



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

FEWO • NUMBER 058 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, March 1, 2011

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Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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•(1125)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): I will now call this meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this committee is undertaking a study of violence against aboriginal women. We are looking at the scope of that violence. We are looking at the women on reserve, off reserve, and in isolated areas. We're looking at the root causes of that violence and of course with regard to solutions at the end, based on what we hear.

I would like to welcome today the Minister for Status of Women and the Minister of Justice, who will be presenting to us. They have kindly decided that because of the vote, they will stay until 12:20, which will allow us an hour with them, minus five minutes.

I'd like to begin by asking the Minister for Status of Women to present.

You have 10 minutes. Please begin.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister for Status of Women): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's truly a pleasure to be here to join the members of the status of women committee. I commend you for addressing such an important issue as this one.

[Translation]

Madam Chair, honourable members, it is a pleasure for me to be here today with my colleague, Minister Nicholson.

I would also like to acknowledge Inspector Kevin Jones from National Aboriginal Policing Services at the RCMP. Also joining us is Suzanne Clément, Coordinator and Head of Agency for Status of Women Canada, and Linda Savoie, Director General of the Women's Program.

As Minister for Status of Women, I am here today to discuss Status of Women Canada funding and update the committee on funding for the Native Women's Association of Canada.

Over the last five years, our government has taken action to help women be safer, more secure and more economically successful.

Through the Women's Program, Status of Women Canada provides funding for projects across Canada that yield real results for women and girls.

Our government has increased funding to the Women's Program to its highest levels ever, nearly doubling it since 2006.

Last year alone, SWC provided more than \$19 million in grants and contribution funding to organizations, in support of more than 350 projects.

[English]

These projects address Status of Women Canada's three priority areas: eliminating violence against women and girls, increasing women's economic security, and advancing women's participation in the democratic process.

Last year we introduced the continuous intake process that allows the women's program to accept applications on an ongoing basis. As a result, Status of Women Canada can respond to groups faster and work more closely with them as they develop their projects.

Officials from Status of Women Canada involve other relevant government departments such as Indian and Northern Affairs and Justice Canada in the review of these projects. This new approach increases our ability to respond to emerging issues, allows other potential funding partners to express an interest in contributing to certain projects, and enables us to draw on expertise from across government.

Recently we also introduced the blueprint projects program to the women's program. This new program gives groups the option of adapting one of seven ready-made models to their region instead of spending time and resources to develop a new project from scratch.

We've also worked to address honour-based violence by engaging community organizations in order to raise awareness about and respond to this very important issue.

Violence against women is an issue that cuts across communities, regions, provinces, and territories, and aboriginal women and girls are particularly vulnerable. Our government is working with organizations across Canada to eliminate this issue.

As Minister for Status of Women, I am pleased that Status of Women Canada is collaborating with aboriginal organizations across Canada, such as the Native Women's Association of Canada.

In March 2010, Status of Women Canada provided funding of \$500,000 to the Native Women's Association for the recently completed Evidence to Action project. This project aimed to strengthen the abilities of aboriginal women and girls to recognize and respond to violence in their families and communities and to break the cycle of violence.

Last week, when I announced close to \$1.9 million in funding for the second phase of this project, entitled Evidence to Action II, Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, the president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, said, "This commitment shows that the Government of Canada and NWAC have a shared dedication to ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls".

This second phase will strengthen the ability of communities, governments, educators, and service providers to respond to the root causes of violence against aboriginal women and girls. Our ongoing support of the initiatives of the Native Women's Association of Canada is just one example of how we're taking effective action to implement a real and lasting change in the lives of aboriginal women and girls.

Last October, we made an unprecedented announcement of \$10 million to address the high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women. At that time we announced seven concrete actions to deal with this issue. Minister Nicholson will be elaborating on those.

But the announcement also included additional funds available upon application to support new culturally appropriate victim services to help the families of missing and murdered aboriginal women, new awareness materials, new school and community-based pilot projects targeted to young aboriginal women, and new community safety plans to enhance the safety of women living in aboriginal communities.

Sue O'Sullivan, the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, praised this announcement by saying that:

...what we need is more government action of this breadth and initiatives that address all aspects of the issue, from prevention and prosecution to victim support. These are the kinds of initiatives that have the most impact and that we can all support.

Madam Chair, there has been a great response from aboriginal groups and organizations to this additional funding. In fact, some 20 projects are now already under way. They include the expansion of the Canadian Red Cross project entitled "Walking the Prevention Circle"; the Campbell River victim services initiative, which will look at reporting and responding to victimization; and a new edition of the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia's resource booklet, entitled "Trust Your Instincts".

Since 2007, the women's program alone has funded 50 projects to support aboriginal women, and these include great projects such as Grandmothers Helping in Life, which helped 369 women from various first nations communities address experiences of violence using traditional healing practices.

Another one is entitled "Aboriginal Women and Youth: Reclaiming our Power". In Winnipeg, it works to increase aboriginal girls' leadership skills and personal resilience in order to live violence-free. The New Realities project in Winnipeg is also helping women to reduce family violence and problematic substance abuse and to take steps towards a healthier lifestyle.

In Quebec, the Corporation Wapikoni Mobile project is educating young women and girls in eight aboriginal communities about violence within their communities and how they can best respond to it.

• (1130)

In London, Ontario, the Girls Helping Girls project is enabling young women and girls to challenge the violence, threats of violence, and inequality that they encounter on a daily basis.

In Saskatchewan, the Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services project will help women, particularly aboriginal women, access shelter services and other effective services for rural women.

[*Translation*]

As Minister for Status of Women, I am proud that our government continues to take strong action to ensure the safety and security of women and girls across Canada. We proudly support community groups that encourage women and girls of all backgrounds to reach for their dreams, to take advantage of our country's many opportunities, and to participate as active and equal members of their communities.

[*English*]

Thank you for your time today.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister. You were well under 10 minutes, I might add.

