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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, March 6, 2008**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi**

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## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Thursday, March 6, 2008

• (0905)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.)):** Order, please.

I know we are missing a few members. What I'd like to do is continue with Ms. Biguzs and Mr. Wild.

Thank you, Mr. Wild, for bringing the flow charts. I think we will wait until the Bloc members arrive for that flow chart explanation, because if you do explain now, you'll get some questions that might be repetitive. Do you have any more presentations today, or is it questions and answers only?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs (Assistant Secretary to Cabinet, Operations Secretariat, Privy Council Office):** We did our presentations on Tuesday, so I think we are quite happy to answer any further questions that you have following Tuesday's discussion.

**The Chair:** Before we ask questions you might as well go through the flow chart, and if we have to repeat, then we will repeat. Could you take us through the flow chart, and the decision-making processes, the memorandum to cabinet, and the Treasury Board submission processes? Thanks.

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** Perhaps I can begin in terms of just the overview.

The committee was interested in knowing how all of the pieces fit together in terms of the roles of central agencies and departments in terms of the whole machinery of government around decision-making.

The blue and green flow chart that you have in front of you tries to give you some kind of framework in terms of the initial policy development stage, which is at the left-hand side of your paper. Then moving to the right, it goes into the implementation phase. Down the side of the left-hand column you'll see that we tried to identify PCO, Finance, the Treasury Board Secretariat, and line departments.

In terms of looking at the policy development stage, the role of PCO, as I had described on Tuesday in my comments, is to support the Prime Minister and cabinet. That is certainly the support we provide to the policy committees in terms of policy initiatives coming forward, helping to ensure there is a horizontal or coordinated perspective—since many issues, of course, cross over more than one department—and helping to ensure overall that the government's agenda in terms of the priorities that it has set through the Speech from the Throne are followed through.

Finance, on the other hand, will be meeting with you next week and they can certainly elaborate in greater detail on Finance's role. Certainly they of course help in setting the overall economic and fiscal context. They are the experts in terms of economic and fiscal implications and analysis. And of course, budget preparation is a key responsibility of the Department of Finance and the Minister of Finance.

I'll let Joe speak to this when I'm finished, but Treasury Board is basically responsible for looking at and ensuring the integrity of the system in terms of overall oversight on financial and management issues, on assessing resource adequacy.

Line departments, in terms of the bottom column, are ultimately responsible for developing initiatives pursuant to the government's policy agenda and ensuring that any of their priority initiatives, or initiatives that they are working on, are consistent with the government's policy initiatives. They actually are responsible, as I mentioned the other day, for developing and preparing policy proposals that would come forward for consideration to cabinet.

The three central agencies on that policy development process work very much together. We have complementary roles, if I can put it that way, and we input in terms of policy initiatives that would be coming forward to cabinet. When I go into the next chart I'll actually show you how that all comes together.

That's the policy development side of things in terms of items before they are considered by cabinet.

For the implementation phase, clearly Finance has a role in terms of the passage of the Budget Implementation Act through Parliament, and tax and other statutory measures.

Treasury Board is responsible, of course, for the approval of program authorities for departments to implement programs, to approve spending plans, ensuring that programming is consistent with the Financial Administration Act and, of course, parliamentary management of the estimates process. That's the main estimates and the supplementary estimates process. They have also set the macro policies for the Government of Canada in terms of program evaluation and audit policies.

Departments, on the other hand, are responsible once an initiative has received policy approval and program approval by Treasury Board, and then are responsible for actually implementing an initiative, providing the appropriate management oversight in terms of program implementation, reporting to Parliament in terms of their DPRs, and also conducting program evaluations and risk-based audits of their programs.

I hope that is somewhat helpful in terms of trying to explain how the pieces fit together.

Before I turn to the memorandum to cabinet process, I maybe can turn to Joe.

Do you want to add anything on the role of the board?

• (0910)

**Mr. Joe Wild (Executive Director, Strategic Policy, Treasury Board Secretariat):** Sure.

I think the focus of the board really is twofold. It's ensuring that the spending planned in the budget is properly expressed within the estimates through, ultimately, the appropriation act, which then provides the actual legal spending authority for a department to spend funds in that particular area. The focus of the Treasury Board submission process is very much on getting the details of program design, the specific costs, the expected results and outcomes, and how program delivery and administration will occur.

It's basically a check, with a focus on implementation. So the policy part of it has happened, and it's very much looking to make sure everything is in place that's necessary for the department to actually be able to successfully implement that policy decision.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Are you going to the next one?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** The next page.

As for the next two charts, the first one tries to give you a sense of how the memorandum to cabinet process works.

The initial policy proposal in terms of what comes forward is determined by the government's agenda. Clearly that's set through things like the platform the government articulates, then subsequently in the Speech from the Throne or mandate letters or the budget. So the priorities are in accordance with the priorities that have been identified by the government and that should be moving through the system. The department would ensure they identify a priority that's consistent with the agenda through the Speech from the Throne or, as I say, through the budget or through mandate letters, and they would start to do the policy work internally. Traditionally on a policy initiative, that would be developed by a strategic policy branch located in a department. They would start to put together the necessary analysis in terms of developing a memorandum to cabinet.

I think, as I mentioned the other day, in terms of the template for the memorandum to cabinet process, it is on the PCO website, and it gives you a sense of what the structure of a memorandum to cabinet should be in terms of identifying a proposal, a recommendation. It identifies the problem, why this is coming forward, the analysis of the issues, and the possible options. We look for credible options that give ministers some choice in terms of what they can move forward with, and it also gives them a sense of the risks and the benefits of moving forward.

The department starts to initiate that work and starts to develop a detailed policy proposal they would like to bring forward to cabinet. That's the first stage. That would move out.

Before it even comes to central agencies, there would be an interdepartmental working group. As you know, issues are now much more complex than they might have been many years ago and cross over other departments many times, or you may need to work in coordination with other departments. Sometimes proposals are sponsored by more than one minister and may come forward from a number of ministers.

So it's very important for departments to identify and recognize implications if they need other program departments to help them in the delivery of a particular initiative they want to go forward with. The interdepartmental working group is the basis for a department to pull together other policy experts in other departments so they can further develop the proposal they would like to bring forward to cabinet to ensure it reflects a broader context and takes into account potential implications or participation by other departments. That helps to start refining the document, the memorandum to cabinet, that would be coming forward to a cabinet policy committee.

Once that work has been completed and you start to have a draft of a document that would come forward, there would be consultations with central agencies. And it's very important. We always encourage departments to engage with the Privy Council Office early in the process. Treasury Board and Finance are very much a part of that, so it isn't just one central agency. Each central agency brings a somewhat different but complementary perspective. PCO would focus on the overall policy intent and the work that's required to advance that; Finance, of course, brings its economic perspective and its lens in terms of an initiative; and of course, Treasury Board already thinks through at that point and provides comments and assistance from the point of view of what it would take to deliver this program, to already start thinking through at the initial policy stage whether this is a credible initiative that can be implemented and if there are challenges in terms of program implementation. They will also help to try to focus on the results expected to be achieved, because that's important at the opening policy stage to help identify the results, so subsequently, when you're doing program implementation, it's clear at the outset what your overall objectives are.

• (0915)

Central agencies would meet with the department, and that might take several meetings. This is a dynamic process, so central agencies would meet and would review with the department their proposal and any documents they would submit. They would provide comments back to the department in terms of how to make a proposal more robust and whether there are any gaps that central agency officers feel haven't really been addressed in a memorandum to cabinet.

That can be a very dynamic process and might take a certain amount of time in terms of just working through, back and forth, a dialogue between officials.

After that has taken place, then there's an interdepartmental meeting, and I had mentioned that to you on Tuesday. The interdepartmental meeting is very important, and that's required on any initiative that comes forward to a cabinet policy committee and the broader community, not just affected or impacted departments or implicated departments or partnering departments in an initiative. It's really an opportunity for the broader interdepartmental community to come together and to review a proposal. And the draft is basically circulated and shared with that community.

It's usually one meeting. It may be more meetings. It depends on the nature of issues that may be identified in that interdepartmental meeting in terms of whether there are concerns raised by a particular department, which it thinks the memorandum to cabinet hasn't addressed, or whether there are certain risks or implications that a department may not have factored in or may not have taken into consideration. It could be something it hadn't been aware of.

