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## **Standing Committee on the Status of Women**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, December 5, 2007**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi**

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## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Wednesday, December 5, 2007

• (1540)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)):** Ladies and gentlemen, I think we have a quorum as far as hearing witnesses goes. We will call this meeting to order. This is the eighth meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

We have a couple of presenters here with us this afternoon: we have Ms. Lissa Donner and Ms. Armine Yalnizyan. Also, on video conference from the University of South Australia, we have Professor Sharp.

Can you hear us, Professor?

**Dr. Rhonda Sharp (Professor of Economics, Hawke Research Institute for Sustainable Societies, University of South Australia):** I can, and I can see you well too. Can you hear and see me?

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** We can. So welcome.

Ms. Donner, are you going first?

**Mrs. Lissa Donner (United Nations Platform for Action Committee Manitoba):** Armine is going first.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Okay.

Each presenter will have 10 minutes, and then we will go into questioning.

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan (Director of Research, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto):** First of all, I want to thank you very much for being invited to address this committee.

I want to indicate that I am the director of research at the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto and an economist. We do research and community development. We work with the community services sector in Toronto. We are funded by the United Way and the City of Toronto.

The community services sector of Toronto has about 1,500 organizations that provide services directly to hundreds of thousands of residents and touch the lives of virtually everybody.

Yesterday Statistics Canada announced that Toronto is the UN in action: it is the city on the surface of the planet that has the most concentration of foreign-born. I can tell you that in our years of working with community sector groups in very diverse communities, the single and most resounding reality is that women make the difference in the societies as you're trying to improve the lives of residents of all kinds, in all income classes, and in all neighbourhoods where people lives.

I greatly thank you for taking seriously the issue of gender budgeting.

I want to indicate that my remarks are written down. I have submitted them today, hopefully for translation for everybody on the committee—about five pages' worth of notes—and I will not be reading directly from my document.

I want to say first of all that we genuinely applaud the serious discussion of gender budgeting.

It's of course important to discuss not just the tool but what you're using the tool for, taking a look at the analysis in which budgetary policies and government policies have differential impacts on women and men in this country. It is widely acknowledged that the full participation of women in gender equality is a vital precursor to achieve economic growth, social development, and political sustainability.

In part, those three things—women's full participation in life—provide the reason that Canadians are given as to why our soldiers, both men and women, are fighting in Afghanistan. I remember being very struck about a year and a half ago by the military official in charge of Kandahar province saying, "You can't come to Kandahar and go away not being a feminist." We heartily applaud the work that is being done there to bring women and children into the fold of political discourse. We would encourage you to do the same thing here in Canada among our marginalized women and children.

The federal commitment to improving the quality of life of Canadians cannot be done without a corresponding commitment to women's equality, we believe. To date there has been no publicly available government analysis of how the policies adopted, such as tax cuts, cuts to unemployment insurance, housing, and supports for legal assistance, play out for women as compared with men.

Not only has there been no assessment of those changes, but we have had no assessment of what the impact would be not only on women but on the economy of public investments that expand the stock and affordability of housing and child care or offset the costs of skills training and post-secondary education for those who cannot save enough through RRSPs and RESPs.

My first question to you is, why do you even want to look at gender budgeting? What is it, and why do it?

The short answer is, what you can do through gender budgeting is one of two things. You can either look at what women need and figure out how to pay for the things that we say women need, or you can look at how you already allocate public resources and who benefits from fiscal policies, both taxation policies and spending policies.

Frankly, a gender budget tool is useless in and of itself. It is there to put into place a plan. You may ask what that gender plan would be, and I would answer, we have that plan and have had it at least since 1995.

But in fact it starts with what we signed on to in 1948.

Just as a point of curiosity, in 1946 a Montreal lawyer, John Humphrey, was the man who penned the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Canada signed, and in various iterations since 1948 Canada has signed on internationally to the agreement that women should expect of course to have their voices heard in the public arena; they should expect safety and security where they live; they should expect a share, and a decent share, of prosperity; and they should be able to be a viable part of public life, including political life.

• (1545)

Those things were all signed on to in 1948 by undertaking gender budget analysis or gender audits. The federal government would finally be living up to the key commitments made in 1995 at Beijing, when we signed on to the Beijing platform along with 188 other nations; that is, if we implemented policies to reduce systemic barriers faced by women in their pursuit of freedom from violence, access to the basics in life, and the opportunity to develop their potential, as well as an equal voice in public life. This is a very short list of things that need to be done and that we have already agreed we wish to pursue.

Back in 1995 the federal government, having signed the Beijing platform, said in order to meet its commitments made in Beijing, "The cornerstone of the Federal Plan is a policy requiring federal departments and agencies to conduct gender-based analysis of future policies and legislation." We are still waiting for this to happen. It is greatly acknowledged and encouraged that you continue these very serious discussions on how to make gender budgeting a reality, because that's what's going to facilitate it to move on to the other commitments made to women in 1995.

Given the actions taken last year by the federal government to silence women's NGOs that explicitly advocate for greater and substantive gender equity, not just equal treatment, it is heartening to see the federal government is now examining ways to take these objectives back in-house to ensure that policies are not gender biased toward men, so they don't favour men, and do not have the perverse impact of further advantaging those who are already advantaged in our society.

NGOs have always said the task is greater than the resources available to our sector and that indeed it is the proper and appropriate responsibility of government to undertake this sort of analysis when deciding how to spend our money.

I want to go very briefly to what we've signed. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed in 1948, according

to the Beijing Platform for Action, according to the millennium development goals we signed onto 2000, and, more recently, with four provinces and two federal parties indicating we must make a move on a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy, I would say we have more than enough adequate plans on how to move to assure better equality for women in this country.

These initiatives all have had many elements in common, and the top four things they all endorse—which by the way are endorsed by a vast majority of Canadians irrespective of political affiliation, as we have seen in polling by Environics—these four top measures that most Canadians would support are affordable housing, affordable post-secondary education, affordable child care, and improved minimum wages.

The federal government has a role to play in all these things, and irrespective of which party was to take that forward, if you moved on any of those things you would have the vast backing of Canadians in every region, in every income spectrum, irrespective of political support.

You will note that these things are not gender specific. However, they have a disproportionately beneficial impact on women.

I believe you heard last week about the impacts of tax cuts on women as compared to men. In the interests of time, I am not referring to how you could do better gender budget analysis, but I want to say that federal policies have long relied—there is a little gap here in my presentation that I'm going to fill in. I am worried about running out of time.

I do want to connect the dots to our federal government's reliance, and this has been a longstanding reliance, on immigration policy. We will be relying on immigrants as a pillar of economic growth and advancement, more so in the coming decade as we see a sea change in the labour market in this country as more people will be retiring than we have ever seen before.

It is absolutely incongruous that we should be inviting more people to this country. They come to the growth poles of this economy where there is precisely a lack of access to affordable housing in those places, and systems of public infrastructure, both hard and soft, are already stretched to the limit.

The fiscal tools for meeting these things are available at the senior levels of government, but cities and municipalities are increasingly tasked with the process of making things work, so I want to refer to the fiscal imbalance that exists.

• (1550)

I do want to indicate that the premier policy that has been adopted by parties of every political stripe at both senior levels of government between 1996 and 2004 has not been to meet any of these things that I have discussed—affordable housing, affordable child care, affordable post-secondary education, or raising the minimum wage, which wouldn't cost governments a penny—but has been in tax cuts.

Let me simply say that I believe this particular group of people here can be vocal critics of further tax cuts. We have already spent \$250 billion on tax cuts between 1996 and 2004. The current federal government has spent the last 21 months in power scheduling a further \$191 billion in tax cuts.

