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● (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.)): Welcome to this session of the status of women committee. With us we have the minister, the Honourable Josée Verner, and from Status of Women Canada, Ms. Beckton and Nanci-Jean Waugh.

Since the minister has a very limited time—she's here with us for an hour—I would like her to make any remarks she wishes. Minister, the normal procedure is to allow 10 minutes for remarks and then there'll be Q and A with the members.

Minister, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Committee members, I am pleased to be here to outline the Government of Canada's plans and progress in promoting equality for women and their full participation in Canadian society.

I am accompanied by Clare Beckton, Coordinator of Status of Women Canada, and Nanci-Jean Waugh, Director General, Communications and Strategic Planning.

I understand the committee has been studying gender-based budgets for the last few months and has been hearing from a wide range of experts. I look forward to your report and assure you that the Government of Canada will continue its efforts in this area.

[English]

Canada's prosperity depends on the economic prosperity of women, who in turn influence the prosperity of their families and their communities. If Canada is to continue to be one of the most prosperous countries in the world, women must be able to participate in, contribute to, and experience economic prosperity.

Our government is committed to promoting equality for women. Our goal is to have a direct impact on people's lives and to achieve real, measurable results that work for every citizen, women and men alike.

[Translation]

The recent budget focuses on providing responsible leadership so we can build on Canada's strong economy—the strongest of any Group of Seven country—by implementing our economic plan, Advantage Canada. In fulfilling this vision, we count women in. That is why we announced, in Budget 2008, that over the next year, our government will develop an action plan for women. We will

work with Status of Women Canada and other departments and agencies across the federal government. This action plan will further women's equality throughout Canada by improving their economic and social conditions and their participation in democratic life.

To create the best possible action plan, we will consult with leaders across all sectors of society, with women's organizations and with communities of all kinds in all parts of Canada. We will also make strategic investments in key federal programs and services to promote women's participation.

In addition—and this is critical to our goal—we will work to promote women's economic success by enhancing their financial and economic literacy.

This is especially important because during the next two decades, the ratio of older persons to active workers in Canada will increase by 20%. Most of those active workers will be women. Increasingly, Canada will have to look to women to fill the gap in the labour force. As a result, there will be more opportunities for women. Women need to have the education and skills necessary to seize the day.

Investing in women is investing in Canada. As a recent Royal Bank of Canada report noted, "If women had identical labour market opportunities as men, then women's personal incomes would be \$168 billion higher each year."

As the engine of our federal women's machinery, Status of Women Canada fulfill its mandate in two ways: by building strategic partnerships at the federal level, with other levels of government, and international bodies, to remove barriers and build women's participation; and by funding projects through the Women's Program, as well as through the Sisters in Spirit initiative addressing equality issue pertaining to aboriginal women.

I am very pleased with the results of the Women's Program. It is functioning as an effective, focused and results-driven program, thanks in large part to our decision to restructure it into two new components, the Women's Community Fund and the Women's Partnership Fund.

Over the last year, 181 projects received funding under the Women's Community Fund and the Women's Partnership Fund for a total dollar value of \$33,993,843 over three years. Impacting over 1.5 million women and girls through the projects funded, organizations are carrying out work in educating women on violence prevention, building women's financial literacy, encouraging networking, promoting women's economic security, prosperity, health, and safety, and ending all forms of discrimination and violence against women.

Over the past months, my colleagues and I have traveled from coast to coast to coast to meet the representatives of these organizations, and to hear first hand how their work changes the lives of women, their families and their communities.

The national Sisters in Spirit campaign is bringing public attention to the high rates of violence against aboriginal women. The campaign has developed the following: a community awareness strategy to promote safety and zero tolerance for violence against aboriginal women; a culturally appropriate gender-based policy framework for action at community level; and case studies to determine the root causes, trends and gaps in services as they relate to the disappearance and murder of aboriginal women.

In the coming months, Status of Women Canada and the Native Women's Association of Canada will engage other departments and provincial and territorial partners to improve program and policy areas at the root of aboriginal women's social and economic status.

● (0910)

Status of Women Canada continues to fulfill the role it plays in Canada's commitment to meeting international obligations for advancing gender equality.

The 52nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was held at the United Nations headquarters in New York from February 25 to March 7, under the theme "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women." Canada reported on the progress our government has made, particularly increased funding to the Women's Program, and our commitment to create an action plan to advance equality for women across the country, through the improvement of their economic and social conditions and their participation in democratic life.

We are now looking ahead to two key international meetings—the 13th Women Leaders' Network Meeting and the Meeting of Gender Focal Point Network of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, to be held in Peru in May.

In the follow-up to last June's National Aboriginal Women's Summit, these actions are underway. In March, Status of Women Canada hosted a workshop for aboriginal organizations geared toward developing culturally relevant gender-based analysis tools.

A meeting is being planned between the National Association of Chiefs of Police and representatives of aboriginal organizations for the purpose of adapting police training concerning the treatment of aboriginal women and girls.

We supported a violence prevention toolkit for youth, which would see training for more aboriginal youth across Canada.

An RCMP-led initiative was set up to train law enforcement officers on identifying and investigating human trafficking, with a focus on victim issues and the vulnerability of aboriginal women.

[English]

In closing, let me reiterate that more than ever before, Canada will need the contributions and participation of women at all levels of society, including in positions of leadership.

[Translation]

In developing our action plan, we know women will rise to the challenge. Indeed, they are doing so now. Our government is supporting women's participation through effective, results-focused action. To make Canada the best it can be, it makes good sense for all Canadians, women and men alike, to enjoy an open-door policy on opportunity.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Ms. Minna.

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

I have a series of questions. The first one has to do with pages 4 and 5 of the estimates. It shows that the women's program is going to be going down by, I think, \$3 million. Could you tell me why that is?

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: Thank you for your question, Ms. Minna. Ms. Beckton will complete my answer.

The budget has not gone down. Our government has committed to investing more in the programs at Status of Women Canada, namely \$20 million over two years. Ms. Beckton can give you the breakdown of that amount.

[English]

Hon. Maria Minna: I'm sorry, Minister. I'm talking about page 4. It explicitly shows that it goes down by \$3 million. I'm looking at the women's program, supplementary estimates (B), from \$2.9 million to \$4.9 million. Then it goes on—\$30.8 million to \$30.1 million.

● (0915)

Ms. Clare Beckton (Coordinator, Office of the Coordinator, Status of Women Canada): Perhaps I can explain that. Not all of the money is reflected in the main estimates. Some of our money was received through supplementary estimates (B) last year, and this has to be resupplied through supplementary estimates (A) this year before it will be reflected in our budget. But in fact, the budget, on an ongoing basis, is \$19 million for the women's program, with the two funds.

Hon. Maria Minna: What is the overall budget for the Status of Women right now?

Ms. Clare Beckton: The overall budget from year to year will be approximately \$29 million. There will be a bit of an aberration this year because we did re-profile some funds from this year to next year because of the late supply last year.

The Chair: If I can help you out, go to page 5: \$31.7 million, \$29.7 million, and \$28.7 million. There is a gradual decline. So that's where Ms. Minna is coming from.

Hon. Maria Minna: That's right.

Ms. Clare Beckton: Yes. The decline is because we have re-profiled some money from last year to this year, so it looks higher this year.

The Chair: Ms. Minna's complementary question is, what does that mean?

Hon. Maria Minna: You said you had re-profiled some moneys. What does it mean exactly to re-profile money?

Ms. Clare Beckton: It means that because our supply for the women's program, the second \$5 million, came in only in March approximately, we asked the Treasury Board to actually give us the extra money for this year instead of giving us all of the money last year. So it means we actually have more money for the women's program to ensure that we could spend the money.

Re-profiling simply means we had \$5 million in supplementary estimates (B), and we asked that \$2 million of that be re-profiled to this year to ensure that we could spend the money in time. So it means that the budget will be higher this year, and then the normal budget will be \$29 million ongoing.