The interdepartmental process is a dynamic process. It's meant to provide constructive feedback. Central agencies also participate in that forum, and Status of Women does as well. So it's an important opportunity for Status of Women, certainly, to view proposals coming forward and to provide its input and its views in terms of the proposal.

What usually has to happen at that stage is that a document has to be revised. It has to reflect the perspectives and the issues that have been raised through an interdepartmental process. And once that has satisfactorily come to ground, you effectively have what constitutes a final draft document that's ready to be presented to ministers.

And then the document itself must be submitted and must be signed by the minister. A minister is ultimately accountable, or ministers who are presenting a proposal are accountable. So ministers, of course, play a major role in terms of ensuring that they're satisfied with the proposal coming forward, because they ultimately have to present it to their cabinet colleagues.

If a minister is satisfied and signs off on that document, then the document is referred to a cabinet committee, the relevant policy committee, whether that is social affairs, economic, or environment, depending on which committee it would go to. The cabinet committee of the policy committee would have the opportunity to deliberate. It would see the proposal. It's an opportunity to ask questions and to debate.

If the committee is satisfied, it doesn't have the final decision-making authority on that. It's basically a recommendation that is issued out of a policy committee, which would be referred to the priorities and planning committee of cabinet, the committee of cabinet responsible for ratifying cabinet decisions. The priorities and planning committee has the opportunity to challenge. It's sort of a check-and-balance system. It's an opportunity to challenge, as well, recommendations that are coming forward from policy committees of cabinet.

Ultimately, if priorities and planning is satisfied and is all right with a proposal, then a final decision would be issued. At that stage we've completed the policy stage.

Then it moves out to the implementation stage, which may or may not—depending on the issues—but usually does require the next stage, which is Treasury Board approval.

I'll turn to Joe to explain the Treasury Board role, which is to provide that opportunity to start providing the details of how a policy initiative will be rolled out: how it will be implemented, what resources are required to deliver it, who the delivery body will be, and what accountability mechanisms are in place. That's when we move on to the implementation stage.

Before I turn to Joe, do you want to take a moment there?

• (0920)

**The Chair:** Yes, I do.

When I look at this memorandum to cabinet, I just want to know this. For example, economic security for women, which is something we have studied, would involve three ministers. For economic security it would be the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister responsible for Status of Women, and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians. So if we were to speak to those three ministers, in your understanding, are the silos still there or do they talk to each other? That's my first question.

And when deliberations take place on a gender issue—and you talked about a formal interdepartmental meeting and then priorities and planning committee—is there cabinet confidentiality, or can we access documents here?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** The documents that go to cabinet would of course be covered by cabinet confidence, in the sense that they're recommendations to ministers. That would be covered by cabinet confidence.

**The Chair:** But if they came to priorities and planning and somebody is doing the decision-making and they challenge and do a checklist, and one of the issues is to check to see whether gender has been addressed, would that type of discussion or approval or checking be accessible, or is that also covered by cabinet confidentiality?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** The document that would go into cabinet and on which decisions are based is a cabinet document, so that would be covered by cabinet confidentiality. As I say, under the Access to Information Act certain analytical parts of a memorandum to cabinet may be accessible, but normally the decision-making documents for cabinet are cabinet confidences.

There wouldn't be additional information. Normally the document should be a comprehensive document, and working backwards to the beginning of the process, it should reflect issues that are raised and the extent to which there are gender issues that have been identified through the interdepartmental work and by Status of Women. Normally every memorandum to cabinet includes sections on implications, risks and benefits, and strategies, so it should be actually incorporated or reflected in that piece that goes to ministers for decision-making.

**The Chair:** And my first question—

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** You mean your question on the silos.

**The Chair:** Yes. Do silos exist, and does it take one minister to champion a cause? For example, which minister would take responsibility for gender equality or gender budgeting? Would it be finance? Would it be status of women? Would it be human resources and development? What would be more effective?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** I think it's a combination of factors. A challenge always in government is working horizontally. It's an issue we've tried to address over many years. Accountabilities, of course, are very much vertical in terms of departmental ministerial accountabilities to Parliament, so the challenge is trying to work across the system in terms of coming up with accountability structures that ensure you have synergy and coordination happening.

The reason we actually do have.... It's certainly a requirement for PCO. It's required that we do interdepartmental consultations before something comes forward. It's very important that the connections be made. Certainly one of the key issues we ask for is interdepartmental work before an initiative comes forward, just to ensure that very thing—that an integrated perspective is actually taken into account and that there's every opportunity to identify issues.

It may not be a perfect system, but I think the mechanisms are certainly in place to try to ensure that those kinds of issues are raised at the officials level; then of course, it's incumbent on officials to brief their ministers who sit on policy committees of cabinet and on cabinet. Officials brief their ministers, so if there are continuing issues, that's also an opportunity to ensure that their ministers are aware. Ministers have every opportunity in cabinet committees, of course, to deliberate. That is their role: to debate, to discuss, to ask questions, and to ensure they are satisfied with the proposal coming forward.

A number of mechanisms have been put in place to try to ensure that happens. I think that to an extent it is a responsibility for everyone. The budget preparation process, as I mentioned, is the responsibility of Finance. This committee has already made recommendations, which I think Finance is certainly acting on; I think you'll have every opportunity next week to hear from them in terms of the extent of the work they're doing on gender-based analysis, but I know they also are working with Status of Women.

I think having a champion is very helpful, but I think it is a system issue as well, in the sense that it's incumbent on—and I think we've tried to build them in—various steps along the way to make sure there is every opportunity to reflect on key issues.

• (0925)

**Mr. Joe Wild:** May I just add to that, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I just wanted to add to that.

I think your question really goes to the heart of what the Westminster system is about, and the purpose of a cabinet. For those who are fans of the Westminster system anyway, the real magic of the system is the idea that you do have robust discussion amongst the entirety of the cabinet—amongst the different ministers, who all have different perspectives, different experiences, different backgrounds. It's all being brought to bear on an issue to arrive at the best decision possible. All members of the cabinet ultimately stand behind that decision.

In a sense, yes, there's a minister who is going to be the minister accountable to Parliament for the decision that has been taken, and that will be whoever that lead minister is, but ultimately all ministers of cabinet stand behind the decisions that are taken at that table, and basically they're all champions for whatever the decision is that has come out of cabinet.

That's the magic—to me anyway—of the Westminster system. It does provide for a very unified approach to bringing all perspectives in, having the robust debate, and then coming out of that with a decision that everyone supports and backs.

**The Chair:** In your experience, have the silos generally come down? Is there synergy taking place?

Over the years we used to hear that this hand doesn't talk to that hand, and there is always this turf protection. In your opinion, have the silos come down? If we want to do gender budgeting, or even look at it, we need cooperation throughout. It's not something that is going to happen by one department. It is multidisciplinary.

In your opinion, has it gotten better over the years, or is that still where we are at?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** I think a number of measures have been put in place in terms of trying to ensure there is a coordinated approach on issues. As I said, part of it is this memorandum to cabinet process that we have. I think in some cases as well it is reflected in the cabinet committee structure in terms of making sure you have committees that bring together an integrated perspective, so that you don't have silos in the same way. And I think the accountability structures, as well....

I know the work the board has been doing in terms of requirements for accountability frameworks actually looks at things like horizontal structures and frameworks that are not just for one department. It basically is trying to lay out the array of how all of the various departments come together on a particular initiative in terms of their roles and responsibilities and accountability. It's trying to ensure also that the front end and the back end have put together structures that allow interdepartmental initiatives to come forward, and that there's subsequent follow-up in terms of accountability.

I think your reporting is very much moving to that world of integrated reporting.

• (0930)

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I certainly agree in that I don't look at this as an end state. I look at this as a kind of marathon journey that actually has no finish line. We are continuously seeking ways to improve our ability to operate horizontally, to coordinate between departments to find ways to ensure that the synergies you can achieve through bringing together different departments with different policy levers and different policy expertise are brought to bear on a given problem. I think there's no question that if you went back and started at Confederation and then went forward, you would see that continuously through time.

We are becoming more and more sophisticated in our understanding not only of science but of how certain policy initiatives may impact on other things. Our capacity to measure the results of programs has been making leaps and bounds over the last decade compared to where we used to be. Our sophistication around understanding policy levers, understanding the results they generate, the consequences that they sometimes generate, has been improving. As all of those things improve, our job is to continuously try to find ways to work better together to ensure that we arrive at the best possible solution for Canadians.