Now I'd like to go to the Honourable Rob Nicholson, Minister of Justice, for 10 minutes, please.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice): Thank you.

I'm pleased to be here with my colleague, the Honourable Rona Ambrose, Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Status of Women. In addition, I'm pleased to be here with Lisa Hitch, who is a senior counsel with the Department of Justice.

I'm here today to provide information about the recent concrete action taken by the Government of Canada to address the disturbingly high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women. As you know, in last year's Speech from the Throne we recognized this pressing priority.

I was pleased that an additional \$10 million was set aside in budget 2010 to address this important issue. On October 29 of last year, my colleague announced a number of concrete actions to support governments, aboriginal groups, law enforcement, and other stakeholders in tackling this issue.

Research conducted by the Native Women's Association of Canada during their five years of funding by the Government of Canada has highlighted the complex and interrelated set of factors that contribute to the high rates of violence facing aboriginal women and girls in Canada today.

The Government of Canada has already taken a number of steps to address some of these underlying factors, from the new federal framework for aboriginal economic development, the commitments as part of Canada's economic action plan to aboriginal skills training and employment, and budget 2010's investment in aboriginal health programs, to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's family violence prevention program and CMHC's shelter enhancement programs on reserves, and many others.

But because this issue is important, involving an all too real tragedy for the women involved, for their families, for their children, and for their communities, the government wanted to consider how best to use the additional \$10 million to achieve concrete action.

The concrete steps announced on October 29 of last year include: a new RCMP national police support centre for missing persons that will provide front-line police officers with more comprehensive information on missing persons across jurisdictions; amendments to the Criminal Code in Bill C-50, currently before the House, to improve the efficiency of investigations into serious crimes, including those that involve missing and murdered aboriginal women; support to the development of school- and community-based pilot projects to help provide alternatives to high-risk behaviour for young aboriginal women to reduce their vulnerability to violence; support for the provinces to develop or adapt culturally sensitive victim services for aboriginal people and for families of missing and murdered aboriginal women, and for the response of aboriginal community groups to the unique issues faced by the families at the community level.

They also include: support for the development of community safety plans to improve the safety of aboriginal women within their communities; support for the development of awareness materials on the importance of breaking intergenerational cycles of violence and abuse that threaten aboriginal communities across Canada; and developing a national compendium of promising practices in the areas of law enforcement, victim services, aboriginal community development, and violence reduction to help aboriginal communities and groups improve the safety of aboriginal women across the country.

I am pleased that there has been significant interest in the Department of Justice funds. As was indicated by my colleague, there are approximately 20 projects under way.

Madam Chair, the question of missing and murdered aboriginal women is of great importance not only to the government, but I'm sure to each and every member here. The government is moving forward to respond.

Again, I thank the committee for this opportunity to appear today.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

Now we will begin our question and answer session. It begins with a seven-minute round—I'm sure that all of you know that—and those seven minutes include questions and answers.

I will begin with Ms. Neville for the Liberals.

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

Ministers, thank you both very much for being here today. We've been waiting for this, and we're pleased to have you here.

As you know and as you've referenced, the committee has focused much of its work over the last while on issues related to violence against women. In particular, during the last Parliament we studied the issue of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and, as you know, we're looking at the issue of violence against aboriginal women. We've travelled extensively in the country and have seen an ugly underbelly that exists in this country and that many of us were quite shocked to realize the full extent of.

I'm pleased that you're both here, as you're both ministers responsible for government's policies related to violence against women. I have some particular questions, and because I have so many questions, I'd appreciate your keeping your answers brief to allow me to try to get through the questions.

In 2008 the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion calling on the government to develop and implement a national violence against women prevention strategy. Has the government done this? Is there a national violence against women prevention strategy?

• (1140)

Hon. Rona Ambrose: We have addressed the issue of violence against women in many ways. In the Status of Women department, we've made ending violence against women our number one priority. Interdepartmentally, we also have an initiative to ensure that the issues of domestic violence, human trafficking—

Hon. Anita Neville: I don't want to be rude, Minister, but is there a strategy that has been developed, an actual strategy? I'm assuming that if it's there, you could table it with this committee today.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: On the issue of murdered and missing aboriginal women, yes: a murdered and missing aboriginal strategy that was announced in October is a national strategy to address this issue.

Hon. Anita Neville: What about a violence against women prevention strategy? That was the motion passed by the House in 2008.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: As I said, the Status of Women department has made the issue of ending violence against women its number one priority. In terms of our national approach, we work not only with all provinces and territories on these issues but also with organizations in every order of government and with community organizations all across the country.

Hon. Anita Neville: What I'm hearing, though, is that there is not a developed strategy, an organized strategy. There are initiatives, but not as part of a comprehensive strategy.

It's my understanding the government has also not prepared a national action plan on human trafficking, which makes Canada one of the few countries without a comprehensive blueprint for dealing with human trafficking. I've had the opportunity to travel internationally on this; I've heard from representatives of other countries.

Does such a plan exist in Canada?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: I think your question is very timely, because it is the issue that status of women ministers have been discussing. In fact, led by the Province of Manitoba, after a report was commissioned by the FPT ministers on this issue, there has been a great deal of work done, both in the provinces and in the federal government.

Our federal efforts to combat trafficking are coordinated and monitored now by an interdepartmental working group on trafficking in persons, which is co-chaired by the Departments of Justice Canada and Public Safety Canada. But there are a number of initiatives going on within those—

Hon. Anita Neville: Does a plan exist?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Yes, a plan exists, and I'll allow the Minister of Justice to also—

Hon. Rob Nicholson: We're actually taking concrete action, as you know. In fact, one of your colleagues from Manitoba, Joy Smith, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, introduced legislation that deals specifically with human trafficking. I'm very pleased that we're moving ahead. We're taking concrete action and—

Hon. Anita Neville: That was for mandatory minimums, Minister.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Pardon me?