Hon. Maria Minna: I thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, you have a number of upcoming international events that are taking place, but I hope there will be political representation at those, as there was none at the UN. I wonder why there was none at the UN. Perhaps you could explain why we had no political representation at the United Nations, and I hope there will be at APEC and these others.

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: Thank you for your question.

As I said in my opening statement, the meeting was held from February 27 to the beginning of March. May I remind you that the budget was tabled in the House during that time and the presence of ministers and members was required.

As for upcoming meetings, which will take place in May, the same issue arises. It is not that we are not interested, on the contrary. Ms. Beckton and officials will be present at those meetings. We are studying the possibility of my attending in my capacity as minister, while keeping in mind the requirements of the House, of course.

[English]

Hon. Maria Minna: I understand that there was a budget, Minister, but given the importance of these meetings, I think that elected representatives of all parties...I'm sure we can always identify one or two delegates to lead the delegation.

In any case, you can pick up on that in just a minute. I want to move on to something else.

I was looking at the web and the structure you have in terms of eligibility. We have seen the change where you have reintroduced the word "equality" in certain parts of the mandate, but the eligibility criterion really hasn't changed from the previous eligibility with respect to issues that affect women in particular issues of advocacy. I see that's still not a criterion that is acceptable.

The reason I raise this is that, as you have said, this committee has been looking at budgeting gender analysis and we've had some really strong experts here at this table—people who have done research and advocated with the help of Status of Women Canada and have advocated on behalf of women. We have seen from the analysis they have done just how disadvantaged women are in our society.

In the last two budgets, the analysis that was done was totally off, and in fact the majority of the actions of the government were in fact detrimental to women. So again there is nobody out there advocating. It's one thing to deal with a specific women's issue with respect to direct service, but it does not affect the overall change of women's equality.

I would like to know from you (a) why that criterion is still not changed, and (b) why we are still seeing budget items that are really skewed and hurt women in this country.

• (0920)

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: In fact, Ms. Minna, advocacy groups are still eligible for funding when they present programs which show direct action and concrete results for women. Status of Women Canada—

[English]

Hon. Maria Minna: Madam Minister, I apologize, but I do have to interrupt.

The minister knows what I mean by my question very well. I know what she means clearly by direct service and direct results. She means serving an individual woman at the front door, dealing with that woman's specific issue. I understand that.

I am talking about a specific, different situation. I'm talking about allowing research for the purpose of advocacy, speaking on behalf of all women who need assistance and to change a condition of government policy that exists. Why is that not being allowed?

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: I will complete my answer. Advocacy groups are still eligible for funding if they present projects which meet our criteria. As you know, our government has chosen to provide women with direct services, in the interest of producing concrete results and meeting objectives. Status of Women Canada has funded advocacy groups, including the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba, the West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund and the Alliance féministe pour l'action internationale. Advocacy groups which present projects which yield concrete results for women are eligible for funding.

As for the first part of your question which dealt with upcoming activities in May, Ms. Beckton will add a few words.

[English]

Ms. Clare Beckton: I would say, generally, there are years when ministers attend these meetings and other years there are events that ministers don't generally attend.

In terms of the APEC meetings, I will be heading up the Canadian delegation for the Women Leaders' Network, and we will have representation at the gender focal point. Following that, there are the trade ministers meetings, which Minister Emerson will be attending. We will be feeding in the results of that to Minister Emerson, to speak at those trade ministers meetings, so that he can bring the women's issues to the table at those meetings.

The Chair: I guess that was not a satisfactory answer, because I can see heads shaking, but that's a position the government has taken and we will have to live with it.

[Translation]

Ms. Deschamps, you have four minutes.

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

Good morning, Madam Minister, Ms. Beckton and Ms. Waugh. It is always a pleasure to have you here.

I reread the opening statement you gave us, Madam Minister. You said that, in the coming year, your government will develop a plan of action. I would like to focus on that. It contains general principles, but in concrete terms, can you tell me what you intend to do to implement this plan of action, and which measures you will take to meet your objectives?

You claim to want to increase women's participation. In order to do this, you go so far as to say that you will consult leaders in various areas of society. I would like you to tell us who these leaders are or whom you have in mind.

You also talk about women's groups. Is it possible to know what type of people and what groups you will consult?

You also say that you will make strategic investments. What do you mean when you say: "[...] strategic investments in key federal programs and services [...]?" How will you consolidate all this to achieve concrete results?

● (0925)

Hon. Josée Verner: Madam Deschamps, thank you for your question.

As far as developing the plan of action is concerned, we are in the process of defining the parameters we will implement. In other words, we are in the process of determining the themes and major principles. We want to consult with the greatest number of stakeholders, be they women's groups or academics, amongst others. For now, we are working on the process which will be followed.

We mention targeted investment, but I will not talk about anything more than the suggestions we might hear in the course of our consultations. For example, if we want to make sure that the program to fight violence against women is effective, we will have to invest in

programs developed for women by women's groups to prevent this violence from happening. If we target the right sectors, we will make the strategic investments.

May I remind you that we have announced an additional contribution of \$20 million over two years, which will help bring about many more things. In 2006, the program budget for Status of Women Canada generally did not exceed \$10 million. But this year, that amount has been increased to \$20 million. This will enable us to do more in areas which we have identified with women's groups.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: You also said you traveled across the country to meet with representatives of certain organizations to see firsthand the concrete results of changes you have made to the WP, or of the change in direction of Status of Women Canada. You said that this has changed the way people work, it has changed the lives of women, of their families and their communities. But putting it like that is a distortion of the truth. If I compare what you are telling us with what certain witnesses have told us in the course of our study on the economic security of women, I get the impression there is a disconnect. It's as if we are getting away from the basics. It's all very well and good to talk about security. Your government has implemented several programs to fight violence against women.

However, most heads of single-parent families are women. It is not easy for these women to benefit from the government's proposed tax measure. More specifically, in terms of tax credits, I am thinking about the \$100 benefit given for young children. How is it possible for a single mom, who receives \$100 or \$200 a month, to place her child in a good day care and find a job to give her economic security?

I don't think this is a reflection of what women want, many of whom are poor and vulnerable, and live off unstable or seasonal jobs. I have the impression that we are not addressing these concerns, which in the majority of cases affect women.

● (0930)

Hon. Josée Verner: Thank you. I will try to address all of the aspects of your question.

Indeed, over the last few months, I have traveled to Vancouver and Calgary, and more recently, last week in fact, to Montreal, where we announced funding in the amount of \$5.69 million with 21 women's groups in attendance. These groups were very happy with the additional funding. Of course, the more financial resources they have, the easier it is for them to create programs which will help more women.

Take the Centre Marie-Vincent in Montreal, for instance, which received funding in the amount of \$1.5 million over three years. The chairman of the board told us that he did not want to be successful; rather, he wished that one day, he would never have to deal again with violence against children, particularly those between the ages of 4 and 12. However, receiving the additional funding, which translates into a certain degree of stability—the funding is for three years—will enable the organization to create programs to help children who have been victimized—we were told that 72% of these kids were girls—and their mothers.

[English]

The Chair: Madam Minister, can you please wrap up your answer? We are running out of time.

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: Indeed, from an economic point of view, the aim is to support groups who help women acquire the necessary skills to find a job and earn a living and to get out of poverty.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Boucher, you have seven minutes, if you will.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good morning, Madam Minister and officials from Status of Women Canada. I will ask the minister a very brief question to give her time to reply at length.

Madam Minister, having heard many representations and heard from many witnesses, can you tell the committee which women's groups have received funding under the new criteria? Have those announcements been made?

Hon. Josée Verner: Of course. We have made many announcements, including some with our colleagues. In fact, this year, 181 projects have been announced. As I said in my opening remarks, close to \$34 million have been earmarked to help 1.5 million women and girls. There have been many announcements. I mentioned the one which was made in Montreal last week. There were also other announcements in Vancouver which will help a dozen groups or so, as well as in Calgary, when another dozen or so groups were present.

