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Ms. Marie-Claude Morin

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• (0845)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP)): Good morning, everyone. We are going to begin.

Welcome to the 52nd meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Today, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are continuing our study on sexual harassment in the federal workplace.

This morning, in our first panel of witnesses, we have Serge Jetté, from Conflict Management Services at the Treasury Board Secretariat. Then, from Status of Women Canada, we have Linda Savoie, Director General of the Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate, and Kelly Bradley, Acting Chief of Human Resources.

Welcome, everyone. Thank you very much for accepting our invitation.

Let me tell you about the procedure this morning. Each organization will have 10 minutes to make its presentation. Then we will proceed to a round of questions. For information purposes, I want to let you know that, since we are timing everything, I am going to tell you when you have one minute left, just to make things a bit easier for you.

Perhaps we can start with you, Mr. Jetté, if you don't mind. You have 10 minutes.

Mr. Serge Jetté (Manager, Conflict Management Services, Human Resources Division, Treasury Board Secretariat): Thank you very much.

Good morning, everyone. My name is Serge Jetté and I am Manager of the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) Conflict Management Services and of the Harassment Prevention Program.

My presentation will give you a brief overview of the sexual harassment in the workplace situation at the TBS. I will also briefly go over the 2011 public service employee survey results on harassment. I will end with an explanation of our practices in preventing and resolving harassment situations brought to our attention.

First, I must say that, since 2000, no sexual harassment complaints have been filed at TBS. Regarding the 2011 public service employee survey results for employees who said they had experienced harassment in the workplace, TBS results were very similar to the public service results, with 28% of employees stating that they felt they have experienced harassment over the past two years. The TBS

has taken serious steps to improve its performance the next time. I will tell you about them in a minute.

However, the results also called attention to some very positive aspects of our work climate: the vast majority of employees (91%) report that everyone in their work unit is accepted as an equal member of the team, regardless of race, colour, sex or disability. The vast majority (81%) state that their organization treats them with respect. Over 95% of employees report that their work relationships with colleagues are positive.

Let us now look at the measures taken by the Secretariat.

Following the survey results specific to harassment, TBS took steps to ensure that employees were actively provided guidance and education, as well as assistance, regarding harassment in the workplace.

The department therefore introduced an action plan in response to the survey results. This plan requires that all TBS managers and supervisors take a half-day workshop on preventing harassment in the workplace before the end of February 2013. The plan also specifies that all TBS employees must have taken this workshop by the end of June 2015. Finally, the plan also requires that all new employees who join TBS and have supervisory responsibilities must take the workshop. It is a half-day workshop.

• (0850)

[English]

This workshop that everybody has to take endeavours to explain what constitutes harassment, what does not constitute harassment, what to do and where to find help if you experience harassment, what resources are available within the department, how these resources can help employees and managers, what steps are taken if an employee files a harassment complaint and the guidance or protection they will receive, and the obligations and responsibilities of management and employees in regard to harassment.

Basically, the initiative aims to better equip all employees and managers to recognize, report, and manage harassment and inappropriate behaviours in the workplace. The evaluation from these sessions shows that they're effective and appreciated.

Further on the matter of prevention, in 2011-12 the secretariat published a brochure for employees that explains what is and what is not harassment and where to go to get help. This brochure is shared and distributed at the many workshops and courses that we offer in house.

How do we process harassment complaints when they're brought to our attention? Our approach at the secretariat is first to encourage an informal resolution, the goal being first and foremost to make inappropriate behaviours stop. When employees come to see us, we try to accompany them in trying to resolve the situation informally, without necessarily having to go formal with a complaint and an investigation and all of that. We want to offer them the opportunity, because that's often what they want. They want the situation to stop.

The nature of the service we offer when they come to us is that we're neutral, we're confidential, and we're informal when we resolve through the informal approach, and employees feel less threatened in coming to discuss their harassment-related concerns with us.

The importance of this approach is confirmed in the latest TBS policy on the prevention of harassment, which goes so far as to mention that officers in charge of the harassment prevention program must be qualified in informal conflict management. In other words, they must be thoroughly familiar with such alternative conflict resolution methods as active listening, empathy, mediation, and facilitated conversations and they must be capable of using them.

TBS is one of the few departments in which the harassment prevention coordinator is also an informal conflict resolution practitioner, and therefore, a mediator. The coordinator is the one who receives, informs, and supports the parties in question when an employee is considering the possibility of filing a complaint or files a formal complaint. This ensures that someone listens and that expert resources are on hand to try to prevent and resolve harassment cases.

This concludes my presentation.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We are now going to proceed to the question period.

No, I am sorry. We are now going to hear from Linda Savoie from the Status of Women Canada. I apologize.

You have 10 minutes.

Ms. Linda Savoie (Director General, Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate, Status of Women Canada): Thank you.

[English]

As previously stated, I'm the director general of the women's program, and I'm accompanied today by Ms. Kelly Bradley, who is our chief of human resources. Both of us are the departmental coordinators for the prevention and resolution of harassment in the workplace. It's in this capacity that we're here today.

Status of Women Canada is a federal government agency which, like all other departments, adheres to the policies and directives established by the Treasury Board Secretariat. This includes the policy on harassment prevention and resolution, which provides strategic directions and sets out the expected results to foster a respectful workplace and address potential situations of harassment, including sexual harassment.

Before I get into specifics about sexual harassment, I'd like to provide a bit of context about our agency.

As you know, Madam Chair and members of the committee, Status of Women Canada is responsible for exercising leadership and working in partnership to advance equality and increase women's participation in the economic, social, and democratic life of Canada. We also provide expert advice on how to take gender equality into account in developing the best policies and programs for all Canadians. We promote commemorative dates relating to women and girls in Canada. We support action and innovation that will lead to equality in communities across Canada. Finally, we support Canada's efforts to meet international obligations.

We focus on three priority areas, as you may have heard before: increasing women's economic security and prosperity, ending violence against women and girls, and encouraging women in leadership and decision-making roles.

● (0855)

[Translation]

To deliver our mandate, we have some 90 employees across the agency, the majority of whom located here in Ottawa. Our demographic profile is diverse except with respect to gender: less than 15% of our employees are men.

While we are pleased to report that, in the last five years, there have been no claims of sexual harassment filed at Status of Women Canada, we nonetheless strive to put measures in place that will help protect employees from harassment and provide them with a safe, healthy, and violence-free work environment.

More specifically, we have put measures in place to ensure the prompt resolution of complaints and we have undertaken preventive activities to help foster a harassment-free workplace. These activities have aimed to reduce the potential for harassment and, or perceptions of harassment in the workplace.

Over the last two years, Status of Women Canada has delivered two mandatory training sessions to all staff to promote and foster a healthy workplace. First, we have offered a program called A Respectful Workplace. This program was recommended by Health Canada's employee assistance program. Then this year, we have also added another training session called Communicating Effectively in Challenging Situations.

In a demanding work environment that brings together diverse individuals, misunderstandings and interpersonal conflicts are inevitable. Through these training sessions, Status of Women Canada has promoted the awareness and practice of good communication and effective interpersonal skills. We have also reminded employees that ongoing effort to demonstrate respect is everyone's personal responsibility.

Our intent is to regularly provide training that will foster a harassment-free workplace. Nonetheless, there will be occasional instances of conduct incompatible with public sector values. In such cases, like our Treasury Board colleagues, we encourage early, informal approaches to manage conflicts promptly.

At Status of Women Canada, we have also developed a three-year values and ethics plan identifying activities to promote and raise awareness of public sector values, including the value of respect for people.

Early this year, an organizational code of conduct was launched—this is a code to guide and support employee behaviours in all their professional activities.

The overarching objective of these tools and activities is to ensure consideration of values and ethics in all aspects of our business, and help public servants make appropriate decisions when faced with ethical issues in the workplace.

Thank you. Please feel free to ask us any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We are now really going to move to the question period, starting with the government side.

Ms. Truppe, you have seven minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to welcome our guests. Thank you for taking the time to come here today. I have some questions for each of you.

I'll start with the Status of Women first.

I was happy to hear in your opening remarks that there were no claims of sexual harassment found against Status of Women Canada since 2005. Do you include in these numbers the use of informal resolution mechanisms, grievances, and human rights tribunals in your general statistics on incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace? If not, could you indicate how many cases were referred to these alternate and informal resolution options during that same time period?

Ms. Linda Savoie: That would include any type of complaint through any mechanism available to employees. There were no complaints of sexual harassment in those five years.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: There were no complaints.

Ms. Linda Savoie: There may not have been any beforehand, but we only went back five years since that's the data that was accessible.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Right. That's pretty good for five years, since 2005.

I see you're undertaking a variety of training sessions for staff and there's intent to continue to offer this type of training.