Hon. Anita Neville: Is there a government plan?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: The government plan is consistent with what I just indicated. We're taking action with respect to the Criminal Code and justice initiatives. These are our plans to deal with these—

Hon. Anita Neville: Could you table that plan with us, please?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: You probably have already had Joy Smith's bill. Again, that's part of what we are doing on that. But it covers a whole wide range of areas within the Criminal Code, Madam Chair, in terms of better protecting individuals and better protecting victims.

Hon. Anita Neville: My understanding is that hers dealt with mandatory minimums.

My question is to you, Mr. Nicholson. Do you think the recent ruling in Manitoba—which you I'm sure know well—is consistent with the manner in which such jurisprudence has evolved? I know, as you do, that since 1992 there has been no such thing as implied consent in Canadian law. Do you think the ruling we had, and that clearly shocked the women of Manitoba and women across the country, is consistent with the government's message on violence against women?

• (1145)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Again, I don't comment about cases, particularly cases within the appeal period. But with respect to the general question of standing up for women and standing up for victims in this country, we have been very consistent. We have taken the side of victims. That has been demonstrated across a wide range of legislative initiatives. Again, we don't tolerate violence against any individuals. We don't tolerate it against women. I know it was addressed by my colleague, but again, we're very careful about making any public comments within the 30-day period.

Hon. Anita Neville: I appreciate that—

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Good.

Hon. Anita Neville: —but I would like to follow up on that because it is such an important ruling. Can you ensure that as part of the judicial training that takes place in this country there will be a component—if it's not already there—that deals with the reality of women's lives today and some of the issues women face?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Again, the judicial training component is administered at the provincial level, among those jurisdictions, of course, that have the responsibility. But I can tell you that in my discussions with provincial Attorneys General—and I agree with them—this is certainly a priority and it must continue to be a priority.

Hon. Anita Neville: I would have liked a clearer response on that.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Neville.

Now we will go to Madame Demers from the Bloc Québécois.

[*Translation*]

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

Good morning, ministers.

Minister Ambrose, I want to commend you on your French. Thank you very much. I also want to commend you for giving the Native Women's Association of Canada \$1.9 million so they could continue with their project Evidence to Action. It was very encouraging to hear that.

However, when we toured aboriginal communities, one of the most urgent problems we saw had to do with shelters. There were not enough shelters, or they did not receive adequate funding to operate properly, or they were too far away from the communities. As a result, shelters were having to take money that would normally be used for operating costs to pay the travel costs of women who wanted to come to the shelter, given that the plane ticket for one woman cost between \$1,500 and \$2,000.

Did you take that into account in the plan you talked about earlier to reduce violence against aboriginal women? That is one of the biggest problems.

We also find it appalling that there is no transitional second-stage housing for these women after the shelter. They often have to live at shelters for nearly a year, even though they are not normally supposed to spend more than 30 days in a shelter for battered women, and certainly no more than 1 to 3 months.

Minister Nicholson, we know that a large chunk of the \$10 million went to public safety, even though a lot could have been done from a justice standpoint to improve the situation of aboriginal women. How much of that money is administered by your department? And what specifically are you doing in your department to improve the situation of aboriginal women?

Lastly, what is happening with prisons? It is a fact that aboriginal women make up a large part of the female prison population, and very often, these women do not have access to the various programs out there. Was that also a consideration when you developed your programs?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: The \$10 million is over and above that which is already allocated from INAC, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

As you know, the CMHC shelter enhancement program, the five-year program, was part of it. There are provisions with respect to native health, which is an important component of that. A number of initiatives come within the purview of the minister responsible. So the \$10 million that was included in the budget is over and above that, and again, my colleague—

• (1150)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Minister Nicholson, what is happening with the prison programs available to aboriginal women?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: In terms of what exactly?

Ms. Nicole Demers: I am referring to programs that are available to aboriginal women in prison. Most of them do not have access to the social reintegration programs available in federal prisons. Are you doing anything to address that?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Within the public safety initiative there are programs sensitive to the issues of aboriginal women within the federal prison population, but I think your initial question was with respect to the \$10 million. This is over and above any initiatives that have been undertaken by Public Safety and in addition to any additional funding that has been announced with respect to INAC. Again, the \$10 million—

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Yes, I understand, Mr. Minister. Forgive me for interrupting, but you are not answering my question.

Minister Ambrose, where do you stand on aboriginal women's shelters?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Sure. It's a very important issue to have shelters available and accessible to women who are experiencing violence in any community, but particularly in the aboriginal community because, as you said, sometimes there are issues of isolation and distance to deal with. There are a number of things.

My colleague is talking about some of the prevention strategies, and we have a number of projects that we fund, which I mentioned in my opening remarks, to deal with prevention. Beyond that, the government has also committed, as you know, to \$50 million, which is the highest amount of funding ever, from the INAC department for aboriginal on-reserve shelters. This is an important step forward. CMHC also has funding available for transitional housing components. For the first time, the Status of Women department has opened up proposals to be accepted for second-stage housing specifically to help organizations deal with advancing strategies for second-stage housing.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Have you told aboriginal communities about that new initiative?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Yes. Actually, we're targeting aboriginal groups in this particular outreach. The agreement with the Native Women's Association of Canada for the \$1.9 million, which we just announced on Friday, also involves the work they are going to be doing with shelters and other services in the community, whether it is to develop strategies to increase access to shelters or awareness of some of the needs that are in communities. The infrastructure is there, and is provided through INAC and CMHC. Beyond that, there is the issue of prevention strategies on which NWAC is also going to be working.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Minister Ambrose, another problem exists when you consider that the provinces, territories and federal government do not have a harmonized approach to dealing with the children. Children in aboriginal communities are often taken away from their families, not because they are being mistreated, but because they are living in poverty. So the child is removed from the home.

