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Chair

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc

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● (1100)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP)): Good morning, and welcome to the 56th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Today we are continuing our fascinating study on women in skilled trades and sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics occupations.

It is our pleasure today to welcome Mr. Ryan Montpellier, Executive Director of the Mining Industry Human Resources Council; Ms. Nancy Darling, Program Administrator, Women in Trades Training, Kelowna Campus, Okanagan College; and from Actua, Ms. Jennifer Flanagan, President and Chief Executive Officer.

Each group of witnesses will have 10 minutes for their presentation, which will be followed by a questions and comments period with the members of the committee.

We will begin with you, Mr. Montpellier. You have 10 minutes.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier (Executive Director, Mining Industry Human Resources Council): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members, for the opportunity to appear as a witness and to address the committee this morning.

My name is Ryan Montpellier and I'm the executive director at the Mining Industry Human Resources Council, also known as the MiHR council, which is an industry-driven, non-profit organization that leads the development of solutions to the industry's HR issues.

Our goal, very simply, is to build a diverse, sustainable, skilled, and safe Canadian mining workforce that is recognized globally. To accomplish this goal we do not work in isolation. We work with almost all major mining companies in Canada, with contractors, with equipment suppliers, with aboriginal groups, with post-secondary educational institutions, and with a number of other stakeholder partners.

My talk this morning aims to give you a bit of an overview of some of the labour market issues affecting the mining industry in Canada. As you all know, the mining sector employs a number of occupations that are STEM related and, in particular, I'll spend the majority of my talk this morning talking about female participation in the mining industry and some of the barriers and challenges and opportunities that exist with regard to their women's participation in the mining sector.

Let me start by providing a little bit of context as to some of the challenges currently facing the mining sector and its labour market. We're essentially facing what we've called the perfect storm. We have a sector that is growing at the same time we have an industry that is aging. According to the Mining Association of Canada, about $100 billion of new mining projects are currently going through the environmental assessment and permitting phases. Even if a small fraction of those mining projects come to fruition, that will mean a significant increase in the growth of the sector and cause a significant amount of strain on an already tight labour market.

The mining industry also is not immune to the aging workforce. In fact, about 40% of the mining industry workforce today is over 45 years old and one third of the industry will be eligible to retire in the next five years. Compounding this problem is the question of where we are going to find the next generation of miners and from where we are going to recruit these individuals. As you can probably guess, most major mining projects are not located in large urban centres. They are more and more in rural and remote locations in Canada, and many of them are fly-in/fly-out operations which, in itself, is a challenge not only to men but also to women and everyone.

Very few kids grow up today saying, “When I'm older, I want to be a miner”. This is often a second or a third career after the first few options don't work out. Also, the mining industry has not done as great a job as it could have in attracting new Canadians and women. If you put all of this together, you have a very daunting task, which is to hire what we are forecasting to be over 100,000 workers in the next decade, and that's under a very moderate growth scenario. If, as the World Bank is forecasting, commodity prices do rebound, we will need to hire upwards of 125,000 new workers over the course of the next decade. Clearly, there's no silver bullet here and there's no simple way of attracting this next generation of mine workers.

The industry today is implementing a very sophisticated strategy to ensure that down the line we have the right people with the right skills, at the right time. One pillar of that strategy is to make better use of all potential sources of supply, which includes making better use of and attracting and retaining and developing more women, more aboriginal people, and more new Canadians.

There are a number of initiatives under way that I could speak to with respect to aboriginal engagement and engagement of new Canadians, but for the remainder of my talk this morning I'll focus on attracting, retaining, and developing women in our sector.

I'd like to start by saying that women today are working in the mining industry more than they ever have before. In fact, today women represent 17% of the mining workforce—that's almost 38,000 women—and although that is not necessarily a number to be proud of, it has increased by over 40% in the last decade, so we are trending in the right direction.

● (1105)

We fully acknowledge that female participation in the labour force as a whole is much closer to 50%—it's in the 48% range—and that we as an industry have a lot of work to do to attract and retain more women in our sector.

When we drill down a little and look at the specific occupations where females do participate in the mining industry, we see that over 50% of females in the workplace are working in HR, finance, and administrative and support roles. However, when we look specifically at the STEM-related occupations, the occupations that are specific to skilled trades or production—we're talking about miners and equipment operators—we see that number fall to under 10%. For many occupations, that number is 5%. In some occupations, it's as low as 2%. In the professional and physical sciences and technical occupations—here we're talking about geology, mining engineering, the geosciences, and metallurgists—that number is about 20%, which is on par with other sectors of the economy.

Obviously, doing more to attract, recruit, and retain women is a priority for our sector. To do that, we need to knock down some of the barriers. I'd now like to give you a few examples of some of the barriers we've found as a result of some of the research we've done.

The first barrier is the lack of career awareness and the lack of interest that women have in the sector. MiHR recently conducted a survey of 2,000 career-seekers—1,000 men and 1,000 women—between the ages of 18 and 24. These individuals were looking for a career at that moment. Unfortunately, only 7.5% of women surveyed indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they would consider mining for employment, and only 8.5% of women indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that mining offered jobs that interested them.

As an industry, we need to change these perceptions. We need to do a better job of communicating with regard to the rewarding careers and the modern careers that exist in our sector.

The second barrier we have identified is around workplace culture. Studies conducted by MiHR, by Women in Mining Canada, and by the B.C. labour shortage task force have all indicated that workplace culture in the mining sector is often thought of as male-dominated and as a deterrent to women's retention in the sector.

We recently wrapped up a national survey of mining workers, an employee survey, and we found that women respondents were more likely than men to find it a challenge to adapt to mining work culture. The majority of men and women respondents indicated that it is harder for a woman than for a man to succeed in their workplace, yet 70% of all respondents did say that mining companies are putting in place programs to encourage a respectful, welcoming workplace. Clearly, 70% is a number that we want to increase, and we want all mining companies and suppliers to build workplaces that are inclusive and respectful.

The third challenge that I wanted to highlight is career advancement. Career progression and advancement is a complex topic. In our research, a lack of career advancement opportunities was identified as a barrier by women.

Additionally, research has indicated that women's careers in mining are stalling despite interest in further advancement. Our research suggests that one cause of this may be the lack of role models and the lack of direct mentorship. Without visible role models and mentors, it was more difficult for women to navigate and progress in their careers in a male-dominated environment. Also, and not surprisingly, women were more likely to have taken parental leave. In the research we did, parental leave was identified as having a negative impact on an individual's career path.

What can be done to increase participation of women in the sector and in STEM occupations in particular? Well, the first building block to put in place, I believe, is taking a long-term view and creating the supply of workers by investing in career awareness and promotion for the occupations that will be most in demand, and those are the STEM-related occupations.

Promoting a positive and accurate image of the mining industry and the careers it offers is also essential to support career awareness efforts. Employers are already doing a lot of this in supporting work placements for young women, providing mine tours, and bringing women on site. We have done a number of programs and pre-employment programs to help women transition to the sector.

The second area I would identify is that of providing more flexible work arrangements. This was identified as a key barrier in that the mining industry and our work schedules were quite rigid and were not conducive to individuals who, in some instances, also wanted to raise a family.

● (1110)

To support advancement, workplace culture must also be better understood. MiHR is currently researching workplace culture barriers, and we will be publishing a study on this in the fall of this year.

Over the next three years MiHR will be implementing our new project on addressing systemic barriers to gender equity in mining, which will address the invisible barriers that exist in current mining policies and procedures and hinder the inclusion of women. Ultimately, the project will expedite the institutional change necessary to improve gender equity in the Canadian mining industry.

Finally, many mining employers today are making remarkable strides with respect to gender diversification, and we are encouraging them to share their strategies and results. This transparency has already started at the board level with securities regulators in Canada, in Ontario and Quebec in particular, now requiring publicly traded Canadian companies to disclose gender diversity indicators and practices. Deploying a similar reporting or disclosure mechanism to all levels of an organization, not just around the board table, would encourage more companies to adopt gender diversity policies and practices throughout their organization.

I'll end it there. I think I've surpassed my ten minutes.

Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Thank you for your understanding.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We will have the opportunity to discuss this further during the question period.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Fine, thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Darling, you have 10 minutes. You have the floor.

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Darling (Program Administrator, Women in Trades Training, Kelowna Campus, Okanagan College): Distinguished committee members, thank you for inviting me to appear today.

I'd like to start with a story that will illustrate how important it is to individuals and to us as a nation to champion the cause of women in trades. It's the story of one of our participants. Her name is Kaitlin. She lives in the Okanagan College region and she came from a family in which income assistance was a generational challenge. Her mother and her grandmother had been on income assistance for years and years. In order for her to take a trades foundation program at Okanagan College, she would need to let go of that assistance, and that was a real challenge for her based on her family history. So with a lot of support and encouragement, Kaitlin decided to take a student loan and enrol in the welding program. She completed the program and within 60 days of program completion she was hired at a job site in Alberta. After eight to 10 months of work, she returned to the campus to check in and see about incentives for apprentices and also to bring her T4 slip to show to the chairperson of the welding department that she had earned over $120,000 that year. She was actually excited to file her first ever tax return to show earned income. I think for her whole family this was a win.