It's not something where there's ever going to be an end state, where we're going to say, okay, we're done, and we've now achieved perfect horizontality. I don't think that exists. I think it's a continuous journey, and I think it's one in which we're probably—I would say, arguably, compared to some other governments around the world—fairly well advanced, particularly given that we're talking about a federal system of government, which complicates things. There are three levels of government that we have to consider and think about when we're making policy decisions, as well as the international level. It's a far more global world than it once was.

I do think we are making progress, and I think it's a continuous kind of thing. There is certainly always room for improvement. We have a lot of things, as Ms. Biguzs mentioned, that are entrained that I think will help us to better understand horizontal impacts.

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** Can I add to that? I may not have been as clear or as explicit.

In terms of an initiative coming forward to cabinet, you may actually have initiatives that will be sponsored by more than one minister. It's not unusual that you would have an initiative that requires two, sometimes three, sometimes four, sometimes five ministers to be participating ministers on an initiative. That, I think, reflects the integrated nature. You have to take into account that a number of departments have a role to play and are participants. Ministers then have to sign and sponsor together a proposal coming to cabinet.

That's another role we try to play. We try to be vigilant in making sure the right departments and the right ministers are included, because again, we don't want to leave anyone behind who is implicated, ultimately, in an initiative.

As I say, you will see items coming forward—and not unusually—sponsored by multiple ministers, ensuring that integration and that horizontality of several departments working together to advance an initiative.

**The Chair:** Since I started the round of questions, I think it would be fair to get the committee's approval as to whether we should have Mr. Wild finish. Or shall we start the questions and as questions arise—and your flowchart helps in our understanding—we'll move on to that. Is that agreeable?

Yes. Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. Pearson.

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

Let me start by thanking you both for coming.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** On a point of order, how does one party get two rounds back to back? You just said you started the rounds.

**The Chair:** It's the chair's privilege. I asked a question when Ms. Biguzs asked me if there was anything I wanted. It's the chair's privilege to ask a question, but it has nothing to do with parties.

Fair enough?

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Not really, but carry on.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Pearson.

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** I'm willing to give up my slot if it is the cause of a problem.

• (0935)

**The Chair:** Okay.

Madame Boucher, do you have to leave early? Is that the problem? Then we'll give you the floor.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Yes.

I have a little question here, in French.

[*Translation*]

Witnesses have told us that some people are resistant to gender-based budgeting. Are you aware of this, and if so, have these people explained to you why they are resistant?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** I'm not aware, but I think your question should probably be directed to Finance when you meet with them next week on the budgeting process.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Okay.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Do you want to just carry on with this round?

**The Chair:** Mr. Stanton, I think next I'll have to go the Bloc, and they're just settling in.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** We have some time.

**The Chair:** Yes, you have, absolutely. You have six minutes.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My question is really an open question to both of you. We've heard some comments to the effect that progress on integrating GBA into the practices and decision-making processes over the last couple of years has been somewhat derailed. Perhaps derailed isn't the right word. In some ways the clock has been turned back on the ability to continue to make advances in the work that's being done to make GBA an integral part of the decision-making process.

In the course of your and other witnesses' presentations, I've seen that the opposite is true. In fact, at first blush, it looks like advances continue to be made. I wonder if you could tell me if there has been any directive from the political side of the Government of Canada to in any way change or alter your respective department's approach to GBA and the advances that you seem to be continuing to make? Has there been any such directive?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** No. As I've said, we're continuing to always try to make our analysis and our support as effective as it can be, but there have been no directives.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Any thoughts, Mr. Wild?

**Mr. Joe Wild:** There hasn't been any directive. The approach has been continuing to try to embed GBA as part of the policy reflex of the analysts at the Treasury Board Secretariat, which I think is pretty much indicative of what most departments are trying to do. Certainly I'm not aware of any evidence or measure that would demonstrate that the quality of GBA analysis today is somehow less than it was five years ago.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** In terms of the leadership for these kinds of initiatives—as with any organization, the work that's undertaken, the urgency, the priority that's given to certain initiatives in a very large organization like the Government of Canada—where does the leadership come from to make sure something like GBA considerations continues to be advanced and incorporated in the decision-making process?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** I think in the central agencies it's having the role of GBA champions. Certainly in PCO it's been approximately two years that we've had a GBA champion. I think that helps to ensure that there is focus and attention on it. It helps to ensure that there is appropriate training and leadership in our organizations, and the interdepartmental process that I have described, in ensuring that Status of Women, for example, is at the table in terms of the expertise that they can provide on gender-based analysis—

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** I don't mean to interrupt, but even if these champions and committees exist and those structures are in place, one knows that unless the leadership at the top makes sure these things are in fact adhered to and continue to make progress, they may not be given the importance they merit. Does that leadership come from, for example, the secretary to cabinet or the head of the PCO? In your case, Mr. Wild, would it be the senior administrator in the Treasury Board?

● (0940)

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I would say there is a minister responsible for status of women in Canada. At the highest political level, there is clear leadership there.

Within each organization—and there may be some variability in terms of the practice—but certainly within TBS the champion is an assistant secretary—so an assistant deputy minister—as are all of the champions for the various types of areas where we have a champion, like official languages, employment equity, and sustainable development. They are all at the assistant secretary level.

They are the senior executive team within the secretariat. Each of those champions is responsible for promoting that particular issue or matter within the secretariat, ensuring that the practices of the secretariat align with and meet expectations that exist for whatever that particular area may be, including GBA.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** They have the full support of the leadership in your respective organizations.

**Mr. Joe Wild:** The champions are named by the secretary. They have full support not just from the secretary as the deputy of the organization, but also from the entire senior management team. That's basically the structure of what the champion role is meant to do.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Pearson, for accommodating Ms. Boucher.

I'll have to accommodate Mr. Murphy because he is leaving. Mr. Murphy, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** I come to this fairly new, of course, and I'm happy to be here to ask a few questions.

This may have been asked before, but it seems to me, after reviewing the material, that the emphasis seems to be on MCs, memos to cabinet, for programs. I inferred that might be, in most cases, new programs, or new spins on old programs—as we've seen in the last two years or so—with new names for old programs.

What about existing programs? There are a number of pieces of approved legislation and spending authority attached to those pieces of legislation. I think back to unemployment insurance and old age security as good examples. If these are existing programs that have already gone to cabinet—some in Louis St. Laurent's time for the first time—how is it that GBA would ever be incorporated into a consideration of their core spending?

I can understand if they're new assets or facets to existing programs, fine, but how can we be assured that GBA is considered at the very beginning in cabinet decisions respecting existing programs?

Maybe that's a stupid question, I don't know.

**The Chair:** There's nothing stupid here.

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I have to unpack that question a little bit, but there is a process that was launched this year, and which Treasury Board Secretariat has been leading, called strategic reviews. This was our first year of doing strategic reviews to determine or look at, on a four-year cycle, all existing spending within departments. The purpose of strategic reviews is to look at existing spending from the perspective of efficiency, effectiveness, and whether or not the spending is properly aligned with the priorities of the government. Are the programs actually achieving the purposes for which they were intended? The idea is to identify low-priority programs, or programs that are simply not particularly effective, as potential areas from which spending could then be reallocated to, or reinvested in, high-priority and high-performing programs.

In carrying out those strategic reviews, if the program has gender-based issues integrated into its program design, you would then be picking it up in that sense. So if you had a program, hypothetically, where Health Canada was doing awareness of breast cancer, you would have a measure associated with that program to understand whether or not it's actually working. So you would have a results-based framework, which you would then be assessing and asking, am I actually achieving the results this program is intended to achieve? As part of the strategic review, when Health Canada's turn comes up, they would have to look at all of their existing spending, including that program and whether or not it was actually achieving the desired results. Is it an effective program or not? In that way, it gets picked up.

If, for example, the program was not working particularly well, if the measures were indicating that it wasn't getting the information to the people who needed it, that there was no impact on women's awareness of breast cancer issues, then perhaps the program would be looked at to see if there's a problem in its design or in the fact that it's just not an effective program, and that we need to find more effective means to do it.

So as part of that strategic review, you look at that spending and decide if you want to reinvest the money into a program that's potentially going to be more effective.