We need investments, and it's up to you to help us champion and endorse these investments in the areas we know can make a big difference in women's lives, that will in fact, by supporting a women's agenda, find a way to support an agenda that promotes economic security, human development, and political stability for all.

I thank you for your time and look forward to the next step in this process.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Professor Sharp. We don't have notes for Professor Sharp, so we'll be taking notes as you speak.

You have 10 minutes to make your presentation, please.

**Dr. Rhonda Sharp:** Thank you very much. Thank you for inviting me.

I'm going to speak to you today as somebody who's been involved in gender-responsive budgeting since its inception in Australia in the mid-1980s. It's been a journey of some 22 years. I just wanted to talk to you about some of the insights I've gained along the way.

First, I think it's worth noting that for the majority of countries, the government budget is the major source of finance for gender equality and women's empowerment, so we're left in a position that if we're serious about promoting women's empowerment and gender equality, we can't ignore the impact of the government budget.

That having been said, though, there is no clear pathway to how we can make sure the government budget does deliver those objectives. It's not so much a technical problem of not knowing; although there are technical problems and we need increasingly better data—particularly gender-desegregated data and analysis—the problem is a political one.

I'm probably not saying anything new to a group such as yours that at the heart of the budget process is a political process and it requires contestation. Commitment at very high levels is required as well if things are going to change in the area of gender equality.

I'd like to endorse the comments of the previous speaker. It's interesting sitting here, because in Australia we're following a similar policy path in giving enormous emphasis these days to tax cuts as a policy instrument. Tax cuts and tax expenditures, or what I call tax concessions, have enormous gender impacts and go through the

budgetary process almost without question as being a good thing for everybody. They're not a good thing for everybody.

The other point I'd like to make is that it is unlikely that any developed country has not, at some time, sought to make government budgets more responsive to gender equity and equality. So what I'm saying is this process of gender-responsive budgeting is not entirely new.

I was reading the other day a very good publication from the Canadian office of the Status of Women. It was talking about the particular impact of tax expenditures in relation to women's retirement income. This is an example of a plank in gender budgeting—that is, gender analysis of the impacts of budgets.

What we're moving into increasingly I think since the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action recommendation that government budgets should be scrutinized for their gender impacts is an era in which we're asking how we can explicitly and systematically scrutinize the budget and engage in actions and processes that will bring about change. There have probably been elements of gender budgeting in developed countries since we developed plans for gender equality and women's empowerment, but it's the issue of the explicit and systematic link to the budget process that's been lacking in the past.

I think another understanding I've come to is that naming something is political. If we put it up in lights that we're doing a gender budget initiative, it sometimes sets us up. I'd like to see more and more gender budgeting as just the normal everyday work of politicians, NGOs, and the bureaucracy—and also, importantly, of ministries of finance or treasury.

• (1555)

In Australia, we did go down the track of sort of saying we are doing “women's budgets”, as we called them, in the mid-1990s. So it ultimately gets constructed as a project rather than the normal everyday work.

When I talked to my New Zealand colleagues, they said to me, “We're not doing gender budgeting.” I said, “That's interesting, for a developed country that has a very strong women's policy.” So I started to deconstruct the process by asking the question of what they do to implement their women's policy. It very soon became apparent that they're engaged at a number of significant levels, particularly with the finance ministry, in making sure that there is a flow of resources to support the projects that are needed to implement their plan and that there's scrutiny of new projects that go up to cabinet from a gender perspective. But they would say, “We're not doing gender budgeting”, and I would say they're engaged in the politics, particularly under—not so much now but in the recent past—a very strong neo-liberal framework for operating that made it difficult to name gender and women's equality as a priority.

Some of the key lessons I've learned over my 22 years of involvement I'll just put to you as a series of points.

The first one is that specifically targeted allocations to women and girls or men and boys are important, there's no doubt about that. But we must keep remembering they're minuscule in terms of the total budget. Every assessment of this—and I've done one myself for my state here in South Australia—shows them always to be less than 1% of the total budget. So it's important that when we talk about gender budgeting, we're genuinely looking at the other 99% of government expenditures that are not gender specific but have important gender impacts, like retirement income policies; family policies; infrastructure policies, even; tax cuts; whatever. They're not designed, we're often told, for women or for men, but the issue here is to work out what their impacts are and change them if we don't like them.

Some countries are still persisting with focusing on gender-specific targeted allocations. I don't want to undermine those claims. I'm just saying we need to be clear that they're just one element of gender budgeting and not the most important in terms of the total dollars or impacts.

Another observation that certainly came home to me here in Australia, but in every country in the world I've worked in, is that the wider economic and political context in particular, the macro-economic strategy that's in place, and the discourses about the role of government do play a fundamental role in shaping what can be achieved I think in relation to gender equality, but just as importantly, they're going to shape the design of any gender-responsive budgeting exercise that you may wish to implement.

• (1600)

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Excuse me. You have one minute left.

**Dr. Rhonda Sharp:** Okay.

Under a neo-liberal framework, it's much more difficult to get increases in expenditure through the budget, but there are spaces for actions. We can more effectively use the budget reforms that have been going on that emphasize transparency, accountability, and participation, and the use of results-based indicators to make them more gender sensitive.

Lastly, crucial to it all, which I started out with, is that you do need champions for this work and you need them over a long period of time, and you need a high level of political commitment within the government to make sure that it keeps on moving, and you need the involvement of treasury. You can't afford to let them sit on the sidelines.

The final piece of that picture is that you need a very active civil society and NGOs putting pressure and contestation around the budget.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Thank you very much, Professor.

Now we will move to Ms. Donner, please. I will let you know when you have a minute left as well.

**Mrs. Lissa Donner:** Thank you for the opportunity to be here. I'm here today as a volunteer representing UNPAC Manitoba. UNPAC is the United Nations Platform for Action Committee.

In Winnipeg I am self-employed. I do research, much of it focused on gender and women's health and social and economic situation.

UNPAC Manitoba has existed since 1995, when 45 Manitoba women who attended the UN Fourth World Congress on Women in Beijing returned and were keen, as Armine has talked about, to carry on the work and to really hold the feet of government to the fire here to ensure that Canada lives up to its commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action.

UNPAC has existed since that time. From 2003 to 2007 UNPAC received funding from Status of Women Canada for its gender budgeting project. UNPAC has also received funding from the Province of Manitoba and hopes to again receive funding from Status of Women Canada to continue its work. Currently, all staff have been laid off because of these funding cuts.

I want to talk a bit about UNPAC's gender budget project, the overall goal of which is to reduce women's poverty. We're not interested in abstract studies of federal and provincial government budgets. Government policies and budgetary decisions can either alleviate or exacerbate women's disproportionate burden of poverty.

UNPAC has used education, consultation, and working with decision-makers to reach its goals, adopting a treetops and grassroots approach, working both with government decision-makers, the treetops, and with local women, the grassroots.

The grassroots part of this strategy involved 46 workshops over two years from 2005 to 2007. The workshops were held across Manitoba to introduce mostly low-income women to government budgeting processes and to learn from them about their priorities for government revenues and expenditures. They were designed to be fun and interactive.

UNPAC also developed a cartoon character, La Femme Fiscale. If you have my written presentation, she's on page 2. La Femme appeared in cartoons and in postcards, to popularize these issues. She also appeared in person at the Manitoba legislature to comment on the 2006 and 2007 provincial budgets.