Indeed, the additional money will enable the government to help more women's groups who are on the front lines to provide services and opportunities to a greater number of girls and women in the country.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you.

On another subject, in the 2007 budget, the Government of Canada announced an additional \$10 million a year for Status of Women Canada.

Can you tell us what types of projects will be supported with this money?

Hon. Josée Verner: In fact, our priority is to make sure that women can be helped in many areas. The first ones who come to mind are victims of violence, but we also want to help women who want to go farther in life, who have already acquired a certain degree of economic security, but who would like to become economically prosperous; women who want to go farther and play leadership roles.

Take for instance a project we supported financially; it was announced in Quebec City alongside with Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie and the Government of Quebec. This project will help many women work alongside mentors so they can become leaders in our society, be it in politics or economics, on boards of directors, on elsewhere.

Of course, we also want to help homeless women, who are extremely vulnerable. We have to give them the tools, the skills and the necessary experience so they can get out of the cycle of poverty and find jobs so they can stand on their own two feet.

● (0935)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Thank you very much, Madam Minister.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and welcome, Minister. It's great to have you back. I appreciate your comments on the work our committee has been conducting on the issue of gender budgeting.

One of the issues that has arisen in the course of that study is about research and making sure there are proper comparisons and indices that can be used to measure the impact of policies and legislation that impact women across Canada.

I wonder if you could give us an update on what Status of Women Canada in particular is doing. We know that in the past some concerns were expressed about withdrawal of research services. I wonder if you could give us an update on where we sit now and what our go-forward plan is for research on these important issues.

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: Thank you, Mr. Stanton.

Status of Women Canada is conducting ongoing internal research to help it carry out its mandate. The department calls upon experts in the area of policy development and will continue to work with other federal organizations.

Status of Women Canada can, amongst other things, use studies conducted by Statistics Canada. Other indicators may be provided by Human Resources and Social Development Canada. Health Canada can also provide indicators on the health of women. Today, Status of Women Canada is also working on forward-looking projects on gender equality in cooperation with other departments. In fact, it is this exchange of information between the various departments which allows Status of Women Canada to carry out its mandate.

[English]

The Chair: Do you have a very short question?

Mr. Bruce Stanton: I can probably squeeze in a very short question.

Madam Minister, I think it is welcome news that the government is planning to go ahead with the action plan. You've begun to suggest how that might be done. Is there anything more you can tell us about plans for proceeding with this action plan?

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: Indeed, I also thought that was very good news and a wonderful victory for women. In my opinion, everyone will come on board to help us meet our objectives.

As for the plan of action, as I mentioned earlier to another colleague here, we are establishing the parameters and our strategy to see how all of society can participate, including all stakeholders and communities. How will we hear from everyone and which themes will be put forward? We are working on that in close cooperation with Status of Women Canada.

[English]

The Chair: *Merci, Madame.*

We'll go Ms. Mathyssen for seven minutes.

● (0940)

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for being here, Minister.

I'd like to follow up on some of Mr. Stanton's questions.

Do you believe that Status of Women Canada achieves balance between both of its program activities?

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: In fact, this year, because it received additional funding, Status of Women Canada received a record number of funding requests for projects. Of course, it was a transition year. Status of Women Canada held information sessions with women's groups and it made sure that each of these groups could put in its funding application. It was a great success with women's groups who put in their funding applications to complete their projects.

[English]

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you.

I want to follow up. I've been looking at the estimates from 2005-06 through to 2008-09, and one of the program activities at Status of Women Canada is the development of strategic policy advice and partnerships, which replaced the promotion of equitable public policy. I'm wondering why SWC no longer seeks to influence the development of government policies. I say that, because if you look at the estimates from 2005-06, there was just under \$8 million devoted to that, and by the time we get to 2007-08 we're looking at less than \$2 million.

So, basically, it would seem to me there is no longer this effort to influence the policies of government and the research programs and services that take into account the diversity of women's perspectives and reality.

I'll let you answer that, and I will have some more questions in that vein.

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: In fact, Status of Women Canada is proceeding differently. I will let Ms. Beckton give you the details as to how Status of Women is proceeding to meet that objective.

[English]

Ms. Clare Beckton: What we've been doing over the last few years is refining our approaches of how we look at the best ways of influencing policy. One of the things that happened was a reorganization of Status of Women to bring together the elements of GBA, strategic policy, and our international work, so that we could better look at where we needed to influence or work with other government departments and also to try to be much more strategic in our approach.

So it's a refinement, not a departure. I think it's made our ability to work along more strategic lines more effective.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: So why exactly was promoting public policy replaced by strategic policy advice, and what does that mean? What does strategic policy advice actually mean? I was having some difficulty understanding the subtleties of that.

Ms. Clare Beckton: I think it was just to better reflect what we actually do and how we're trying to influence policy development. We do that through working in partnership with other departments, rather than the approaches we've sometimes used in the past. It has also allowed us or enabled us to focus on indicators—how we measure the success of public policy as it's being developed through the use of gender-based analysis, and then how we're measuring the success by working on indicators.

So it is just taking a different focus, and I think it better reflects how we're doing our work and how we're moving to do that work in the future.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: You talked about working with other departments. I wonder if SWC is also collaborating with provincial and territorial governments, civil society, key international partners. If so, could you please provide some details to the committee about that collaborative work.

● (0945)

Ms. Clare Beckton: Absolutely, we are working with and have regular meetings with federal, provincial, and territorial officials, and then annually there's a meeting of the ministers. We are working on some initiatives together.

We also work very closely with civil society. I have regular meetings with and have met with many groups across the country over this past year to hear their concerns and to talk about how we can work together on specific issues.

On the international front, we've been working very hard to be more strategic in our approach to international interventions. We've shared learning and knowledge with other countries, plus we work with CIDA to assist other countries, particularly in the development of gender architecture and of training around gender-based analysis. In New York, for example, I had a number of bilateral meetings with other countries, including at a lunch where we met with seven or eight other countries to share ideas on successes we're having and on what works and what doesn't. Plus we receive about 17 to 18 delegations a year from other countries, with whom we share what's working and what we've learned in the process.

So very much so, we're big on partnerships.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: In terms of tracking these results, what key performance information will you use to ensure that there are in fact the kinds of results you're hoping for or expecting?

Ms. Clare Beckton: I think you had Suzanne Cooper here last week or the week before explaining to you the detailed work on the indicators. We are looking at indicators such as health. For example, how are women being treated, how are men being treated, and how are we progressing with respect to health indicators? Employment is another area, as is, obviously, democratic participation. These are some of the areas.

We have a working group that is working to refine these, and we hope by the end of this year to have the fully developed framework in place. That will be used to consult externally as well with many groups to ensure that we have the right framework.

The Chair: Thank you. Your seven minutes plus are up.

Ms. Neville, we go to the second round, and you have five minutes.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Minister, thank you, again, for being here today.

I have a number of comments and then a number of questions. I'm going to try to get them all out and then allow you to respond.

I'm having some concerns about the re-profiling of the dollars. To me, it's inflating the budget, and I would welcome some comments on that.

I also want to indicate that I very strongly object to the fact that there is no political representation at international meetings. My experience as a member of Parliament is that there has always been political representation at international meetings. I realize that we have highly qualified bureaucrats, but I think it's important that there be political representation as well.

You talk in your presentation about the importance of economic growth and opportunities for women, and part of your action plan will focus on that. I just want to indicate that I've recently been doing a tour of the child care centres in my riding. I'm hearing about the waiting lists, but I'm also hearing a significant number of stories, albeit anecdotally, of women who are leaving the workforce because they don't have adequate child care for their children, or they have been putting their children in unsafe child care and have been anxious. So they are now leaving the workforce or leaving their studies. I'm concerned about how you reconcile that.