Could you name and describe the types of training that you offer to employees and whether this training is applied to all employees, including temporary or contract employees?

• (0900)

Ms. Linda Savoie: Yes, certainly.

The first training we provided focused on respect in the workplace and issues of harassment were discussed. It was mandatory training for every employee in the Status of Women department, no matter

their tenure. This was followed by consultations with various individuals who have roles in terms of values and ethics in the department to see what would be the appropriate next steps. It was identified that providing better skills in dealing with difficult conversations, such as telling people how you're feeling about the way they've approached you on something, would be beneficial. This is what we focused on this year. Again, it was training that was mandatory for all employees at Status of Women.

Our next steps are going to be informed by an internal values and ethics committee that has representatives from every part of our organization. Employees from across our organization are building a three-year plan together to identify where the next priorities should be to continue to strive for a respectful and healthy workplace.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you. How long after they're hired do employees receive the training that addresses sexual harassment in the workplace?

Ms. Linda Savoie: It would depend on when in the year they are hired. However, if they're not getting the mandatory departmental sessions, employees also go through the cycle of mandatory training that is offered through the Canada School of Public Service for new employees or for employees who are getting a promotion and have to do these mandatory training sessions which include values and ethics sessions.

It's a more general approach, more values and ethics focused rather than harassment focused, but that's what they'll get until they fall into our cycle, which is approximately yearly.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: When they fall into the cycle, will they get training on sexual harassment?

Ms. Linda Savoie: That's correct.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Do you think that would be in a year, six months, or two years? Could you give me a ballpark figure?

Ms. Linda Savoie: I would say that it's unlikely an employee wouldn't get some form of training or session in the course of a year.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you.

I have a question for Treasury Board. I was happy to hear that since 2000, you've had no sexual harassment complaints filed there either. That's quite a long time.

How long have you had a harassment prevention coordinator?

Mr. Serge Jetté: Every organization has to have a dedicated employee who is in place to assist managers and employees when there are harassment complaints. In our case, the individual has been there for three years.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: It's been three years. Did you say every department has to have the equivalent of a harassment prevention coordinator?

Mr. Serge Jetté: Yes. Normally there is a point of contact in a department if you make a harassment complaint. Oftentimes the point of contact rests with HR. Sometimes it's with labour relations, and sometimes elsewhere in HR, but it's a dedicated person.

When somebody files a complaint or comes forward and wants to hear or understand how to proceed and whatnot, you need to have someone to explain to you what's going to happen in a formal or informal process. You need the same thing to support the respondent. Just because you are facing a complaint does not mean you are guilty. This person is also affected. He or she also needs some kind of support to understand how the process will unfold.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's good to know. It's nice to know they have somewhere to go, because I'm sure if there were an issue somewhere, a person might not even come forward if there were no options, or if he or she was not sure what to do.

I read somewhere, and I'm just trying to figure out which department or where this falls.... Is there such a thing in Treasury Board whereby if an employee is accused of something and maybe found guilty and is reprimanded or whatever happens, that after two years the file is expunged and actually shredded? Is that true in your area?

Mr. Serge Jetté: Yes. After two years, the file is destroyed and there's no mention.... There are two things. There's the file, which is the investigation report and all of that—

• (0905)

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Serge Jetté: —and then, if the investigation shows that the respondent was found guilty, there is a letter that goes to the respondent's employee file saying that he or she has been found to have harassed somebody—no details are included—and that's in there for two years as well.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Right. After two years, this person can move on to another department, get another job, and perhaps continue to harass, if that is the case—

Mr. Serge Jetté: Yes.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: —because the new employer would not know that there was an issue.

Mr. Serge Jetté: Exactly.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Is the point of this two-year mandate to give the respondent an opportunity to move forward? Where did the two years come from? Has it always been two years?

Mr. Serge Jetté: It's from Library and Archives. There's a policy on the lifetime of documents.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Okay, thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now turn to the official opposition.

Ms. Ashton, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Thank you.

My sincere thanks to the witnesses for joining us.

[English]

I'd like to start off with a question for Madam Savoie.

Status of Women Canada is known as a federal government organization that promotes equality for women and their full

participation in the economic, social, and democratic life of Canada. It's responsible, as we know, for providing strategic policy advice and gender-based analysis support.

You went through some of the concrete rules at Status of Women Canada. I'm wondering, with respect to other departments or other federally regulated workplaces, if you could elaborate on the kind of work you do around prevention of sexual harassment, perhaps involving culture, involving measures to ensure that a respectful workplace is in practice. Could you let us know which departments or other federally regulated workplaces you work with?

Ms. Linda Savoie: Our role has been to provide advice and coordinate policy with respect to policies and programs that affect Canadians, not necessarily the federal workplace. This being said, our primary tool, being gender-based analysis, is a good methodology that any department can apply to pretty much any issue, including its own internal approach to managing sexual harassment. While we have not been going out to offer advice with respect to sexual harassment, on occasion we are informally consulted by departments.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Have you been consulted by the RCMP?

Ms. Linda Savoie: Yes, we have. I wasn't personally involved, but I can confirm that we have had a dialogue with the RCMP. We've been able to provide them with resources in terms of experts and research on best practices in the policing field. We remain available if they require any form of advice, tools and resources primarily.

Ms. Niki Ashton: That's very important.

As you probably know, a major focus in this study is dealing with the allegations of sexual harassment that have gripped Canadians, something we find particularly disconcerting in a federally regulated workplace, as well as among the services we depend on to keep us safe.

Could you give us a timeline around this consultation? When did you start being consulted, at what stage are you now, and what kind of work might you be doing with them?

Ms. Linda Savoie: I wouldn't be able to be very specific because these interactions happen at multiple levels.

I believe it's been stated already that the head of our agency has spoken with the commissioner. Also, at the working level we have analysts who may have been exchanging information directly with some of the working level people at the RCMP. It's been happening throughout the year, so I wouldn't be able to give you an order of size or frequency without surveying the entire policy and GBA section within our department.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I understand that this is a priority for all of us. Obviously, it's something serious.

Have there been additional resources? Are there a number of people in your division or that you are aware of in Status of Women—I mean, Status of Women Canada is not a large department—who are dedicated to working with the RCMP to deal with what is a very serious situation?

• (0910)

Ms. Linda Savoie: That's not the case. Our advisory resources are available for any department that wants to get better information about gender-based analysis or tools and resources. Those are the same resources that are available to the RCMP. There's nothing that's been specifically isolated within our workforce to work with the RCMP.

Ms. Niki Ashton: As a department, you've dealt with various specific issues that affect women across the country. Does it help to have dedicated staff and resources to deal with specific areas, in terms of efficiency, for example?

Ms. Linda Savoie: Employees will naturally become more knowledgeable in certain fields as they interact more frequently with one department or another. However, the requirements for our assistance are quite variable. It would be rather unfeasible for us to start dedicating portfolios in that manner. We're a very small organization. When you have basically two or three people working as GBA experts, they have to serve everybody.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Is that the total of GBA experts for the entire analysis of anything to do with women in Canada?

Ms. Linda Savoie: All of our policy folks are quite solid on the GBA front, but as far as being dedicated to GBA, yes.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I find your feedback very interesting, in part because it's very clear.

We know from media stories and from surveys done with Canadians that what's going on in the RCMP is unacceptable and people want to see immediate action. Whether it was the Minister of Public Safety last week...there has been a recent focus on understanding the culture that is not just in the RCMP but that could possibly create a place that's more prone to sexual harassment.

What kind of leadership is Status of Women Canada providing to make sure a message is being sent around the kind of culture that could exist to prevent sexual harassment in any workplace, or frankly, in society?

Ms. Linda Savoie: Actually the primary messenger on this issue is Treasury Board as the employer. We are there to offer assistance only when departments seek some very specific tools or help, as I was mentioning. It's mostly that GBA is a good methodology for examining—

[Translation]

The Chair: I am going to have to stop you there, Ms. Savoie. Thank you very much.

Let's go back to the other side.

Ms. O'Neill Gordon, you have seven minutes.

[English]

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

I want to thank the witnesses for being here this morning. Your presentations were very well done and gave us lots of good information.

I read somewhere that as an employer, your department is committed to providing a work environment free of harassment,

where all persons in the workplace are treated with respect and dignity. We believe that the message is clear: harassment of any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Would you say this is true of your department? From what I have heard, this is a very high expectation, is it not?

Either of you can answer.

Mr. Serge Jetté: The expectation is high. Is it true? I would say, yes, but with human nature being what it is.... Based on the statistics we see, there are very few harassment complaints.

I think the key aspect of what we're trying to convey as a culture is respect, because if you have respect, you don't have harassment. There are different ways of looking at it. We want to stop harassment or we want to promote respect. Yes, we do promote respect in many ways.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: That is there, and it's very clear in your presentation that it's what you are expecting. I have to say that you are to be congratulated on this policy.