Just to give you a little bit of background on Okanagan College, we provide women in trades training programs across four regions of the southern interior of British Columbia. We were fortunate enough to receive funding from 2008 to 2014 through the labour market agreement funding. Currently we are receiving funding through the Canada jobs fund agreement. During this time we've trained more than 650 women who have participated in over 800 training interventions.

I'm pleased to report to you today that this ongoing investment in and commitment to skills training for women is working well in British Columbia. Prior to the Women in Trades initiative at Okanagan College, women made up only 7% of the total number of students in trades and apprenticeship programs. Over this time period, so within six years, we now represent over 13%, so we have effectively doubled the rate of participation by women in six years. There's still a lot of work to do, but the trend is going in the right direction, especially when demographics are pointing to a gap between the number of jobs that will be available and the number of people who will fill them.

We consider ourselves to be a service and support centre because our funding pays for training interventions for the women but also for a lot of different supports. We deliver two streams of training. The first one is an exploratory program that's 12 weeks long. That program is open to any woman who meets the eligibility criteria and has a general interest in exploring trades as a career. It's an all-female introductory program in which women get to have hands-on experience in five or six different trades. Embedded in this program are essential skills training and also employment readiness training. We find that these are some of the things that are barriers to women getting jobs in trades. These help women to build confidence as well as to make an informed decision about which trade they would like to pursue for a career.

The second stream of training is in the trades foundation programs like welding, which I mentioned earlier. These women are ready to be integrated into the already-scheduled trades foundation programs and work alongside their male counterparts to get ready for employment on the job. In this type of program they receive level one technical training towards their apprenticeship. Most of our apprenticeships are four years in length, and so this gives them the first year and a good start at employment.

We usually train between 100 and 110 women per year. Of the women who take the trades foundation programs and become certified in a specific discipline, 75% will become employed within six months of completing their training. Approximately 50% of the women who participate in the exploratory Gateway to the Building Trades for Women program will move on to take that next step of further training to make them more employable. Only 1% of people who take the exploratory gateway program go directly into work and become apprentices. Most of our women require further training to make a meaningful connection with the labour market in skilled trades.

We have a unique approach. Collaboration and design are important aspects of our program as is working closely with the communities where we deliver programming. Employers have been generous in allowing us access to industry mentors, and those are a crucial part of our program. The industry mentors are women in trades who have often been in trades for 25 or 30 years, from a time before these were women-friendly types of occupations. They have developed skills that are really valuable to share with our new women coming in, and so we rely heavily on our industry mentors to support our program.

● (1115)

Early engagement is vital to increasing participation of women over the long run, so we do some work with the school districts as well to try to engage the instructional staff in the K-to-12, and most specifically the K-to-9 system, to help them understand the role of trades and how important they are, because without their help in bringing that to the younger women, we are not going to get them interested. We are learning that they make their career plans in grades 7 and 8, so we know we need to be talking to them before that. And, wouldn't you know, most of the elementary school teachers are women. So we need to work with them so they're not afraid of the tools.

We deliver an event called Maker Days. This has grown out of the Maker Movement and this has been a great way to engage younger women. We do it for elementary school groups, usually 80 or 100 kids. We give them an ill-defined problem and let them work on developing a solution and building a prototype. This has been a really great way to engage women in trades and STEM activities. We also do the Maker Days as a professional development activity for the instructors, to put them through the paces. This takes a lot of their fear away so they can bring these types of activities back to their students.

At the college we also engage in other activities to focus on engaging younger people. We have a spaghetti bridge-building contest. We have RoboCup. We have trade simulators that we drag to the schools and we let everyone try to lay down a bead for welding, and we have outreach programs.

We offer participant supports to our women who are in programs. They are program-specific and tailored to meet the needs of individual women. The barriers are different for different women. We sponsor them for tuition, books, tools, and what we call personal protective equipment, PPE, which is trade-specific. Other supports include access to industry mentors, which I've mentioned, and peer tutors, as well as upgrading, counselling, and job coaches. The women in trades team provides an ear if someone is having a rough day or needs moral support and encouragement. Also, there's a referral centre for other types of supports. Participants can access fitness equipment and group classes to gain strength and flexibility to avoid injury on the job.

I'm going to give you another example, of someone named Alyssa. It shows how some of these supports come into play.

Alyssa heard about our program through a teammate at a soccer match and she was interested, so she joined the Gateway program. She was one of the very few who went to work directly after completing the Gateway program, so she became an apprentice at a family-owned construction company and was part of a framing crew. After a year on the job, she came back into college for her level-one technical training, but she really struggled with the math. She got a tutor assigned by our team, and by working with the tutor for three weeks, she was able to pass her level one and carry on with her job. After about another year, she was injured on the job and she was off work for a couple of months. At that time she considered leaving carpentry after being quite badly injured. So we assigned an industry mentor who worked with her for a period of several weeks. Alyssa returned to the job and is still working as a carpenter today. Fast forward until now, and she's on track to get her Red Seal certification by the end of this year, and we have hired her back as an industry mentor to support the new women coming into training this year.

We've been having some challenges. We have capacity issues. Our college is too small. We don't have enough space to train enough women, so we are undergoing a $33-million trades expansion and renovation project. That is going to increase access for all kinds of people. We're going to build a new trades centre and that's going to increase capacity for women, and of course, in order to increase capacity, we require further funding. The challenge is that we are only able to bid for and acquire a certain number of dollars of support for our women, and that does hold us back.

Retention is an emerging issue for women in the trades. We know there's a problem with women staying in the trade after the first year. A lot of them are dropping off after that first year. We also know that a four-year apprenticeship is not a straightforward path for many of our women. It may take up to seven years for them to complete that traditional, four-year apprenticeship, mainly because of stopping for children and things like that. Life gets in the way.

Women are struggling without mentorship on the job, and some workplaces are still less than desirable, and that makes them feel uncomfortable. So we're learning that women without adequate support on the job are leaving for other employment. We have a best practices guide for employing women in the trades. There's a free link I've included in my presentation.

I just want to finish up and say that there's a strong need for continued investment in skills training for women and other non-traditional learner groups. Additionally, we need to examine post-training employment challenges and work with employers to create the necessary conditions to support our non-traditional workers. I have noticed a positive shift in the culture and environment in skilled trades training to make it more welcoming to non-traditional participants, and as we increase the number of female participants in trades training programs, and correspondingly in industry, a new culture is emerging.

Kaitlin and Alyssa are just two of the 650 success stories that we could tell about Okanagan College's Women in Trades program. With ongoing investment from the federal and provincial governments, we could turn that number into thousands, or hundreds of thousands.

Thank you very much.

● (1120)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Darling.

We will now hear Ms. Flanagan, who has ten minutes at her disposal.

Ms. Flanagan, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan (President and Chief Executive Officer, Actua): Good morning, everyone.

I'd like to start my presentation with a brief, one-minute video clip.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: The video will be in English, but you have the translated document in front of you.

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: There's only a little bit of talking.

[*Video Presentation*]

This was taken a couple of weeks ago in Iqaluit, Nunavut. In the clip, you saw Inuit and northern girls who were part of the throat singing club learning coding skills they then used to capture the sounds of their throat songs in a piece of software and then recode those sounds into music they could then share with their friends, family, and so on. They were building STEM skills, applying their traditional culture, and learning about opportunities for the future in STEM fields.

Actua is a national organization with two decades of experience delivering programs that break down barriers to youth participation in STEM. Actua represents a national network of university- and college-based members who annually engage 225,000 youth, ages 6 to 26, in 500 communities across the country.

We work with corporate sector partners like GE, Suncor, GlaxoSmithKline, and Google to connect these youth with leading-edge STEM content and careers.

Within our broad national mandate, for the past 20 years we have led an initiative to ensure the equal representation of women and girls in skilled trades and STEM fields.

The evidence of the under-representation of women in skilled trades in STEM is indisputable. It is also well established that the early engagement of girls in these fields is critical. What needs more focus and attention within this broader topic—and where I will focus my comments today—is the significant and mounting under-representation of women in computer science and the absolute imperative that exists to engage girls in building competency in these fields now. I would argue this is a prerequisite to their engagement in skilled trades and STEM.

Encouraging girls in computer science is not only about making sure we have more women computer scientists. We live in a digital world where every aspect of our lives is controlled by computer science. Computers are revolutionizing every field from the construction trades to health care, environmental sustainability, politics, and art. If girls don't learn to code, which is really the language of computers, they will be left behind, period. Canada risks losing the critical perspective of women in the digital economy.

Over the past 20 years, Actua has developed successful models for the engagement of girls in STEM. We focus on building self-confidence and self-efficacy. We expose them to inspiring female role models and allow them to imagine themselves in these fields in the future.