I'm interested in getting a list of all the organizations that have received funding. I'd like to know the difference between profit and non-profit organizations. Many of us are going through our Canada student grants programs right now and are finding an inordinate number of faith-based requests for funding. I'm interested in knowing the number of faith-based organizations that have been receiving funding from you and the nature of their activities and projects. I'm interested in knowing as well what funding is one-time only funding and what funding among these organizations is long-term funding.

I'm interested in knowing about the Sisters in Spirit. It is winding down. The way you described it in your remarks is not how I understand it to be. I'm interested in knowing what the long-term proposals are for the Sisters in Spirit program. I'll stop there, but I have a lot more questions.

● (0950)

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: I will try to address each of the points which were raised.

As far as day care spaces are concerned, our government chose to give parents a universal benefit for each child under the age of six to help parents choose the type of care best suited to them. Our objective is to help women, regardless of the situation they are in. This is the initiative which the government chose to implement to help working women or those choosing to go back to school. In short, irrespective of their situation, we want women to be able to choose the type of care best suited to their children.

[English]

Hon. Anita Neville: But, Minister, there is no choice if they have no choice. If they have no option to put their child in day care, they have no choice.

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: Don't forget, Madam, that the government chose to transfer funding to the provinces. The provinces are free to create day care spaces if they wish to do so. Women living in different parts of the country have different needs, and we wanted to help them all.

Ms. Beckton has taken down the question with regard to the list of organizations which have received funding. We will send you the list of those groups, whether they have received long-term funding or funding for only one year, depending on the projects they wished to create. Of course, we will also send you a list of those projects.

You alluded to religious groups. Religion is not part of the criteria. The quality of a project takes priority over the status of a particular group.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Davidson, for five minutes.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Minister, thank you very much for appearing before us again. Certainly, I thought your remarks were excellent, and your presentation, and I think it outlined very emphatically that the department has been extremely busy over the last year. I think we're moving forward.

I have a couple of things I want to go back to that have been touched on already. The first one is that with the reorganization, the research fund was cut. When we're studying the GBA analysis, part of that is that Status of Women will be doing that analysis of GBA and helping the other departments as they go through this process, both in the short and long term, is my understanding.

Are there going to be enough resources left at Status of Women Canada to conduct the research on the status of this GBA, and how is that progressing so far?

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: Thank you for your question, Madam.

The objective includes three components. First, training, which is coming along well because there are more information sessions. We are also working on the organizational structure and we are looking at accountability.

Three organizations in particular have been chosen to help move the process along, namely the Department of Finance, Treasury Board and the Privy Council Office. The great news is that to receive funding approval from Treasury Board, the departments must have conducted a gender-based analysis. That has already been confirmed to you. So it is an excellent way to make all departments aware of the work which is being carried out in that area.

Perhaps Ms. Beckton would like to add something.

• (0955)

[English]

Ms. Clare Beckton: I would simply say that the work with central agencies is focused also on accountability. Using the accountability mechanisms, we are working with them on how to ensure that through the management accountability frameworks and the program activity architectures, we can determine if gender has been considered in their work. So we've made considerable progress over the past years.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you.

Then maybe as a follow-up to that question, hopefully we're looking at the long term, because this is something that has been considered for years and years and has never got there yet. We're hoping that this time we can move this forward and put something in place, so that it is a permanent long-term initiative that will continue to happen, that there will be sustainability with it.

Do you feel that in the long term there will be the resources there, or is this something that as the initiative spreads across every department, the empowerment with the other departments will help look after that manpower?

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: Yes, absolutely. With each success, we'll continue to consolidate the gains we've made. This could be one of the concepts included in the action plan. However, I don't want to reveal what the action plan will look like until we've consulted the various groups. That wouldn't be very respectful to them.

In any event, as soon as we're able to decide on a way of doing things that gives us the results we want and puts us on the right track, obviously we'll stick with that approach.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Davidson, do you have a very short one?

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Yes, I do.

How do you measure the impact made through the women's program in different regions? Different regions have different expectations and different needs. How do you do that?

Ms. Clare Beckton: We have our regional offices. They are responsible for all the different regions in Canada. But every certain number of years we also do a summative evaluation that enables us to see which impacts are successful. Also, our regions listen to what the groups are saying, and we try to adapt how we deliver the service to the needs of the various regions.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: So it remains a work in progress?

Ms. Clare Beckton: Absolutely. It's a continual feedback. We are always trying to ensure that we provide the most effective service.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Demers, you have five minutes.

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Good morning, Minister, Ms. Beckton and Ms. Waugh. Thank you very much for being here today.

To begin with, I'd like to thank you on behalf of the women's groups which have received money. I'm very happy about this. I still have a number of concerns, however. As you know, it doesn't take much to worry me about the plight of the women that I represent.

I was disappointed to not be able to participate in the Commission on the Status of Women, an event we usually attend every year. The budget is always, or almost always, tabled at the same time of the year. Nevertheless, we usually find a way of attending these events because it's very important to be able to debate the problems that we all face with people from other horizons. It's a pity that we were not able to be involved this year and I hope that we can correct that next time.

I'll go straight ahead and ask my questions and you'll then have an opportunity to respond.

Minister, an action plan was developed in Beijing in 1995 which was supported by women worldwide. Did you decide to develop another action plan because that action plan was unsatisfactory?

You said that the Treasury Board has to ensure that departments have conducted a gender-based analysis before they make known their intended projects. So, the departments have to carry out a gender-based analysis. However, they are not obligated to take it into account. So, they carry out the analysis, but do not bear it in mind. So, what is the use of carrying out such an analysis?

Do you intend to develop a genuine pay equity policy? As you said, investing in women means investing in Canada. It is a pity that most women who are entitled to pay equity throughout Canada do not benefit from it. They should be able to enjoy the same benefits as all other women.

My final question is about women living in aboriginal communities. Aboriginal groups have written to us on several occasions advising us of the grant applications they have made. The department had said it was offering grants to deal with issues such as violence against women, homelessness, and family problems. And yet, several groups have not received any grants. They have been told to reapply, but since there is no longer an Office for the Status of Women, and since there are only a few people in a position to help them, they always face delays.

Since I have a lot of questions to ask you and since you are not with us for very long, I will stop there. Otherwise, I fear that you won't have enough time to answer me.

• (1000)

Hon. Josée Verner: Thank you, Madam. Please remind me of your questions as we go on, because you had several questions in your list.

Regarding aboriginal women, I cannot give any specific titles from memory. In fact, a large number of projects was announced. Yes, specific projects for aboriginal women were announced. Ms. Beckton noted what happened with the rejected projects. Nevertheless, this clientele got a great deal of help when we added funds to the Status of Women Canada Program.

As for the other plans that are already being implemented—I presume, Ms. Demers, that you agree with me—we will use them as guides. Why are we announcing an action plan? We are talking about the advancement of women and we think that the other guidelines that were set up were adopted in view of some very valid objectives that we want to pursue. We think that we must also look to the future, use these guidelines and adjust to existing situations. For instance, I do not pretend that the status of women today is the same as it was 10 years ago. I think that it is good for women that we are taking the situation into account as a whole and that we know where we want to go. This process will always need further improvements. I would not want to say that the work has already been done, that it has been put on paper and that there is nothing further to do.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Can we go on to the other questions?

Hon. Josée Verner: The other question was about the participation of women... Listen, I am carefully noting—

Ms. Nicole Demers: My question was about pay equity.

Hon. Josée Verner: Regarding pay equity, I suggest that you invite my colleague, the Minister of Labour, Jean-Pierre Blackburn. He is very aware of this issue and he could explain to you in detail what he is doing for equity pay. I think that you will be delighted with what he has to say.

Ms. Nicole Demers: There was also a question regarding gender-specific analysis done by the departments.

Hon. Josée Verner: You heard the Auditor General's testimony. Indeed, I am anxious to read her report. She must be studying the period from 2000 to 2007 to see if any progress has been made. We are very open to any proposals that would help to improve things.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Do you intend to—

[English]

The Chair: Madame Demers, we have to be fair. I know the minister is on a tight time schedule and Ms. Mathysen wants a couple of minutes.