It is no different than the residential school situation, for which the government had to apologize to aboriginal communities. We will see the same thing happen in 20 years' time. We will have the same problem because children are being sent off to live somewhere else, where they are not being taught their culture, their values or their traditions. Are you going to do anything about that?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose: My understanding from the Native Women's Association of Canada is that part of their community outreach and partnerships is going to include working on this issue. Also, some of the programs that Justice Canada has put forward, in order to look at some of the cultural sensitivities that we need to deal with when we address violence in the aboriginal community, will address this. I think where we will find solutions is by partnering with the aboriginal community and with others, whether they're law enforcement agencies, social services, or other service providers that we can work with.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Demers.

You are over the time. *Merci*.

Madame Boucher, for the Conservatives.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good morning, Minister Ambrose, Minister Nicholson and members of the committee.

As you know, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women has spent a lot of time studying violence against aboriginal women. We have had numerous discussions in the House about missing aboriginal women. We have often asked questions. And that is why you are here today. As the parliamentary secretary, I appreciate having this time with you so you can explain what the government is doing about this issue.

Minister Ambrose, in your opening remarks, you talked a lot about SWC projects targeting aboriginal women. What is the scope of these projects? The government is carrying out a number of pilot projects and programs as part of its SWC mission, initiatives involving violence against women and so forth. Could you please explain to the committee the various SWC programs that the government has put in place?

• (1155)

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose: There are a number of different programs, but in the last number of months, our focus by and large has been on ending violence against women, and, more specifically, targeting vulnerable women, that is, aboriginal women and girls, and women in our immigrant and refugee communities.

We've done that by doing outreach, not only by announcing funding in these particular areas. We're also doing outreach and targeting these communities and asking them to come forward. Whether it's by holding round tables or by Status of Women officials going into regions to meet with different women's organizations, we are proactively asking them to come forward.

We've also changed the way in which we evaluate our projects. I mentioned in my opening remarks that we're moving to a continuous intake process. The reason for this is that a lot of women's organizations have very little capacity. Many of them are run by volunteers and don't have large budgets. Putting together complex proposals can be very challenging for them, so we have changed to a continuous intake process, which allows the officials to work on an ongoing basis with women's organizations to address some of the challenges they have in putting forward proposals to the Government of Canada.

This allows us to work with them and not just shut the door on a particular project. We help them along, giving them concrete advice on how to shape their proposals. In the end, we all have the same goal, which is to support good, solid projects that will provide services to women and girls across this country. That change has been very successful.

As you know, we have our three priorities of ending violence against women, encouraging economic security, and promoting leadership in women and girls. Those are the three target areas that we have been focused on.

As I mentioned, recently we opened up a new way in which we're looking at projects. It's called the blueprint project and has been incredibly successful. We just announced it a short time ago and already have about 320 proposals for projects in front of us. This specifically asks women's organizations to come forward with projects that increase the recruitment of women in non-traditional work; that retain and promote women in non-traditional and under-represented sectors, such as construction, engineering, and science and technology; and that increase women's involvement as decision-makers in community-based organizations.

As I said, these projects provide organizations with just another way in which they can come forward and another funding mechanism to allow them another opportunity to access funding from the Government of Canada. We're trying to be innovative and

we're trying to be flexible, and we have found ways to do that in the last number of months. We're seeing a huge uptake from women's organizations.

I think these changes have been positive. They've been well received and successful. We'll continue to find ways to be innovative and to adapt these kinds of ready-made ideas so that we can accept more good ideas from women's groups.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Do I still have time left, Madam Chair?

[English]

The Chair: You have about two more minutes, Madame Boucher. I'll let you know when you're running out of time.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Last week, you went to New York, and I want to commend you. While you were there, you met with some NGOs. What was the feedback you received regarding our work on the ground?

• (1200)

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose: The conference was focused on the issue of education and increasing women's participation in science and technology, in under-represented sectors. The feedback was good, particularly on this issue. There was good feedback on the fact that we have announced this new project framework, the blueprints. As I said, it's been very well received and is already oversubscribed, which is good news.

We've also made sure that these projects target aboriginal women and immigrant women. Again, the issue is around vulnerable communities. If we're talking about education, science, technology, or engineering, our projects still have the priority of targeting vulnerable communities like aboriginal women and girls and our immigrant and refugee populations.

It was very well received. We had a strong Canadian delegation that had very good experience on the issues of promoting women and the equality of women in these non-traditional and under-represented sectors. I heard that, by and large, it's something that provinces, territories, and the federal government have to work on together. Because of course not only does it include the way we raise our young girls in society to believe they can achieve all the things that little boys can, but it also includes having good role models and addressing things as complex as the glass ceilings in our post-secondary institutions.

We heard from many, many Canadian NGOs at the conference that do good work. They raised issues of social inequality and issues of poverty, but also more complex issues that we need to tackle as a society, such as things like the glass ceiling in our post-secondary institutions, as I've said, which we sometimes see. There were a number of different issues, but I think our message was well received in the sense that we have shown we are acting within the Status of Women program to support organizations that are putting forward good projects to support women in leadership and to support women breaking through those glass ceilings in non-traditional areas and sectors.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll now go to Ms. Mathysen for the NDP, please.

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

I'm very glad to see both ministers here today. We waited a very long time to have a chance to talk to you.

I'd like to start with you, Minister Ambrose. In 1995 when the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women was cancelled, Status of Women Canada introduced the policy research fund. It was supposed to facilitate research. It's very clear that research is fundamental if we're going to understand what's going on in terms of women.

Sisters in Spirit established a database, and that database became integral to government's understanding the depth of violence faced by aboriginal women, and it compelled people to finally take action. The problem is that under the new situation in Status of Women Canada, in 2006 the research and advocacy portion was cancelled, and Sisters in Spirit can no longer access research dollars. In other words, that important database that has begun the progress we hope to eventually make is in jeopardy. That concerns me very much.

How will we preserve this database? How will we make sure the information is there so that Sisters in Spirit can continue to support families and communities and women at risk? If it's not there, important work is lost.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: I'll ask Kevin Jones to address that. The RCMP will be dealing with the database issue.