The other thing, obviously, is that departments have been doing GBA analysis on their proposals since 1995. So for the better part of about 13 years now, GBA has been part of any development of a program. So to the extent any existing spending has actually commenced within the last 13 years, there would have been GBA performed on it by the department bringing forward the proposal.

I'm not sure if that gets to exactly what you're asking, but that's the way in which it's addressed currently.

• (0945)

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** If I could use your word in reverse and “pack” your answer horizontally, notwithstanding what you're saying, the GBA analysis applies mostly to new programs, or programs like those in Health Canada where there are screening issues that are patently gender based.

I guess my general question was about programs like EI that don't respond to gender issues at all—and these programs have been established for eons.

The answer I seem to be getting, Mr. Wild, is that there really is no GBA analysis in those programs, except for the strategic reviews that might catch it by happenstance.

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** Before Joe comments, could I just add that there is a component of program evaluation, and programs like EI, for example, have to do annual monitoring and assessment reports to Parliament.

Looking at issues of effectiveness and implications and impacts, as I say, these would be looked at—in addition to within the strategic reviews—in the context of the evaluations of existing programs. As I said, EI has statutorily built-in monitoring assessments.

I'll turn to Joe.

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I think that's very much along the point that I was going to make. There is an expectation that departments will do so on a regular basis, and the way we've set the cycle on strategic reviews, for example, is once every four years. We intend to have full coverage of the discretionary spend over a four-year cycle.

The idea around evaluation of the effectiveness of programs, which is something that continues to develop, is that basically departments are expected to have results-based structures in place for all their programs. Results-based structure is about measuring its performance, and it would seem to me that part of that process of assessing the effectiveness of the program does mean discerning whether or not there are unintended consequences.

I think the point I would make is that I don't think that's solely a GBA lens. I think that's a full-spectrum lens. In other words, unintended consequences could be on official languages, employment equity, gender impacts that are unintended, sustainable development, all kinds of things, but that, again, fulsome policy analysis is done to determine whether or not the program is working as intended, whether it's generating the results that were expected, and how effective it actually is at achieving the outcome for which it was actually designed. Part of that equation takes into account whether there are unintended consequences, and looking at unintended consequences is not a narrow band, it's a fulsome spectrum that we have to look at.

• (0950)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Murphy.

We'll now go to Madame Demers.

*Vous avez sept minutes.*

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

We apologize for being late.

Thank you for being here with us this morning. In the documents that you sent to us, Mr. Wild, there's often mention of training for the analysts. In fact there were sessions on January 8 and 9, from what I can see in your document. Within the framework of these meetings, is there also training on gender-based analysis?

I would also like to know why, on question 4.5.5 of your guide for policy development, it says that if the policy has an effect on gender, impact assessments are required. Should they not be automatically required?

Finally, at point number 2 of your guide to preparing Treasury Board submissions, it says that appropriate consideration is given to gender-based analysis issues. It is quite broad. What do you mean by “appropriate consideration”? Is it appropriate to approve gender-based analysis, or appropriate to the will of the government?

[*English*]

**Mr. Joe Wild:** In terms of the training, gender-based analysis training is incorporated into the orientation for new employees. There is more fulsome training available for analysts, and we do run special training sessions on occasion to give a more fulsome training around how to do GBA analysis, but it is a component of the orientation for all new analysts who are coming into the organization.

In terms of the other questions you're raising, I'd simply make the point that GBA is only one of many considerations that are incorporated by cabinet in making decisions. It's certainly not the only one. There are a host of perspectives and what I'd call public interests, stakeholder interests, whatever you want to call them, that are taken into account and that then ultimately generate the decision made by ministers.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** In your guide, it says that normally gender-based analysis should be systematically applied. Therefore, what we're saying is not true. It is not systematically applied, but is applied as a result of various considerations, if they are present. That is not quite the same thing. You should perhaps change the text.

You cannot have memorized this entire document, Mr. Wild. It is on page 6 of the French version. It is at point 9.7.3 entitled "Gender-Based Analysis".

[English]

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I'm not sure I fully understand the point that's being made. What the guide says is that departments are expected to include these considerations when they're performing their initial policy analysis, usually at the MC stage. We also expect them, when they're preparing their Treasury Board submission, to reflect on whether or not there are GBA considerations in the implementation of that policy decision that has been taken by cabinet.

So I'm not sure I'm clearly understanding the point.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** In your document, you say that gender-based analysis is done at the outset. Then you say that if it was not done appropriately, you must make corrections before presenting it again to the people concerned. That is exactly what the document I have in my hand says:

However, when preparing Treasury Board submissions [...] federal organizations should proceed with a last check to ensure their proposal is GBA compliant, and report their findings in the TB Submission.

You absolutely must ensure that this is being done at Treasury Board. But it seems to me that you do not need to ensure that it is being done; it is only done under certain conditions, if necessary. I have trouble understanding why it would be stated that something must be done systematically and then not follow up on it afterwards.

• (0955)

[English]

**Mr. Joe Wild:** Perhaps this will help to clarify. We have a set of questions that have been provided to analysts to use in order to help them review the Treasury Board submission when it comes in. Along the line of those questions, there's a specific set of them that deals with GBA.

So there's a set of questions around outcomes, goals, and objectives, questions such as these: Does the policy or program support the full participation and equality for women and men? Does it create barriers? Does the policy or program service discriminate against women or men in outcomes? Would this policy or program service alter the situation of women or men negatively or positively?

We also have a set of questions that they ask, and I can do this part in French.

[Translation]

As far as the analysis of possible outcomes and recommendations, the following questions are asked:

What are some possible unintended outcomes under the recommended option and, as the case may be, the other proposed options?

What are the underlying assumptions and values about gender roles implicit in the option being recommended?

Which gender aspects provide a solid rationale for the recommended option?

There are other questions as well on the program/service design and delivery:

Does the activity clearly define outputs/results related to the advancement of gender equality?

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** I'm sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Wild.

In order to help me understand, could you send us a non-partisan example of a policy that would have been subject to these questions? How did you answer those questions and what were the results? You have said several things, but we have no way of ensuring that the process works. If we could have a typical example of a program or proposal for which gender-based analysis had been done, we could see exactly how that changed the proposal or how it made it compliant with GBA analysis.

[English]

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I can't give a specific case because then we're into cabinet confidences, we're into the specifics around a submission and the discussions around the submission, which pull me into cabinet confidences.

What I can do, though—and perhaps this will assist, because this is the part we never really got to discuss—is explain how this fits together and where we play in the process. That may help. I can also leave with the committee copies in English and French of the tool that lays out all those questions that I was just mentioning before, which will give you then a sense of the guide we've given to our analysts on how to assess submissions.

The process basically is this.

We start with the government priorities that are set through the Speech from the Throne and the budget. There's an MC process then, where departments and agencies are going forward for their policy approval from cabinet. As Madam Biguzs has explained, gender-based analysis is occurring through that stage. Basically there's a whole process in place to ensure that various views and perspectives are brought to bear as that policy initiative is being developed, including all of the departments in government that may have an interest having an opportunity to speak to that submission, including Status of Women.

After you have your policy authority for your program, and you have your source of funds identified, whether through the budget or through the estimates, you then come—

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** We understood that part. I'm not blaming anyone, neither your organization nor Ms. Biguzs', but I can see that no one is playing a strong enough leadership role to ensure that your recommendations are truly incorporated into bills or programs that are tabled. No one is playing a strong enough leadership role to ensure, once the GBA analysis and considerations have been pointed out, that they are communicated. There is no one strong enough to ensure that they are accepted.

•(1000)

[English]

**The Chair:** Madame Demers—

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am sorry.

[English]

**The Chair:** [Inaudible—Editor]

**Mr. Joe Wild:** If I may, the job of Treasury Board analyst is to provide ministers with fulsome advice on proposals coming forward to the board. As part of that, if the analyst believes there is an issue with the gender-based analysis done by the department, they would flag that in the advice that they give to ministers.

Ultimately, ministers then have to take into account a whole host of factors, a whole host of interests, and weigh those interests and make a decision. The decision they ultimately come to is like any policy decision: you're having to choose between winners and losers. It's a complicated set of factors that ministers are considering.

We're not the decision-makers. It's not our job to make the decisions. We're not elected representatives and there's no accountability mechanism for us to be held accountable by the public. The whole purpose of the system is that we are providing non-partisan advice on what we think are the factors and the policy issues that ministers need to be aware of and what they need to take into account and consider when they're making their decision.