Ms. Mathysen, you have two minutes. Thank you.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Okay, and I'll be succinct.

Ms. Beckton was talking about equity across the regions. Minister, I'm wondering, does Status of Women Canada have any plans to evaluate the closing of the 12 regional offices, the cancellation of the policy research fund, and changes in the terms and conditions of the women's program? If so, when will these evaluations take place, and can we see the reports from those evaluations? I'd be most interested to see the impact of the closing of those regional offices.

• (1005)

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: As Ms. Beckton was just saying, we must always evaluate our successes and learn our lessons, according to the number of projects and the results obtained with funds granted by the government to help the groups.

Right from the outset, let me tell you one thing: the first observation I can make is the fact that we received a record number of applications this year for projects presented by women's groups. I think that this tells us a great deal about the method that was adopted

to help more women's groups with their applications. I am especially thinking of the updates to the website.

In fact, we must make sure that women's groups understand how they can fill out their application with the help of Service Canada, with its nearly 500 outlets in Canada. They offer access to women's groups who want to fill out their applications. The first immediate, concrete result of the change in direction of Status of Women Canada was a record number, a large number of applications for funds made by women's advocacy groups.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

I know the minister has to leave. I'd like to thank the minister for being here.

Minister, you acknowledged the good work that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women is doing. This committee has been working very cooperatively on a number of issues; therefore, it is a disappointment that the elected representatives who have worked so hard for the economic security of women, for the Status of Women, are being left out of the APEC conference. I'm hoping you will reconsider it.

I'd like to leave you with a brief note. If the government is really serious about women, the economic security, the gender budgeting that we are doing.... In 2002-03 the budget for the Status of Women was \$24 million. By 2006 it was cut by \$14 million, and it has never been replenished. Therefore, when we talk figures, we have to be careful not to fudge figures. It's very critical for us that we understand where these figures are coming from and where we are to go.

I know you are in a hurry to go. If you would like to take your time and respond to us later on, that would be fine. I am cognizant of your time constraints.

We thank you for coming. Perhaps we will have—

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner: If that is okay, Madam Chair, perhaps we could come back to that later. I can see that everybody is shaking their head in response to what you said. I am actually on duty in the House and I am going to have to leave, but I think it would be worthwhile to give the women who are here with me today an opportunity to respond to what you just said.

[English]

The Chair: Minister, I'm hoping you will reconsider the APEC issue.

Thank you.

Hon. Anita Neville: Madam Chair, could I ask that the information I asked for be tabled for the committee, please?

The Chair: Sure.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Madam Deschamps.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I'd like to move a motion concerning the meeting.

• (1010)

[English]

The Chair: Can the minister leave?

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Yes, she can.

[English]

The Chair: Merci, Minister.

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: There are going to be some important meetings held soon. And I'm referring specifically to the APEC meeting. I think that it would be quite appropriate for members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to be part of the delegation and attend these important meetings. One of the topics discussed, among others, will be equality between the sexes. And as it happens, we're currently writing a report on this. I don't know if my colleagues share my opinion, but I think that it would be most appropriate for us to be part of this delegation.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

While Madame Deschamps has her motion...do I hear any objection to that motion? If there is no objection, then I'll allow the motion.

[Translation]

Ms. Deschamps, Ms. Boucher would like you to repeat the motion.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Ms. Boucher, would you like me to reread the motion? Are you listening?

It is quite simple. I am asking that we be allowed to be part of the delegation attending the APEC meeting which will take place in May.

Ms. Boucher, you got me to repeat—

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I am listening to you, but I don't have to look at you.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I think that that demonstrates a lack of respect.

So, I am asking that we be part of the delegation in attendance at the 13th meeting of the Women Leaders' Network and the Gender Focal Point Network, which will be held in May.

[English]

The Chair: Are there any objections to that motion?

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Will it be done today?

The Chair: No. The only way we can have a motion here is if I have unanimous consent. If I have unanimous consent, the motion comes before committee and we will.... If I do not have—

Mr. Bruce Stanton: There is no consent. We'll go through the normal channels, and then we'll consider a notice of motion.

The Chair: There is no unanimous consent. You will have to give 48 hours' notice.

Merci, madame.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but since the subject is on the table, unanimous consent is not required. This is the topic that we have discussed this morning. The motion is in order, especially since it's a motion dealing with the subject discussed this morning.

[English]

The Chair: Today we are discussing the main estimates, not the trip to APEC; therefore, if you have any specific issues around the main estimates and you have a motion on that, yes, I can take it, but because this is a sidebar—the minister just let us know what she was doing—it has to have the normal procedure, and I do not have unanimous consent. For a motion from the floor, I need unanimous consent on a topic that is not relevant to the estimates.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Madam Chair, I just want to make certain that the department is aware of this. When I'm asking for a list of the funded programs, I'd like a clear breakdown of what were profit, what were not profit, what were multi-year, what were single year, what were faith-based organizations. I want the department to give that breakdown, please.

The Chair: I have asked the clerk to write that down and we will send a written request to the department.

Hon. Anita Neville: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Madam Chair, I would just like a clarification on that. Is that being asked for the current year? Are we seeking that for the fiscal year ended 2008—like 2007-08?

Hon. Anita Neville: I would like it for 2007-08. We're into a new year—not far into it. If there are some that have been funded in the current year, that would be informative as well.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Okay, so starting from April 1, 2007, then, to the current....

Hon. Anita Neville: That's fine.

The Chair: Welcome again, Ms. Beckton, Ms. Waugh, and Ms. Paquette.

Do you have any opening remarks, Ms. Beckton?

Ms. Clare Beckton: I don't have any opening remarks per se, but perhaps it would be helpful to have Cindy Paquette, who is our director general of corporate affairs, explain the budget for the last years, which would indicate that the budget has not in fact gone down, but we are now at \$29 million ongoing, with the exception of this year because of some funds that were re-profiled from last year.

I want to say that the re-profiling was a matter of good management. Because we received the second \$5 million in funding through the supplementary estimates (B) last year, that meant we would only receive the funding in March. So we asked to re-profile some of the program funds to ensure that we would have adequate funding this year, because for some of our agreements that are over three years, we have a heavy demand on the funding this year, and we also wanted to make sure that none of that money would lapse. We were very successful in having no money lapse from our funds. So that's the reason we asked to re-profile some of the money into this fiscal year.

● (1015)

The Chair: Is this in response to what I stated, that from 2002-03 onwards, the budget—actually that's what the estimates show—was \$24 million? Then the minister made a statement in 2006. The budget went down to \$10 million, so there's a \$14 million shortfall. I don't want to get into mathematical confusion here, and I would like the committee to proceed with their questions. Perhaps I could take it aside and understand what the issue is.

Ms. Clare Beckton: I think there's some confusion between the program funding and the overall budget of Status of Women. The program funding was \$10 million, up until the addition of the \$10 million ongoing for each year.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Pearson, a fresh round now, for seven minutes.

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

Welcome to everyone this morning.

Ms. Beckton, we've had a number of witnesses come to these sessions who've talked about these equality indicators. Some feel, and I guess I'm one of them, a certain level of frustration—and you've probably read about that. It's just that we seem to have this model set up, but the outcomes do not seem to be achieving what we believe the desired ends should be. Many of the witnesses have said the same thing. What they were saying is that they would like to see the equality indicators much better integrated into the gender budget approach.

I have a couple of questions for you.

First, what are the indicators you are using at present? I think you mentioned those before. You also mentioned to Ms. Mathysen, I believe it was, looking at new things such as employment, democratic participation, and things like that.

Secondly, has there been any discussion within your department about the indicators identified at the United Nations session in 2003? Those included things like affordable housing, civil legal aid, affordable and regulated child care, education and training, employment insurance, and shelters and transition houses for women experiencing violence. When you talked about where you were thinking of going, you didn't really mention any of those.

I wonder if you could answer those two things for me and give me some light at the end of the tunnel.