I will just say that the database was incredibly important, and of course Sisters in Spirit is able to continue that work. That is a project of NWAC. The Native Women's Association of Canada has been incredibly well supported by this government, not only in funding from various departments across the government...to just this year, I think, resulting in almost \$10 million in support from different government departments.

On top of that, as you know, we in the Status of Women department funded Evidence to Action I, their first project, and Evidence to Action II, last week announced, which will allow them to take that information and the good work they have developed through their database into the communities to partner with law enforcement agencies, social workers, teachers, and a number of service providers in order to address the root causes and come up with prevention strategies for dealing with violence against aboriginal women and girls.

In terms of the database, announced in the action plan for murdered or missing aboriginal women was a database that all law enforcement agencies would be able to access across the country so that this would be a priority for all of us.

I know that the Native Women's Association of Canada has been meeting with the RCMP about integrating their data into the new database, so I'll turn it over to Mr. Kevin Jones to comment on that.

● (1205)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Yes.

Inspector Jones, I have other questions, so just very quickly, will that data be preserved and protected?

Insp Kevin Jones (Acting Director General, National Aboriginal Policing Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): The RCMP doesn't have control over whether Sisters in Spirit can preserve and protect their own database. At this point in time we're working with them, hoping that type of information will inform the databases that are being developed within the RCMP. We have the two databases; one will be a law enforcement database, and then we have the national website.

Through our meetings with Sisters in Spirit and NWAC, we're hoping that we'll be able to use that information. Any information that we can receive obviously will help us to be able to effectively deal with this issue that we feel very concerned about.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

Minister Nicholson, one of the things we've discovered in our research and our travels is that violence against aboriginal women isn't perpetuated just in the larger world, in the community; there's also the violence that's perpetuated by government. I'm referring to the report from the correctional investigator, Mr. Howard Sapers. He talks about the fact that aboriginal women make up an inordinate number of those who are in prison, that many of them are mentally ill, that in fact 30% of the women in prison are aboriginal despite the population being about 4% of the Canadian community.

These women have been sexually abused. They're subjected to a management protocol that essentially puts them in isolation. I'm very concerned.

Mr. Sapers' report recommended that there be a deputy commissioner for aboriginal corrections, and recommended very strongly that the management protocol be rescinded.

Now, I hope you're not going to say that this is somebody else's bailiwick, because you're the Minister of Justice. What can you do to guarantee justice for those aboriginal women who are suffering in solitary, who are not receiving treatment?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: I appreciate that you're asking me a question with respect to public safety, but in terms of the component and my particular interest and the interest of the Department of Justice, we have administered and continue to support the aboriginal justice strategy. This is coordinated by the Department of Justice, and it works in conjunction with a wide range of other levels of government and aboriginal groups to reduce the rates of victimization, crime, and incarceration among aboriginal people.

It's one of the programs, quite frankly, that I was quite impressed with when I became justice minister, the idea of getting and supporting those individuals who obviously don't want to be incarcerated and want to have an alternative. I was very pleased with that.

In addition, it goes in conjunction with the Department of Justice aboriginal court worker program, to make sure that people who get involved with the criminal justice system are aware of their rights and aware of the help they may be able to get. I mean, a number of programs are administered at the Department of Justice, but I think they work in establishing connections, sensitivity, and making sure that every effort is made to assist those individuals who have unfortunately come in contact with the law.

Again, I have been impressed with the programs. These are over and above the initiatives, announced in the last budget, with respect to missing and murdered aboriginal people. Those programs continue. I think they've had a great success rate.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you.

If we are really very succinct, and people look at me to know that they have so much time left, we can do a quick three-minute round, but I mean a quick three minutes.

We will begin with Ms. Neville, for three minutes.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm finding the time limits here very frustrating.

I want to go back to the \$10-million announcement on the missing and murdered women.

Minister, in my mind it has some very serious shortcomings. You know that at the time the Native Women's Association was not consulted. We know that a significant amount of the money goes to institutions that are far removed from aboriginal women. We know that it doesn't address the jurisdictional issues of the RCMP.

In the original budget announcement or throne speech announcement, it appeared that the \$10 million was going to aboriginal women. It has been redirected away from women and families and put into other bodies or organizations. Why? How do you account for that?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: I hope you don't mind my taking that.

I'm disappointed that you're not pleased and not supportive of the initiatives that have taken place within that \$10 million. To say that the money going towards the RCMP initiative that will have comprehensive missing persons data accessible by all police forces, I have to tell you, Madam Neville—

Hon. Anita Neville: In 2013, Minister.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: No, I just want to complete that thought. Our investigation of this very difficult problem points out a number of shortcomings, and one of them was the lack of communications between various law enforcement agencies across this country.

I have to tell you that I, for one, was very pleased to see that initiative with respect to the RCMP to coordinate that activity so that there's instant access. What I have been told is that sometimes these things will become isolated. An individual becomes a victim in one

particular community, but the information wasn't being transferred or wasn't accessible by other law enforcement agencies. I appreciate that Mr. Jones is here from the RCMP, and again, I appreciate that Public Safety has a lead in this area, but I, for one, was very, very pleased about that, because what I heard was that this is one of the major challenges in solving these cases: the lack of coordination between law enforcement agencies.

I want to tell you as well that this is a matter that I also have discussed with my provincial counterparts. As you know, the administration of justice and policing, for the most part, is at the provincial level, but again, I was very pleased about their awareness of this and their willingness to undertake that cooperation. So I think it's one of the major components of that \$10-million strategy, but again, I hope it gets your support, because this is exactly what I heard was part of the problem in this very difficult area.

Hon. Anita Neville: Minister, there was no consultation and the women felt duped.

The Chair: Your time is up, Ms. Neville.

Thank you, Ms. Neville.

Mr. Boughen, for the Conservatives.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Let me add my voice of welcome to my colleagues in welcoming the two ministers to our meeting this afternoon.

I have just one question. First of all, let me acknowledge the work of both ministries. From your reports, it's been a very, very busy year, with a lot of time, energy, and dollars going into the programs you've initiated.