Actua is annually engaging 100,000 girls in these experiences, which are not only fuelling the pipeline for skilled trades in STEM but also helping them to develop critical life and employability skills such as collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking, and financial and technical proficiency.

We apply our model to reach all girls with a significant focus on engaging aboriginal girls through our national aboriginal outreach program, which annually engages 30,000 aboriginal youth across Canada.

● (1125)

As you saw in the video, we engage with communities to make strong cultural connections that are inspiring aboriginal girls to take their place in the digital world. In October 2014 Actua and Google launched a three-year project called Codemakers to transform how youth engage with computer science.

In the early phase of establishing a national strategy, we've confirmed three big challenges. The first is an almost complete lack of formal computer science content in Canadian schools. The second is the ongoing myth among parents and teachers that because youth are such great consumers of technology, that translates into their understanding how that technology works. The third is a lack of awareness about why these fields are so important beyond just making sure we have enough computer scientists in the future. And as I have said, this is particularly critical for girls.

Actua's new partnership with Google is contributing to a national strategy to address these challenges. We're infusing our national girls program and our national aboriginal outreach program with experiences that transform the way they view computer science. We start by situating how computer science impacts their lives. We work with the girls to build technology skills so they can then apply them and design and build their own technology. We'll also address the critical topics of online safety, digital citizenship, and cyberbullying, but in a different, more empowering way.

Instead of telling the girls how to behave online, we're actually going to show them the computer science behind these messages. As we do this direct work with girls, we're also developing tools and resources to train their influencers—specifically parents, teachers, and community leaders. Through 20 years of experience and research, we know that these are the people with the most significant ongoing influence on whether girls study and stay in STEM fields. This is particularly critical for the skilled trades.

I also want to underscore the importance of the partnership with Google, not only because they're one of the largest and most ubiquitous technology companies in the world, but because this is an excellent example of the kind of multisectoral approach to create real systemic change in this area. The success of Actua's model, beyond the amazing experiences that we're providing to girls, is leveraged greatly by drawing on partnerships with universities and colleges, with governments, and with industry.

I love that video clip you saw at the beginning, because it reinforces all of the messages I'm speaking about today. Given the right exposure, girls will come to understand the importance of computer science in ways they otherwise would not have considered. Given positive role models, they'll start to see themselves in these fields in the future, and given the support, they will build essential skills in these areas and share what they have learned with their families.

Based on our experience working with hundreds of thousands of girls across the country and the new initiative that we're taking on within computer science, I have three recommendations for you to consider.

First, we need to recognize and promote the fact that computer science and digital skills are a kind of basic literacy. They are prerequisites to the successful engagement of girls in skilled trades and in STEM. They're also essential for the future economic resilience and independence of girls far beyond just computer science fields.

Second, Canada has to be prepared to make a huge leap here. We need big, bold goals, so I encourage you to provide financial support for evidence-based, multisectoral models that can be scaled up significantly, and to put girls in the driver's seat of developing content that will inspire them to become the innovators and technology producers of tomorrow.

Third, the influencers need to be equipped. Invest in programs and content that support teachers, parents, and other influencers to ensure that their daughters become the leaders of tomorrow's digital economy.

Thank you very much.

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I very much like the image we are left with in the video. It reminds me of a computer hardware course I took, where we took a central processor apart and reassembled it, and we actually did not start of fire. I was very proud of myself.

We will now go to question period.

Ms. Truppe, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): I'd like to welcome everyone to our committee. Your presentations were excellent. It's always very beneficial to have your expertise here, because we're here to get it, and you're the ones who know what's going on out there.

I have questions for all of you, and I have only seven minutes. I'll start with Nancy.

Nancy, you mentioned mentorship, and we've found that mentorship is very important in almost everything we're doing with women and girls. When I've hosted round tables for entrepreneurs, mentorship has always come up, and when I was doing skilled trades round tables, it was always mentorship.

A couple of you mentioned getting them involved at an early age. I think when I started round tables, it was about getting them involved in grade 9 or 10 so that they would know what they were going to take. Then by the time we finished the roundtables, it was no, you have to get them involved in grades 6, 7, and 8, so they know what they like, and then they can take the right courses in high school to go on and get the skilled trades.

You mentioned that there's a fairly good percentage who drop off after the first year. Do you have a suggestion for something we can do so they don't drop off that quickly?

● (1135)

Ms. Nancy Darling: I think we need to engage industry in providing those mentors themselves. We hire mentors from industry to work with our women, but once they leave us and get onto the job site, they're floundering a little bit. They're used to having a lot of support and someone to go to with questions. Once they get to the job site, they're not sure.

They very often go to a corporate centre where they get hired and are told to show up at a certain job site. They meet their boss for one second, and then he's gone somewhere, so they don't know who their go-to person is on the job. After a period of time, the situation worsens, and very often women get injured because they don't have someone to ask, and so they get injured doing something.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: It sounds as though it's not explained properly and they're not getting the proper training when they arrive.

Ms. Nancy Darling: That's right.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I think you just said that you hire mentors.

Ms. Nancy Darling: We do.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's interesting.

You also said, I think, that you get Canada job grant funding. How much do you get from that, or do you know off the top of your head?

Ms. Nancy Darling: We ask for about $750,000 per year to train 110 women.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Okay.

I think you briefly touched on the $33 million project. What's the main focus of it?

Ms. Nancy Darling: The main focus is the trades area of our college. It's over 50 years old. When they built for trades 50 years ago, they didn't consider women joining. It was built for a very narrow population. With this expansion, everything will be not only bigger but newer. There will be provisions for women to change and things like that whereas currently we don't have any of that.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's great.

You also have a link, I think, on your website. Is it specific to women in skilled trades or is it for skilled trades in general?

Ms. Nancy Darling: It's specific to women in skilled trades. That link is from the industry training authority of British Columbia. They have developed this guide through consultation and a lot of going out to the communities. I've read through it, and it's actually a guide to make workplaces better for everybody, not just for women. It talks about hiring practices and an orientation to the job site for every single person working on that job site. All of those things will help all tradespeople, not just women, but the guide was developed specifically to help employers with hiring women and retaining them.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Jennifer from Actua, how are you funded? Is it through partnerships and everything or is it through a big wide range of different...?

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: We have received our funding primarily through the corporate sector. I mentioned some of those big funders: Google, Suncor, and GE Canada, but we also receive funding through NSERC PromoScience and through CanNor for our northern programs.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Approximately how much do you receive from each of those?

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: We receive about $250,000 from PromoScience.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's great.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: We get about $100,000 through CanNor and some additional territorial support in Nunavut.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: The video was great, by the way.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: Thank you.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: It was very cute. They really seem to engage in it and, really, without that at that young age.... They're not interested if you start them off at the end of grade eight. If you're engaging them, probably they think it's cute to bring it to their parents and to show their family what they have.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: That's right.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I have one more question for you.

You mentioned, I think, engaging about 100,000 girls. What is your best method for engaging them?

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: We engage them inside of schools by doing school workshops to support and enhance what teachers are doing, but our work is primarily outside of school. We engage them through after-school programs, weekend clubs, and in summer camp experiences. We really focus on engaging them for an extended period of time, beyond just a couple of hours. We want to get them 40 plus hours of content.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: The camps would be one week.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: That's right.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Now I'll go on to mining.

Ryan, I remember when I was doing round tables. Is the president of the Mining Association a woman? I'm not sure what her title was.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Yes, she is. Zoë Yujnovich used to be the president of IOC, Iron Ore Company of Canada, and has now moved to Shell. She continues to be the senior executive with Shell Canada and is still the president of MAC.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Excellent. I thought that was really good for a woman to be in that position in the mining industry of all places.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: She was the first woman in 120 years.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Kudos to her.

I found out from doing those round tables how much money the girls could be making in the skilled trades, not even in STEM, and I couldn't believe it. Instead of working at lower minimum wage jobs, if they knew about these jobs,...my God.

The fellow who was there from one of the mining industries said he was looking for another hundred people. He said if he could pick between the girls and the boys or the men and the women, he would take the women any day because they're more meticulous. They don't have anything to prove to each other and they're far better workers.

That was nice to hear, as well.

● (1140)

The Chair: Ms. Truppe, you have time for a very quick question.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: My last question is whether you have mentorship programs in place.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: We do. We have what we call a Virtual MineMentor Program. The idea behind the program was that we were seeing a significant amount of mid-program attrition at the post-secondary education level. People would start in mining-related programs, be it in geosciences or skilled trades, for technician or technologist programs, and if they weren't connected to the industry, they would drop off. Obviously there isn't a mine site in proximity to most colleges and universities in Canada, so this was a way to bring people who were at a site into classrooms. It is relatively successful. We've divested the program to one of our partners that has a much broader reach, and now the Canadian Institute of Mining is operating the Virtual MineMentor Program. They have 14,000 members, so that really allowed us to expand the program in a much quicker way.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Freeman, you now have the floor and you have seven minutes.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Thanks to all our witnesses for being here today.