Those 46 workshops held across our province over two years identified a number of issues. The themes—Armine and I did not plan this—sound remarkably similar. The first was housing, housing, and housing; the second, child care; the third, affordable public transportation; the fourth, employment, work, and income—decent-paying jobs, pay equity, and better employment options for women—health, including a greater focus on prevention; intersectionality, that is programs that recognize the ways in which all of these factors combine to hold women back; government programs with long-term stable funding, adequate resources, and staff sensitive to the needs and experiences of low-income women; and government revenue.

As the previous two speakers have mentioned, the perspectives of the women who attended these workshops are not really in sync with current federal government initiatives. They called for increased corporate taxes, higher personal income taxes for high-income earners, luxury and sin taxes, such as a tax on junk food, and green taxes.

That was the grassroots part of UNPAC's work. What about the treetops?

The treetops part of the strategy was designed to get the message about the importance of gender analysis and the priorities of women attending the workshops to key decision-makers.

At the close of each workshop, women had the opportunity to write a letter to their local MLA, asking that gender analysis be made part of the budget process and naming their own specific budget priorities. Letters were copied to the Minister of Finance and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

UNPAC also met with our provincial Minister of Finance, the Hon. Greg Selinger, and other key ministers, such as the Minister responsible for the Status of Women and the Minister of Family Services and Housing.

- (1605)

With the assistance of the Minister of Finance, these meetings were followed by ongoing meetings with senior staff to discuss options about how government could use the results of the grassroots consultations.

As a result of these initiatives, the Minister of Finance expressed an interest in improving gender and diversity analysis skills among provincial civil servants. UNPAC encouraged these efforts and supported the idea of pilot projects as a way to both test the usefulness of GBA and to build skills internally.

At the first stage, the province prioritized analyses of the situations of aboriginal women and men and boys and girls, and women and men and boys and girls with disabilities. And in my professional life, I was contracted to lead this project.

We began with training in gender and diversity analysis for program managers and policy analysts, and this was followed by four pilot projects on priority issues that were identified by departments, one with Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, one with the Public Library Services Branch, one on housing that I will describe to you in more detail, and one with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

In the remainder of my presentation I would like to focus on the portion of the work done in the Manitoba Family Services and Housing pilot project. The department was interested in learning more about the demographics of those Manitobans living in what Statistics Canada calls “core housing need”.

And if you have the English version of my written brief, that definition appears in a footnote at the bottom of page 5. It deals with three elements: affordability, suitability, and adequacy of housing.

Manitoba Housing was interested in understanding more about the population living in core housing need in order to better plan for the development and redevelopment of social housing in our province, particularly in Winnipeg.

Usually, data about core housing needs are published about households. This seems to make intuitive sense—people live in households—but it masks the sex differences in the incidence of core housing need.

If you look at figure 1, which is on page 5 of the English version of my brief, you'll see a standard presentation of that. In Winnipeg, as in Manitoba and Canada as a whole, the percentage of households living in core housing need increased from 1991 to 1996 and then decreased from 1996 to 2001. Since 1996, Winnipeg's core housing need rate has been lower than that for both Manitoba and Canada. So where is the problem? Why are all you women complaining?

In 2001 there were just over 60,000 Winnipeggers living in core housing need. By including gender in our analysis, we discovered that women had a higher incidence of core housing need. In Winnipeg and in Manitoba as a whole, for every 100 males living in core housing need, there were about 125 females. So at the very outset you can see just simple sex disaggregation of the data makes a big difference to our understanding. That's shown in figure 2, which is on page 6 of the English version of my brief.

We also wanted to examine core housing need among males and females through the life course. We found that the largest group of Winnipeg residents living in core housing need were children, almost 21,000 of them, and young adults aged 18 to 44, particularly young women. About 13,600 young women lived in core housing need in my city in 2001. This is shown in figure 3.

**The Vice-Chair (Ms. Patricia Davidson):** Ms. Donner, you have one minute.

**Ms. Lissa Donner:** Okay.

Note that while the incidence of core housing need is lower among senior men than among working-age men, it's higher among senior women than among their younger counterparts.

I understand I'm out of time. I'd like to draw your attention to figure 4, which shows that when we consider disability status, again it is women with disabilities who are at higher risk of core housing need than men. It's the same for aboriginal women compared to both aboriginal men and their non-aboriginal counterparts, and again, if we look at males and females, by immigration status.

The participants in UNPAC's grassroots workshops identified housing as a major budget concern for women wherever they lived in the province.

•(1610)

Research done as part of a gender and diversity analysis project for the Province of Manitoba helped to document the greater burden of core housing need borne by women, as well as familiarize provincial employees with the value of considering gender and diversity analysis in planning government programs.

I want to conclude by saying that, importantly, Manitoba Family Services and Housing has indicated these data will help shape their future decisions about the development and redevelopment of social housing in our province.

We remind the committee of Canada's obligations under the Beijing Platform for Action to work toward gender equality and to undertake gender analysis. The question here should be how to proceed, not whether or not to do so.

We would recommend this committee encourage the federal government to support governmental and non-governmental collaborations to understand and act upon the differential impacts of its budgetary initiatives on women and men. As demonstrated in this case study, policy and program areas such as housing, which appear to be gender neutral on the surface, are often not so in practice.

Thank you very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Thank you.

Thank you to each of our presenters.

We'll now go to the question round, the first round being seven minutes.

We will start with Mr. Pearson, please.

**Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much, all of you, for coming. This has been a bit of a journey for us as we're trying to get our heads around the whole idea of gender budgeting.

Just briefly, Ms. Sharp, we had a professor from the United States here a couple of meetings ago, and he was talking to us about gender budgeting analysis. He was talking about Australia as an example. He said that things have started well but have tailed off since that time. Is that correct? If it has fallen off the rails, could you tell us why?

**Dr. Rhonda Sharp:** The first thing I'd say is it did last at the federal level in a very explicit and visible way for 12 years, and that's not bad for any exercise. All the state and territorial governments introduced these, what I thought and what I now call the "femocrat"-based, gender-responsive budget, meaning it was driven by the women's policy units within government. Those exercises continued in similar forms right up to about 2001.

What happened after that is that at the federal level we got a change of government, which has changed again very recently. In 1996 it abolished the femocrat-type exercise and replaced it each year with a ministerial budget statement. So it was still visible, but it was more politicized and less reliant on analysis. It was a recognition that government was saying they still needed to be accountable to the public in some way.

In South Australia the exercise morphed into various forms. Even in 2003 the treasury was still publishing an appendix to the budget papers, saying this was the impact on women and girls.

What I would say is it never stays the same. A mistake we made in Australia was thinking we could have the same model forever. Things change, particularly the economic and political climate. By the early to mid-1990s, we shifted into a discourse that the role of government had to be reduced all the time. The basis on which we had introduced gender-responsive budgeting was in more of a Keynesian economic environment where it was possible to get substantial increases in funding for women's issues. When that environment changed, we didn't really have a strategy, other than stopping the worst from happening.

We know a lot more now, but I think each country has to design the exercise according to its conditions. I would say now there's more of a consultative process within government on these issues and much more emphasis on whole of government approaches, but we don't call it a gender budget exercise or a women's budget exercise; we try to always bring the budget element into the process. What we're still lacking I think is a strong movement outside government to put pressure on the budget.

•(1615)

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** Thank you, Ms. Sharp. I appreciate that.

Ms. Yalnizyan, you made some evocative statements, I thought, at the beginning when you spoke. We are trying to get our heads around gender budgets. In many ways, I think a lot of this is that we don't know quite how to start.