As well, I have noticed during our meetings with the different departments that have visited us in our last few meetings we continue to see a very clear expectation of a no-harassment policy in all of the departments. More and more every day we are seeing this in presentations being given to us. As we know and you know, this takes work. It takes high expectation. It takes leadership, and of course it takes training.

Are there separate training documents developed for managers, and what do those include?

• (0915)

Mr. Serge Jetté: Right now we offer the same workshop. I would say it's 90% the same for employees and managers. We're now offering workshops for managers, because sometimes there are questions or issues that are different from a management perspective. However, managers are also employees and they also have a manager. The content is 95% the same.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Okay.

Is it the same with you, Ms. Savoie?

Ms. Linda Savoie: In our case, the workshops are the same, except that we try to put managers together in the workshop so that we can discuss challenges associated with management.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Okay.

At what intervals will refresher training be offered?

Mr. Serge Jetté: In our case, at the time of the previous survey, some training was offered. It was mandatory in some sectors. It was based on the sector's action plan. Right now the plan is to make sure it's an ongoing requirement for entering managers, so through that means we're assured that anybody who's a manager or supervisor will have received the training within six months of entry. For employees, there's no plan for a second cycle.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Okay.

You mentioned in your remarks that Status of Women has put measures in place to ensure the prompt resolution of complaints. Could you name and describe these measures?

Ms. Linda Savoie: Primarily we encourage informal discussions with your manager to start with. As we are very small and we have very few complaints, I can't say we have a lot of experience managing these types of issues. At this point in time, our experience has been good.

The challenge with a small organization such as ours is that an informal mechanism of that sort relies very much on trust, and you have very few people to go to. You are basically dealing with a limited pool of people to whom you can address your challenges. If a person is not comfortable addressing this with their manager, we have to encourage them to discuss it with another manager.

Primarily we try to encourage better communications and prompt reporting to their management. Those are the first steps.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Do you have something you want to add? No.

Can you describe the benchmarks you are using to ensure that these measures allow for the quick and effective resolution of complaints? How do you put this into practice?

Mr. Serge Jetté: When you say "these measures", what do you mean?

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: I mean the benchmarks. How do you make sure that this is happening, that they are reporting any....

Mr. Serge Jetté: When people file formal complaints, we keep track of them.

I'm not sure I understood the question.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: I know that you have expectations. I'm just wondering how you go about measuring whether it's all working well.

Mr. Serge Jetté: That's a very tough one, because the number of complaints filed doesn't tell the story at all. If you have an organization that has 40 complaints filed, it could mean that people feel safe coming forward and that the organization will take action. If you have an organization that has zero complaints filed, it could mean that people are scared or that people don't trust management or whatever.

I think the survey is one good indicator of whether harassment is happening. People can say whether they perceive that they have been harassed. That doesn't mean they have been. That's their perception.

That would be one of the best approaches to measure that.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

The floor now goes to Ms. Sgro for seven minutes.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Welcome to the witnesses. I appreciate the fact that you're here today to help us on the study we're doing.

We continue to talk about how the policies sound great and look great on paper, but don't necessarily produce the results we ultimately want to have, which is a safe environment.

Ms. Savoie, the mandate of Status of Women Canada has not changed since 1977. Again, the words sound wonderful, but is it not time they were updated? Is a review of the mandate called for to bring it more into the 21st century?

• (0920)

Ms. Linda Savoie: Those are not decisions within my purview. I'm here to implement the policies, not to suggest their content at this point.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Okay, that's fine.

Mr. Jetté from Treasury Board, I'm concerned about the issue of the two years for erasing the record. That could pose quite a problem when someone who has a serious problem says the right things and gets it to go away.

What does it take for someone to be fired from the public service for harassment or sexual harassment? This has to be hypothetical, because I'm asking you a question you probably....

Mr. Serge Jetté: What I can tell you is that the quantum of the discipline to be applied is determined by management. It's a delegated responsibility in collaboration with human resources, labour relations. When a harassment situation has been investigated, and it is well founded,

[Translation]

the delegated manager will have to meet with the people from human resources to discuss disciplinary action. I am honestly not qualified to explain what the degree of sexual harassment or harassment has to be for dismissal. I don't know.

But I can tell you that, if it is a case of sexual harassment,

[English]

we will inform the employee, if she or he comes forward about sexual harassment, that this is also a criminal offence. She or he could bring charges criminally. We inform people of that. If somebody comes forward with a formal complaint about sexual harassment, we would also inform our security folks. However, I can't tell you about discipline measures.

Hon. Judy Sgro: How often are people transferred out of a department as a result of harassment complaints?

Mr. Serge Jetté: I've never seen it in my limited experience, but I know that it is more frequent that somebody, one of the two parties, would be transferred out of a unit. Sometimes that's the remedial measure that is taken.

Hon. Judy Sgro: If the immediate attempt at fast resolution... because often it's an attitude, it's a culture in a department or an individual. That's just the way they are and they don't have that perception of what may not be offensive to them is clearly offensive to me or someone else. All the rules will not change that. When you are going through your hiring process and your interview process, how do you look for the kinds of sensitivities that are required when you're in the management level? How do you identify that? Sometimes it stands out and other times it doesn't. We often hear, especially in some of the things that we've heard, that some of the people you would least expect to be accused of sexual harassment are.

It is difficult to identify. If the individual doesn't want to come forward and lodge a complaint—and, I would say that people do not come forward and lodge these complaints easily—and if someone in a department observes someone else who is being treated disrespectfully, bullied, or whatever, in your policies are they encouraged or allowed to come forward and lodge a complaint on behalf of someone else?

Mr. Serge Jetté: No, you have to be the subject of the harassment to lodge a complaint. If you witness it you cannot lodge a complaint.

Hon. Judy Sgro: How often are you reviewing your practices?

• (0925)

Mr. Serge Jetté: Actually, we've been reviewing them over the last three years when I came in, and that's where we adopted an approach that is much more aligned with trying to accompany the parties and to offer informal conflict resolution. Right now we're in the process, through all these workshops we're offering, of giving out a questionnaire which has three questions. We are asking employees based on their knowledge of the organization and the practices what they think would be necessary to reduce any kind of harassment, what kind of management practice they think should be addressed, or whatever.

We are trying to get a better understanding of why 28% of people say they've been harassed when we have very few complaints in reality. That's the challenge to understand. One of the hypotheses is maybe people don't understand the real definition of harassment. You can feel harassed, as I said earlier, and you could be exposed to inappropriate management practices, or inappropriate behaviour, but it's not necessarily directed at you, or complying with the definition of harassment as we have it.

In that sense we are always questioning ourselves to try to understand how we can make the workplace more respectful, and when people feel they have been the subject of inappropriate behaviour they can come forward safely and that some action will be taken to support them. It's ongoing.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now proceed to the second round of questions.

Ms. Young, you have five minutes.

[English]

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Thank you to our panel for coming.

I found the information that you shared most interesting. I'm very impressed by the small number of harassment complaints that there actually is.

I'm going to ask a set of questions and I'd like both departments to respond to them, if possible. Some excellent questions already have been asked covering a variety of things, so I want to focus on the program and why it seems to be working particularly at Treasury Board where there has not been a complaint for 12 years now, and as well with Status of Women Canada where it's been seven years since there has been a complaint.

Obviously you're doing many things right to inform and educate your staff and to create a respectful workplace because you haven't had any complaints. We may even say that you are perhaps a model department.

Can you give me a quick overview, each of you, of your staff?

For Status of Women, you had some of those statistics in your presentation, but how many staff are there at Treasury Board?

Mr. Serge Jetté: We have about 1,900 employees.

Ms. Wai Young: You have 1,900 employees. Is this across Canada?

Mr. Serge Jetté: It's mostly in Ottawa. I would say it's 95% in Ottawa.

Ms. Wai Young: You have obviously been implementing these various workshops, and you have pamphlets.

Is it possible for the committee to get a copy of your workshop pamphlets and outlines, please?

Mr. Serge Jetté: Yes.

Ms. Wai Young: Obviously it's very effective, and we need to see what's working.

Mr. Serge Jetté: Okay.

Ms. Wai Young: That would be great.

It would also be great to have a job description for your harassment prevention coordinator. Obviously, he or she is doing a very good job.

With these particulars and tangibles, which hopefully we will receive copies of to review, I'd like to ask you a couple of things. When you put all of your staff through this training course or workshop, is it a half-day workshop or whole-day workshop?

Mr. Serge Jetté: It's a half-day workshop.

Ms. Wai Young: It's a requirement within the department, of course.

Mr. Serge Jetté: Yes.

Ms. Wai Young: Management probably gets a bit longer workshop and a bit more training, as you were saying.