Ministers ultimately weigh all of those things. They bring to the table additional context—this is the political context—that we are not able to provide advice on, and then they make a decision. Ultimately ministers are held accountable by Parliament and the institutions within Parliament, ultimately by the electorate. That's the system.

From my perspective, I think it's a very good system of government. Does it always work perfectly? Absolutely not. No system does. Is there room for improvement? Sure. There always is. I think we're always struggling to be better at our part of that equation, which is providing the most robust policy advice we can to make sure that all of the information ministers need is on the table.

Certainly GBA and the work that was started in 1995 was putting forward an emphasis for us, that as part of our policy consideration we need to make sure we are looking at and performing GBA so that we are providing a view to ministers on whether or not there are GBA impacts. Ultimately ministers will decide what they're prepared to accept or not accept as far as that goes.

**The Chair:** Thank you. And you will provide us with the list of questions that your analysts use in terms of assessing and challenging and whatever.

**Mr. Joe Wild:** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** Ms. Mathysen, for seven minutes.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for being here. It sounds in many ways like you're facing the music and someone else is doing the dance.

I'm wondering how many Treasury Board submissions have been altered or returned to departments because they were not adequate in terms of GBA. Do you track this? Is there any way of keeping a list, I guess, or a sense of this kind of information so that we know where there are weaknesses or whether there's a weak link in a specific department?

**Mr. Joe Wild:** We don't keep a specific list. The Treasury Board process is one whereby the department develops the submission. It's very much ultimately that minister's submission.

It comes in to the Treasury Board program analysts, who review the submission. They have conversations with the officials in the department who are responsible for the submission concerning any deficiencies or issues that are viewed in the submission. It's a conversation, it's a dialogue. Sometimes it results in the department making changes to the submission and sometimes it doesn't.

Ultimately, the analyst provides an independent view to ministers on the risks or issues associated with that submission. That independent view is not shared with the department. That's the specific advice that the analysts give to ministers, which is then incorporated into the decision-making process by the ministers.

The difficulty is that I can't talk about specific cases, because it's all wrapped up in cabinet confidences. I'm certainly aware of cases where there have been conversations specifically on whether or not the gender-based analysis was adequate and certainly aware that there have been situations where departments have decided to pull back a submission in order to adjust and incorporate the suggestions that were provided by the analysts.

As to quantum or magnitude, I'm not in a position to be able to give that. We don't track those things on that basis. Because, as I mentioned, it's a regular, continuous, ongoing dialogue as they're actually preparing the submission, it's just not something we can track. But I'm aware that there are examples of cases in which there have been issues and they've ultimately been sorted out one way or another.

•(1005)

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** I understand the politics of it and the ministerial oversight, but it must be very difficult for departments when a minister makes the decision but doesn't share any of the reasons with the department. It must seem very difficult to understand why it happened. I must say, I don't envy those who go through this.

Is there anyone at PCO or in the Treasury Board who has the sole responsibility for ensuring that GBA is included in the policies and directives? I refer to the recommendation from "Gender-Based Analysis: Building Blocks for Success", the 2005 report. Basically, that report recommended that the Treasury Board Secretariat designate a senior official to take responsibility for ensuring that GBA is included in policies.

Is there someone so identified?

**Mr. Joe Wild:** The way it works within the Treasury Board Secretariat is that there is a GBA champion. The GBA champion has overall responsibility for championing GBA, ensuring that there is training, and that it is integrated into the policy and program analysts' functions.

My particular responsibility as executive director of strategic policy is to challenge policy centres within Treasury board Secretariat that are developing the management policies that apply to government institutions. Part of our challenge function and part of what my analysts challenge on is whether or not there has been a gender-based analysis done on those particular management policies as they're being brought forward for approval. That's something that is integrated into the work my analysts are doing.

**Mrs. Irene Mathyssen:** Mr. Stanton asked a question, and basically it was framed like this: is GBA any worse now than five years ago? I guess my question would be, is GBA analysis any better, and would it be possible for Treasury Board to report annually to Parliament on the progress we're making towards gender-based analysis goals?

**Mr. Joe Wild:** Whether or not it's any better is a difficult question to answer, in some sense. I think that generally we're always getting better at doing policy analysis, whether it's gender-based analysis or official languages or sustainable development—whatever it may be. I think that as a public service we're constantly seeking to improve our skills and tool kit around how we do policy analysis.

I would certainly like to think we're better than we were five years ago, just as I hope we'll be better five years from now than we are today.

In terms of reporting, we don't specifically report on gender-based analysis. Our primary reports are the same as they are for most departments: it's the report on plans and priorities and the departmental performance report. We don't report on gender-based analysis specifically, just as we don't report on any of the policy lenses specifically that we bring to bear on the submissions or the policies we're responsible for within the secretariat.

• (1010)

**The Chair:** You have half a minute.

**Mrs. Irene Mathyssen:** In a previous committee meeting there was an indication that the interdepartmental committee on GBA meets about once a year. Is that still the case, or how often does the committee meet?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** There is no regular schedule, but it meets as necessary. The last meeting was in December 2007, so about two months ago. The role of the committee is to review how things are progressing and address any questions people have in terms of advancing issues.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We now go to the second round, and we're coming back to our normal schedule.

Mr. Pearson, for five minutes.

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's nice to see you both again. Thank you for coming.

Ms. Biguzs, at the PCO level, I know that when Status of Women Canada delivered their fairly comprehensive recommendations to the House in 2005, they suggested in that report that a committee of deputy ministers be brought together to respond to memoranda to cabinet, to look through it and other cabinet documents for gender-based analysis. This thing hasn't all just happened in the last couple

of months, but we're trying to get our heads around it. Obviously the previous committee in another Parliament had been on this, and they had recommended that. Has that been done, to your knowledge, or has it been considered to be implemented?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** That has not been implemented.

On the process that's been established in terms of MCs, many items can come forward to cabinet committee, and deputies of course are engaged in many issues in terms of running their departments and ultimately in terms of initiatives that come forward from their department that a minister is sponsoring to cabinet. Clearly a deputy would have to be satisfied that the initiative coming forward has gone through appropriate due diligence, and so in that sense deputies are ultimately accountable or responsible in terms of ensuring that their work is effective in moving forward.

As I say, there has been no committee of deputies struck. Deputies meet as needed around issues. As I say, they have many issues to deal with. The view was certainly that in terms of the interdepartmental process that has been created around the policy initiatives coming forward, this tries to ensure that an interdepartmental perspective is brought to bear that includes Status of Women Canada, and any initiative going forward therefore has to be reported up the line, if I can put it that way. In that sense deputies have an opportunity if there are issues of direct bearing that they need to be engaged in and that they need to bring forward. I think it was felt that the mechanisms that have been put in place should ensure that in fact gender-based analysis is a part of the process, and we're trying to embed it throughout the various layers of the work that takes place in the policy process.

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** One of the witnesses last week, from the University of Victoria, had been in the PCO, and he said he feels what we're really lacking in the process are champions. He said that if a senior minister would take this as a champion, it would be good, but if deputy ministers themselves could come together and strengthen one another to drive these things through.... So I would encourage the system to look at that again. I think that was a good recommendation of the previous committee.

I have a general question. It seems to me that before any of this stuff gets to you, the expenditures have already been decided at the Department of Finance. They have figured out how they're going to do things. Saying that, by the time you see it and you perform your GBA...and I really agree with what Mr. Wild said last week, and I appreciate his encouragement. I don't think it is a checklist; I think you're trying to do a thorough job. By the time it gets to you, how much influence do you actually feel you would have if many of these major decisions about expenditures have already been made?

Mr. Wild, you talked about flagging, that you send these things forward and you flag them. We've had so many witnesses who have come to us.... And they might be flagged, but for some reason it's not working, at least from what we're hearing from witnesses. So I would like it if you could address that. It seems to me that something needs to happen way before you folks start to flag it or even recommend it. The Department of Finance has to do a lot more in looking at this whole thing about GBA. I'd be interested in your comments.

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** As a general comment, the budget process, which is the responsibility of Finance, is informed by a number of factors. It is also informed by a broad policy context. It's informed by the government's priorities, as set out in the Speech from the Throne, and platform commitments. So it's not necessarily the case that the budget just arrives and it hasn't gone through any policy work, because as I say, it is part of a broader policy process and you may actually have initiatives that have gone through a policy process that ultimately are reflected.