Could you share with the committee what's happening down the trail? If you look forward into 2011, we're into month three of a twelve-month timeframe, of course, and I'm just wondering what kinds of issues and events you are looking at in terms of the two ministries as you continue to work with this committee around issues affecting women. I'll just open it up.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Thank you, and thank you for that question.

I do want to just make sure that the issue of consultation is addressed with regard to the Native Women's Association of Canada. I can't underscore enough how well and how diligently and proactively our officials have worked with the Native Women's Association of Canada. They have a very long-standing relationship with them. Before the missing and murdered aboriginal women strategy was announced, Minister Nicholson and I briefed the president of the Native Women's Association of Canada about the components within this particular strategy that involved the RCMP, Public Safety, and community organization funding to work with a number of different women's organizations and aboriginal organizations on prevention strategies.

So this was a very holistic approach, and as I've said, the federal ombudsman for victim services, Sue O'Sullivan, commented after the announcement of the \$10-million program for missing and murdered aboriginal women, that this was the kind of initiative—because it included prosecution and prevention strategies—and the kind of breadth of initiative that the government should focus on more.

I think that speaks volumes to the consultation that was done, not only, as Minister Nicholson said, with provincial justice ministers and public safety ministers across the country, but with law enforcement agencies at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels, including the RCMP, about how to tackle this very difficult issue of murdered and missing aboriginal women.

Beyond these, there's the centre for missing persons for police forces across Canada to access. There's also, as Mr. Jones mentioned, a national tip website for missing persons, which is also incredibly important in sharing information across the country with Canadians who may have had a glimpse of someone who is missing. I encourage Canadians to take note of that as well.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Ambrose.

Now I will move to Monsieur Desnoyers from the Bloc.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome to both of you.

I listened as you talked about a number of projects and announced several others. For the past few months now, we have been hearing from various groups in different communities across Canada. Whether the topic is education, prevention, health, funding, murders, the abduction of women or the hundreds of unsolved cases, there seems to be a total disregard for what is happening in those cases, both on and off the reserve.

My colleague mentioned the Sisters in Spirit initiative, which produced outstanding work.

Given all the measures you announced, how long do you think it will take to solve the problems of aboriginal women?

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Again, I don't think there is a willing disregard on this issue. I think there's a much greater awareness. I notice that a number of the studies go back to the 1990s.

In terms of investigating this problem and assembling the data that points out this terrible problem—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Another colleague of mine asked whether you had a plan. Would I be right to say that, in 15 years' time, the problems facing aboriginal women will still not be solved, whether they are related to violence or incarceration? Do you think 15 years is acceptable?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose: I think I'd like to say that it wouldn't exist at all today, but it does. Unfortunately, there are root causes of violence in the aboriginal communities that include things like poverty and racism, and this is why it's incredibly important for us to work with organizations, aboriginal organizations, across the country, and to partner with people like the RCMP and Justice Canada, because this has to be a multi-pronged approach. We need prosecution, we need prevention strategies, and we need community organizations to be involved in a culturally sensitive way.

So we are partnering with those aboriginal organizations to make sure we get this right, and as the federal ombudsman for victim services said, this is an excellent initiative that's been put forward by Public Safety and Justice Canada to partner with all the right organizations. It's an important step forward. I think all of us have a commitment to end violence against aboriginal women and girls, and we hope that this kind of awareness and these kinds of programs help to diminish this issue.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will go to Ms. Mathysen for three minutes.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister Ambrose, in your remarks you talked about the investment in the women's program. You indicated it was the highest...I am assuming that is because it's a very important investment in terms of the work of Status of Women Canada. My question is, since it is obviously important, why was \$1.4 million taken away from the women's program in the year 2011-12?

• (1220)

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Sure. That's a reflection of the estimates. It was not reflecting that there was a decrease, but reflecting that there was actually a holdover of that amount of money from the previous year. But we can get you the information for that.

Suzanne may like to comment on that.

Ms. Suzanne Clément (Coordinator, Head of Agency, Office of the Coordinator, Status of Women Canada): As we've mentioned before in front of this committee, there was an amount of \$1 million that had been re-profiled from 2008 into 2010, so that amount is no longer reflected in the main estimates, and there was a reduction in the operating budget for the Minister for Status of Women, given that it was not a stand-alone ministry.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

I'd like to ask another question of you, Minister Ambrose. You've made a number of official speeches, and in those speeches, you've never used the term "gender equality". That was a term that was used quite extensively before 2006. You use the phrase "the equality between men and women".

I'm very concerned, because words do matter, and gender equality is key to our understanding of what it is we're trying to achieve. It goes to the notion of unpaid work for women. It goes to the concern about work-life balance, affordable housing, the need for a national child care program and, of course, violence against women.

I am wondering why you would abandon that term. Was there pressure to abandon it? Why would you forego something so key that is at the essence of advancement for women?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: I can reassure you that there is no abandonment of anything. In fact, I'm very committed to the issue of gender equality. I consider myself to be an advocate of women's rights. I always have been and will continue to be.

If I do talk about equality between men and women it is sometimes because I'm trying to reach out to women, and to the men in our community in particular, to get more involved in the issue of gender equality. I think that sometimes just mentioning the words "men" and "man" and including them in some of the projects we're doing is helpful.

Gender equality continues to be of paramount importance, obviously, in all of the work we do at Status of Women Canada and in my personal professional life. I hope that reassures you.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Were you—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen. I'm sorry.

We've come to the end of the questions. The ministers have indicated they would like to leave at this point in time.

Or are you prepared to stay longer?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Thank you very much for this appearance and good luck in your deliberations.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Thank you, Madam Chair. We appreciate it.

The Chair: Thank you.

• _____ (Pause) _____

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• (1225)

The Chair: I hope we can begin. What I wanted to do is tell you that you still have the officials here, who will answer questions, so I thought we would do that for the next 20 minutes. Then we'll have 10 minutes to do some housekeeping.