Mr. Serge Jetté: No, they get the same half-day workshop, but they are together as managers.

Ms. Wai Young: Okay, great.

Mr. Jetté, have you primarily been overseeing the implementation of this whole program?

Mr. Serge Jetté: Yes.

Ms. Wai Young: You would have the best experience with this program.

Mr. Serge Jetté: Yes, the coordinator and I would.

Ms. Wai Young: Right.

With 1,900 staff and a half-day workshop, would you be able to—not today, of course—pull that into resources in terms of staff time and your time? How much resources are Treasury Board putting into this particular area of combatting harassment?

• (0930)

Mr. Serge Jetté: There are no additional resources. It's the harassment coordinator himself who delivers the training. We are using a large room and we have 40 people at a time in the workshop. We deliver one or two workshops per week. This year, we are focusing mainly on managers. We have more or less 400 managers, or anybody who has supervisory responsibility.

In terms of necessary resources, that's what it is. For the next 24 months, it's going to be ongoing for employees.

Ms. Wai Young: What I am hearing is that you have pretty well integrated this harassment training into your existing department, and certainly into your existing training structure at Treasury Board.

Mr. Serge Jetté: Yes. It's an in-house course.

Ms. Wai Young: That's great.

Obviously, it's a priority.

Mr. Serge Jetté: Yes, it is.

Ms. Wai Young: Great.

I will ask Madam Savoie the same questions.

Ms. Linda Savoie: Of course we are in very different circumstances, being 90 employees in total. Everyone has multiple responsibilities. We do not have a dedicated person who does only that.

Our approach has been to integrate our values and ethics, respect for people's values, and harassment discussions, into a number of approaches. For instance, we have "Executive News", which is sent to employees. The head of the agency will speak to an issue around values or respect. We have training. We have that values and ethics three-year plan. We integrate our—

[Translation]

The Chair: Unfortunately, I have to stop you there, Ms. Savoie, because Ms. Young's time is up. Thank you very much.

It is now Ms. Ashton's turn for five minutes.

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton: I will start off and then pass it on to my colleague, Madam Hassainia.

What we have heard on various occasions to this point, and certainly because of the RCMP, but more in general, is that

Canadians are wanting to see, and we want to see, a champion when it comes to an effective approach around sexual harassment. There has been a fair bit of work done around training and a framework that makes it clear what is and isn't acceptable and what happens when sexual harassment takes place.

Going back to your previous point, Madam Savoie, around the lack of dedicated staff working with the RCMP, or perhaps with others, around specific experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace, I am a bit alarmed that there hasn't been a kind of champion's mentality given to you. Again, this is not your decision, but it seems to me that we would want to see a department, and what better department than the Status of Women, take the lead role in this.

Some years back, in 2006, Status of Women Canada suffered a \$5 million cut, which was 37% of its budget. I am wondering what departments—and perhaps if your department—were affected by those cuts.

Ms. Linda Savoie: I'm not sure I'm getting the question, I'm afraid.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I will just clarify. Did the \$5 million cut mean jobs were lost in your specific division and/or among other people working for Status of Women Canada who may or may not have played a role in dealing with sexual harassment or building a more respectful workplace for women across Canada?

Ms. Linda Savoie: Thank you for clarifying that.

There were some job cuts, but they had no effect on our mandate for Status of Women relating to sexual harassment in the workplace. Our role has been to coordinate policy and provide advice on policies and programs that affect Canadians, not federal employees.

That was also the case during those years.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Where were those jobs? In which divisions of Status of Women did people lose jobs?

Ms. Linda Savoie: I am familiar with the job cuts in the programming area, which is the arm of the department that provides funding for projects and communities across the country. We've reorganized our resources and continue to deliver our services but with a different model.

• (0935)

Ms. Niki Ashton: I appreciate that answer.

I'd like to go back to the answer that was shared with us initially about there not being a need for dedicated staff to deal with the RCMP or whoever might be experiencing a really serious situation. If everybody can deal with that stuff, then when we lose some, and 37% is no small number, even with reorganization, it seems to me there is a lack of capacity. Certainly two or three gender-based analysis experts indicate as much.

That certainly shows how important it is to have this work done openly in workplaces across the country.

[Translation]

The Chair: Is that a point of order, Ms. Young? What is it about?

[English]

Ms. Wai Young: Madam Chair, I find that the questioner is putting words into the witness's mouth. She's already said that they're not responsible for sexual harassment policies across the bureaucracy. That's not their role or mission.

I would ask her to please not put words into the witness's mouth.

[Translation]

The Chair: That is not a point of order, Ms. Young. However, I would ask our members to stick to the study on sexual harassment.

Ms. Ashton, you have 40 seconds left.

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you very much.

With respect to Treasury Board, women and men have expressed that if they come forward with allegations of harassment, they fear retribution. What's in place to make it clear that won't be the case?

Mr. Serge Jetté: There is often that fear and all kinds of other fears related to that. We are trying to inform the complainant as much as possible about the mechanisms in place to protect against reprisal and about the neutrality and fairness of the process.

[Translation]

The Chair: I am sorry, Mr. Jetté, but I have to stop you there. Thank you very much. It is sometimes ungrateful to interrupt people like that, but I don't have a choice.

The floor now goes to Ms. James for five minutes.

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome to our guests.

I have a question directed to the Treasury Board. Ms. Sgro and Ms. Truppe referred to records being shredded or set aside, tossed, eliminated, and so on, after two years. I'm just wondering how that applies to a particular individual if maybe a second incident occurs, whether it's related to the same individual or perhaps a second individual. What happens? Are those files linked together? Is it one file with multiple dates? Will that file be shredded based on the date the file was opened or the date of the last incident?

Mr. Serge Jetté: I can tell you that we keep the file for two years. If there is another incident, it will be put in the same employee file for which there have been two incidents. When there is a new incident, labour relations keeps the file. They don't destroy anything. Let's say you have a harassment complaint, and then a year later another complaint comes in. Both complaints will remain on file for two years.

Ms. Roxanne James: In theory, it could be three years for the first incident that was logged. Would it still be on file for three years at that point, based on your example?

Mr. Serge Jetté: That's my understanding of how the labour relations files are maintained.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

I've asked other witnesses this question. It's been referred to as the million dollar question. I'm glad that you pointed this out, because it's clearly in your statement that there have been zero formal sexual harassment complaints filed at Treasury Board. Yet, in the survey done, as you said, 28% said they had a perception of harassment.

As politicians, most of us have very thick skin, otherwise we wouldn't be here. Certain things that may bother another individual roll off my back, personally. When we get into the issue of perception, that's a very difficult thing to identify. I'm going to narrow it down to the second set. You said that 91% of employees felt that "everyone in their work unit is accepted as an equal member of the team, regardless of race, colour, sex or disability". There is 9% missing from that equation.

I'm wondering, based on the 9% who responded, whether there was any type of trend. Were the respondents who were not happy with that particular question found in one area? Did you see a focus?

● (0940)

Mr. Serge Jetté: No, we don't have any breakdown of the 9%, as to why they answered that way.

Ms. Roxanne James: Was it anonymous? Was there no name on the survey? Okay, I guess you can't answer that question. Thank you.

My next question is directed to the Status of Women. In your opening remarks, you talked about developing a three-year values and ethics plan, and then you said that earlier this year, an organizational code of conduct was launched. Is this a booklet, guidebook, presentation, memos, or is it simply a plaque sitting on someone's wall?

Being from the private sector, I know that sometimes a company will launch something and it sounds great, but what does it actually mean? What is the organizational code of conduct?

Ms. Linda Savoie: It's a physical document. When the "Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector", which applies to all public servants, was launched, we accompanied it with our own code of conduct. It examined issues that our employees had told us were more relevant to them. It complements the "Values and Ethics Code". These are physical documents that were brought to the attention of all our employees in the spring, when we did performance assessments for employees. Everyone was directed to look at them, and to acknowledge that they were familiar with them.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

Going back to the Treasury Board, I believe in the opening remarks you talked about encouraging an informal process for resolution. We've heard from countless witnesses about alternative methods or dispute resolution and how effective they are. Now we're seeing a low percentage of sexual harassment, or even harassment. Do you attribute that to some of these informal resolution or alternative dispute resolution processes that are in place?

There may be problems in certain areas, but we've heard from witnesses that there are very few incidents reported. I'm trying to figure out what the best practices are.

Mr. Serge Jetté: Yes, I've seen people come forward in the informal conflict resolution program with concerns of being harassed or feeling harassed. Through the support we provide and the intervention we do with them, we often resolve the situation or allow them to start exploring what exactly is going on, what they can do about it, what conversation they could have, what—

[Translation]

The Chair: Once again, I have to interrupt you, Mr. Jetté.