• (1015)

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** A GBA process, if they've gone through that.

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** Well, policy initiative that's gone through a policy development process, as I outlined, because as I say, the budget is set in a broad context. Finance will be able to speak to you better next week, when you meet with them, in terms of the various processes and considerations that are taken into account in developing a budget. But it is informed by the broader policy context, and that certainly may include initiatives that have been considered by a policy development process through cabinet.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Pearson.

We now go to Mrs. Davidson for five minutes.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for coming back today. I think we're certainly learning a lot more as we go along. I appreciate the fact that you've brought this information we asked for on Tuesday. That does help a lot.

I would agree with Madame Demers, if we could follow a project from start to finish, it would be wonderful to be able to see that, but I also understand we have confidentiality rules and we can't do that. So we'll have to try to work around how we can make that clearer to ourselves as we go through it.

I think it's really encouraging to see everybody around this table agreeing that this is something that needs to be done. We know it's been an issue for a lot of years; people have been working on it for 13 years. As you said, it started through this process in 1995. I think it's strengthening. We heard from Dr. Good that we are making progress.

I think this committee wants to see how we can continue to make progress, strengthen the process, and assure ourselves it can be measurable, that we are doing what we need to be doing. I think that's what I'm having a hard time getting my head around. We've heard about the champions, the training. As the chair said, I think it's extremely important that we get rid of the silo mentality as much as we can and try to do some horizontal discussion and input. I think things get done in this world by people cooperating. So I think that's good.

But I'm still not clear on how we strengthen this issue. We also have the issue of past policy, policy that has been in place for years, as Mr. Murphy pointed out. I'm still not clear on that issue, how we can manage to make sure past policy is good policy and that GBA can apply properly to it.

I have one more question. Almost everything we've talked about to this point has dealt with a normal process and how things go

through the system in a normal way, if we can call it that. Some people would question that. We're talking about proposals being put forward, policies and processes being outlined in throne speeches, and budgets then coming forward as projects and so on, and the GBA being applied to it.

What happens when private members' bills have an impact? We've heard a lot of criticism here about some of the tax measures and policies that have been put in place, and that GBA definitely, in some people's opinion, could not have been applied or they would never have been allowed to go through. So what happens with private members' business? Is GBA applied to that? If it isn't, how can we ensure that in the future that's something that does get looked at?

So these are just a few questions on how we can strengthen it as we go forward in different areas.

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** In terms of strengthening the process, I think we've already put in place a number of measures. I think, as we've indicated in terms of having champions and ensuring that as part of initiatives coming forward, we can build on that. I think in the last two years we've moved the yardstick, so I think that's progress. Certainly I think to make that process more robust, embedding it in terms of not losing sight of it by having the champions' network and the interdepartmental committee is very important.

In terms of past policies, I'll let Mr. Wild speak to that, because it's trying to get at the issue of the A base. It shouldn't just be focused on incrementality, but I think the whole issue of doing strategic reviews is trying to look at effectiveness and impacts. I think the whole role of program evaluation in government is looking at the effectiveness of programs and what impacts programs are having. Are they having unintended consequences or negative consequences on men or women or employment equity groups or the disabled? That should certainly be a role, that program evaluation is a management tool to make our programs better and more responsive on some kind of evidence base.

• (1020)

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Is GBA built into the program evaluation now?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** I'll let Mr. Wild talk to you in terms of the policy. There is the overall policy on evaluation, and it's up to departments, of course. Departments are responsible for undertaking program evaluations, but as I said, it's a matter of looking at program effectiveness and impacts and whether programs are having a negative impact. That's how you build new policies, come in with new proposals to modify programs with a new policy initiative, and inform that process through robust program evaluations.

On the issue of private member's bills, they are initiated by members of Parliament in the House, so I can't tell you whether members of Parliament, in their development of private member's bills, have actually undertaken a gender-based analysis themselves for initiatives coming forward.

Regarding the timing of these things, if something is moving forward and if it becomes policy, then it becomes after-the-fact if something is approved in terms of assessing the implications. I guess the extent to which officials are in a position to do some kind of assessment of what the impacts would be from a gender point of view, after the fact.... You would have to turn that question to members of Parliament, on the extent to which they do gender-based analysis on their proposals.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** When it gets referred to committee, that would be an opportunity for committee to ask that question, would it?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** In terms of parliamentary processes, yes.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Okay.

**The Chair:** Mr. Wild, would you like to respond to Ms. Davidson?

**Mr. Joe Wild:** On the question of program performance measurement, the management results of structure policy that we're putting in place, again we don't highlight a single policy lens through which we expect departments to measure and determine program effectiveness. It's expected that the department will do that on a full spectrum of policy lenses, so we don't go in and say "You need to look at just this", nor do we give them a specific, defined checklist of the lenses they should apply. We tell them that their responsibility is to have appropriate performance measures in place, that they should have their program properly aligned to what we call their program activity architecture, which basically means they have set the outcome and results that they are striving to in their mandate, as departments, they have programs that are aligned under that mandate. Each program has a desired outcome identified with it, and they identify the specific results they are going to attempt to measure, the actual measurable things they are going to use to determine whether or not that program is actually meeting that outcome, if it's actually generating it.

As part of that policy analysis, certainly in my view, an appropriate methodology would mean that you're also looking at whether or not there are unintended consequences. In unintended consequences across the board, it would seem to me that unintended gender impacts would be part of that mix. But we haven't gone in to say specifically that it needs to be this, that, and the other. We expect they are doing a complete job of looking at those program results.

Ultimately it is the minister for that department who is responsible for whatever the outcomes are that those programs are generating. It's that minister's responsibility to be held to account for whether or not there are unintended consequences associated with the program or outcome. It's that minister who has to answer for whether or not he or she believes that program should then be redesigned or whatever in order to address any of those unintended outcomes or consequences.

The last point I would add is that Status of Women Canada is certainly there to help. It is there to help departments with these things. It is there to help departments understand. It plays a very important role in helping departments ensure they have the proper capacity to carry out GBA. It is providing a very good service in giving advice and helping departments understand how they can build GBA throughout their policy spectrum.

•(1025)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We now go to Madame Demers, for five minutes.

I'm letting the clock run sometimes, because when people are responding, I don't cut them off.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** That is right, Madam Chair. In any case, this is a briefing and it is to the benefit of each and every one of us.

Mr. Wild, I come back to you. You stated that when you have finished your study or your analysis, you don't report to anyone externally, except I presume the minister involved in the program or policy concerned. You have found that the bill for which you were making recommendations is causing problems. Should the Minister for the Status of Women be informed of the bill and the recommendations made by your secretariat in order to ensure that they comply with the GBA analysis? That would allow her, afterwards, to pressure the other members of cabinet in order to ensure that the recommendations are implemented.

My second question is for Ms. Biguzs and Mr. Wild. We are going to report on everything that we have learned and heard. Do you have any specific suggestions that would allow you to produce more concrete results, once your work is done? You could ensure that you get an agreement once the analysis has been done and that you have pointed out the disparities between the GBA analysis and the program, and do all of this to ensure that it has in fact been taken into consideration. Is there anything that we could do or that we could put into our report so that this is indeed implemented afterwards?

[*English*]

**Mr. Joe Wild:** On the first question about bills, any government bill that is going to be introduced in Parliament goes through the MC process. As part of that process, interdepartmental committee meetings are held on it. Status of Women would have the opportunity to participate in those interdepartmental meetings, as Madame Biguzs explained, at the outset of this session.

Through that means, the minister responsible for the status of women can be briefed and advised by her officials as to whether or not there's a specific issue around a government bill that should be raised as it goes through the cabinet process, before its drafting is finalized or the bill is introduced in Parliament.

On the second question, I don't really feel it's necessarily my place to suggest to the committee what it should do on recommendations. I think we have the tools necessary to do GBA. We provide robust policy advice to ministers. I think ministers listen to that advice and take decisions accordingly.

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** Just to comment on the first question, in terms of the role of the Status of Women, I think the system the way it has been designed in terms of the interdepartmental process is intended to get at that very issue. The fact that you have departments around the table to challenge, effectively, and ask questions and understand an initiative that is coming forward is a very important process. We're all better informed as a result of it. Every department doesn't have the capital, the intellectual or program capital, in any one area. So I think the objective is to try to make for better policy as a result of that.