We will go, then, with a five-minute round, starting with Ms. Simson for the Liberals.

Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for appearing today.

Primarily, I have questions for you, Ms. Clément. I hope you can help me.

I am concerned about the funding of a lot of the projects that Status of Women gets involved in. Specifically, we've heard from groups across the country that the funding is erratic and that it tends to be at the last minute if they do hear that funding is being extended. In other words, sometimes on a Friday they don't know whether they can open the door on Monday.

I understand that we have financial challenges right now in the country that we're trying to meet, but two weeks ago I had the opportunity to attend the *Ghosts of Violence* ballet, which had been

provided \$317,000 by Status of Women. It was a beautiful production—and don't get me wrong, I'm a patron of the arts—but that said, I was certainly left wondering whether that was a good use of our resources. Quite frankly, the point was missed, and not only by me. I was there for opening night and didn't hear one comment about the content and the message it was trying to drive home.

I guess I have a concern about how the money is prioritized. Are you, for instance, asked for your feedback? Quite frankly, to see groups like Sisters in Spirit have their funding cut, in favour of something that in my mind was clearly a Heritage Canada issue, had me a little concerned.

• (1230)

Ms. Suzanne Clément: To deal with the question on the funding decisions being erratic, I'll refer back to the changes the minister mentioned earlier that were made to the women's program to be as responsive as possible to the needs of community groups. We are working very closely with community organizations as they develop their projects, and at the point at which the projects are complete and presented to the organization for assessment with the other departments, a very, very short period of time is taken. We're now having decisions on projects within three to four weeks from the time that a final proposal is submitted to us.

In terms of groups, if groups are making those comments, as you know, the women's program is for one-time funding, for actions that are taking place in the community to help women directly. We're not a funding source for ongoing and operating funding for organizations.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: That was made clear.

The issue I have with respect to this is that there is no interaction with the stakeholders in terms of programs and that it's top-down. We're telling these organizations that in order to receive funding, they have to fit into this little box, which would be fine if you're consulting with them as stakeholders to ask whether that is actually going to do the job or be effective.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: In launching the blueprint project in early February, we worked through our regional program officers across the country, who had been working with organizations closely. We consulted them to find out what the predominant issues were that organizations wanted to work on.

We developed six themes that were recurring across the country. We developed what the proposals could be like, with a number of areas that could be filled in by the organizations themselves. We launched the project and invited groups to come in with their proposals.

We've received over 320 proposals. Organizations said that this was an innovative way of reducing the work they had to undertake before they could come and obtain funding from Status of Women.

Sisters in Spirit was an NWAC project that ended on March 31. The work between Status of Women Canada and NWAC, however, did not end on March 31. We had a project funded with NWAC for \$500,000 at the end of March, and now a \$1.9-million, three-year, community work project that has been recently announced.

•(1235)

The Chair: Thank you.

The next round goes to Ms. O'Neill-Gordon for the Conservatives.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for staying to answer our questions. We appreciate your time.

In our minister's presentation, she mentioned that \$19 million in grants and contributions to organizations was going to support more than 350 projects. I have three reserves in my riding and I know that some of this money has gone to them.

Will the Status of Women funding for aboriginal shelters for women and their children be increased to meet the gap between what is currently available and what is needed to keep women and their children safe?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: The Status of Women program does not permit us to fund the operation and management of shelters. What we do, however, is work with community organizations to try to address the ongoing funding issue, to address the recruitment of specialized health practitioners, and to address the need to network with other shelter organizations across the country to put in place good practices. The initiative called Uniting to End Violence Against Women was meant to do just that: to ensure that shelters across the country share the good practices and learn how best to approach their situation.

We did one project in Nunavut where there was a lack of shelters for women in Iqaluit. Our funding was used to develop expertise and to get funding from local governments and the provincial government to help create a shelter with day care initiatives built into it.

Our funding continues to be available to help communities address the need for shelters. One of the helpful new initiatives in the women's program approval process is that we're bringing in other federal departments to discuss and review the assessment of projects submitted to us. Wherever a shelter project is being proposed, we invite officials from HRSDC, CMHC, and INAC to join the discussions. We believe that we are building a much better awareness of the needs and bringing organizations into working more closely together.

The other initiative that Status of Women Canada has been working on is reinstating the shelters initiative as a priority under the family violence initiative, which brings together 17 departments to look at this issue. Shelters in the north is one of the key elements being looked at.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon: Thank you.

That's fine.

The Chair: All right.

I will move to Madame Demers for the Bloc Québécois.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon.

Ms. Hitch and Mr. Rozon, a number of the witnesses the committee has met with have told us that many aboriginal women end up being arrested because they were victims of violence who did something about it. After being battered for a very long time, they finally hit their breaking point and turned on their attacker. And very often, these women are charged and put in jail.

The committee has heard repeatedly that the department should definitely conduct not only a gender-based analysis of legislative measures, but also a cultural analysis of the legislative measures specifically affecting aboriginal women and this issue. Has the department undertaken to do that?

•(1240)

Ms. Lisa Hitch (Senior Counsel, Office of the Senior General Counsel, Family, Children and Youth Section, Department of Justice): Forgive me, but I will answer in English, if you do not mind. It is a bit hard for me to answer in French.

[English]

This is not my area. I am not working with the criminal law. I can tell you that there are programs within the department, as the minister mentioned, that specifically look at and try to deal with the issue of overrepresentation of aboriginal people, men and women, within the justice system. Some of those are in the aboriginal justice strategy, which looks at setting up—

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Are you with the Department of Justice?

Ms. Lisa Hitch: Yes.

Ms. Nicole Demers: And if a gender-based analysis of legislative measures had been undertaken, you would know about it, even though it is not your area of expertise, would you not?

[English]

Ms. Lisa Hitch: We are now at something more than 1,500 lawyers, so I may not be aware of all of the studies the department is doing. I can certainly undertake to get back to you on whether there is such a study within the department.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Please.