I'm going to start with Ms. Darling for a couple of questions.

You mentioned that there was difficulty keeping and recruiting women and making sure that they get through the program. We talked about it and Ms. Truppe even asked you about it. I know you mentioned having children, and things like that. What are other examples of things that would lead a woman, who has been recruited into the program or who has decided to pursue a career and take the classes at Okanagan, to drop out?

Ms. Nancy Darling: I want to be clear that we have great retention while they're in programs. It's once they get on the job that retention becomes an issue. We're fortunate enough to have had nobody drop out of programs in this last fiscal year, which is the first time. We do have the odd ones drop out, but this was the first time everybody stayed in.

I'm going to say the number one reason is isolation on the job, even if it's not a remote job site. It's just being perhaps the only woman on that job site. Again, the lack of role model or mentor on the job site has become an issue. The women who feel isolated feel they're not getting the training they need, because with an apprenticeship, you need the combination of the technical training and the work-based training, and if you're not getting to work-based training and you're just showing up and doing the same thing every day in isolation, that's not really going to help you to get your apprenticeship

Ms. Mylène Freeman: You mentioned safety and security guidelines and being able to understand security measures and things like that and really having access to those. We've had quite a few witnesses point to things like microaggressions as well. What they mean by that is not being taken seriously on the job, things like that, or as women being denigrated.

Have some of your students, or those who have gone into apprenticeship programs, experienced that kind of thing?

Ms. Nancy Darling: They have.

It is a part of it sometimes. It's not just with the employers; it can sometimes be in the institutions as well, where women are maybe not perceived as taking it seriously. They've had comments such as that maybe they are there to find a husband more than to be a welder, and things like that.

We do a lot of work with the mentors and with our students on communication, and I think a lot of these things are about communication, being able to stand up for yourself and advocate for yourself on a job site. These are some of the things they need to know. But, yes, we have had those things reported for sure.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Having more security around that would also be helpful instead of always putting the onus on them.

Ms. Nancy Darling: One of the things we've heard is that if an employer is hiring a woman, everybody on that crew gets a call the night before with a heads-up that there will be a woman on site the next day. So the women have told us that when they come on site everyone says hello and then they clear a path around them. They're afraid of saying something to offend them, or maybe if the girl has really good skills they're a little bit afraid that she might take their job and they might not get picked up on the next project, and that sort of thing. So we have heard of that.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: It seems as though there needs to be some awareness worked into the industry. It's very interesting

● (1145)

Ms. Nancy Darling: One of our women said her strategy is that in the first few days on the job she tries to swear a lot so they feel more comfortable around her, and they don't feel they have to tiptoe around her. She says then she lets up on it once they accept her as one of the crew.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: That's hilarious.

I noticed on your website that the program specifically targets unemployed or underemployed females, those who are ineligible to receive EI benefits. That's great, because obviously we're targeting women who are the most vulnerable, who are having the hardest time making ends meet. How do you go in and reach these women specifically, not just girls who are in school?

Ms. Nancy Darling: We work a lot with local service providers and women's groups who deal with a variety of women, underserved women. We also talked to the head of income assistance in our province to see that the women who take the exploratory program are allowed to retain their benefits while they take that 12-week program.

It's very low-risk for the women who come in and try it. We tell them that it's okay for them to come in and explore trades. They're not for everybody. Not everybody who tries the program will end up saying that they'll definitely become an electrician. Some women like it, some women don't. But this is kind of a low-risk way to get women in the door. Because we pay their full tuition, there's not really any risk for to them to take it. They won't lose their income assistance benefits.

Our goal, of course, is for them to willingly let those go and to take the next step to becoming fully trained and employed.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: It makes a big difference in creating that bridge.

Ms. Nancy Darling: It does.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I have some questions for you, Mr. Montpellier.

Sorry, I have to pronounce your name the French way; I just can't not.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Mylène Freeman: We've had some witnesses say that pay inequity is higher in the mining, oil, and gas sector. What steps are being taken very concretely to address that problem across the sector, across the industry?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Pay equity in Canadian society in general remains a problem. I can't speak specifically, and I don't have the statistics behind pay equity differences in the mining sector. We do very little, when it comes to compensation in the industry, as an organization.

I can tell you that there are initiatives under way to remove all of these barriers to attracting women into the sector. Pay equity is certainly an element being reviewed by our sector.

In terms of concrete plans that our stakeholders are using at this point, unfortunately I don't have anything that I can provide today.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Are there any specific hiring practices being looked at? We have heard that having HR or more women involved in looking at different things is an important part of that.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Part of our gender equity in mining project is looking at all of these barriers that may exist.

I'll give you one example. We've conducted what we call a “physical demand” analysis on a number of occupations in the industry. An entry requirement to the mining sector used to be that you had to do a physical. You had to physically go and lift a certain threshold of weight for you to enter the industry. In the seventies, that may have been appropriate, because you were moving big jacklegs around. But with the level of mechanization in the industry today, that no longer exists. In most of the occupations in the industry today you're operating equipment remotely, you're operating scoops with robotics.

We're now opening the industry where we used to have barriers to recruitment. Some of those barriers are still in place for legacy issues. We're trying to change those practices today so that there are no longer barriers in places where they may have been necessary 20 years ago but are no longer necessary today.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. O'Neill Gordon, you now have the floor and you have seven minutes at your disposal.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): I want to welcome all of the witnesses here today. Your presentations certainly gave us lots of information. We were certainly pleased to hear them all.

First, Jennifer, I agree with you that there certainly is a great need for girls to be in computer science. I really enjoyed your video giving us a real picture of how it all happens. It gives the students great initiative in terms of getting started. I liked seeing them all there and the many things you tried with them.

As well, I'm impressed by the many ways you get the girls involved with your day camps, workshops, and clubs. You're not just focusing on a certain level at school or something like that. It opens it much wider and gives them greater opportunity.

I know that Actua is certainly doing a great job all around. I'm wondering how many provinces it's actually working in.

● (1150)

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: We deliver programs in every province and territory across the country, so 500 communities would receive our programming each year, and that covers every province and territory.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Tthat's good to hear because I don't know—

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: The model is that we support university-based outreach programs, so our members are located at universities. There are 33 of them across the country. They travel out from there to deliver in rural remote communities. We also hire a team directly out of Ottawa that travels to the most rural remote communities that our members can't yet reach. We pride ourselves on being able to get into the smallest most remote communities and also servicing larger urban areas.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: I imagine the University of New Brunswick or—

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: Yes. I started the outreach program at the University of New Brunswick, and I spent my first summer when I was an undergraduate student travelling around the province delivering these outreach initiatives in schools and then in summer camps. I spent a fair amount of time in your neck of the woods delivering these types of initiatives, which are very reflective of the model that would be located at the University of New Brunswick and that would travel out from there to reach into those communities without easy access to these types of programs.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: That gives them a great overall look at all that's going on, to see where they can jump into it. That's what we need, for sure.

Ryan, you mentioned some of the many barriers. At the end of your presentation, you even mentioned some of the invisible barriers that are still there. I'm wondering if you wanted to elaborate a little bit on those as well.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Certainly some of these barriers are quite obvious. I can give you a few examples.

If you look at the facilities that exist underground in some of the mines, with washrooms in different parts of the mine, historically these were not in place to accommodate women, and today they are. I won't say in all mines, but today we do have both male and female washrooms underground in certain locations.

It's even a matter of things like having the right PPE, the personal protective equipment. We saw this year on the CBC show *Dragons' Den* that somebody struck a deal for overalls that were now female friendly. That's from our industry, and Women in Mining Canada in particular have completely endorsed this sort of thing.

These were barriers that existed. When we're not providing our employees with the right equipment to do their job effectively, how can we expect them to be retained in the sector? It takes so much effort to attract somebody to the industry, but once we bring them in, if we don't equip them properly, they leave.

Those are some examples of the very obvious practices or policies in place that we are trying to change. There are other ones that may be less obvious, and I'll give you an example involving the way work is being scheduled. Many of the mines today offer shift work and require a 12-hour shift, and you only work four days a week. That may work for some individuals, but we have found that it certainly doesn't work for the majority of women or young men who have families at home.

So part of this project is trying to accommodate different policies and procedures or identify these policies and procedures that may be in place. The mining company may not be aware it is discriminating against women, but the result of the policy is that fewer people are interested in working for it. And part of what we're trying to do is identify those barriers and help companies address them systematically.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Sometimes it's only when you bring those up that someone would really think of them as barriers and think of things that just don't exist unless you are there and see them.

As you all mentioned, another thing is that getting women into the STEM program is certainly increasing at every level you spoke about. The president and managing director of GM Canada mentioned that Ontario is currently producing more STEM graduates each year than the state of California is.

Why do you think this is so? We should be proud of them, for sure.

Do any of you want to comment on it?