That concludes our discussion with the first panel of witnesses.

Thank you very much, Mr. Jetté, Ms. Savoie and Ms. Bradley. It was very interesting. Enjoy the rest of your day.

I am going to suspend the proceedings for a few minutes so that the witnesses from the second panel can get organized. If you want a coffee, this is the time to get one.

● (0940)

(Pause)

● (0945)

The Chair: If I may, we are going to resume the proceedings. We do not want to keep our witnesses waiting.

Let me remind you that this is the 52nd meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Today, in our second panel, we have Marielle Doyon, Caroline Weber and Charles Vézina from the Department of Public Works and Government Services. Also joining us are Yves Vaillancourt and Pat Langan-Torell from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Let me first explain the procedure. Each organization will have 10 minutes to make its presentation. I am going to let you know when you have one minute left. Then, we will proceed to the question period, during which I am also going to give you a one-minute warning; it will be easier that way.

We are going to start with the officials from the Department of Public Works and Government Services.

You can start, Ms. Doyon.

Ms. Marielle Doyon (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources Branch, Department of Public Works and Government Services): Thank you.

Good morning, Madam Chair, ladies and gentleman.

My name is Marielle Doyon and I am the Acting Assistant Deputy Minister of the Human Resources Branch at Public Works and Government Services Canada. With me today is Caroline Weber, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Corporate Services and Strategic

Policy Branch, and the departmental champion for gender-based analysis. Also joining me is Charles Vézina, Director of Labour Relations and Ethics.

We appreciate your invitation to address the committee concerning PWGSC's directives and experience in respecting various legislative and policy instruments related to sexual harassment.

As indicated to this committee by the Treasury Board Secretariat, federal government departments, including PWGSC, adhere to a number of laws, policies and directives which address harassment, including sexual harassment. We are also subject to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

● (0950)

[English]

I would like to assure this committee that PWGSC is committed to providing to its more than 12,000 employees a workplace that is harassment free. We believe that prevention is the cornerstone of our strategy.

At the outset, for the period from 2009 to 2012, 34 harassment complaints were filed, 17 of which met the requirements to be receivable. After investigation, 14 were determined to be unfounded and three to be founded. Of the three, two sexual harassment complaints were founded and disciplinary action was taken.

I will first address PWGSC's compliance with the legislative and policy focus aspect of harassment, given the nature of the committee's invitation.

We apply Treasury Board Secretariat's policy on harassment and the directive on the harassment complaint process and follow the guides on the application of harassment complaints. In addition, we have also developed a departmental guideline on dispute resolution of harassment in the workplace and a prevention of harassment in the workplace fact sheet for managers.

In early October of this year we took advantage of Treasury Board's renewed policy on harassment prevention and resolution and the new directive on the harassment complaint process as an opportunity to reiterate the department's commitment to a harassment-free workplace. We did so by disseminating these documents and reminding all PWGSC employees of everyone's responsibilities for preventing harassment and fostering a respectful workplace.

Our department is also conducting a gap analysis to ensure that the department's instruments on harassment align with Treasury Board's new policy instruments. This is expected to be ready and completed by January 2013.

[Translation]

Moreover, PWGSC has six designated officials responsible for the application of the policy on harassment prevention and resolution and the directive on the harassment complaint process. Within our regional offices, the regional directors general are responsible for managing the harassment complaint process; in the National Capital Region, that responsibility lies with the Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources Branch.

These designated officials, have access to our internal national harassment prevention coordinator should they require advice in the application of the policy or the process. The national coordinator is also an expert resource for labour relations advisors involved in harassment files, as well as to the parties to harassment situations, and reviews all allegations before an investigation is launched, suggesting informal resolution options when appropriate.

PWGSC follows a rigorous process when dealing with harassment complaints, including those of sexual harassment. This process is comprised of six steps. The first is early problem resolution where the objective is to resolve any situation or conflict as soon as possible, in a fair and respectful manner without having to resort to the complaint process.

If this avenue is unsuccessful, the second step concerns filing the complaint where a written complaint is submitted by the complainant, which includes the facts required for assessment.

Then, at step 3, we proceed with the screening and acknowledgment of the complaint.

At step 4, we review the complaint to determine the best avenue of resolution.

In all complaints, at step 5, we offer mediation to the parties as a voluntarily means to resolve the matter.

Finally, when required, at step 6, a harassment investigation is launched using an independent firm.

As you may have guessed, these cases can be very complex and difficult for all parties involved. We strive to complete the process as expeditiously as possible—in accordance with the six-month time frame mandated by TB policy. Unfortunately, some cases take longer.

• (0955)

[English]

I want to reiterate that our emphasis is on prevention. PWGSC includes sexual harassment within the general definition of harassment, and the preventive activities I am about to describe reflect that.

We believe that communication is key, and we regularly emphasize the deputy minister's and senior management's commitment to fostering a respectful workplace. We also make information available about the harassment complaint process, harassment prevention strategies, and the resources and tools available to assist managers and employees via our departmental website, during our various training sessions, and through communications to all employees.

PWGSC's core values include leadership, and we encourage managers to engage in discussions about ethics. We also encourage managers to remain vigilant and to identify risks in their work units that may give rise to harassment. To do so, we provide managers with tools designed to help with diagnostics and dialogue.

To support both managers and employees, we offer scheduled and ad hoc training sessions on harassment awareness and prevention. We have included harassment awareness in the department's mandatory values and ethics course, called "A Step in the Right

Direction", as well as in code of conduct training sessions. We also offer coaching and advisory services to address conflict incidents to prevent them from escalating to possible harassment cases.

We acknowledge, however, that prevention measures are not always sufficient, and we take ongoing measures to minimize workplace issues and conflict through the use of mediation, facilitation, group intervention, and coaching. This ranges from offering effective workplace relationships workshops targeted to employees and managers across the department to offering workplace assessments to scan the health and state of the workplace.

[Translation]

Following founded cases of harassment—and regardless of whether the harassment allegation was addressed through formal or informal means—the department will apply corrective and/or disciplinary measures. The department will also engage in restoration of the workplace to minimize the negative impacts on employees and to ensure their well-being and productivity through information and awareness sessions or content-specific training at the group and individual levels. These sessions deal with subject matters such as harassment, discrimination or organizational well-being and are delivered by our internal specialists.

I would like to conclude by describing recent initiatives.

In the spring of 2012, to guide employees on their workplace behaviour, PWGSC released a departmental code of conduct, in which our standards of conduct were embedded. One standard specifically prohibits engaging in discriminatory practices and supports a workplace free from harassment and violence. Beginning next fiscal year, we will be measuring the effectiveness of the harassment complaint process within the department. Collaboration with key stakeholders, including bargaining agents, will be undertaken during these exercises.

[English]

The department has a well-established disciplinary council comprising senior departmental representatives which is chaired by the associate deputy minister. The PWGSC disciplinary council provides high-level guidance and recommendations to the deputy minister on matters of discipline for which he or she is generally accountable as a deputy head. It provides an opportunity for the senior management cadre to review the more serious discipline files within PWGSC.

The council specifically meets for all cases where a disciplinary termination of employment or demotion of an indeterminate employee is contemplated by the delegated manager.

As well, any founded cases emanating from an internal disclosure under the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act will be brought to the disciplinary council before the required posting on the website.

In addition, by exception, if a manager would like to discuss any other particular sensitive file at the council, even if a disciplinary termination or demotion is not contemplated—

•(1000)

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Doyon, I am going to have to stop you there. You have run out of time, unfortunately. I apologize for not giving you a warning, but I was following your brief and I saw that you were almost at the end.

Ms. Marielle Doyon: Okay, I guess I was not able to make my whole presentation within the allotted time.

The Chair: You were not able to go over the conclusion, is that it?

Ms. Marielle Doyon: Yes, but that's fine.

The Chair: However, I am sure that you will have an opportunity to do so during question period.

I am sorry. Thank you.

Ms. Marielle Doyon: That's fine.

The Chair: We will now hear from the officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Ms. Langan-Torell, you may start. You have 10 minutes.

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell (Director, Values and Ethics, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today to speak to you on this critical issue on behalf of our department and our values and ethics program.

I am the director of values and ethics, and in that capacity I hold the delegated authority from the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs to administer the departmental harassment prevention and resolution policy. I am joined by Yves Vaillancourt, DFAIT's inspector general, to whom my division reports.

As an employer of the public service, DFAIT is committed to providing a work environment free of harassment, where all persons in the workplace are treated with respect and dignity. We believe the message is clear, that harassment in any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

[Translation]

Our work environment is enormously diverse by virtue of our network of missions abroad, and our employee complement is correspondingly diverse, as it is made up made up of 2,133 rotational staff serving in Canada and abroad, 3,000 non-rotational staff serving in Canada and 5,157 locally-engaged staff abroad.