I've worked a fair bit in Africa over the years. With women's groups and others, we have signed all sorts of declarations with community leaders and others, and we come back a year later and find out that none of these things have been respected. Now that's Africa. In Canada, I know, with the Beijing signing in 1995 and other things, we're a fairly advanced country, and yet we seem to have trouble moving ahead on this ourselves.

So my question is this. People like me who are trying to get their heads around it kind of need a *Gender budgeting for Dummies*—I'm speaking about myself—something in which somebody could help us to get started.

You have mentioned four things. I think you mentioned post-secondary education, housing, pay equity, and the fourth was...?

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** Child care and minimum wage. In fact, the fourth thing is minimum wage, and it wouldn't cost governments anything. It would be just setting the rules of the road.

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** I wonder if you could take just one example that you think would be good. How could we get started, as opposed to just eyeing it and trying to get a perspective on it? How would we make it work?

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** I have to say, Mr. Pearson—and I thank you very much for your question—it isn't a vague thing. It's actually more about poverty reduction than anything else, as Lissa has said. It's really just moving forward on those things that we have failed to invest in.

With due respect, we cut in the mid-1990s. You know, it's often said that the poor bore the brunt of the costs of getting this country's fiscal house in order, and I have to repeat again and again, it was women who did it. It was women who primarily benefited from the programs that were cut. It's not women who primarily benefit from tax cuts.

We seem to have a lot of money to throw around. I have to remind you, we are the ninth largest economy on the surface of the planet, with a fraction of the population. That is, to me, an eye-popping number as an economist, that we're the ninth biggest economy. We're the only economy of the advanced industrial nations that enjoys fiscal surpluses. We have for the last 10 years, and as far as the eye can see, now that provincial levels of government are enjoying surpluses...and we don't seem to have enough money for a national housing project, which we know would make a material difference in women's lives.

Women have no place to go. The violence-against-women shelters are full. They are going to emergency shelters with their children, which is not a place for women and children to be.

It's imponderable to me. We are inviting immigrants to come. Where do they go? They go to Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Where's the biggest housing crisis in this country? Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto. We have no national policy. That's seen as something that cities should be doing. You can't do it without everybody rowing in the same direction. Cities do not have the resources to meet the needs of living conditions.

So housing, to me, would be the biggest thing you could do to make a material difference in women's lives, but it isn't a gender-specific thing. You know when you do tax incidence studies on the

effect of tax cuts—you heard about this last week—that the primary beneficiaries of tax cuts are male. You can see that by just going through tax information. Where are women in the income registries? They're in the middle and at the bottom of the income spectrum. Who gets the lion's share of tax cuts? Those in the middle to the top. That's just the way it works.

So if you want to spend our surplus somehow in a way that invests in the future, housing would be number one, making sure that people have pathways to—

• (1620)

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** I'm sorry to have to interrupt you.

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** Of course. My apologies.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** No, that's fine.

We're going to move on, and perhaps you'll get a chance to expound some more on those things.

We move to Madame Deschamps, please, for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, I would like to welcome you.

I'm going to continue in the wake of what Mr. Pearson said. This is quite complex. Sometimes we get the impression that we're experiencing a surprising paradox. We try to define a budget that promotes gender equality and to acquire the tools to do that. In the past two years, we've dealt with two Conservative government budgets that do not appear to be promoting gender equality.

One question is of great concern to me. Is it preferable to allocate a government's budget surpluses to pay down the debt or to invest part of those amounts in social programs in order precisely to promote gender equality?

In the past year, we've had witnesses tell us about women's economic security. We've virtually made the rounds of what could concern that type of economic security. We've talked about elderly women, housing, employment insurance and women heads of single-parent families. In general, the heads of single-parent families are women. So very few tools currently exist. In addition, in the government's last budget statement, there is no indication that concrete measures and means will be taken to promote equality between men and women.

Doesn't allocating all budget surpluses to pay down the debt further heighten the inequality between men and women?

•(1625)

[English]

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** I'm not sure I should go first, because I think you've heard what I said. I think the primary things the Conservative government has done in the last two budgets are to allocate \$191 billion of surplus in the coming years to tax cuts and \$37 billion worth of surplus to debt reduction, and that will do nothing, absolutely nothing, to bring women into greater equality with men, because we need spending; we need public investments. That's what women benefit from. I think I've said my piece on that.

You heard last week that the benefits from tax cuts flow primarily to men. As I said earlier, gender budgeting is, at the very least, a way of showing that you're not getting the perverse results of advantaging those who are already advantaged with more public resources.

I would really welcome any kind of discussion in this committee, where such good work gets done, on how we can utilize surplus revenues. You don't even need to tax people to make things better for people.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Ms. Donner.

[English]

**Mrs. Lissa Donner:** Thank you very much.

I want to second what Armine has said.

Just to add to that, we're here talking about gender budgeting, and I particularly used housing as an example because I wanted committee members to understand that even in those areas that appear gender neutral on the surface, areas you think have nothing to do with sex or with gender, there are often differential impacts on women and men. The point of gender budgeting is to think about those things up front.

For example, this committee could recommend that the Department of Finance be required to prepare analyses of the differential impacts on women and men of new budget initiatives. That would show compliance with Canada's existing commitments under the platform for action.

This goes back to your earlier comment and question, Mr. Pearson, about gender budgeting for dummies. It's not really that hard. In the Department of Finance there are very skilled experts, as Armine has said, who are expert at figuring out who is going to gain and who is going to lose by new government initiatives, whether those are expenditures or whether those are tax reductions.

I think this committee should understand that under our commitments through the Beijing Platform for Action, Canada is required to consider the differential impacts of budgetary initiatives on women and men. As a taxpaying Canadian I would be most happy if you would recommend that the Department of Finance simply did that.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** You have 30 seconds left.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** What I retained more from the comments of Ms. Sharp, who is speaking to us by videoconference,

is that her government—they've changed governments too—took advantage of the fact that the budget had been established and influenced by groups of women or by women.

Did I understand correctly, Ms. Sharp?

[English]

**Dr. Rhonda Sharp:** What I was saying was that in terms of the first 12-year wave, the model we used was one in which gender-responsive budgeting was driven by the women's policy offices within government. When the political and economic situation changed in 1996—and this is what you have to be wary of in terms of how you design these exercises, and I'll say something more about that in a minute—the new federal government cut the women's offices by 40%. That was the end of that story, so you have to have a structure that is going to be sustainable.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** I'm sorry, but your time is up, Professor Sharp. We're going to have to move on to the next questioner. Thank you.

We'll now move on for seven minutes to Mrs. Grewal, please.

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

Thank you, ladies, for your presentations. Certainly they were very informative and very interesting.

I have a question for Ms. Yalnizyan.

Ms. Yalnizyan, in your report *Canada's Commitment to Equality: A Gender Analysis of the Last 10 Federal Budgets (1995-2004)*, you referred to a 1995 Liberal government promise to undertake gender analysis of all its microeconomic policies and its budgets, but then you say that the government never followed through with its commitment. Could you please comment on that period?

•(1630)

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** I wish I could report on something different—that is, a partisan difference—but I'm afraid that both governments we have had since 1995 have been unable to meet the Beijing commitments. That does tar both the Liberals and the Conservatives with the same brush. However, I'm hopeful that we can work with either the Conservatives or the Liberals, or whoever is forming the government, to actually make substantive change and use these incredible surpluses. It's the opportunity not of a generation, Madam Grewal, but the opportunity of economic history in Canada to use a portion of those surpluses to make life better for men and women.