I think the fact of having Status of Women as the experts in gender-based analysis at the table is an important role. Their role also includes briefing their minister so that their minister is aware of issues, and if there are particular concerns in the context of cabinet, of course, the minister is always able to communicate with her cabinet colleagues or someone who's sponsoring an initiative. Certainly if there are issues that he or she wants to ensure are taken into account, I think the minister, in the system, has every opportunity to do that. It's incumbent on her officials to make sure the minister is briefed and aware of that, and then the minister can avail herself of opportunities to make those views known to her colleagues on any concerns there may be on gender-based analysis with respect to a particular initiative. So I think the system has tried to build in that kind of opportunity to ensure that's reflected.

On your second point, I guess I'd have to echo Mr. Wild's view that, to come to your own assessment of all the various presentations that you're having, at the end of the day it all hinges on the issue of accountability, ultimately, in terms of the various players and the pieces in the system. So I think public policy ultimately falls to Parliament as well, that you have every opportunity to ensure that parliamentarians are able to ensure that the accountability is there.

• (1030)

**The Chair:** Madame Demers, you can continue, because Ms. Mathysen has left the room, and then I'll go to Ms. Grewal.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

What particularly concerns me, Mr. Wild and Ms. Biguzs, is that over the last few years, several measures have been adopted that have really hurt women, children and the heads of single-parent families. Given that these measures have been adopted, we have the necessary tools to cushion the impact for these people.

It is true that this is an issue of government responsibility, but it has to be more than that at the committee level. The committee has to play a broader role in order to ensure that such measures are not adopted before having considered all of the repercussions that may result from them. You may well have done your work in each one of the departments most competently, but there are no results. Even though you have the tools, you have asked the questions and shared your considerations, the measures went forward in any case.

I always come back to the issue of leadership, as you mentioned in your previous presentations. You said that very strong leadership was required, but where to find it? Who should demonstrate this leadership? This person must be given the tools and the courage needed to face the music, if necessary.

The measures that have been implemented have proven very negative for a large part of the population, and we don't know how to react to that.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** May I make a suggestion? I know we're all getting frustrated, but the thing is, would legislation help, if we were to say to legislate gender-based analysis? I think we've heard so many witnesses, international and national, and we feel perhaps, as a new committee, that this process has been going on for 13 years and we probably don't see the type of advancement that you see. So would legislation help? Perhaps you can think about that.

I'll go to Ms. Grewal for five minutes, or seven minutes. You can share—

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Maybe I can share my time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Has anything other than training been done to advance gender-based analysis at the Privy Council Office and Treasury Board Secretariat? Can you provide the committee with any overview of other GBA initiatives that have been put in place at your organizations?

• (1035)

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** Certainly. At the Privy Council Office we have a designated champion at a very senior level, a senior official who was appointed two years ago with the position. GBA has been incorporated. There's an annual training session provided with the expertise of Status of Women Canada to help PCO officers understand gender-based analysis and how it should play in the policy process.

From the point of view of PCO's role, as I think I outlined on Tuesday, PCO doesn't develop the policy or make the policy or develop the documents. Our role is to ensure that in our advice and in the material that comes to cabinet to inform decision-making, due diligence has been done and that it has been incorporated.

From our point of view, having a champion to ensure that the training actually happens and to ensure that PCO officers understand their role in terms of the policy challenge function—which includes raising questions around gender-based analysis—and understand their role in ensuring that an interdepartmental process takes place that includes the expertise of Status of Women leads us to feel we've actually put in place the necessary mechanisms to ensure that gender-based analysis is an issue and a factor that we understand in our day-to-day work in performing our job.

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I would add that in addition to having a champion at the assistant deputy minister level, as does PCO, we at TBS have also worked with Status of Women Canada to develop tools. I circulated one of them today, the questions to assist analysts in reviewing submissions so that they understand the types of questions they should ask around GBA.

As well, we've integrated it into our policy process. For us policies mean the actual management policies that we issue to set the standards for how departments are supposed to manage certain areas—for example, how they handle security, information management, information technology, HR, and all the administrative areas that departments need to manage, including procurement and that sort of thing. We've integrated it into our own policy development process. We've also integrated it into our challenge function on Treasury Board submissions.

Those are the major things we've done, beyond just the training.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Madam Chair, how much time do I have?

**The Chair:** You have about two minutes.

So go ahead, Mrs. Davidson.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** I think I'm hearing that although this has been an issue for a long time, we are making progress, and maybe it needs to have more time so that we can measure that progress. I'm not really sure.

I hear you saying that we've got a lot of measures in place, and there aren't a lot of other suggestions coming from either of your two departments regarding further suggestions, such as to continue what we're doing and maybe strengthen some of the recommendations going to the individual departments so that they'll bring back more conclusive evidence that it's happening.

Is this going to take time? Are we being too impatient? Has it not had the opportunity to show the results that we, all around this table, think we need to be seeing? I'm sure you've heard our frustration at not being able to put our hands on what actually has happened and what progress has been made.

Maybe part of it is the fact of confidentiality, as we've discussed before. I think it's the frustration level. I know we haven't spoken with Finance yet, and I'm quite sure some of our questions will be answered once we have that opportunity next week, but maybe you could comment on the timeframe that might be involved in our having a better understanding and seeing this more concretely. I think everybody so far has said it's not something you can just legislate and say it has to be done; it's something that has to become....

• (1040)

**The Chair:** An integrated mindset.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** It has to be integrated right into the policy and the thought process of every department and every committee.

Could you comment?

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I think there are a few points here.

First, it's the way the system operates at the end of the day. It's difficult to measure whether the policy advice being provided to ministers is adequate. In essence, that's our role. Our role in this system is to provide ministers with the best possible non-partisan advice.

This is an area that continues to evolve. We get better at it every year. Our tool kit for doing it gets better every year. I don't think there's ever going to be a time when we declare perfection. I don't

think there's such a thing. It's continuous improvement—we strive to get better and better in our understanding of how to provide advice to ministers that helps them make decisions.

The disconnection is that while the advice we provide to ministers is fulsome advice, and while GBA is one component of a host of other policy lenses, ministers layer on an additional set of political factors that have absolutely nothing to do with the advice we're giving. That's appropriate because they are the elected representatives. They're the ones who are held accountable by Parliament through committees such as this for the decisions they're making.

The difficulty is that you can't use the decision made by a minister as a proxy to discern the quality of the policy advice that's been brought forward. I don't think we ever want to be in a situation where the policy advice coming from officials has to be taken as the definitive perspective on exactly what a minister should do. Absolutely not. We do not want to be in a situation where public servants become the decision-makers. That's not the purpose of the system. The elected officials are supposed to be the decision-makers.

I think the challenge for this committee, as well as any other committee trying to discern whether policy lenses are being applied appropriately, lies in figuring out how to hold ministers accountable if you have issues with the way they're making decisions at the end of the day. That may be an area one wishes to probe.

It's difficult for us to be in a situation to talk about the advice we're giving to ministers. It's very much an issue of confidentiality, and I would argue that this is exactly as it should be. Again, it's the basis of our Westminster system.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** I'd like to add something on the policy process.

As Mr. Wild was saying, our role is to ensure that we have a robust policy process and that the information provided to ministers is as complete as possible, based on whatever information or data we may have, in respect of an initiative going forward for a decision by ministers. This means working closely with departments and being in possession of evidence sufficient to inform a decision. Our role is to try to ensure that the information is there, and it is our advice that ultimately goes forward.

As Mr. Wild was explaining, it's then the prerogative of ministers in cabinet to decide the course of action, the path and direction, taking into account all relevant factors. There are many considerations to be weighed before an initiative goes forward. As I said, the role of elected officials is to weigh those various considerations.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

If we could perhaps do gender auditing, would that help to achieve our goals?

It is a complex situation. You give your analysis to the ministers, and they have to factor in political considerations. We are all aware of that and understand it. That's the reason I suggested legislation. Perhaps you are not in a position to answer. We would require a discussion on what the legislation would look like. However, if we were to do gender audits, would that help the process?

You can reflect on that while I give Mr. Pearson three minutes. Then I'll go to Madame Demers.

• (1045)

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to take another go at this.

Mr. Wild, you didn't get a chance to respond to my earlier question. Let me just try to put it into the context again of what we're trying to get at.

I think you've done a very credible job of showing us that you are working hard to flag these issues, get them done properly, research them well, and put them through to the pertinent departments and people who need to be there. I accept that.