Harassment is a difficult and complex issue and our challenge is to address it effectively in our demanding and culturally-diverse international environment.

In one respect, our global operational reality with its associated need to capture respect for cultural diversity in our training, has also provided an advantage of sorts. In the context of building a harassment-free environment, the same values and behaviours that promote cultural sensitivity are applicable to the promotion of a respectful workplace. Further, the Code of Conduct for Canadian Representatives Abroad, which has been in place since

January 2006, clearly delineates the behaviours that respect cultural diversity, promote operational cohesion and reward excellence. We believe that together, these are important contributing factors in explaining our relatively low incidence of sexual harassment complaints.

[English]

Underpinning culture is leadership and the influence it exerts on affecting positive change. In the context of values and ethics, this means leading by example and actively fostering a respectful, harassment-free workplace. The deputy minister of Foreign Affairs is the departmental champion for values and ethics, and from the outset his leadership on this file has been active and visible. Also, our former inspector general, a senior female manager, is the departmental champion for women.

We believe this sends a clear signal of DFAIT's commitment to harassment prevention, including sexual harassment, and on resolution across the organization. A central achievement in tackling harassment has been the recent launch of the DFAIT values and ethics code. The development of our code involved extensive soundings from across the department, including a series of video conference consultations with missions and regional offices. More than 800 employees provided input into this consultation phase. The code is tailored for DFAIT and is an important addition to our existing values and ethics resources. It contains five core values, one of which, respect for people, is clearly tied to harassment prevention and its effective resolution. It provides the blueprint for developing excellence in our organization and is the compass that guides managers to promote and maintain a healthy and respectful workplace. It also empowers employees to expect the best of their organization.

There are two internal mechanisms for making a formal harassment, including sexual harassment, complaint or grievance: a complaint to the values and ethics division or a grievance to the labour relations division. DFAIT has nine collective agreements, seven of which cover sexual harassment specifically. Related statistics for the last five years as expressed as a total are as follows. We received 47 complaints of harassment. We received four complaints of sexual harassment. There were 12 grievances of harassment, and zero grievances for sexual harassment.

•(1005)

[Translation]

Going forward, and in support of the implementation of the code, we are developing a comprehensive online training course on values and ethics. It is currently in the pilot phase and once completed and based on the feedback received, we expect to make a recommendation that the course be mandatory for all DFAIT employees.

In addition, a training deck on harassment prevention, including sexual harassment, has been developed for delivery by directors general at headquarters, by senior trade commissioners in our regional offices across Canada and by heads of mission or their delegates across our network of missions abroad.

Further, the values and ethics intranet page is easily accessible from the departmental home page. It contains specific information on harassment, including definitions, prevention and resolution instruments, mechanisms available for lodging complaints, as well as information on the classroom training available. It also includes hyperlinks to relevant Treasury Board sites.

[English]

It's generally recognized that the impact and costs resulting from any form of harassment is significant. Productivity is affected not only for the parties involved but also for the colleagues within the work group. Further, absenteeism rates increase and outputs often decrease. These can have an adverse effect on the morale of the unit.

In conclusion, we'd like to thank you again for inviting us to appear before you today to reiterate DFAIT's ongoing commitment to a respectful, harassment-free workplace to the best extent possible.

[Translation]

We are pleased to take any questions you might have.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Doyon, since Ms. Langan-Torell took a bit less time, I am going to give you one minute to present your conclusion. It was partly my fault that you did not have time to wrap up.

Ms. Marielle Doyon: Actually, I had almost finished.

[English]

I've described the disciplinary council. I just wanted to conclude....

[Translation]

In addition, to strengthen our strategy, which really focuses on prevention and dialogue, two co-champions of values and ethics—the Assistant Deputy Minister of Human Resources, and the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Departmental Oversight Branch—have been designated to promote the principles contained in the Values and Ethics Code for the public sector, including respect for people. As well, senior PWGSC executives from the National Capital Region and the regions form part of our Ethics Advisory Board, which handles ethical issues and breaches of the code.

I will conclude by thanking committee members for their time and attention. I will be pleased to respond to your questions.

Thank you very much for the additional minute.

The Chair: Thank you, that is my pleasure.

We will now proceed to our first question period and we will begin with Ms. Bateman. No, I am sorry, I made a mistake once again. It's a sign that Christmas is almost here.

Mr. Aspin, the floor is yours. You have seven minutes.

Ms. Bateman, you will have the floor in the next round of questions.

[English]

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Welcome, guests. Thank you for appearing on this important subject.

My questions are directed to Ms. Langan-Torell.

In your opening remarks, you discussed the training courses and products available to DFAIT employees. You are hoping to make the online training course on values and ethics mandatory for all DFAIT employees.

Could you please name and describe the types of training that DFAIT provides to address the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace?

• (1010)

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: At the moment, there are three courses that are given in the classroom, and there's been on ongoing engagement, both from our labour relations division and our division abroad, on sensitization.

Since 2005, upwards of 2,000 people per year have received some form of values and ethics training. The new one, our online training, is very comprehensive, and includes definitions of what harassment is, what it looks like, and a lot of scenarios and resolutions. It's in the pilot phase; actually, the pilot will finish this week. Some of the feedback we've received so far has been very positive, and we're going to adjust it accordingly.

We're going to continue, almost one-on-one or informal visits across our network abroad. That's when people come out and can really ask questions. Our LES, locally engaged staff, population, the people who are hired abroad, have to be taken care of in the same way as the people at headquarters. It's a particular challenge. We're going to continue to do those modules and sensitization training. We have found in the past that as those are rolled out, we get a lot more consultation on what constitutes harassment, which benefits early resolution.

Mr. Jay Aspin: With respect to leadership, we've heard a lot from witnesses that the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace begins with strong leadership. You mentioned that the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs and your former inspector general provided clear examples of leadership on this file.

I am hoping you will describe in further detail the specific ways in which your leadership reaches out to your employees.

Mr. Yves Vaillancourt (Inspector General and Chief Audit Executive, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): If I may, I'll take the question.

The department has structured an office of inspector general and chief audit executive. There are five business lines, one of which is values and ethics. The deputy has also directly delegated the responsibility of harassment to the director of values and ethics. The deputy minister has designated himself as the champion for values and ethics for the department. I think those are clear leadership signals. I would say that grouping together the oversight functions under my responsibility, including values and ethics, also promotes employees not hesitating to inform us when they see instances of potential harassment.

Mr. Jay Aspin: Thank you, Mr. Vaillancourt.

Could you possibly describe what actions are being taken to ensure that they're reaching everyone in the workplace?

Mr. Yves Vaillancourt: That's a very good question, and it's a particular challenge for our department.

We have three categories of employees at Foreign Affairs and International Trade. We have the regular public servants. We have public servants who are also foreign service officers and are therefore deployed overseas. Then we have the employees we recruit in the countries where we have embassies and consular offices. They are what's referred to as locally engaged staff.

It's always a challenge to reach out to all of our employees. That's why Pat's team developed this online training program which was referred to. It's the most effective way to reach out to everyone. It's training we've now piloted that will become mandatory for all employees. All employees will have access to the necessary technology to take the training. I think that's a major improvement for us.

• (1015)

Mr. Jay Aspin: Do you have any way of assessing how effective it is?

Mr. Yves Vaillancourt: Yes, we do. I'm also responsible for a function called mission inspections. I have a group of inspectors who go out to our embassies overseas to inspect the functioning of each of those offices as part of their program of inspections. We verify their awareness of values and ethics and the policy on harassment.

Mr. Jay Aspin: Would this include the LES, the locally engaged staff?

Mr. Yves Vaillancourt: Yes, it would. It's for all DFAIT personnel covered by our code of values and ethics and the policy against harassment.

Mr. Jay Aspin: In a sense, both of you regard leadership as key in this area.

Mr. Yves Vaillancourt: Absolutely.

Mr. Jay Aspin: Could you comment on how important that is?

Mr. Yves Vaillancourt: I think the tone at the top is always very important in influencing employee behaviour. The fact that our senior deputy minister, Mr. Rosenberg, has taken the leadership role on values and ethics sends a clear signal. The fact that he has created an oversight body within the department which people can go to directly and that he has delegated authority directly to my director is a positive signal.

Mr. Jay Aspin: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now go to the other side of the table.

Ms. Day, you have seven minutes.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for joining us today. We are really happy to hear from you.

I will have a few very specific questions for you, Ms. Doyon, but first of all, I will turn to the official from the Treasury Board Secretariat.

According to the survey that was conducted, 10,000 employees responded of the 12,211 male and female employees in your department. That is an excellent participation rate. Of those 10,000 employees, 28% of women said that they were subject to harassment, and of those women, 44% stated that they were subject to gender-based discrimination. That means that this struck a chord with 1,232 women of the 10,000 respondents.