I would completely concur that after three years of cuts from 1995 to 1998, when the Liberal government had the opportunity to reinvest in the programs they had cut, they did not do that, but neither has the Conservative government. Nobody gets off free on this one.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** As a member of Parliament, I have been approached by literally hundreds of my constituents—men, women, young girls—demanding that the federal government reduce taxes. In your opinion, if the federal government were to implement gender budgeting, could tax cuts be justified over new spending programs?

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** Madame Grewal, I don't know what conversations you have with your constituents. I know that by and large, in the work we do through the Social Planning Council, which is my constituency, nobody is asking for tax cuts. People are asking for more service.

I don't know if you recall this. I live in Toronto, and about six weeks ago we had a huge political fight about which community centres, rinks, and pools we were going to cut; we decided to increase taxes to avoid those cuts, because they were happening in areas where in fact we are trying to stop kids from shooting each other to death. There's not enough stuff for them to do, so you need to keep those centres open.

I think the Canadian population is getting to the place where...I'm not saying they would pay more, but they don't want to see service cuts, and I don't think you can keep cutting taxes at this stage without actually threatening loss of service. That is not what Canadians want.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Would you like to answer that?

**Mrs. Lissa Donner:** I would. Thank you very much for the opportunity, Ms. Grewal.

In this exercise we're talking about incorporating gender analysis into the budgeting process. If this committee were successful in requiring that the Department of Finance incorporate gender-based analysis into its analysis of new federal initiatives, it would become very clear that tax cuts benefit men more than they benefit women, and that therefore, in introducing those kinds of across-the-board tax cuts, Canada is not living up to its commitment under the Beijing Platform for Action. There's a very direct connection here.

People talk about gender-based budgeting or gender-based analysis in budgeting or gender budgets as if the subject is abstract and far away. It's very nitty-gritty, and that's what UNPAC tried to show and what they did show with the workshops they held across Manitoba—rural, urban, and north—with grassroots women. These things affect women very directly.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** In a previous submission to this committee we were told that about 60 countries have undertaken gender-responsive budgeting initiatives.

Are you familiar with any of these initiatives, and can you offer any insight into lessons that may be taken from them?

**Dr. Rhonda Sharp:** I'm familiar with many of them, and in my presentation I tried to go to the core of some of the key lessons that we keep in mind. I can't emphasize political commitment enough; I can't emphasize the diverse role of actors who have to be engaged in this process.

One of the earlier speakers said let's not, in effect, get distracted about gender-responsive budgeting; what is at the heart of this is implementing policies that do remove poverty, that do promote gender equality, and so on.

The other thing about these probably 60 or 70 initiatives—we have trouble counting them—is that they're incredibly diverse. Part of it is that they're diverse in style, diverse in terms of who's involved, their politics, and so on. But they're also diverse in what they're trying to achieve, which requires each country to ask, what is it that we're trying to achieve here?

You already have examples in your country that are trying to achieve certain things by gender-responsive budgeting. Take the earlier presentation on engaging poor women and trying to raise awareness about housing; that is an initiative. You might in your country end up with a multiplicity of initiatives that could be backed by your treasury, your ministry of finance—I'm not sure what you call them in Canada—being required to assess new expenditures.

New expenditures aren't a big proportion of the budget, so it's not such a big exercise. But it is interesting, if you have large budget surpluses, to be able to focus on where the surplus money is going. I think that's politically crucial, because it at least looks as though—it's not true—you're not taking it away from anybody else but are distributing the benefits.

• (1635)

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Thank you very much. Your time is up now, Mrs. Grewal, sorry.

We're moving now to Mrs. Mathysen, for seven minutes, please.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses. We're very grateful for the expertise that you bring to this committee.

I want to start with Ms. Donner's very impressive brief in terms of its clarity. It seems to me that you in Manitoba began in a very pragmatic way and set out a very clear process that seems quite workable. I'd like you to comment on that.

One of the things we keep hearing is that gender budgeting is so complex, so difficult, but it seems that this is a very clear process. So I'd like you to assess the process so far and tell us whether or not you feel it has been successful, and categorize it.

As well, who else needs to be consulted? Who do we need to talk to?

**Mrs. Lissa Donner:** Okay. Those are a lot of questions. I'll do my best to speak quickly.

I was the lead consultant retained by the province to do the work with policy staff across departments, and then they had a competitive process and four pilot projects were selected.

I think we've made a good start, and the feedback from the department involved in the pilot projects has been quite positive. Ministers have not yet been briefed, and I'm not in a position to say what steps Manitoba is going to take next. I'll just say stay tuned, but I think feedback on those pilots has been very good.

But I think that's a first step. It was just a first step, and now we really need to dig in and figure out what to do next. Certainly my advice, for what it's worth, will be basically the same as I've given you. I sound like a broken record. Consider the differential impacts of women and men on the initiatives that you take through the budget.

You may not be able to do them all in the first year, but pick the big ones. Governments have priorities. Every government comes in saying, "These are our main planks; this is what the people have elected us to do." If governments were only to subject those top three or five priority items to analysis of their differential impacts on women and men, that would be a big step forward.

How do you do that? First, you have to train up staff in government, because staff may not have the skills to do that. You have to work collaboratively with non-governmental organizations, because that's where a lot of the skills and expertise rest. Then you have to bring them together and do the work. You have to understand that it's really not—and I hope I don't offend any rocket scientists here—rocket science. We committed in 1995 to do it, so we should just start already.

• (1640)

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Okay, thank you.

This is a general question. We talk a lot about the cost of programs. You hear it constantly, the cost of bringing forward a national program. I'd like to talk about the cost of poverty. What's the cost of not addressing the inequities that we see in the current budgeting systems?

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** Can I just say how easy it is to do a gender budget analysis on tax incidence? You can follow the money. You can do "what's the impact of a tax cut like this", given the staff to do it. Finance probably does it, but doesn't make it public—there's a good chance of that.

I don't think that's the tough one. We know that "who's the beneficiary of spending" gets a bit tougher to do.

We have really good analysis on human capital development through educational stuff. It's a straightforward cost-benefit analysis. It's done for individuals: you plunk down  $x$  amount of dollars for your post-secondary education and you see a stream of revenue for the rest of your life. That's very classic cost-benefit analysis.

We can tell that if we invest an  $x$  amount publicly, it should have a macro-impact. You can do that through input-output and forecasting modelling, all sorts of stuff. There are lots of gimmicks you can use to indicate what a dollar of expenditure on education will be. Of course, most Canadians identify access to education as the primary pathway out of poverty into opportunity for better-paid jobs.

We could probably say what the bang for the buck would be on child care; on better access to ESL, for example, in schools; and on post-secondary education. That would be pretty easy to do. And we

know how to do it on public infrastructure, because we do it primarily in capital investments, with a yield curve of flows of benefits to a society, which is the only macro thing we do.

Where we can't do it is on social spending, because there are too many third-party effects. If I spend \$100 billion on health care this year, how do I know what the impact of it is?

The only way you don't know is if you don't spend it. There's no control group. You'd have to have a control group and say, "This group got health care and this group didn't; let's take a look at the impact on the two."

It's a very messy area, and I wouldn't suggest you spend a lot of time on it. We know that if you spend more on health care, people are healthier and they produce more. You don't need to twist yourself up into knots to quantify the scalar at which those public investments are good.

It's more difficult to say what the public impact of employment insurance is in actually meeting people's needs when they lose their job. But we know that it's counter-cyclical.

We've been riding this 12-year unbroken economic expansion phase. What happens when we enter a recession? We have stripped all those economic stabilizers. We know from the 1920s and 1930s that one of the ways to power through a recession is to keep people's purchasing power up. That's why you have things such as unemployment insurance.