On the other hand, we get witnesses coming to us all the time who are saying there are major flaws in these programs about things like pension splitting, RRSPs, CPP, and employment insurance. It seems as if, as you have said, this disconnect is there. I could go ahead and ask you all these questions again—why is this so, why we are hearing from all these witnesses that it's not being done—when you folks are actually doing a pretty credible job of putting it forward. I think your answer to me is going to be, look, we're doing what we can; it's up to the political sector. I don't want to go there, because I know that will be your answer.

I would like to ask what we can do as a committee to help. Are there more resources that you need to flag these things better? When we put forward something like the deputy ministers coming together for a committee, we want that to be taken seriously. Perhaps it was, perhaps it wasn't, but it wasn't done. It's a practical question. It's a non-partisan question, because we work pretty well here in that capacity. What can we do as a committee? I don't think some of the bells are ringing in some of these places, and we would like to be able to help you to provide even better stuff.

Could you both please comment? Is there anything the committee can do to help try to get you resources or other things that you need?

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I certainly don't come to the committee thinking that we need to ask for resources. I don't think there's any issue there. I think that certainly within Treasury Board Secretariat we have the analysts that we need to do the job they're doing. They have the training that they need to do the job they're doing. I think with experience we get better at it. Again, I think we're doing the best job we can to put forward the best possible policy advice that we can. I think we're doing the best we can to put forward fulsome policy advice that includes as many different perspectives as possible. We do our best to try to identify if we think there are going to be any unintended impacts on anyone out there.

The difficulty really is that it's even more nuanced than the way you were putting it. I certainly don't want to portray it as though it's us versus them. It's not. It's a system that's designed to allow us, as career public servants with experience and expertise in public policy development, to provide ministers with robust policy advice, but we do it in a non-partisan way. We do not take into account political considerations. Those political considerations are absolutely legitimate and need to be taken into account by ministers. With respect to the balancing act that they then have to go through for the decision that they arrive at, again there always ends up being this discussion

of winners and losers. They may feel there are certain constituencies that their decisions are supporting, while others may not feel that way.

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** Mr. Wild, I only have a minute. I understand that. You've said that before, and I agree, I understand. We're not trying to make it into winners and losers. We're listening to all of these witnesses who are telling us these various things. My question to you was whether there is anything we as a committee can do to help to give you resources or other things that you need. Your answer was no.

Can I ask you, Madam Biguzs?

**Mrs. Anita Biguzs:** I think we do have mechanisms and tools in place. I think we're building on them. I think the interdepartmental committee is at a very senior level—it's ADMs—and I don't know whether going to a deputy level would actually accomplish or achieve much more than that. As I say, I think we can always try to make the policy process as strong as it can be. I think that's what we endeavour to do based on solid evidence and information. I believe that we have the tools in place.

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Demers, you have three minutes.

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Wild and Ms. Biguzs, I can understand what you were saying earlier—that confidentiality really was required when a policy or a bill was not yet in place. Did it ever happen that a measure with the necessary conditions for gender-based analysis was referred to your organization, and that after studying it, you found that all the steps in the process had been carried out, that it met the criteria for gender-based analysis and that the measure was subsequently implemented? If so, could we have a copy of that so that we can see how the process works? You would not be violating a confidentiality requirement, and this would be not be partisan in nature.

• (1050)

[*English*]

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I can't talk about a specific case that's real.

What we have tried to do in the materials we've provided this morning was show how the process lines up. We have taken a hypothetical case and walked through how that process works and how the different steps work. But I cannot provide the material associated with a specific case, because they are cabinet confidences.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Madam Chair, do you think we could have access to this information through an access to information request, once the whole process is completed? I think it is unfortunate that we cannot look into these things ourselves to try to understand how the process works and to see where there are some shortcomings. Shortcomings definitely exist, and in order to find out why, we need to understand the process. It is not coming from you; it is therefore essential that we understand how this works.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Madame Demers, when you were not here, they went through the process, and when we came to the memorandum to cabinet, Madam Biguzs did explain, because I asked specifically where we could access, if you go to chart 2.... We can't access cabinet documents, but perhaps we can access analysis, and that could be through access to information.

We'll be hearing from Finance, and then we will be hearing from other witnesses on their analysis of the budget. And I think we will take it forward from there.

Collectively, we need to understand where we are going. They're here really to help us understand the process. They can't but tell us what the process is. It's a Westminster process. We're following the process. They are bureaucrats. There are political implications. Those things are reality, and we need to face those realities.

I have one very practical question for Mr. Wild.

You do the strategic overview. I don't think you have the budget book with you, but on page 252 you talk about strategic review. I just want to ask a question. When you're doing the strategic review for a department, do you do it with the department, or does the department do it itself and then determine where its efficiencies lie?

**Mr. Joe Wild:** With respect to strategic reviews, they are assessments of all direct program spending to ensure that programs are managed effectively and efficiently. Departments are responsible for conducting the review.

The role of the Treasury Board Secretariat is to challenge the information the department is providing in the review. Then ultimately it goes to Treasury Board ministers, who then make what in essence turns into a recommendation. Ultimately the information from the strategic review process is fed into cabinet to feed into the budget.

**The Chair:** For Statistics Canada it says "Reducing research activities in lower-demand areas". That, I think, applies to the practical issues we are wondering about. For example, for research on violence against women, or women in Canada and the measuring of that violence, how would we know if that is low-demand research, and how would we know that's not being cut?

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I don't know the specifics of the Statistics Canada case in terms of what those areas are. To me, lower demand simply means that people aren't asking for the statistics in certain areas. But I don't know what's behind that, and I don't know the specifics of that case.

**The Chair:** Fair enough.

Ms. Mathysen, you were out of the room. You have the last three minutes to ask your question, and then we'll wrap up.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I really only have a couple of questions, and I'll be quick.

With regard to the new strategic reviews that are performed, it's my understanding that it's 25% each year. What reviews were conducted this year?

• (1055)

**Mr. Joe Wild:** Actually, I'll correct that. It's a good opportunity for me to correct that. It's kind of *grosso modo* over time. It'll be roughly 25% a year, but for this year it was 15%. It was our first year doing it, so we took a smaller slice, but over that four years we will end up at the 100%. So we looked at about \$13.6 billion in spending.

In terms of the specific departments that were reviewed this year, we reviewed Canada Revenue Agency; the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; Canadian Heritage; the Canadian International Development Agency; the Canadian Museum of Civilization; the Canadian Museum of Nature; Finance Canada; the Canadian International Trade Tribunal; the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, or FINTRAC; Foreign Affairs and International Trade; the International Development and Research Centre; the Library and Archives of Canada; the National Gallery of Canada; Canada Science and Technology Museum; Parks Canada; Statistics Canada; and Transport Canada. So it was 17 departments in total.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Is any of the information in regard to those reviews available?

**Mr. Joe Wild:** The information with respect to those reviews is all contained in the budget, as the chair pointed out. Annex 3 to the budget, starting on page 252, lays out the specific detail around each of those 17 departments and agencies.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Okay. I have one final question.

In the guide to preparing Treasury Board submissions, article 9.7.3, it says that conducting a gender-based analysis should also be considered. I'm wondering if we need tighter language there. Do we need stronger language so that it's much more forceful?

**Mr. Joe Wild:** I circulated the specific tool that is used by analysts to review the submissions in order to give them a sense of the types of questions they would ask in order to assess whether or not there are GBA issues with the submission. I certainly think, from our perspective, that departments are generally doing what they should be doing in terms of addressing any GBA that should be conducted within the frame of their Treasury Board submission.

We're not having a particular problem with departments providing GBA on their submissions. I'm certainly not aware of any issues where we're having a problem with departments completing GBA, either at the policy development phase or when they come in with their Treasury Board submission at the implementation phase.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank you, Ms. Biguzs and Mr. Wild, for providing us with your insight. I'm sure we are a little more tuned in. We might have a thousand more questions, which we'll probably ask Finance.

I have some committee business that I'd like to bring to your attention.

There's a female German parliamentary delegation coming on April 15. We've asked them to come and sit in on our committee meeting so they can see how we operate, and they will probably interact.

You will be receiving your work plans electronically. There's been an amendment to include estimates. We are requesting the minister for April 15. If the minister is available, then that will be changed accordingly.

With that, I'd like to adjourn the meeting. Thank you very much.

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