We would also like to congratulate you on your awareness initiatives. That's very important in those types of situations.

I am really wondering about something. When the victims, the complainants, file a harassment complaint, the person who is the subject to the complaint is notified, correct? I am talking here about the person complained about.

Ms. Marielle Doyon: Yes, the person has to be informed.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Could that explain why some departments receive so very few complaints or why the complaints do not get very far? Do you think that this might be a factor?

Ms. Marielle Doyon: It is certainly one of the reasons why the victims always think twice before they lodge an official complaint. The process is rather complex, as I explained. That is why, when people come to see us, we are always going to encourage informal conflict resolution as a first step.

Don't forget that we have two teams on the ground that will take the pulse of the situation. We have our informal conflict resolution team and another team, referred to as the employee assistance team. So we have two teams ready to intervene when difficult situations arise and people might be hesitant to file a formal complaint. We have a team that is going to address formal complaints, of course. However, if the person is not sure and wants to test the waters because they are afraid of all sorts of things, we have two teams to deal with that.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: I would still like to dig a little further into this. In Quebec, which is my province, if you want to complain about drug trafficking, for instance, you can dial a number to report people without being scared that you will be attacked in your home or shot the next day.

You do not have a confidential complaint mechanism that makes it possible to check if the complaint is valid or not, even before solving the problem. That does not exist. The person subject to the complaint is automatically informed.

• (1020)

Ms. Marielle Doyon: It is not done automatically. I can let Charles answer your question, but, generally speaking, we will try to resolve the conflict. If there is an allegation, we will try to dig a little further into the issue. However, you can understand that the person against whom those allegations are made also has rights, and we cannot overlook them.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Yes, just like drug dealers have rights and we cannot overlook them.

Ms. Marielle Doyon: No, but it is because...

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: But an investigation will be conducted.

Ms. Marielle Doyon: ...it is not always certain.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Harassment is illegal.

Ms. Marielle Doyon: Yes, but it is not always certain that the complaints are founded. So we have to look at both sides.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: The same goes for drugs; the complaints are not always founded either.

Ms. Marielle Doyon: That's right.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: But you can conduct a search.

Mr. Vézina, what do you think?

Mr. Charles Vézina (Director, Labour Relations and Ethics, Department of Public Works and Government Services): I could perhaps add that, in terms of the respondents, as Ms. Doyon said, we have to follow the policies and respect the rights and obligations set out by the Treasury Board. The person who is accused of harassment, or even sexual harassment—which is the topic of your current study—is presumed innocent until proven guilty. We must give them an opportunity to defend themselves against the allegations, once we determine that those allegations fall under the definition of harassment, as set out in the policy.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: I agree with you. However, in this system, the victim may decide not to file a complaint because the person subject to the complaint will be informed.

Do you have any numbers or comments on the people who do not file complaints? Do they say that they are not going to file complaints, because there are unions? We really have to talk about those things.

Ms. Marielle Doyon: Yes. You will understand that it is difficult for us to say that we have numbers on something that is not official; we do not.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Especially not management.

Ms. Marielle Doyon: However, what is certain, as I told you, is that we are using a very multidisciplinary approach in our department. We have a number of ways to take the pulse of the organization. That is why we have provided our managers with a type of guide—I talked about it in my remarks, as you might recall—to help them assess the situation. If we have heard rumours that there might be problems, we will often go and see the manager to advise them to make an organizational diagnosis to see if there are problems within the organization. We will not necessarily tell them what we know or who the employee is. Without accusing anyone, we will tell them that there might be some problems within the organization. We will make some suggestions and help them carry them out, without

making an accusation, because we don't have anything at that point to accuse someone.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Would you say that the current harassment policy is effective?

Ms. Marielle Doyon: For our department, based on what we have and what we know, we feel that it is effective. However, we are very open to any suggestions for improvement.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: What initiative would you propose to improve the system?

Ms. Marielle Doyon: At the moment, the Treasury Board has already proposed a new policy and we have made a commitment to follow it. As I said, our procedures will be fully aligned with this policy by January 2013.

We want to strengthen the message that people can come to see us as soon as there is a small problem, because we are part of the solution. That is what we did with the survey. Four actions have already been suggested through the survey to get the message across to the employees. We have already started the awareness sessions, because we really feel that we should focus on prevention. Of course, when action is taken and allegations are founded, we have to intervene. But we really feel that, since our organization has 12,000 employees, prevention is the answer. That is why we have published the standards of behaviour at the same time as our code of values.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: I have one final question for you, Ms. Doyon.

Is it just the person at the top who meets with the victims or is there a tripartite committee or another type of committee?

Ms. Marielle Doyon: Union representatives are always...

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: They are always present?

Ms. Marielle Doyon: ...invited if the person wishes to invite them. It is up to the individual to decide whether they want to be represented by their union or not.

The Chair: Thank you.

It is Ms. Ambler's turn now.

You have seven minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you very much to our witnesses for their fascinating testimony today.

I'd like to begin with Madam Langan-Torell. I want to ask a question regarding cultural diversity. You mentioned a couple of times that you strive to address this in the policy and in dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace. You deal with a unique and demanding environment internationally. You're dealing with many cultures, and I understand that you would want to respect that you're dealing with different environments culturally, but I would like to know exactly what that means and how it plays out on the ground in the real world, the piece on respecting cultural diversity.

Would you like me to expand the question?

• (1025)

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: I can attempt to answer.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: As you said, our environment is unique. It's absolutely fundamental to the system's working properly that each of our missions works properly, and fundamental to that is having all employees engaged and fully respected for the work they do.

When we send our diplomats out to a post, they have to be cognizant of what the differences are wherever they're going in the world. The world is diverse, so it's not the same training; it's very much tailored, depending on where they're going.

The key to it all, just as it is here in Canada, is respect. What we've tried to create and needed to create is that sense of respecting diversity, of embracing diversity, because it builds strength. It's an actual asset for us. If that becomes the *modus operandi*, it's easier in a way. It almost sets the stage for it to be applied more universally.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: My concern is more with the fact that you may use different approaches in different places. How can you ensure consistency of results when you do that? When a different approach is required because you're considering cultural sensitivities, how do you ensure that standards are not lowered? How can zero tolerance still be enforced if definitions of sexual harassment are different in different cultural environments?

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: They are not. Everything is by the Canadian standard in a Canadian mission. Our definition of sexual harassment is what....

Mrs. Stella Ambler: It's applied internationally.

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: It's applied universally across. When I meant tailoring, I meant not just in terms of harassment issues, but the entire cultural aspect. It's very different, for instance, dealing in China from how you might in Latin America. There are different approaches to work. Something as easy as using a BlackBerry in a meeting is fine in Latin America, but it may be offensive in a Nordic country. It's those kinds of things.

The point is more to underline that it's respecting those differences and adapting to them, but the standard is the Canadian standard across our missions around the world.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: That's very reassuring.

My concern also is with countries where women are not respected as much as they are here in Canada. I'm fairly comfortable in saying there are certain countries where women are still fighting for their rights, whether it's the right for girls to go to school or for women to work wherever they want to work, or to travel wherever they want to travel. There are still these types of barriers for women all over the world.

Do you have to take into account those cultural sensitivities? How do you do that without lowering our Canadian standards?

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: I think anybody who is hired to work in a Canadian embassy, high commission or consulate around the world will get the same rights within their employment with the embassy. Beyond that, there's not much we can do, except, of course, to continue to advocate on the foreign policy side.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thank you very much for clarifying that.

I'd like to address my next question to Public Works on the statistics resulting from the survey.

Madam Day mentioned the statistic of 44% of women who responded positively to the question on sexual discrimination. I went back to the actual results of the survey online. In the past two years, after reading the definition of harassment, when asked if they had been a victim of harassment on the job, 27% of women said they had been. That's 27% of 5,700 respondents. That's a big number in the hundreds. Yet in a three-year period, 34 harassment complaints were filed, only two of which were sexual harassment. There were two sexual harassment complaints in three years. Seventeen were not receivable and 14 were unfounded. I don't understand what not receivable means, and I don't understand how some are unfounded or what that means.

• (1030)

[Translation]

The Chair: Please give a very quick answer.

[English]

Ms. Marielle Doyon: I'll ask my technical expert to explain it.

Mr. Charles Vézina: A complaint that is unreceivable does not meet the standards of the definition of harassment, and therefore we can't receive it as such. It doesn't mean we don't deal with the situation as warranted.

Regarding a founded complaint—

[Translation]

The Chair: I am sorry, but I have to stop you there. Ms. Ambler's time is up. I have already stretched it out a bit so that you can answer. Thank you.

We will now go to Ms. Sgro.