Ms. Clare Beckton: I'm not sure I can give you light at the end of the tunnel, only to say that we've been working with the recognition that our indicators are not perfect.

One of the reasons we have the indicator project is so we can better measure the results. We're also trying to work with our central agencies to integrate it into the management accountability framework and program activity architecture, which is the way outcomes of departmental work are now measured. They've moved with the new frameworks to having more specific outcomes. My team of gender specialists has been working very closely with the board to see how we can integrate that into those frameworks, rather than create new ones.

At the same time, we do have the indicators project, and as part of the development of the indicators project, our person who is leading it for Status of Women has done extensive research looking at what other countries do, at what the United Nations has put forward, working with other departments that have been working on indicators in their area of responsibility—for example, Human Resources and Social Development Canada and Health Canada—and creating a framework that we will then take out to consultation with the groups to ask, “Are there things missing? Do we have it right? Do we need to have different sets of indicators?”

I think that will be very important as we move forward with action plans and specific goals, to make sure we're satisfied that the indicators will be able to tell us if we've achieved success and how we're progressing.

Mr. Glen Pearson: So there has been discussion about the UN ones, from 2003?

Ms. Clare Beckton: Yes, there would be discussion about all of the work that's been done internationally. I know that Suzanne Cooper—who appeared before you—has done a literature review and looked at the work that's being done, for example, in the World Economic Forum. We know that sometimes each country needs to have ones that work best for them, given their culture and their legislative and social frameworks.

● (1020)

Mr. Glen Pearson: Just for the sake of time, I have one other quick question. It's about the gender budget champions that were talked about, putting them in various departments. We spoke with the gender budget champion in the Department of Finance, and she specifically put the tax policy side into it, which I realize is a very important area. But when she was here and we tried to ask questions that related to other parts of Finance, she said she wasn't really qualified to answer about those various areas.

I'm wondering if it's a good scheme or a good plan to sequester somebody in just one department of Finance—which may be her field of expertise—but not have her able to speak to these other areas of Finance that gender budgeting is supposed to be applied to as well.

Ms. Clare Beckton: We are working with the central agencies to ensure that the champions do have access to all the work that's being done in the department. As you're aware, we were doing some training this winter to expand the gender-based analysis work of Finance from tax policy into their economic and other policy areas. The deputy minister has been extremely supportive and interested in advancing the gender work in the Department of Finance.

But we recognize it's still a work in progress. We're not yet where we'd like to be.

Mr. Glen Pearson: Thank you.

That's good enough for me, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Who wants to take the time? There are two more minutes.

Hon. Maria Minna: Very briefly, Madam Chair, if I could.

Has there been any assessment of the impact? I know it was asked earlier but I'm not quite sure I understand. Are you doing an assessment of the impact of the offices that were closed, what impact that may have had out there, positive, negative, in terms of access to Status of Women Canada?

Ms. Clare Beckton: We haven't done a formal study, but obviously we've been working very closely with our regional members of Status of Women to change the way we deliver service, to get feedback from the groups. Normally a formal evaluation is done as part of an evaluation plan, but that will be several years from now because we need a period of time when we've had the program fully operational, which has taken us this full year to do, and then to be able to measure that within a year or two. But we get continuous feedback from the groups and we try to work with them. If there are areas that we think are not working so well, we work with our regions to try to change the way we've done that.

So we've really changed the way we deliver our service quite extensively over this past year.

Hon. Maria Minna: I understand that. I'm concerned that a proper assessment would be necessary so that while we change how we deliver service, we don't miss a lot of the people who may not be able to access...like rural Canada in particular, rural women, when you consider that offices are so far from one another that access is very difficult. Some of the women I've been talking to recently in rural parts of Ontario.... I went to two meetings where there were some problems. I just want to flag that for you.

To go back to the estimates, there's talk of developing a strategic policy advice and partnership.... Has that started? Who is being consulted for that process specifically, and who's doing the consultation? How is that structured?

Ms. Clare Beckton: When we talk about strategic projects, we're not necessarily talking about formal consultation and strategic partnerships. We do work together with departments in trying to identify gaps, and of course in our discussions with groups, as our regions work with them, as we look at the projects we're funding, as we look at the extensive consultations that were held in 2005, we try to identify gaps.

We also try to work with departments in areas where we know there are gaps and when they're beginning to develop initiatives, to

ensure that women's issues, the gender considerations, are being taken into effect, so that it's broad-based. It's not something where you can say, this is how it's done, A-B-C; it depends on the issues. For example, on the questions of matrimonial real property, we did give input to Indian Affairs as they were developing it to ensure that some of the issues of concern we had were raised.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Deschamps, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: If I have any time left at the end, I'd like to share it with Ms. Demers.

I'd like to come back to the action plan. I would like to know what your involvement is in its development. There's been a lot of consultation with women's groups and leaders. Have you been part of this? Are you giving Status of Women Canada the tools it needs to develop this action plan? And when you do so, do you always start with the premise that your political orientation is very clear and unambiguous?

•(1025)

Ms. Clare Beckton: Is that your question?

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I'd like to know to what extent you are able to influence the departments. Over the years, you have developed a certain amount of expertise. Are you successful in making it known that the direction being taken is not in line with the set objectives and that the way programs are attributed needs to be reviewed since they don't really correspond to the experiences being lived out on the ground? Do you wield any influence when it comes to developing the government's strategic plan for its action plan?

[English]

Ms. Clare Beckton: I like to think we will have influence. But I think the action plan will be developed the way policy and plans are normally developed. It's a relationship between the direction from our ministers, from the government of the day, and the work we do in moving forward to implement and then to help develop that plan of action. Normally the departments—Status of Women Canada, in this case—would be working together with the minister on the elaboration of the directions for the action plan and on the consultation. And yes, we would very much be involved. The Minister for Status of Women Canada has the lead with respect to the *plan d'action*.

I like to think we're influential. We're certainly working to be influential around the government, in terms of influencing our colleagues and helping them to understand the need for consideration of women's issues in all the work they do.

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: You talk about being influential, but the fact remains that several Status of Women Canada offices, including regional offices, have been closed. Once these offices close, doesn't Status of Women Canada become somewhat disconnected from what is going on in the regions? It must be quite risky, when you close an office, because you may no longer have your finger on the pulse of Canada's regions, and of shrinking Status of Women Canada's coverage. In what way are you influential now? How do you get feedback about what's going on in the regions so that you can both develop policies or a strategy, while at the same time being sure that they'll really address the needs and problems faced by women, and particularly those who live in the regions?

[English]

Ms. Clare Beckton: Simply because we don't have as many offices doesn't mean we aren't able to be in touch with the regions. There are a number of ways we can be in touch.

Over this past year, along with the director general of the women's program, we travelled extensively across the country, meeting with women's groups, talking about what their issues were and about how we can better serve them.

I have asked our regional offices to ensure that they travel as much as possible within the region to talk to the various groups. We have a 1-800 line. We have held consultations around the women's program and the new criteria, using telephone conferences, plus group consultations, where we bring the groups together. Our regional heads also attempt to participate in key federal council meetings in the regions. They try to attend important meetings, where possible.

So I think we still have the means to ensure that we are in touch with what's important. I've certainly made every effort I can to be out there as much as possible, making myself visible and inviting feedback.

When I was at the United Nations in New York, we also had an opportunity to meet with a lot of our NGO delegates who were there. In fact, we briefed them every day, but we also had opportunities for a lot of feedback. We found that very helpful, because they have networks and they're able to assist us through those networks as well.

• (1030)

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: A number of witnesses have made the following point to us. Canada is very large, and every province—I am referring here to Quebec—develops measures to meet the needs of families, women and so on. If I look at what Quebec has done, compared with the rest of Canada, how many so-called universal programs that have been put in place can meet women's needs in a universal way? There are major differences between the various regions, let alone the various provinces.