We've conducted a social experiment whose costs we don't actually know until we hit the next recession. Right now it looks as though, if we hit a recession, it's going to be self-fulfilling; it's going to start triggering all sorts of multiplier effects because people can't spend money. You can't estimate those costs, but you know from history not to do the things we've done in the last decade.

It really isn't rocket science. We know what the macro-economic effects are. I wish we'd fix some of them, already, because we seem to have found \$10 billion more a year for the military, and we've found unbelievable amounts of money for roads and bridges—not all over the country, but at the border.

If we have that kind of money and can throw away money to the tune of \$191 billion on tax cuts and \$37 billion on debt, can we please fix the things that we know are going to make people's lives better and smooth out the economy, should we hit that bump on the road, which looks as though it could happen in the next calendar year?

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Thank you very much.

Ms. Mathysen, your time is up. We'll now move to round two, for interventions of five minutes.

Ms. Minna, please.

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Firstly, I thank all of you for coming. I sense two things, I guess, and even within myself and to some degree with all of you in this room. One is that we should have done this a long time ago, so there's impatience. The other is that we have the knowledge, we know what we need, and there is expertise among our own community and society, so we need to move on.

I want to ask a couple of questions. I agree with a lot of what has been said.

Firstly, to our guest from Australia, from the 12 years you had when gender budgeting was being done, can you just very quickly choose one area and tell us what it looked like—I guess not what it looked like, but where it made a major difference in women's lives during that 12 years, and what has happened since?

I mean very quickly—I have only five minutes, and I apologize, because I want to go to another question as well.

Twelve years is a long time, so presumably it would have had some impact in some areas.

• (1645)

**Dr. Rhonda Sharp:** I think the major impact initially was to just genuinely raise awareness that there were differential gender impacts across the policy spectrum, and people took that up in various ways. We did have impacts like debates around the dependent spouse rebate, where a tax rebate was paid primarily to men for having a dependent spouse. We got Treasury to admit to the gender defects of that, and at the end of that period it was abolished and paid out as children's benefits.

We were able to reinforce the point that if you pay payments to the primary caregiver, which is usually the woman, it's more likely to be spent on the children, so we were successful in building that into the general policy apparatus.

Each year these budget documents published a whole raft of new expenditure initiatives for women and girls, so it gave us some sort of tracking mechanism. We were able to improve the quality of our data. You can't do gender budget analysis without improving your data, and that had ramifications for other things.

Having said all that, it is not just the focus on the budget in whatever constructed form that brings about the results. It has to be very broad based. It's not just about saying to Treasury, you do that and things will be fixed. They won't.

It has to be integral to every policy debate and the work of government and NGOs and so on.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I think we need to talk to you a little bit more. Maybe today doesn't give us enough time to really get more information. After all, 12 years is a long time, and there's a wealth of information that you would have.

To some degree, you've actually answered my second question, which was about how more recently we had a national child care program. That's been cancelled and replaced with a \$1,200 taxable credit or money going to families. We have still a lot of tax credits. I think the tax expenditures are worth about \$25 billion. I have two questions. One, for those who are familiar with our system, Ms. Donner and Ms. Yalnizyan, what would you do with the \$1,200 and with the child care program? How would you solve those two in terms of changing?

The other is what I would like to suggest is that we start analyzing our tax expenditures with a gender base and start seeing which ones we need to change into refundable or into something else other than tax expenditures, and are there specific ones that you would start with?

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** We just have a very short time for answers.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Maybe you can do it on your next round as you answer other people.

**Mrs. Lissa Donner:** If I can begin, we need a national child care program. I did work with this committee. It was over 20 years ago when this committee considered child care in the mid-1980s. I was advocating for a national child care program here.

Since then I've had a child and she's now past day care age, and why am I still here advocating for a national child care program? That's what we need.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Thank you. We will now move on to Madam Boucher for five minutes please.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Good afternoon, mesdames. Welcome to gender budgeting.

The ideas you've brought are very interesting. I'm going to start with Ms. Sharp, from Australia.

You've been working in the field of gender budgeting for more than 20 years. I believe the success of that kind of budgeting depended solely on government. However, have you faced any other constraints as a result of which the effort was not sustained?

•(1650)

[English]

**Dr. Rhonda Sharp:** When I say I've been in gender budgeting for 22 years, it's not just in Australia. I'm involved in advising governments and in providing technical advice elsewhere.

In Australia, different forms of gender budgeting were undertaken by both the Liberal Party—which is our conservative party of government—and the Labour Party, but the way they constructed the process was different. As I said before, with the Labour Party for the first 12 years, it was about giving a lot of power to institutions within the state, particularly women's policy offices. When it shifted to the conservative parties, the emphasis initially shifted to publishing ministerial statements as part of the budget, which said this is how we're doing good for women, but the analysis was much, much weaker.

So, yes, the political colour is important. The macro-economic conditions are important. You have a budget surplus situation, which we do, and that is an opportunity, a wonderful opportunity, to do gender budgeting. It's much harder when you're in a deficit situation.

Is there anything more specific I can say?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** If I understood correctly, that depends on the thinking of the government, whatever it may be. But have you faced other constraints elsewhere?

[English]

**Dr. Rhonda Sharp:** Of course.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Efforts have to be sustained. So how do you go about making those constraints positive, so that the effort isn't made solely for a certain period of time, but over the long term?

[English]

**Dr. Rhonda Sharp:** One of the things your standing committee could do is find ways in which Parliament would oversee the process—that worked very well in South Africa for a period, and in Uganda—to get the politicians trained in this area and to make sure the questions are asked in Parliament, so that when it comes through to the budget stage, there's parliamentary involvement in putting gender on the table. You no doubt have expenditure review committees. Do they have any responsibility to review gender impacts, as they did in South Africa for a period of time?

You can overcome some of the major constraints by thinking how you can use the structures that you have to give importance to this, to monitor it, to give it a push and make sure it keeps on happening. If questions aren't asked in Parliament, then it falls by the wayside.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** You have 15 seconds left, Madame Boucher, if you wish to use them.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** All right. I don't know who will be able to answer my question.

When a government has completed the analysis and has decided to prepare a budget that takes gender specificity into account, where does it start? What is the first thing it should do?

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Your time is up. We will perhaps get back to that later.

We will now move to Madame Gagnon, for five minutes, please.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm a former status of women critic, and I went to Beijing. There was quite extraordinary momentum at the time and there was considerable hope that the various programs supporting women would be improved over the years.

The first step in this direction by the government, whether it be Liberal or Conservative, is the Canada Social Transfer. You want us to be able to improve certain programs, to enhance them, but you're also calling on the various provincial and federal governments.

If the Canada Social Transfer in health, education and human resources... You talked about that earlier. Not all that money was restored by the provinces. The provincial governments must meet the needs of their populations, including those of women. So it's somewhat disappointing to see currently how...

The question my colleague asked is very relevant. In Quebec, we have the Conseil du statut de la femme. There was a federal counterpart to that organization, but the Liberals abolished it. Who can advise the government? That was an independent organization, but it no longer exists. The departments were told to conduct studies on programs, on the impact on women. Such studies no longer exist. We don't know what will happen. They said they would report to the House.

How can a government, which is in place for a very short period of time, accurately target the issues and see the impact on each program? They say the Department of Finance should... Don't you think it is somewhat difficult to come up with something concrete and well thought out? An independent organization could advise the government and the minister, but they abolished the one they had. The Liberals abolished it and the Conservatives are very far from wanting an advisory committee consisting of women. In addition, you need highly specialized people, as you said. Where are we going to get advice when we don't have that kind of committee? The purpose of the Conseil du statut de la femme is to advise the Quebec government. I think there are different directions, the impact of programs...