You have seven minutes.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: I had the same line of questioning. Would you complete the answer to Ms. Ambler's question?

Mr. Charles Vézina: Yes. Of those complaints that met the test of receivability and that were sent to investigation by external third parties in our department, which is the approach, 13 were determined to be unfounded, that is, after a fulsome investigation and interrogation of the parties, not to meet the standards of harassment. Three of those were determined to be founded or partially founded after the investigative process.

Hon. Judy Sgro: If the complaint is unfounded, you have an employee who feels.... A lot is perception. A lot of us are getting used to being criticized and all the rest of it, and we just have to suck it up; that's just the way life is. There are a lot of people—men and women—who aren't able to do that through no fault of their own, but just because of their own sensitivities.

If a claim was unfounded, what was done? Was it just, “Your complaint is not founded. Goodbye and thank you very much”, or do you actually go one step further and try to change the attitude in that particular department or of this particular person? Is it just because it doesn't meet your terminology? You have an employee who's feeling that way. What gets done about it, anything?

Ms. Marielle Doyon: Usually this is why we will try, first of all, to resolve it at the informal level and to have that discussion with the two proponents. Then if they want to continue, we'll continue. We will try to have a dialogue as we go. As we said, we'll also try to intervene in the workplace to make sure that at the group level there's sensitization done, because usually it's not just one person versus another person, but there's a group that will be affected. If there is a specific topic—because it's not that we are talking about harassment or even sexual harassment, because it's all the same—we'll try to have a focused intervention with the group. This is what we'll try to do.

Hon. Judy Sgro: With all the training and other things we hear from a variety of departments, and with your six steps, my goodness, how could we ever have a problem anywhere? All the steps seem to be in place.

However, if you look at the RCMP, in their chain of command and all of that, they have all the same things, yet there are some significant problems there.

Ms. Marielle Doyon: Yes.

Hon. Judy Sgro: It's practice. It's clear there are some good things happening, in DFAIT in particular. You had 18 complaints in 2007-08, and they've gone down considerably, so somewhere someone's doing something right. Again it's a lot about establishing an attitude and that kind of leadership from the top down as to what's acceptable and what isn't.

The fact is that here we are, in 2012, doing this study specifically because of the issues that were raised with the RCMP that really have shaken our confidence at the federal level, which I think should be the exemplary employer for the country, and in many cases it is. DFAIT has a particularly difficult job with having missions abroad dealing with a multitude of different people from different backgrounds.

I want to get on to the issue of when people in a mission or in a department observe bullying or intimidating behaviour. Can an employee say something? In my opinion, if I were to see that happen, I would mention to someone that maybe they should change their behaviour. Prior to there being a complaint, do you allow someone else to indicate to a senior manager that the behaviour of a particular manager to a staff member is not acceptable and that maybe somebody should be talking to that manager? Do you have enough flexibility in the system to do that?

•(1035)

Ms. Marielle Doyon: Not only do we encourage it, but it is what we are trying to do with our dialogue and our prevention strategy. We try to establish a climate where really this dialogue is encouraged and is permitted, and where there is no fear. We try to make sure that our employees are well equipped to have that dialogue, and they are able to put it into words, because quite often it's difficult. Talking about these things is not easy, and it's not easy also for our managers. That's why we are trying to equip our managers to receive that kind of complaint, to be able to talk to their colleagues, if it's their colleagues, or maybe at more senior levels to have that dialogue and to be able to defuse what's happening, and to talk about the facts, and to not escalate it to a formal complaint.

That is what we are trying to avoid. Maybe that's why we have very few formal complaints. We are really trying to avoid them, because usually no one wins in the end. Even the complainant will not win, because it will not restore their confidence. You don't win at that. Usually, it's a long process and people will suffer through it. That's why as soon as we hear about it we try to intervene. It can be through an informal conflict resolution process. It can be through our EOAP that we try to help people. It can be through our labour relations management. It can be just in our management day to day.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Ms. Langan-Torell, would you like to add some comments from the DFAIT perspective?

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: I think Madam Doyon expressed it perfectly.

I would say it's exactly the approach we are taking. Prevention is key, and sensitization to those issues, and that spirit of openness so that people feel they can come forward. Even if it's not directed at them, they feel that they can consult and see if anything can be done.

Hon. Judy Sgro: How many women are employed at DFAIT? Do you know offhand?

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: I don't. I'm sorry, I wish I did. The numbers must be quite high, actually.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Maybe you could get those numbers for us.

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: We will, yes.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Ms. Doyon, do you know how many women you have?

Ms. Caroline Weber (Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services and Strategic Policy Branch, Department of Public Works and Government Services): As of September 30, we're estimating about 60%. Of our total workforce, 57.9% is female.

Hon. Judy Sgro: How much of that is in senior management?

Ms. Caroline Weber: It's 44.2%, which is above the availability rate in the labour market. We're pretty much above the labour market availability rates, except in a very technical area with a very small number of people, where we're missing—

[Translation]

The Chair: Unfortunately, I have to stop you there, Ms. Weber. Thank you very much.

We will now proceed to the second round of questions. We will have time for one speaker only, I believe.

Ms. Bateman, this time it really is your turn. You have five minutes.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to all the witnesses.

Your efforts and your work are really impressive. I am also very moved to see that both your organizations are focusing on prevention, which is a key aspect.

• (1040)

[English]

I am so happy to see that. We're so impressed with all of the witnesses who have come and the work that is being done.

Madam Doyon, I'm very interested in what you're saying. I'm particularly interested in the fact that Madam Langan-Torell's department has taken the umbrella, if you like, of the federal government from Treasury Board and has then tailor-made it to a unique situation, because there are many men and women in the public service of Canada who are in unique situations. Yours is very obvious, but equally there are people serving up north or on boats. I'm very interested in the fact that you have that flexibility and that you've embraced that flexibility.

You spoke about having developed five core values. My understanding is that there is a code of values and ethics for the Government of Canada, the public service of Canada writ large. You have fine-tuned that and focused in on five core values.

Would you be kind enough to share those with us? Of course respect is one.

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: They're very much based on the core values from Treasury Board. They set them and we implement them. The tailoring for us comes more in how they're applied to our unique situation—

Ms. Joyce Bateman: In the application—

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: —though we have added stewardship, I think.

Mr. Yves Vaillancourt: They're the same five values set by Treasury Board. We have respect, stewardship—please, help me out—democratic values, and so on.

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: Yes.

Mr. Yves Vaillancourt: As Pat was explaining, we've tailored this to the department's reality. This is the values and ethics code book with the code of conduct for DFAIT abroad. We could leave that with the committee. The deputy minister launched this on October 31, about three weeks ago.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: That's wonderful.

In one of your responses—this is where we can pony on to somebody else's question and get more value out of it—you said that up to 2,000 people had been trained in the prevention of harassment and in respect in the workplace over the last several years. Is that right?

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: Actually since 2005, on average 2,000 people a year have received some form of training, either in prevention, in sensitization, or in what their rights are. That has been at headquarters, across Canada, and abroad.

[Translation]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: That involved everyone.

[English]

There have been 2,000 a year since 2005. How many employees does DFAIT have in total?

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: We have roughly 10,000.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You have 10,000. Therefore, you have reached everyone and then some.

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: Well, we have quite a rotation as well. I think the approach has evolved since 2005, and the focus is now probably far more on prevention and sensitization to appropriate behaviours and respect in the workplace. It's not that it didn't exist before, but I think it has been far more focused in the last few years.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Yes, and the leadership has cemented the value of that respect.

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: Absolutely. We're very lucky in our department. The leadership is very clear on this issue.

[Translation]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: And that is always a must.

[English]

That's wonderful.

[Translation]

Is my time up, Madam Chair?

The Chair: You still have 30 seconds.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Oh, I still have 30 seconds.

[English]

You mentioned earlier that diversity is the key to success and that it's one of our strengths. Could you expand on that briefly?

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: That's a big one.

Diversity is found across the country. It practically defines Canada.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: It's a reality.

Ms. Pat Langan-Torell: Certainly with us, I could say as a department writ large, it informs a lot of the policy that will develop. Certainly we learn from different cultures and from people serving abroad. I think that's a huge benefit. One of the things they treasure the most about their service abroad is that they can absorb—

[Translation]

The Chair: Unfortunately, I have to stop you there. It is unfortunate because it was really interesting.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Thank you.

• (1045)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Bateman.

That brings us to the end of our meeting today. I am sure that people would have liked to ask more questions. There is never enough time.

My heartfelt thanks to the witnesses for joining us today. Enjoy the rest of your day.

Hon. members of the committee, I just want to give you a heads-up that, today or tomorrow this week, you are probably going to receive the RCMP report that you have been waiting for. As for the documents that were requested during the meeting, our clerk is going to forward them to you. Thank you.

Meeting adjourned.

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