there may be some momentum in terms of demonstrating that this analysis at the departmental level can also extend to pay.

[English]

The Chair: Excuse me, Madame Gagnon.

Ms. Torsney, do you have a point of order?

Hon. Paddy Torsney: I'm not sure that's really relevant to the topic we're going to have. We're having a pay equity panel with the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Justice, who we've written to.

The Chair: Yes, on November 21.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: While I'm sure that you have many interesting comments from the witnesses, it's really not gender-based analysis. That was a separate report of the committee.

And I'd love to hear those questions in question period.

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: I thought our witnesses might know what the Minister is lacking in order to make a decision.

[English]

The Chair: If I can make some comments and questions, during the deliberation of our committee the word "accountability", thus far, has been a continuum to our guests, our witnesses, as well as to many members of the committee. Obviously, that's reflected in our report, which was the impetus for your panel.

So I'm just wondering, in the countries where they have implemented the actual legislation, what has been the relationship between that and the quality of life or living conditions of women? In other words, can you point to a country where they did enact that legislation and it has led to an improvement in women's lives?

Ms. Doriene Rowan-Campbell: I ask that question, but quite often the legislation hasn't been enforced long enough or is under consideration. In the Nordic countries they feel that, yes, it has contributed to improved quality of women's lives, because they have made a commitment to parental care for children. You don't get penalized if you leave the workforce in the same way that we do if we leave the workforce to look after children. Their society has said raising children is important and men or women can take leave and they're supported in that. We don't have that. They feel that's one thing.

If you're denied any of those benefits, there's a mechanism to complain. They were also saying that the media still cover cases where people complain, so it does keep up a certain level of awareness that maybe everything is not as marvellous as they might

think it is, with the result that people haven't stopped working. They definitely think that the quality of life women have, yes, has been contributed to by legislation.

The EU, as an organization, as it's expanding, has put down very concrete rules for entry, including gender equality. You need to demonstrate that women are listened to in your country. It's one of the things Turkey has to deal with. Atatürk has long gone. There have been a lot of changes. They have to demonstrate that they have structures through which issues that relate to women's equality will be dealt with. They actually had in the constitution, which is now in limbo, gender equality as one of the pivots of the constitution. They don't know what will happen to it now.

The Chair: You've stated that it takes a long time. That's one potential drawback of actually going toward the legislation now. Could we not go simultaneously—in other words, these other forms of accountability mechanisms are applied now in the short term, and as well at the same time, very clearly, and stated formally, we work toward the development of the legislation?

•(1715)

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Sure. Anything is possible.

The Chair: A very positive response.

Madam Torsney and then Ms. Crowder. Ms. Neville will be concluding.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: I was asking the Finnish delegation of members of Parliament what their maternity leave and parental leave processes were. Actually, ours are more generous. The Swedes have a very interesting policy. The former deputy speaker was telling me that she was able to take parental leave because the next person from her party took her spot during the time she was out, and that members of Parliament actually manage to get parental leave. So they've even done things within their own house to be more gender-friendly.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Crowder and then Ms. Neville.

Ms. Jean Crowder: You may have already said this, but does your report go to the minister? Is there any provision in your mandate to provide the committee with a copy, or do we have to go through the minister to get that?

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: It's up to her.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Okay, so we have to ask the minister for the report.

The Chair: Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: I have a quick question. You talked about the importance of funding civil society and equality-seeking organizations. Will you be speaking to that in your report?

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Yes.

Hon. Anita Neville: Good. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. I was going to ask the question. I appreciate that, Ms. Neville.

We are eagerly awaiting your findings, your results, which are very imminent. We look forward to them and hope to see many of our ideas reflected in the final recommendations. We hope to have you back, as well, following that.

Thank you very much today for your time.

Mrs. Georgina Steinsky-Schwartz: Thank you for having us.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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