So I'm quite pessimistic about everything we're told. This morning, there was a question on that subject in the House of Commons. I don't remember the amount—\$2 or \$3 million—but there's no impact on the programs because we don't see them. You can say you're investing \$1.6 million in social housing, but exactly what does that mean?

I'd like to hear from you on that subject.

•(1655)

[English]

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** I'd just like to say thank you very much for your question.

Yes, it is disheartening for those of us who have been in the women's movement for decades to have lost the ground we've lost in the last couple of years.

That having been said, as our colleague from Australia has said, you can't do it just with institutions of expertise within government. You can't do it just with parliamentarians who are champions. You can't do it just with civil society. You need people everywhere to champion this stuff, and the expertise is never lost. We don't have the capacity in the NGO movement to do the work that you can do in treasury or in finance, as we are discussing. With a bit of luck, committees like this can actually push the process so that some of that work does get done where it properly belongs—at the heart of government.

But that's not enough, as our colleague from Australia has said. You need civil society pressure, and, frankly, even if we disappeared for the next 20 years, we have the touchstone of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to tell us what it is people need. People need freedom from fear and violence. People need access to an affordable place where they are safe—shelter. People need enough food. People need clean water. People need health and education. It's a very short list. We know what to do in order to do right by people; we know that when we spend new money, how we spend it makes a difference. This is not rocket science; it is not complex. Let us not fall into the trap of thinking it's complex.

Let us understand that it is actually not the complexity of poverty but actually the effrontery of poverty. In a country that is this blessed with so many resources economically and fiscally, can we not do something to make sure that everybody is an equal player, that everybody can run the race—men and women, children of both genders, immigrants as well as people who are born here?

There's no reason for us to not do better, so while I completely understand your frustration, I don't think the game is over. It is never over as long as there are people like you on this committee willing to take up the challenge on how to make it a vital part of political life.

● (1700)

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Thank you very much.

We will now move to Mrs. Mathysen again, for five minutes, please.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This committee is going to make a report on all that we've heard. If you had a wish list, what would you hope to see in that report from this committee?

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** If I had a wish list I would ask for you to argue vigorously for a process wherein you do some of the things you've heard today: that every new initiative taken out of the surplus budget, every new initiative that comes from program allocation and reallocation, be assessed as to what you are cutting, what you are doing, and whom it impacts.

Please make some progress on housing, child care, and access to education. You can do it. You can also set the tone as a federal government in saying what a living minimum wage is. It costs you very little; it sets a very important message for people who are

working at minimum wages, which in no jurisdiction come close to a living wage at full-time, full-year work—which is offensive.

That would be my short list.

**Mrs. Lissa Donner:** My short list is quite similar. You've been charged with looking at gender budgeting. Come out of this with a recommendation, I would ask, that, as Armine has said and I've said earlier, requires those very talented and very knowledgeable staff in the Department of Finance to ask and answer the question: will this initiative, whether it's an expenditure reduction or a new program, have a differential impact on women and men, boys and girls, and if so, in what ways?

Lay it out. Make it clear, so that you as parliamentarians and your other colleagues can vote, clear in the knowledge that if you vote for this initiative you're increasing the gap or decreasing the gap between women and men.

The second item on my wish list—and although in my housing case study I've touched on it, we've not really had an opportunity to discuss it much here today—is the importance of understanding that neither women nor men are homogenous. You'll see in the case study I did on housing that we looked at women and men first, then we looked at women and men of aboriginal identity in my city and our province; we looked at women and men and boys and girls with and without disabilities; and we looked at immigrants. It's a real mistake to assume that all women are homogeneous and all men are homogenous, because they're not.

However, having said that, whichever group we looked at—immigrants, aboriginal people and non-aboriginal people, people with disabilities, people without disabilities—however you sliced it, more women lived in core housing need than men.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** You still have almost two minutes.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

One of the problems with the current gender-based analysis that occurs throughout the federal government is that there's no accountability or transparency. What steps need to be taken to ensure that there is indeed accountability and transparency incorporated into these gender budget initiatives? How do we do it? How do we make sure that transparency is there?

**Dr. Rhonda Sharp:** I think what you've moving on to now is the hard end of gender budgeting, in that ultimately, calling governments to account for their gender equality policies is what we've been on about for decades. There is no ready answer about accountability, except to use those processes that you know about in your particular democracy.

The transparency stuff can be heightened I think with some change in governance arrangements and institutional arrangements around budgeting. Governments can sign off and signal that they are going to give priority to transparency. It then becomes the work of the bureaucracy to work out how that's going to be implemented. I don't think you can just say we're going to have more transparency; you have to actually have a process.

If you had a budget law or a legislative commitment to it, that would give it teeth.

• (1705)

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Thank you very much, and that finishes up your time.

For the last round, the five-minute round, Madame Boucher is next.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Once again I'll ask the same question I asked earlier. When a government has decided to put in place a budget that takes gender specificity into account, where should it start?

[English]

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** I'll start, Madame Boucher.

If you're going to do more tax cuts or if you're going to do debt reduction, show us who benefits from those things.

In anything you do with the surplus, anything you do with spending, show us who the beneficiaries are. That's the very least you can do.

As my colleague Lissa Donner said, when you parliamentarians vote for these things, you're showing us what you're standing up for. She also said it isn't just men and women; it's also income categories. Frankly, much of what we're talking about does not reach women because the majority of women earn less than \$30,000 a year, and many of the things we're talking about in terms of investments as well as tax expenditures do not reach low-income Canadians. They just don't. The GST would be the single exclusion of that.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** If a government, whatever it may be, decided to adopt a gender-specific budget, would it be better to start working with the private sector to determine where it should head, or with the other departments? What department should it start with?

[English]

**Mrs. Lissa Donner:** Can I answer? You have to start in-house. You start with your own budgetary initiatives, as I think my colleagues on the panel have said. That would mean starting with cleaning up your own house, and being clear, when as parliamentarians you vote to support or to oppose budgetary initiatives, that you do so in the full knowledge of how those will or will not differentially impact your constituents who are men and women.

You ought to know. When you vote to support a government motion or a private member's bill, do you not want to know how that will benefit or not benefit the women and men of your constituency?

I would suggest that you should ask yourselves, and demand answers to, this question: will this increase inequality or increase

equality among the men and women who live in my riding? I would suggest that's part of your job as a member of Parliament. You're there to represent all of your constituents, women and men, so that's part of the information you need to make informed decisions. I would say, to use some business lingo, that it's part of your due diligence as members of Parliament.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Okay. You have a minute and a half left.

Madam Grewal, do you have a comment?

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** According to Professor John Bartle of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, for gender budgeting to succeed there must be buy-in by both government and society at large, so it isn't enough to have just the support of stakeholders. With that in mind, is the climate ripe now in Canada for gender budgeting?

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** I'd like to remind you that I have submitted a five-page document, which I hope will be translated for the members of this committee. The four things I have mentioned—affordable housing, affordable post-secondary education, affordable child care, and raising the minimum wage—are not gender-specific initiatives, and they are supported by between 80% and 90% of Canadians in every region of the country and following every path of political persuasion. If you were to do something in any or all of those areas, you would see a material difference in the lives of women.

I completely agree with what Lissa said, but if you were to move forward on child care, who is the beneficiary of that, the man or the woman in the household—or both? You know it makes a difference in the lives of women, because we're the ones who are trying to make ends meet financially, we're trying to make sure our kids are well taken care of, and there aren't enough spaces for us to feel comfortable that they're being well taken care of at a price we can afford.