● (1155)

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: What I can say, specific to the mining industry, is that we are producing a lot. If I take geosciences, half of the graduating classes of geologists are women. In fact in most schools, it's significantly more than 50%. Yet that number has not translated or made its way into the industry, so what we're seeing is that, although we are developing this talent, we're not able to attract and retain it in our sector.

Clearly, there's a disconnect between our capacity to develop the skills we need and our ability to keep them engaged in our sector. As I said, that's part of the challenge we face as an industry. It's part of some of the projects that are under way in our sector to try to uncover what those are.

The Chair: Mr. Simms, it's your turn for seven minutes.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Merci, Madame.

To our guests, thank you for coming. I really appreciate this for several reasons.

I come from a mining area to start with. I'll get to technology later. There are not a lot of women at the mine site right now. Percentage-wise, it's probably less than 10. We do have an accredited course at a nearby college. It's called a hard rock mining course. It's basically an entry into the mining industry itself. They too have problems attracting women into that program. They've tried to do so. The company itself, which is Teck Resources Limited, has also done it. I give them credit for doing so. They're a very good company to work for.

How do you monitor situations where these barriers exist? How do you monitor success? You mentioned some of the invisible barriers and other barriers that you've identified as problems. So how do you monitor that?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Part of our approach is to build networks of champions who voluntarily participate and want to make a meaningful change in their organizations. We have, what I'd call, our fingers on the pulse of a number of labour market challenges in our sector. We survey all mining companies on an annual basis. We do employee surveys as well without the interference of employers. We want to hear from employees directly. We're constantly monitoring these metrics, or what we call our key performance indicators, as a sector.

Mr. Scott Simms: Can you describe a champion for me?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: It's either a senior-level executive or somebody in the organization such as a VP of HR, a director of HR, or a mine manager, who wants to effect meaningful change in their organization and who has the support of senior leadership to implement or to make changes to the policy of the organization. A number of VPs of mining companies or VPs of HR participate in various champions networks. We have diversity champions networks in which participants not only share amongst themselves and collaborate but are willing to open up their HR departments to their peers and to identify which practices are working and which ones are not necessarily working, so that we can have some meaningful impact and move the yardsticks as an industry instead of as individuals.

Mr. Scott Simms: But they're mostly champions from the administrative positions. Is that correct?

What about champions at the technical level, like the job site that Ms. Darling was talking about, and the problems her students experienced by being on the job?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: I would say that it is primarily at the corporate and leadership levels, but we do have strong champions on site. There could be a mine manager with a workforce of 300 to 400 people who wants to increase the participation of women, or in some cases aboriginal or new Canadians. They have a very specific agenda to diversify their workforce. We work with them and bring in other partners who are experts in this field to help them do so.

Mr. Scott Simms: These people are effective agents for change, and they also monitor the program with regard to what is wrong. Do they constantly update their activities and what they're doing?

● (1200)

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Constantly may be a strong word. We have published a number of best practices guidelines over the last decade or so. We've probably developed half a dozen reports now on diversity metrics in the mining industry looking at best practices around attraction, recruitment, and engagement in the sector. Some companies are doing a phenomenal job at this. Other companies are struggling, and are only attaining this level of diversity because of a business need. They just can't find people anymore, so they're turning to diversity.

Other people have embraced workplace diversity, and have implemented some fascinating programs and moved the yardsticks. One company in particular had a 6% female participation rate and in three years moved it to 25%. They made very concrete decisions about how they were going to do that, and it worked. Part of our role as an organization is to document that, share it with the other mining companies, and help them make a similar step, change, or innovation on this topic.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you, sir. Let's hope your predictions about rebounding commodity prices come true.

It's very refreshing to hear that you're involved with the K-to-9 level. Did I get that correct? To me, it is the genesis of all things when it comes to not only the work force but in general the pride of community, volunteerism, and all that goes into what you're doing. Do you find that at that level there's apprehension towards newer technologies?

I guess it's a question for both of you.

Ms. Nancy Darling: I do, and I find there's an aversion to trades and tools, and to potentially getting dirty, and things like that.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: I think one of the most effective things we have done, building on what Nancy mentioned, was around makerspaces. We have a makerspace at the University of Ottawa where parents can come with their kids, and teachers can come with their students, and they can actually use the tools themselves. I think that is such an important part of dispelling both the intimidation and the fear about what those skills would lead to in the future, because that's really what it is. It's not just parents who are unaware of the opportunities. If they're aware, they don't necessarily think that's the best path for their daughter.

I think getting them in with their kids and playing with these tools in a makerspace where they're printing on 3-D printers, using welding machines, doing die cutting, and learning computer science skills at the same time allows them to see the breadth of opportunity that exists.

These aren't just careers in which people are off in a corner or in a dark room doing work by themselves. They're very collaborative; they're very creative; and they're very diverse. The same intimidation that exists for kids exists for parents and teachers.

You can get them involved through the same types of strategies.

Mr. Scott Simms: You call that a makerspace?

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: It's a makerspace. Basically it's a space with a bunch of different tools, machines, and computer technology that allows you to produce to different products.

You might have seen the story recently about the university students printing a prosthetic arm on a 3-D printer for a little boy. That was done in a makerspace. It was done at the University of Ottawa makerspace.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barlow has the floor.

You have five minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow (Macleod, CPC): Thank you all for coming in. I appreciate it. This is a very important issue and I'm glad you're giving us your expertise today.

I wanted to address one thing Ms. Flanagan and Ms. Darling were touching on a little bit. I guess I'll start with Ms. Darling.

Coming from rural Alberta, I know there is a need for skilled labour. How do we change the perception? You talked in your presentation about the number of women in the program having gone from 7% to 13% in the last six years, which may seem modest, but I think doubling it in six years is a great start. Is part of that changing the perception? I think most of us here are of the generation whose parents said you had to go to university and that a polytechnic like SAIT or NAIT was where the not-so-talented kids went. How do we change the perception of that?

Maybe both Jennifer and Nancy could address that.

Ms. Nancy Darling: This is something we deal with for sure. We have found that working with the schools and working with the parents will help change that perception. A lot of it is not having enough role models out there for them to see women who have become successful. Regarding the makerspaces and Makerdays, introducing technology, coding, and circuitry is the next wave for us in our Makerday experiences with the K-to-9 system because we want to demonstrate that trades have changed quite a bit from how they used to be perceived. You don't have to be huge and physically strong, as Brian was alluding to, for a certain trade. Some of our tiniest women are heavy-duty mechanics. It's a matter of changing the perception by putting role models out in front of them.

That's what I think we can do just by showing the shift. In B.C. we have the best-educated baristas going. The people with university degrees are making our coffee in the morning and not making the big dollars in B.C., that's for sure. That's been helpful to sway the vote.

● (1205)

Mr. John Barlow: Exactly.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: Something we hear all the time is “my child will not go to college; they must go to university“. It's a conversation.

Mr. John Barlow: If they only knew how much the paycheque would be.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: You make an excellent point.

I think it's important in what we are trying to do to have parent programs created by parents. Instead of trying to guess what their misperceptions are or what their intimidations are, we're having that conversation and asking what they need to hear. Pay is a big one along with financial security, job security, and job opportunity. The parents need the exposure as much as the kids do. I think we have underestimated because the reality is that girls are influenced most by their peers. The research demonstrates that in terms of the courses they choose to pursue and how they are encouraged from a career-track perspective, it is still parents who have the majority of the influence. Ignoring them in this whole process is a huge missed opportunity.

Mr. John Barlow: I appreciate what you're saying. Including the parents in those makers areas, I think, is a great step. I have two daughters, and I try to get them to help me when I'm doing stuff in the basement or whatever. Whether it goes anywhere or not, I think if we as parents introduced them to that, it would help.

Lastly, Nancy and Jennifer, do you see the introduction of the Canada apprenticeship loan program, $100 million to ensure people who enter apprenticeships can carry on, as a benefit, and have you had an opportunity to ensure and promote that program to your students?

Ms. Nancy Darling: We promote that program to our students, but that kicks in a little way down the road after they leave us, after they become apprentices, so I don't have very much feedback on that for you.

Mr. John Barlow: You talked about some of the barriers out there, and I know a lot of that is what happens on the job site, but is financial aid one of those barriers? We've seen that about 300,000 Canadians start an apprenticeship program, but fewer than half finish and this loan program is there to address that. Do you see that as maybe addressing one of those barriers?

Ms. Nancy Darling: I do. I think the financial situation is definitely a barrier for some of our women, many of whom are single parents.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sellah, you now have the floor for five minutes.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

First I would like to thank the witnesses who are here with us today.

My question is for you, Mr. Montpellier. In 2011, you published a report entitled “Changing the Face of the Canadian Mining Industry.”

In your presentation, you described three obstacles. Are they a part of the conclusions of that study?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Yes. Let us say that the obstacles we detected were determined in various studies carried out by the Mining Industry Human Resources Council, or done in cooperation with our partners in various areas of the country.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: I see.