Take, for example, the demands that come from western Canada. They are very different from the demands and expectations, the needs and concerns, of women in Quebec. Basically, the word "poverty" has the same meaning, but the needs are very different. How can we set priorities and advance the cause of women in a fair way when some provinces are behind others in terms of their programs? Would that not be favouring some over others?

[English]

Ms. Clare Beckton: I think it's like any other public policy-making program, where obviously the government works to accommodate those regional differences.

In our programming, of course, we look at the individual applications that are coming in. They indicate what some of the region's challenges and needs may be, so the types of programs that are being funded in one region may differ from another. For example, in one corner of New Brunswick we funded some *femmes acadiennes* because they had particular needs relating to the minority language group in New Brunswick. Now that may not be an issue in another part of the country.

So we're very sensitive to that, and our regional offices are very sensitive to those differences. And when we talk to groups, we also work very closely with our provincial counterparts, and that's very helpful to us because they can feed to us. Whenever we're doing grants now, we make sure we talk to our provincial counterparts to ensure that the grants and contributions we're giving are aligned with their priorities, so we're not undercutting any provincial priorities. That is very helpful. We have regular meetings with them to ask, "What are your priorities? Where are you going? How can we work together to make sure the money we're putting in actually supports your priorities as well?" And that's been very successful.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go to Mr. Stanton for seven minutes.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Continuing along the line of questioning pertaining to the budget, the chair has mentioned some numbers here, and I still would like to see if you could clarify what might be in the wind here in terms of these numbers, because I think there has been some confusion created.

I reference, for example, the top of page 4 in the estimates, part III, and I'm looking at the 2008-09 numbers. When we break out the \$24.761 million we see just shy of \$7.5 million in operating expenses and \$16.25 million in grants and contributions, for example. That's about the only breakout we actually see of the main estimates.

If we were to go back to look at 2006-07, in rounded-off numbers, what would that same distribution look like?

• (1035)

Ms. Clare Beckton: I'm going to ask my head of corporate to answer that for you, to make sure it's absolutely right.

Mrs. Cindy Paquette (Director, Corporate Services Directorate, Status of Women Canada): In 2006-07, we had grants and contributions of \$11.8 million, and then the rest would have been operating expenses. The total budget was \$24.6 million, and it included the Sisters in Spirit initiative and the women's program.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: And was the Sisters in Spirit initiative included in the \$11.8 million?

Mrs. Cindy Paquette: Yes.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Okay, that's under grants.

So really what we're talking about here is roughly another \$12 million in operating expenses.

Mrs. Cindy Paquette: Yes. I think it was a little over \$11 million at the time before the cut, yes.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Okay, and that's now down to around \$7.5 million.

Mrs. Cindy Paquette: Yes.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: So what we have here really, to put a fine point on it, is that the total budget for Status of Women Canada has gone up by approximately \$5 million, but we've had a substantive shift from operating expenses to grants and contributions.

Mrs. Cindy Paquette: Yes.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: I wanted to bring some clarity to that, and I appreciate your answers on that.

Just to go back to this, I think you used the term "re-focusing"—the \$2 million.

Ms. Clare Beckton: Re-profiling.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: And I see where it is. I see again on page 4 where, under women's program, supplementary estimates (B), we're projecting \$6.9 million there, and that'll drop down the following year to \$4.9 million. Is that where the \$2 million is?

Mrs. Cindy Paquette: Yes.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: So where did that \$2 million come from again?

Mrs. Cindy Paquette: It was part of the new money announced in the budget, and we didn't ask for the full \$5 million in 2007-08. We asked for \$3 million, and then we asked for \$7 million in 2008-09.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: So because of the timing, you couldn't take the whole \$5 million when it came out in the previous supplementary estimates (B).

Mrs. Cindy Paquette: That's right. We weren't getting it until March.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: So you took the \$3 million, and then that allowed you to take an extra \$2 million, and actually that extra \$2 million will be in the 2008-09 year.

Mrs. Cindy Paquette: That's correct.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Okay, good. Thank you for that.

Mrs. Cindy Paquette: Yes.

Ms. Clare Beckton: And we actually needed it this year because of the number of projects, some of which are two and three years and require a considerable amount of funding this year.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: That provides much-needed clarity.

I'd like to move to the question of the full-time equivalents. From your estimates on pages 8 and 10, in the first priority, which was strengthening full-time participation of women, we had a \$2.5 million budget but 24 FTEs. Then on the programs side, financial assistance programs, we had roughly \$29.2 million and 65 FTEs.

It seems a little low—\$2.5 million for strengthening the participation of women in society. Is that all staff? Are there parts

of that \$2.5 million that are, for example, in research? What kinds of activities flow out of that \$2.5 million?

Mrs. Cindy Paquette: That's mostly staff and operating.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: So it's strictly the office infrastructure, if you will.

Mrs. Cindy Paquette: Yes.

Ms. Clare Beckton: The operating money is what we use to do some of our extra research work, beyond what's required for staff. For example, we would use operations money for the indicators project, gender-based analysis, our federal-provincial-territorial work, and our international work, because all of this requires operational funding. That's the way it's normally done. Grants and contributions funding is for the groups. Operational money is what we use to manage within the departmental agency.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: So those 24 people are essentially involved in, for example, providing counsel, support, and advice to some of the other departments and agencies trying to get their submissions properly done or evaluating and considering gender issues. Is this the kind of support you provide to other departments?

• (1040)

Ms. Clare Beckton: Yes, that's part of it. When we put money in, we also break it down in terms of our support services. Communication and corporate services support our major line, which is directed towards policy and programs. So those are built in, but they support the work we do with other departments in assisting them with training, gender-based analysis frameworks, and the work they're doing towards achieving better results.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you.

The Chair: Could you tell me if the Status of Women supplies its income and expense statements to government for review? Who audits you?

Ms. Clare Beckton: We supply everything through the normal channels.

The Chair: What are the normal channels? Help me.

Ms. Clare Beckton: There are the main estimates and the supplementary estimates. We also do this through public accounts. In addition, we submit a number of reports, including the departmental performance report, which tells how the money was expended.

The Chair: So if we wanted to have a look at the numbers that are confusing us all, and we wanted to go from 2002 to 2008-09, you would be able to supply us back-up? We will request that. Thank you.

Ms. Mathyssen.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: The independent policy fund was cancelled. This committee depended a great deal on research from women's organizations and Status of Women Canada to guide us in the work we do. Do you know of any government-funded research by other departments that could provide the government, and us, with knowledge-based work on gender equality? Government needs this to respond to the complex issues and needs of women across the country.

Secondly, with respect to the research on the SWC Internet site, will those invaluable publications continue to be available?

Ms. Clare Beckton: In regard to your second question, yes, our research will continue to be available on our website.

In answer to the first question, throughout the government there is a fair bit of research that deals with women's issues. Statistics Canada does a great deal of research, and we have worked with them in the past to ensure that it's sex disaggregated. Other departments, like Health Canada and the women's health programs, also do sex disaggregated data, as does Human Resources and Social Development. Indian Affairs does some work, and we have helped them to ensure that some of their questionnaires contain the gender-specific questions they need to ask. There is a fair bit of information available throughout the various government departments that are working on issues of importance to women.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: Okay.

Ms. Clare Beckton: The think tanks also do some work, as well as the Conference Board of Canada, the policy forums; the North-South Institute, in fact, does a fair bit on gender.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: It's interesting that there is all this information and we still don't have a national child care program and a national housing program. When women's groups come here they say that's what they need, first and foremost: housing and child care.

I want to continue. In the past two years, the committee has put forward several recommendations concerning the restructuring of Status of Women Canada. I think you were here for some of that committee work. For example, there were recommendations from the report, *Funding Through the Women's Program: Women's Groups Speak Out*. I'm wondering, has the minister acted on any of these recommendations, and could you specifically tell us how?

Ms. Clare Beckton: I think Status of Women Canada and the ministers have looked at all of the reports when we've talked about gender-based analysis. I think there was a real emphasis on moving towards accountability, for example, and that is what we have been attempting to do through our work with central agencies.