Mr. Rozon, are you aware of such a study? No? What is your job at the Department of Justice?

Mr. Marc Rozon (Director, Innovations, Analysis and Integration Directorate, Department of Justice): I am the director of the grants and contributions program.

Ms. Nicole Demers: So if such a study were under way, you would probably know about it.

Mr. Marc Rozon: Not necessarily, because they would probably come under the criminal law section.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Ms. Clément, did the department ask you for any training programs to undertake this kind of study, given that you are the champions of gender-based issues?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: We communicate with the Department of Justice, just as we do with other departments, about training for gender-based analysis. We did not receive a specific request for a such a study, but we do it at the institutional level.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Yes, but since there are so many problems, especially in terms of female aboriginal prisoners, do you not think it would be commendable to do such a study, in order to really hone in on the problems and fix them? Otherwise, it is just a vicious cycle.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: I can only agree with you, because it is commendable to do a gender-based analysis of the federal government's policies, programs and services.

Ms. Nicole Demers: What must you do, then, in order for the department to be able to undertake such a study? Can you suggest it?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Yes. That is what we do when any piece of legislation or policy is being developed. In addition, whenever the government introduces a bill or a new policy, the department has an obligation to show that this exercise was undertaken.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Was it undertaken in the case of the new bills on minimum sentences?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: I cannot confirm that now. I can check and get back to you on that, but I do know that nothing can happen at the central agency without that kind of research.

Ms. Nicole Demers: I would like a detailed outline of the bills that seek to impose minimum sentences to see whether they have an effect on women.

Ms. Clément, can you tell me why production costs for the *Women in Canada* publication were not included in your operating costs in Status of Women Canada's main and supplementary estimates?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: The costs?

Ms. Nicole Demers: I am referring to the publication costs of *Women in Canada*. Senior officials told the committee that funds were transferred. During our review of the supplementary estimates, we learned that funds were transferred for the *Women in Canada* publication. Status of Women Canada funds were used instead of including the costs in your regular budget.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Numerous departments contribute to the publication costs of *Women in Canada*. Approximately 12 departments make a financial contribution. Some departments have transferred the funds to our budget, but others are going to pay those costs directly.

Are you referring to the \$25,000 and \$10,000?

Ms. Nicole Demers: Yes.

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Those were the amounts contributed by Health Canada and the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec to Status of Women Canada in order to pay Statistics Canada.

Ms. Nicole Demers: The research is done every five years—
[English]

The Chair: Madame Demers, I'm sorry, but we've gone well over time. Thank you.

Now I am going to go to Ms. Mathysen from the NDP.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for staying and providing some supplementary answers.

I think I want to continue on from Madame Demers in terms of questions about the operation of Status of Women Canada. It's my understanding that it is responsible for providing strategic policy advice and gender-based analysis support in regard to the women's program. So essentially, I believe, it would be correct to say that Status of Women provides advice to other ministries and organizations within government.

That leads me back to the question I asked the minister in regard to the rescinding of research and advocacy in 2006 within the department. Things are I think presenting a rather grim picture. For example, in regard to gender equality rankings by the World Economic Forum, Canada has slipped from 14th in 2006 to 31st in 2008. When you see those kinds of statistics, it's very clear that there is a huge wage gap between men and women, and we're not making the kind of progress....

Do you have an opportunity to live up to your function as providing strategic policy advice? Are you asked? Did anyone ask you about the wage gap? Did anybody ask you about the fact that the long-form census will no longer require a question about unpaid work? Did anybody ask you about the impact that the loss of the research component would have on Sisters in Spirit?

● (1245)

Ms. Suzanne Clément: Status of Women Canada is responsible for the coordination of policy and the implementation of GBA across federal organizations. We belong to the groups of ministries or departments that are invited to all of the interdepartmental committees in preparation for any new legislation or policy. Our role in those meetings is one of providing advice on gender issues and ensuring that an analysis is done and the impact is measured. That would happen with any matter going before cabinet for a decision.

In terms of women in Canada, the funding has been provided by a group of departments that believe in the use of that information and that research in developing their policy and in developing their programs. I was very pleased to see the reaction by departments and the willingness to work with us and Statistics Canada to ensure we have the kinds of information needed to do some informed policy.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: So you don't feel at all hobbled by the fact that the data you'll be receiving—because there is no research, because there is no long-form census—will be compromised?

Ms. Suzanne Clément: We've had assurances from Stats Can—we had meetings with Statistics Canada at the time of the decision—that the information we have been using as part of our "Women in Canada" report will be sustained and in fact improved. For example, on the unpaid work chapter, through the GSS and the NHS we'll be getting more information and more data than we have had in the past.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I'd like to shift gears and talk to the folks from Justice.

Last week there was a very significant case in Manitoba. A judge gave a convicted rapist basically a slap on the wrist. The judge blamed the victim, saying essentially that she was provocative and her behaviour on the night of the attack was flirtatious, and essentially dismissing the seriousness of the charge.

This has sent some very negative signals to the women's community. I can tell you that for years and years women have tried, with some limited success, to push back against those kinds of attitudes. It seems to me that at the root of this is a lack of understanding, of training.

Will the department and would Status of Women also be vigorous in terms of ensuring that all judges receive appropriate gender-based training? Now, I know the argument about—

• (1250)

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen, we are over our time.

I'm going to give Ms. Clément 15 seconds to have a quick answer. We have work to do here.

Justice, will you please answer, in about 15 seconds?

Ms. Lisa Hitch: What I can say again is to undertake one more time to get you that information. The Department of Justice has been

working for many years with judicial education institutions to talk about mandatory training, but of course, as you realize, training is done at arm's length from the Department of Justice, within the judicial community.

The Chair: Thank you.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here.

We really have some business to do right now. I would like us to go in camera for the business, please. This means that everyone who can vacate the room should do so.

We have another meeting coming in at 1 o'clock, so could everyone be very quick please?

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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