Among these obstacles, you mentioned the lack of information about women. I suppose we will need money to remedy that. You referred to a culture and an environment that is not inclusive, and is dominated by men. So money will have to be injected there. Moreover, on the topic of career advancement opportunities, you said there was no mentoring, and no parental leave. Money will be required for that as well. However, in Budget 2015, there is nothing that furthers the participation of women in the skilled trades sector.

Does that not worry you, since you want to change the face of mining industry? If the government is not behind that objective, how are you going to manage to attract more women?

● (1210)

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: That is a very good question.

Several ongoing projects are attempting to determine the reasons that prevent us from eliminating the obstacles to the promotion of women. Of course we would like to have more resources to promote the industry to young people, women and aboriginal persons. We have to wonder whose responsibility that promotion rests with. Does the industry have the responsibility of doing its own promotion, as a choice employer? Must the government play a role in the promotion of sectors or professions in demand in our society? There is room for everyone.

Our council receives direct support from the mining industry and the federal government. A lot of our career promotion projects were set up in partnership with the industry and the federal government. It is a model that functions very well and allows us to receive resources from industry and the government so as to knock down the barriers that exist.

The Chair: You have a minute and a half left.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: I listened to Ms. Jennifer Flanagan's presentation.

I was happy to hear about your initiative with young aboriginal girls aimed at encouraging them to take an interest in computer science, which is currently the basis of the whole industry.

I would like to know what the word “Actua” stands for. Does it mean “actualité”? I don't know what it means. Could you explain it?

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: It isn't an acronym. It is a word that years ago, when we came up with our identity, came from the word “actualize”, which was helping kids to actualize their potential.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: That is interesting.

What do you think of this initiative? I know that you have reached a lot of girls, some 48,000 throughout Canada. Will this be an ongoing project?

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: Yes. The figure is actually 10,000 per year.

[*English*]

We have every intention of continuing. The girls program has been going for almost 20 years, and we will continue until women are equally represented in these fields.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Sellah.

Ms. Perkins, you now have the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

Mrs. Pat Perkins (Whitby—Oshawa, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I appreciate all of the presentations today. They were very enlightening, and the video was quite amazing.

Question number one I think would go to the mining industry.

We were talking about the fact that the head of your corporation had been a woman. Is there a board of directors?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: The question was about the first female president of the Mining Association of Canada. There are number of female executives who work in the industry, and we're seeing that trend continue.

Mrs. Pat Perkins: Are your boards of directors involved with these corporations?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Yes, absolutely.

Mrs. Pat Perkins: Are we seeing women on the boards of directors?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: We are.

That is one of the reasons I think the security regulators in Canada are starting to move to mandatory reporting on diversity measures. If they weren't already employing women on boards, they certainly will be now.

What is very important in our industry is our corporate social licence to operate. CSR has tended to be more around environmental impact and our responsibility to communities. We're seeing that more and more diversity is being linked to CSR, and, certainly at the board table and at the C-suite, we're seeing more and more women taking on those roles.

I can't give you the exact percentage—

● (1215)

Mrs. Pat Perkins: —but you're seeing it.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: I am seeing it.

Mrs. Pat Perkins: Good.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: I've been in this industry for 12 years, and 12 years ago nobody was talking about it, but they certainly are today.

Mrs. Pat Perkins: I think that having women on the boards is certainly changing the culture a bit more, so it's very good to hear.

It's not the first time we've heard about the change rooms and the washrooms and the various things that people encounter, such as improper-fitting clothes and all of those things. It's good to hear that the industry is picking up on that as well.

Jennifer, if you don't mind me calling you Jennifer, you made a statement that formal computer science should be a part of basic literacy. You're saying that it isn't part of basic literacy in schools, but you were speaking about all children, not just the girls. It doesn't exist for boys?

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: That statement would be true for all kids.

Mrs. Pat Perkins: So it's not that it currently exists for boys and not for girls.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: That's right.

Mrs. Pat Perkins: All right, thank you. I was a little worried about that.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: That is an issue.

Mrs. Pat Perkins: When you said it, I thought I certainly hope that's not the case.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: Although I do think that there's evidence that boys are more engaged in technology. They're kind of translating the opportunities to take things apart and play with things and tinker around to computers.

The same challenge we had with girls not having those opportunities is now absolutely translating to girls lacking exposure and experience with computers.

Mrs. Pat Perkins: Years ago, when I was involved in a health and social committee, there was dialogue about the school system and what it did in terms of introducing girls and boys to things at age-appropriate times. You said that the majority of the primary teachers tend to be women and that there needs to be a bit of a focus on what they might want to do to help make the change.

When we were having this dialogue a few years ago, they were talking about those primary years. They're focused on colouring within the lines and doing small motor skills and a lot of finicky little things that perhaps don't fall into the area of interest for some of the young boys, who perhaps want to be kicking a ball or doing something a bit more gregarious. They said that things changed as they got a bit older. The girls were doing all of these quiet little tasks, and then once they got to be in about grade five or grade six, there was a shift in what they were learning. It then became more interesting to boys.

Have you ever looked into that study to find out whether in fact there is any connection?

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: No, I haven't seen that study in particular. But certainly we find with regard to computer science that there is an equal level of interest from girls and boys right from the start. We have seen no difference in girls wanting to get in and actually produce their own technology. In fact, from our perspective, girls tend to understand more quickly that there's a behind-the-scenes part.

We say all the time that kids are so great at using technology. We need to take the time to actually tell them who builds that technology and how it functions. We're not seeing any difference there and there's an opportunity as well with technology to engage them in a whole bunch of different subject areas. It isn't just about computers; it's cross-cutting.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Crockatt, I yield the floor to you and you have five minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): I want to thank all of our witnesses.

For me, this is a fabulous panel. It's kind of a Kodak moment in this study, because all three of you have represented all of the issues we've been dealing with regarding how women and young girls need to be engaged so we can get more women into skilled trades. I think there have been some particularly strong pieces of evidence from all three of you that have helped us.

Jennifer, you said that every career is going to involve computers, and in fact it probably does right now, and if girls don't learn to code the language of computers, they will be left behind. It should probably be seared on the minds of every parent raising a young girl these days that this is a critical component of their education.

I wanted to kind of take off from that, and I actually wanted to clarify something that madame Sellah said. I think she stated that this budget has nothing in it for skilled trades. Nothing could be further from the truth. Just last week I participated in an announcement at Ottawa Hydro here about giving another $300,000 to try to improve things for women in skilled trades. We've been talking about the components. Awareness is also a really big component.

Can you talk about what you think we should be doing? Is it more programming of the kind you're currently seeing? Is it awareness? Is it something we need to do with parents? I'd like to start with Jennifer and just go across, please.

● (1220)

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: I think the point you led off with about the complementarity of this panel is exactly it. We're working at a very early phase, and then Nancy is working a little bit later although doing some work earlier, and then Ryan is working with industry. And I think we all tend to be so focused on the group we're working in that we forget about making those kinds of connections along the whole pipeline.

Collaborations between groups that are working at different points in the pipeline to get girls engaged, keep them engaged, retain them in the workforce, and support them there are absolutely critical. I think the approach here is very innovative and it's less siloed by age group and sector. I think that is critical, and I think there are a lot of models out there that demonstrate success in this area that could be scaled up with additional resources.

Some people are doing it well, and I'd like to think we are. We are constantly innovating our approach because we're very connected to community. I think the innovation comes from models that have a large evidence base already.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Ms. Darling.

Ms. Nancy Darling: We agree and have much of the same process. We're very much in touch with our community and we are always looking to adapt and change things up to stay relevant and effective in our community, but as far as increasing awareness goes, I'd like to see more role models brought out in front of women and in front of everybody. We should celebrate some of the successes of women who have risen through the ranks in STEM and in trades careers. That is still one of our biggest challenges. If they see women doing these types of employment, if they see people doing these things, they will perhaps be able to imagine themselves doing them, but if they have never seen a woman doing plumbing, they are very unlikely to choose that for their career.

We do a lot of celebrating the success of our women and we are fortunate enough to have success stories within every trade and we try to highlight them. We have a wall of fame for which we take a picture of somebody at their job and do a little write-up. So if someone approaches us and is interested in becoming an electrician, we can say, “Come outside and look at all these women who have come before you and have become electricians and see what really interesting and varied employment they've been able to get”. Sometimes people have limited thinking about what a plumber might do without seeing the huge range of different jobs they could have with that trade.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Maybe you could share some of those success stories with us and we could help to get that message out.

Ms. Nancy Darling: I would love to.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Ryan.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: I agree with what Jennifer and Nancy just said. I think it's bang on. We do a lot of celebrating some of those successes as well, but clearly more needs to be done.

Just to give you one example, a few weeks ago, a Canadian mining company painted a 400-ton truck pink. It was a big Caterpillar truck, and they painted it pink because they wanted to celebrate the success of their female drivers who were operating their truck, as I think was mentioned earlier, more efficiently, safely, and with less wear and tear on the material. It was a way to try to demonstrate an engagement with women and promote the success that women are having in the workplace.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: What company was it?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: It was Goldcorp. It was done at a Goldcorp mine in Mexico, but it is a Canadian company, and it's something they wanted to highlight as part of their strategy in Mexico.