We've also looked at the expert panel work and attempted to integrate some of those recommendations into the work we're doing.

There was an evaluation done of the women's program. We have worked very extensively to implement the recommendations of the evaluation insofar as they remain applicable. We've brought in better systems that enable us to have up-to-date knowledge on the management of the funds that we're putting out. A GCIMS is what it's called.

So we have done a fair bit of work on implementing the various recommendations of the committee over the years. The increase in funding to the women's program was one of the recommendations, which has occurred over the past year.

There was a realignment so that there was more money put into the actual funding for the women's program and less into the administration of the program, so that you'd have more money going out on the ground. Therefore, Status of Women Canada now tends to be one of the more efficient departments in terms of administering the program funds.

● (1045)

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: Could you give me an update in terms of Status of Women Canada being able to process ATI requests in the legislated timeframe and how many resources you have for ATI requests? I submitted some requests last June and I'm still waiting.

Ms. Clare Beckton: As I've said to the committee before, Status of Women was certainly behind. We have hired another person. We also have a consultant who works with us, and we've made considerable progress in getting at the backlog.

There are challenges because some of the requests require approval from other departments. Sometimes we have no control over the timing of when we get the information back from the other departments. I did speak to the Access to Information Commissioner, and we're certainly working very hard to try to eliminate that backlog. I'm optimistic that by the end of this year we should have eliminated the backlog.

It's very difficult to find people, as you may know, who have the expertise in access to information. It's an area that's in much demand, but we've been very fortunate to find some very good people to augment our staff.

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you.

Talking about audits and examining things reminded me of the Auditor General and her very clear directive that, of course, it was Status of Women Canada's job to strengthen the participation of women economically, socially, and culturally. I'm wondering how Status of Women Canada compares with other countries and jurisdictions in terms of the work to promote women's issues, women's equality, women's concerns.

Ms. Clare Beckton: Taking from the reaction that we get in the world community, other countries think Canada is a leader in this regard. Our gender machinery is very much the envy of many other countries and of many provinces whose machinery is inside another department; we are a separate departmental agency. We have the fortune, I guess, in Canada to be able to work with a strong set of laws. We have been able to work on accountabilities, and we have been able to integrate our functions to be able to make our work more strategic.

I think, from looking around the world, some countries do better than Canada. We all know that the Scandinavian countries in many areas maybe have made a little more progress than we have. But at the same time, when I recently spoke to the Swedish ambassador, she told me that while they've made great strides on the democratic process in the representation of women, they have not done so well in the corporate world. There's still a corporate culture that is a challenge.

I think we do actually very well compared to other countries around the world, and we're continuing. I've been continuing to work at how we reorient and have strategic directions that will continue to ensure that we are able to do that work.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Beckton.

We now go to the next round.

Ms. Neville, you have five minutes.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm hoping to share my time with Ms. Minna.

I have a number of questions. First, I wonder if you could tell us what the targeted date is for the delivery of the action plan. It would be helpful to know that.

You made some reference to regional offices closed but regional people...and I'm not sure I caught it directly. Are there still people operating in the region? And is it possible to give us a breakdown of what your expenses are when you're travelling and how that would compare with maintaining some regional offices? So I'm looking for a comparison between the kind of outreach you're doing at the present time and maintaining a regional office.

As well, you say on page 7 of the estimates, "In addressing women's economic security and prosperity, the Department is collaborating on the following key initiatives", and then you list as an initiative, "supports for young families".

I don't know what that means. Could you give us some examples of what these are, "supports for young families"?

I have more questions, but I'll stop there.

• (1050)

Ms. Clare Beckton: I can start.

I don't have a targeted date. That's something that obviously we're working on with the government, to determine what the target date will be.

In terms of the regions, we have regional offices, as you know, in Edmonton, in Moncton, in Montreal, and our Ontario and national region in Ottawa. I'm not sure if we would be able to correlate exactly the costs of running the offices and travel, but we could certainly give you a breakdown of the travel that occurred in each of the regions over the past year, if you wish. I can do that. I'm not sure if we have the ability to compare it. I would have to sit down with my corporate head here to see if there's any way to reasonably compare that—

Hon. Anita Neville: If I can interrupt you, I appreciate the outreach you're doing and what you're trying to do to meet the needs of women's groups. I know it's a challenge. I guess what I'm trying to determine or get some answers to is rather than you or others being on the road a great deal of the time, would it not be more effective to in fact set up satellite offices, or offices for people to consult with? That's what I'm trying to determine.

Ms. Clare Beckton: No, I understand that. One of the things we are doing this year is working to ensure that all of the Service Canada offices have the information that's needed to be able to help women's groups. I know—

Hon. Anita Neville: That's not providing the information—

Ms. Clare Beckton: Right.

The Chair: Ms. Neville, if it helps, I've asked them for the income and expense statements for the years 2002 onwards, which we would be able to get.

Hon. Anita Neville: That's fine. You're the accountant, Madam Chair.

Ms. Clare Beckton: With respect to your last question, about supports for young families, that is referring to an initiative we have with our territorial and provincial colleagues. We are commissioning a paper to look at what are the other possible ways, apart from EI, to have benefits and supports for young families. That's part of our federal-provincial-territorial cooperative effort.

Hon. Anita Neville: When you say you're commissioning a paper, that's research as I understand research.

Ms. Clare Beckton: I suppose it's an ideas paper about the possibilities; it's not so much research. They may have to do some research in the process, but it's the other ways to support young families than exist at the present time, which may be within provincial jurisdiction or federal jurisdiction, for example. There will be some research, but it's more focused on what we know is out there and what the other possibilities are.

The Chair: Ms. Minna, very short.

Hon. Maria Minna: First I have a request. We're requesting a list for the 2007-08 programs. Could you also include in that whether the amount received has remained unchanged relative to 2005-06, and if not, what the changes were relative to 2005-06? Would it be possible to receive the same breakdown for 2005-06 that we've asked for 2007-08?

Ms. Clare Beckton: To clarify that I understand what you're asking for, are you talking about the dollars in programming funding, or the number of programs that were funded?

Hon. Maria Minna: We received a breakdown for the community fund. We've already received it as part of this package.

Ms. Clare Beckton: As you are aware, the community fund and the partnership fund have only existed since the beginning of 2007. The other would be the old women's program, and any information would be under the old—

Hon. Maria Minna: Maybe you can give us a bit of an analysis of how the two compare in terms of—

The Chair: We will clarify it.

I'm being cognizant of the time, and I know we have something formal to do, which is to adopt the votes on the budget items. I asked the clerk, and we have to do it as a formality because the minister was here and she explained the main estimates to us. I don't think there will be much discussion or debate; we just have to say yea or no. That's on division as well. It doesn't matter. I will read what it says.

Before I do that, I would like to thank you for being here. We will submit the questions that were unanswered or that people were not able to ask. Thank you very much for being here.

I can see the public accounts committee is ready, so we need to clear the room for them at 11.

While they are departing, here is what formally happens. Vote 100, if you go to the main estimates for the Standing Committee on Status of Women, says, and I'm going to read it out:

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Status of Women — Office of the Co-ordinator

Vote 100—Operating expenditures.....\$7,499,000

The Chair: Shall vote 100 in the amount of \$7,499,000, less the amount of \$1,874,750 granted in the interim supply under the Department of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women, office of the coordinator, carry?

(Vote 100 agreed to on division)

Status of Women — Office of the Co-ordinator

Vote 105—Grants and contributions.....\$16,250,000

The Chair: Shall vote 105 in the amount of \$16,250,000, less the amount of \$4,062,500 granted in interim supply under the Department of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women, office of the coordinator, carry?

(Vote 105 agreed to on division)

● (1055)

The Chair: Shall the chair report votes 100 and 105, less the amount voted in interim supply under Canadian Heritage, to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you, committee members. If you have any questions that were not answered or that you couldn't ask of the Status of Women, please do so.

Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.

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