Those four things, Madam Grewal, are in fact not gender-specific, yet they completely intersect with the women's agenda for achieving greater equality. I believe we are ready for that in this country.

• (1710)

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Thank you very much for your answer.

We have a few minutes left. If you wish to go for three minutes, we can.

Madam Minna, would you like to start, please?

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Thank you. Actually, I might want to go back to the question I asked earlier; there wasn't an opportunity to get an answer to it.

Obviously, I personally agree with all that has been said with respect to housing, child care, minimum wage, and all the things we need to get done. I also know there are a lot of tax expenditures in our country. Maybe one of the ways we can start trying out our gender-based analysis would be to start reviewing the tax expenditures.

I am wondering whether there are specific ones that you would recommend. I haven't looked at them yet. We've asked for a copy. The last time I saw them was 1994 or 1995, but I'll take a look at them again. Are there specific ones, apart from the obvious ones, child care and housing, the ones that we know are needed and are of major impact?

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** We know there are some tax expenditures that are on the personal side, but much of the tax expenditure package is on the corporate side. When you talk about reviewing tax expenditures, I presume you are referring to the personal income tax side of the equation, in which case we know that the biggest line item is the RRSP deduction, and we know that it....

I want to echo what Lissa was saying. Women and men are not two big, monolithic blocs. The biggest difference between women and men, foreign-born and Canadian born and all the rest of it, is the difference between rich and poor, which is growing dramatically.

Both tax policies and spending policies have reinforced this divide in society between rich and poor. If you are going to look at tax expenditures, particularly on the personal income tax side, I would highly recommend that you take a look at who benefits from those. Who benefits from the RRSPs? Who benefits from the RESP? We match dollar for dollar the savings of those who can afford to put aside money for their kids, but we know that the biggest thing that is happening to poor families is that they can't save. They are spending most of their money on the basics.

If you want to do something for post-secondary education, that would be an obvious place to go to re-examine our tax expenditure on this item.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Thank you.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Do I have time left?

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** You have 25 seconds.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** That's okay.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** We'll move, then, to Madame Boucher for three minutes.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** I'd like you to provide us with a list of indicators and information that is important for the budget analysis process promoting gender equality.

Can one of you three answer me?

[English]

**Mrs. Lissa Donner:** Not off the top of my head; I'm sorry. A list of indicators of...? What are you interested in measuring?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** A list.

[English]

**Mrs. Lissa Donner:** Indicators measure change over time or indicators measure differences between and among groups. What are you interested in measuring? If I understood that more, I could perhaps do a better job of answering the question.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** When you want to prepare a gender budget, you define an indicator between men and women; the needs of men and women are different. Everyone knows that; we are all different. I want to know whether you have any indicators. When you prepare a gender budget, you attach importance to women in order to make a difference. What are the most important indicators in establishing a gender budget?

• (1715)

[English]

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** Let me just refer you back to the fact that Canada has a platform for action that it wrote in 1995 and has not yet acted on. If you take a look at that platform for action, there are indicators there. You don't have to start from scratch.

You can determine which of those indicators.... Any of them will do, whether you're looking at the differential in pay between men and women, looking at the issue of core housing need, access to legal supports. There are a thousand different indicators embedded in that document. You can pick and choose where you would like to start.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** All right. Thank you.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Professor Sharp, did you want to add to that? Professor Sharp?

I think we may have lost our connection.

Did you have anything else, Madame Boucher?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** No.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Okay. Then we will move for three minutes to Madame Deschamps, please.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** As regards indicators, I could suggest that you go and see what's being done in Quebec. I think Quebec can serve as a model for the introduction of child care services and access to legal aid, in particular. Quebec has made major progress and listens closely to women's groups. Social development is a real concern for it. What is slowing it down today, and my colleague Christiane Gagnon criticized this earlier, are the financial resources required to put in place measures designed to preserve that equality or to improve the situation.

I find it somewhat unfortunate that we're dealing with a government that will probably rack up a surplus in the order of \$13 billion for the fiscal year ending in March. Would associations like yours be closely listened to by the Minister of Finance, since he must currently be consulting all of Canada in order to polish up the next budget that will be presented to us in March?

I think he should be listening closely to everything being said today. He should attach priority to the comments by your associations.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** We have less than a minute left for a response.

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** What she's doing and what I'm doing is on a voluntary basis. There's no money for doing what we do. So if you want us to participate in pre-budgetary policies and whatnot, there are just no avenues. I pulled this thing together in the last 24 hours. This should not be the way civil society is engaging on these discussions.

So there's the answer to your question. There's no support to NGOs for important work.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Can you meet the minister?

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** Of course, if you want to organize a meeting.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Okay, thank you. You have four seconds left.

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Ah, four seconds: one, two, three, four.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** We will move to Mrs. Mathysen, for three minutes, please.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Earlier in the presentations we heard a reference to the \$190 billion that has been taken from the federal government's capacity to fund and to invest in communities. That deficit or that amount of money lost from our ability to fund is very troubling to me.

What do you see in the next few years as a consequence of that?

**Ms. Armine Yalnizyan:** We're going to be a lot slower in moving on the agenda that we've talked about, because that's partly the process of hearing that the cupboard is bare.

It looks like the United States will be entering a recession in 2008. Given the degree of integration with our economy, we can expect some kind of slowdown. Knowing that you've raided \$191 billion in surplus over the next few years means that you can say legitimately, "The cupboard is bare; we can't help you." But women have waited in good times and bad for something to be done.

It is disheartening. It is hugely disheartening. That said, it's not like we have no money to do things. We still have some money. As a society, we can actually say that we want to pay for these things, but that's where in fact politicians and civil society intersect. It is totally political what we do. It's not for lack of money. We have \$1 trillion more a year now than we did 25 years ago.

Somehow we're losing access to health care and education and all the rest of it. We're struggling to maintain what we already have. It's not about the money; it's about us deciding that we want to spend the money we make on the type of society we want, and I'm very hopeful that we are actually entering a new political period where we

talk about these things reasonably, that we see that it is the legacy of my generation, the boomer generation, stripping the assets of public infrastructure and the supports that our own children are not going to enjoy, and we're not even sure how they're going to be earning a living in the next 20 years. I'm very hopeful that we will stop sleepwalking and that we will actually talk about how we can share better the prosperity that we have in spades in this country compared to most countries.

So the \$191 billion is gone. As Dr. Phil says, you can't take back stupid. We lost it, unless some government wants to be elected and say in fact that we don't need to spend that. But that takes political courage, and maybe that's what we're about to engage in, an era of political courage so we pay for the country that we want to live in.

• (1720)

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** You have 15 seconds left, if you want to add anything.

**Mrs. Lissa Donner:** I would just add that I would encourage you, as members of Parliament, to ask the additional question when government priorities come before you, when government initiatives come before you. Consistent with Canada's commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action, you should ask and demand that you be provided with the information you need to understand if these initiatives are going to disproportionately benefit or harm gender equality among your constituents. You're there to represent them all.

Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Thank you very much.

I thank the members of the committee, and I thank very much the people who have come and presented today.

I'm sorry that we lost our connection with Australia before we got to thank the professor, but we will make sure that happens.

Oh, I'm sorry, do you have a question?

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Yes. Was it Ms. Yalnizyan who submitted an untranslated document to us?

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mrs. Patricia Davidson):** Yes. It's being translated and will be circulated to everyone on the committee.

Did you have a question, Ms. Minna?

Okay.

Again, thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.







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