The Chair: Thank you.

On this happy note, we'll conclude this round.

Mr. Simms, you have five minutes.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you.

Ms. Flanagan, earlier you had three recommendations. Could you highlight those three recommendations again? I found them very interesting.

● (1225)

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: The first one was about recognizing computer science and digital skills as an essential literacy, as a prerequisite now to actually getting girls engaged in STEM.

Mr. Scott Simms: I'm sorry if I interrupt, but I only have five minutes.

I find that in many rural areas, access is the question. It's a necessity. Should government be doing more to make sure that access is universal? Meaning that in libraries and in schools—

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: There's some excellent work under way. We get this question a lot: what about rural areas or isolated areas that don't have access? That access is changing quickly. Libraries are among the most highly equipped facilities now in terms of technology, and that's happening right across the country. That's excellent, because this access is absolutely vital.

Computer science can also be taught with no computers, with no hardware, and so we do a lot of our work.... We call it “computer science unplugged”. Teaching computational thinking and the concepts behind computer science without even touching technology is a much more effective way to start teaching this before kids get into the games and the actual consuming part.

There are things that we can do now. We get this question about the north and how there's no connectivity. Are we putting the cart before the horse? Absolutely not, we can get these kids fully engaged while we catch up with access.

Mr. Scott Simms: What was the other recommendation?

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: The second recommendation was about providing ongoing funding for models that were multisectoral and that had a strong evidence base to scale up, and about doing more of this kind of outreach work with younger girls.

The third was about providing support for influencers and, specifically, investing in programs that provide training to parents, teachers, and community leaders that form a kind of web of support around the girls as they move through these years.

Mr. Scott Simms: I find that concept of influencers very interesting. When you said that earlier, I couldn't quite grasp it, but now I think I do, and I appreciate it.

I say that not just for rural areas. I find that it's an issue for urban areas as well. Certainly, for communities that are impoverished or areas that can't afford that kind of equipment, I think the penetration on that level is key as well. Do you work in that realm?

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: Absolutely. We do the majority of our work in rural and remote communities where we focus on that in every program we offer. We bring in the community members. We invite the parents, community leaders, and local government to come in, not only to see what the kids are doing but to participate with them. Because a lot of these kids might be first-generation university or college kids and no one before them has gone, we really need to work on exposing the parents, the teachers, and the people in these kids' lives to these experiences.

If we go into a rural community and deliver a camp, the kids might be inspired and think differently, but if they then go home or to school and there's no one else who is encouraging them to consider these fields, their interest is not going to build. The investment in teachers and parents lasts so much longer than what we can do in a week. We need to do both. We need to get that inspiration and exposure happening, and then we need to support the people who can continue that message on a daily basis.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Fine, thank you very much.

Ms. Bateman, you now have the floor for seven minutes.

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

[*English*]

Thank you so much. I'm sorry, but I will catch up on your actual testimony. I was at the finance committee meeting and it went long.

I'm very fascinated by the conversation I have heard, especially with the concept of the makerspace. This makerspace sounds wonderful, but there's probably always going to be a school board somewhere that says we can't actually use that equipment for purposes other than for what it was intended, i.e. between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. How do you get around that concern? I know that would be the reality in some of the areas I'm quite familiar with.

The concept of actually enabling families to utilize the equipment and play with it, if you like, to learn and break down those barriers, is wonderful. I'd love to hear how you've broken down those barriers or impediments.

Ms. Nancy Darling: In our area the school district is actually very eager to set up the makerspace and have it available to members of the community to come in and use. We believe that tinkering is a lost art, that you need to play with stuff, take it apart, and learn to do things with your hands,to take something you like, learn how to make it faster, better, less expensive, and things like that. These makerspaces can really invite the general public in, and that's where I think we can do a lot of our good work, as Jennifer was saying, with educating parents and even educators throughout the district. They will all come to this makerspace. I think it's a way to get people to feel more comfortable in that environment.

● (1230)

Ms. Joyce Bateman: So it starts with the school board?

Ms. Nancy Darling: I believe it does.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: The Maker Movement is not new. These kinds of workshops have existed for years and years. There is some great profile around them. Part of the Maker Movement is community engagement. So generally, when these types of spaces are created, many of them are created at libraries, so Actua actually partners with libraries in communities all over the country, which have amazing access to this technology, to help them actually build programming. We help them create programs to which community members can come, or kids can come, where they can participate in a safe space. There are lots of different ways to encourage schools to do this.

One of the exciting projects we're working on is a moving maker mobile. We're actually going to have a U-Haul truck that travels around with makerspace equipment to schools and community centres that don't currently have access. It's really to build awareness and momentum around the idea of this, but also to provide an opportunity for them to be exposed to how easy this stuff is to actually work with.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Oh, that's good. It sounds like a concept that really breaks down barriers, and I love that.

I represent Winnipeg's South Centre, and my colleague Susan Truppe came with me when we were focusing on women in non-traditional trades and ways to make a living. We were briefed by the person at the Winnipeg Technical College who said that women actually make better welders. Their precision factor is greater. Their error factor is less. They're better. But it was still incredibly hard for them to enrol women in these programs. They weren't interested. It wasn't part of their.... So I'd like each one of you to take a moment to talk about what barriers we could pull down.

I guess that's the solution. What are the barriers, what are the solutions and how do we attract women into these non-traditional ways to employ themselves and contribute to society? Then once they're there, how do we retain them?

Maybe we should start with you, Ryan, because you have experience with actual mining companies, and the attraction factor is different from the retention factor. I'd love you to speak to both.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Sure. It's a question we've been grappling with for quite some time. We looked at the motivators for an individual to select a career. We've studied this for both males and females and tried to find what drives career choices. Obviously salary is up there. If it was only a matter of salary, we would have no problem attracting people because we tend to pay about 40% more than the average salary in Canada. The mining sector does offer lucrative careers.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: But it's never just about money.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: It's never just about salary. I think it's about communicating to potential employees of the mining sector what the modern mining industry offers. We're not saying it's for everyone, but I think we offer a compelling value proposition to male and female potential employees. The perception of the occupations in the sector is not accurate, and part of the challenge we as an industry have is to change those perceptions and change them at the early stages. Once they are employed and we have been successful at breaking down those barriers and attracting them, certainly we have to do everything we can to keep them. What we're finding, as you've mentioned, is that we have challenges attracting them and then we have challenges keeping them. That's something we're working very hard to change.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Do your employees, whether they're male or female, feel comfortable if their child is sick? That's the classic question, whether you can be with your child or take them to the doctor.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Absolutely, we work in a relatively heavily unionized sector and there are significant benefits in place that go well beyond compensation and that involve paid leave and professional development and a number of other factors that were deemed to be of high value to potential employees. That being said, clearly more—

● (1235)

Ms. Joyce Bateman: So you've actually had that dialogue with the employees about what matters most?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: We have, absolutely, about what matters most.

The number one factor is not compensation. The number one factor is all about applying the skills you've learned and about professional development and training along the way. Compensation and benefits are usually second or third on that list of 15 things, but they're not the only issue. There's more to it than that.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: How about you, Nancy?

The Chair: I will let the other panellist answer briefly and then we'll move on.

Ms. Nancy Darling: For our women, safe and supported access is a big concern. They want to know that they're going to be safe when they try welding, that they're not going to get injured, that they're not going to get hurt. They're fearful of things they haven't tried before and the supported access means a lot. They are able to try any of the different trades as a student for a day, to go and participate for a day. They can try welding, and if they don't like it they don't have to take it. Without role models, just being safe and supported allows women greater access for sure.

The Chair: Go ahead very briefly, Ms. Flanagan.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: I think at a younger age it's really just about exposure, so we will actually allow girls to do a small amount of welding, for example, in a very controlled environment. We actually just let them get their hands in and try it. That first exposure is often what people will relay as the thing that turned them onto that path.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Freeman, you now have the floor and you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Moving along a bit, previous witnesses have shown us a lot of data from StatsCan showing that even when you get women educated in a STEM field, there are barriers to having the same percentage of women employed in the field they were educated for. What do you see as the big factors blocking women?

Ms. Nancy Darling: With our programs we try to have the women do labour market research before we sponsor them for a trades foundation program. They have to be able to show that there is a job available for them to go to once they complete the training or we won't want to sponsor them for that training. But that being said, there are a number of things to consider depending on which trade it is. If it is welding, they are probably going to have to leave Kelowna. There are not very many welding jobs in Kelowna. So are they able to leave and go north? Do they have young children in school? If so, they're very much tied to the community. They may not be able to leave and take those jobs in the northern part of the province or in Alberta. So those are some of the factors they have to consider when choosing a trade for a career.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Certainly within the engineering profession, I think the evidence is that the greatest attrition is between the ages of 27 and 32, which is when women are having children or balancing a lot of other factors in their lives. I think there is a huge element of corporate policy and culture at play in that attrition.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: I agree. For sure we see the same thing in our sector.

I think what also contributes to that attrition are the conditions that in our case, in the mining sector, are specific to our industry, things like the rural and remote nature of the industry. You can do that for a few years if you want and you can go to live in Yellowknife, but eventually people tend to migrate to where they are from. Or things like a fly-in/fly-out schedule in which you work for two weeks and have two weeks off are doable for a period of time but not for a number of years, and eventually that takes its toll. We see much higher levels of turnover for males and females with those schedules, but you can't get around that.

It's about providing as much accurate information as we can about job requirements from the get-go so the individual doesn't necessarily go through all the training, get the job, do it for a year, and then leave. If that happens, we're not helping that individual or the sector.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: That leads right into my next question. We have heard from witnesses, including Status of Women officials, who say that accessibility to flexible child care, especially if you're talking about jobs that are taking you outside your community, or shift work, for instance, and things like that, make it very difficult to raise a family. We know that women still bear a disproportionate amount of child raising and taking parental leave and things like that.

I don't know if you have any observations about how access to child care or lack of access has made a difference. I'm speaking to all of you, by the way.

● (1240)

Ms. Nancy Darling: It has definitely made a difference for us. Child care is one of the most common barriers we hear of.

With trades jobs, even if you are working locally, most daycare centres won't open until 7 or 7:30 and you need to be on the job by 7 a.m., so you need to be dropping kids off at 6:30 at the latest.

We have a daycare on campus and we're working to have that daycare made 24 hours so that access is greater for our women. We're hoping that is going to be a trend. That is what we need, greater access to daycare so our women can work.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: We went through the same thing. A number of mining companies have tried either to set up daycare in the community in which they operate or to support those daycare centres financially or in other ways.

What was interesting was that, for small communities in which both spouses or both members of the family work for the same mining company, the challenge then became scheduling and being flexible. I think all of that speaks to some of the challenges we're looking at: how our industry and our employers can become more flexible to accommodate different types of families today in which there's not just a single income earner but multiple incomes or family structures that are different from what they were 20 years ago. How can we change to accommodate different types of people?

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: I can tell you that we engage 1,000 undergraduate students in STEM fields every year as we deliver our programs. There is already an ongoing dialogue among the females who are working for us about that specific challenge and the concern. As they're going through an engineering program, how are they going to balance this, and are they going to be able to work in this field? They're checking out sometimes before they've even done their undergraduate program. That is an ongoing concern for women, and absolutely we hear that on the ground.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: You mentioned it's one of the barriers to continuing. Sometimes it's even one of the barriers to entering that kind of employment. Do you see it as one of the barriers to upward mobility as well? If women are taking more time than men, is that contributing to the lack of being assigned more interesting work or being open to promotions and things like that?

The question is for all of you.

Ms. Nancy Darling: Absolutely. We have only two female trades instructors at our college. One of them we got because the second she told her boss she was pregnant—and she was only three months pregnant—she was told she couldn't come back to work.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: My goodness.

Ms. Nancy Darling: So not only did she leave work as an electrician, she's done with that field. She's into teaching now.

I was shocked to hear that, because I didn't know if it was even legal for them to say she couldn't come back because she was pregnant.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Some of my colleagues are saying that's not legal, but, I guess it's still all about the culture of the workplace.

Ms. Nancy Darling: It is the culture. They were afraid. They said, "We're afraid you'll hurt yourself. What happens if...?"

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Montpellier, you have the floor, but I would ask you to reply briefly.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: I agree. Hearing stories like that is just horrible.

I think in our sector when we surveyed women they did identify parental leave as a major barrier to upward mobility. When we asked employers the same question, they didn't. So there is a disconnect.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: They're not actually going to say they fired her because she was pregnant.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Exactly. But I think it speaks to the point that there is a disconnect between what female employees perceive to be issues and what employers perceive to be issues. I think even raising that disconnect to employers, hopefully, will help them to address some of it.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Truppe, you have the floor for seven minutes.

[*English*]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I have a couple of questions, and I'm going to share my time with Madam O'Neill Gordon.

Ryan, I'm going to go back to you because I didn't get to finish my questions. My time went so quickly. I think you said 17% of the mining workforce—38,000—were women. Did I get that right?

● (1245)

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Yes.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Do we know what the age group might be for that 38,000? Are they over 45 or 50, or 25 to 40?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: I can certainly get you that breakdown. I don't have it in front of me. My first instinct would be to say they are younger than the average age in the industry. We've seen a significant number of female hires in the last decade compared to what there was three decades ago.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Right.

You said something about the average age. What is the average age?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: In the industry today, I believe it is 46 or 47 years old. And about a third of our industry today will be eligible to retire in the next five years.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I think you said that half of the mining industry was over 45 years old. Is that right?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: That's right.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: And they will be retiring. So approximately how many people is that? That's a lot of people, if you ask me.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: It depends how you quantify the mining industry. The way we do it, there are about 220,000 people who work in the mining industry today, and that's primarily in mineral exploration, mine construction, extraction, and land reclamation. It doesn't include all of the ancillary occupations that would support that.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thanks.

Also, I was wondering about some of the training you have for the women there. You mentioned something about transition programs.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: There are a number of mining-specific programs in place for minority groups. We have a lot more in the area of aboriginal work readiness and essential skills training. We work with a number of community colleges and universities around that.

Not a lot of female-specific mining preparation courses exist. Some do, but they tend again to be more for aboriginal women, and they're working through the Native Women's Association of Canada, for example, and through the Timiskaming native council, where we're specifically targeting aboriginal women. But as for pre-employment courses dedicated to women in the industry, we don't have a lot of them.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Okay. This is my final question. What best practice would you have to make women and girls aware of the big dollars, really, that the mining industry pays? Is there something you do to promote that?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: We do a lot to promote that and we're doing it on a relatively modest budget.

We have a number of career resources and career profile cards on which we profile women and different under-represented groups. We hold big sessions. We bring about 6,000 kids a year into what we call Mining in Society, which is helping kids learn about the different phases of the mining cycle, where they can play with material. They understand what drilling is and they understand how to find, drill, and crush rock, and so on.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Right. That's great.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: So it's giving them that exposure to the industry. We reach youth in a number of different ways, through social media, Facebook, and so on, but I'd say it's done on a relatively modest budget.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thanks.

Go ahead.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: On my last round I mentioned that General Motors Canada had stated that Ontario is producing more STEM graduates each year than the state of California. Jennifer, I know you are getting ready to jump in, so I am just going to give you an opportunity to make your comment.

Ms. Jennifer Flanagan: I think that is a fantastic fact. If you look across the sectors, there are sectors that have really done well in attracting more women and are now approaching 50% or that have slightly more than 50%.

You can see where the tipping points are. If you talk to girls today, most of them have interacted with or been exposed to a female doctor, geologist, biologist, or chemist. There is still a huge percentage of them who have not been exposed to a female engineer or computer scientist. Those are the fields, specifically, that we are looking at and working to get more women engaged in.

I think there is an opportunity with the increased overall interest—and you see that in those numbers—to promote some of the fields in which women are not even close to 50% engaged.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Nancy, you have mentioned how important it is to bring the moms in when we are looking at bringing girls into trades. I am wondering if you have seen many changes as a result of having the moms in. Has that worked or not?

● (1250)

Ms. Nancy Darling: Yes, I think that works really well. Again, the parents are really concerned about safety for their children. If we can bring them in and demonstrate a safe and supported environment, that means a lot.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Are we changing the minds of the mothers more so than just of the kids?

Ms. Nancy Darling: If we can get them in, we can definitely help to change their minds. Not everybody, but most people, will see that the technology component of a lot of trades is not what a lot of people might think. One of the committee members mentioned it being for people who can't get into university and that sort of thing. Once people see that you can really reach high levels with trades and with technology, I think that can change the minds of the parents.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: When they see the salary they are making in all of them, that makes quite a difference as well.

Ms. Nancy Darling: It does.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: That is it?

[*English*]

There were a few seconds left. Are you okay?

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I think there is time for one question.

The Chair: There is certainly, because Mr. Simms has left the room, leaving some room for one question from the opposition.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: We were talking about child care. Is the cost of child care, as well, one of the barriers that you have specifically noticed, or is it just accessibility and timing?

That would be it for me.

Ms. Nancy Darling: It is more about accessibility and timing. Many of our women, because they have low income, will receive a significant subsidy for their day care.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Montpellier, do you want to answer?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: I would agree. The issue tends to be about accessibility, timing, coordination, flexibility, and so on, and not so much the cost.

The Chair: Okay.

Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much for your testimony and for having provided a lot of interesting information and potential solutions for our study. Our study will continue Thursday at the same time, and we will have five witnesses. Once again, thank you for having taken part in our study. I also thank the members of the committee.

The meeting is adjourned.