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Chair

Ms. Marilyn Gladu

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)): I'll call the meeting to order.

I am pleased to welcome the Honourable Patty Hajdu who is with us today to give us some commentary on the GBA report that we submitted, as well as to answer any of our questions.

Minister, I would invite you to begin your comments. You have 10 minutes.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women): Thank you, Madam Chair. *Bonjour.*

I am very pleased to be here to discuss the federal government's response to the standing committee's fourth report on the implementation of gender-based analysis, or as we fondly refer to it, GBA, in the Government of Canada, which was tabled on October 7.

Before I start, I'd like to introduce you to Lucie Desforges, our new senior director general of the women's program. We are very happy to have her. Of course, we have Justine Akman, who is the director general of policy, as well.

[Translation]

Let me first thank the standing committee for its excellent work studying this priority issue, as well as all of the witnesses for taking the time to make submissions and appear before your committee.

[English]

The federal government believes that gender-based analysis, also known as GBA+, is a critical tool to advance gender equality in Canada. It helps to ensure that government decisions about policies, programs, and legislation are made with a full understanding of their impacts on Canadian women and men in all of their diversity.

[Translation]

The government's commitment to equality including through the use of GBA was underscored as a priority in my mandate letter.

It was further reinforced by the increased investments announced in Budget 2016 to enhance the capacity of Status of Women Canada to support government-wide implementation of GBA.

[English]

The government response to your report highlights our commitment to enhancing the use of GBA. It signals our strong agreement with the overall intent of the committee's recommendations,

identifies areas where we can enhance our actions, and several areas where more consideration can be given.

On November 1 2016, the Minister of Finance indicated that to ensure the government continues to deliver real and meaningful change for all Canadians, it will submit budget 2017 and all future budgets to more rigorous analysis by completing and publishing a gender-based analysis of budgetary measures.

[Translation]

This is a concrete demonstration of the government's commitment to use GBA to advance gender equality.

[English]

As the committee is aware, this spring we released a GBA action plan for 2016 to 2020. It sets out specific activities that the federal government, through my agency of Status of Women Canada, the Privy Council Office, and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, is undertaking to strengthen GBA implementation and accountability in response to the gaps identified by the Auditor General's fall 2015 report. I am pleased to note that the majority of the committee's recommendations align with the action plan, which confirms to me that our priorities and activities are on the right track.

[Translation]

Today, I would like to give you an update on some of the progress we have made in the last few months.

[English]

We all agree that training in basic GBA competencies is essential. Status of Women Canada's Introduction to GBA+ online course, which I commend you all for taking, provides a foundation for the common understanding of key concepts and steps of GBA process and is accessible to all public servants and the public.

One of the areas that the committee stressed is the importance of training House of Commons and Senate staff. In May, as part of GBA awareness week, I challenged my colleagues to take the online course. As a result, 588 parliamentarians and their staff have now completed the course. I have also contacted the government House leader and the government representative in the Senate to discuss mandatory GBA training for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff.

An increasing number of departments are making this course mandatory for some or all employees. To date, approximately 29,000 public servants have successfully completed the course. This includes almost 18,000 in the Canadian Armed Forces, Department of National Defence, where the course is being used to support the integration of gender considerations in operational planning, a commitment made by the chief of defence staff.

• (1535)

[Translation]

Status of Women Canada is working closely with the Department of National Defence as they develop more in-depth training tailored to their unique sector.

[English]

This is part of the action plan's broader strategic direction to expand training using a cluster approach. This means engaging groups of departments and specific sectors on the development of advanced GBA training and in-depth practical case studies relevant to that sector. Status of Women Canada has successfully piloted this approach with science, economic, and research departments. Training is currently being developed with seven agencies in the public safety and defence sector. We're going to continue to expand this approach in the coming years.

The agency is also reviewing the online course content based on the ongoing feedback that we received from participants. We will be doing a thorough refresh of the course in early 2017 to refine definitions and to incorporate new content, including that related to non-binary gender.

[Translation]

The committee's recommendations also focus on ensuring GBA training is mandatory.

I agree strongly that GBA can't be optional.

[English]

As noted in the government response, GBA is now a mandatory element in the new templates that support the development of proposals coming to cabinet, in particular, memoranda to cabinet and Treasury Board submissions. GBA is also required by the Department of Finance on initiatives submitted for budget consideration, and there are new commitments to make GBA of the budget public.

In cabinet discussion, there's an expectation by the Prime Minister that gender impacts have been considered, and that mitigation strategies are proposed where needed. I've been very vocal at the cabinet table to ensure that we are all being deliberate in asking questions, challenging assumptions, and identifying mitigation strategies to deal with intended and unintended consequences.

As a result, many departments are now seeking Status of Women Canada's support to ensure strong use of GBA. This has included engagement on the innovation strategy, the defence policy review, the national housing strategy, proposals related to apprenticeship and other employment programs, among many others.

[Translation]

The demand on my agency related to GBA has increased significantly over the past year. The agency is working with its partners to develop mechanisms to more systematically monitor overall progress in implementing GBA.

[English]

This summer a survey was sent to all deputy ministers to gather information on their internal GBA capacity and how GBA was integrated in specific proposals. We're going to continue this survey annually to track progress. Going forward, we will be closely monitoring the combined effects of increased training among officials, the new mandatory cabinet submission requirements, and greater engagement of Status of Women Canada in the development of initiatives. We will closely monitor the action plan's implementation and the impact of these enhanced measures on the rigour and quality of GBA.

[Translation]

In the meantime, we will continue to explore additional means to improve monitoring, oversight and accountability for GBA implementation, including the careful consideration of legislative and non-legislative approaches, and will report back to you by March 31, 2018.

Finally, before I turn to the supplementary estimates B), I want to again thank all committee members for their thoughtful work on this report, which has been helpful in pushing this agenda forward. I look forward to continuing our work together to ensure the government's GBA commitments are met.

[English]

I'd like to talk to you about the funds provided through budget 2016 to Status of Women Canada. This represents a total new investment of \$23.3 million over five years, \$4.2 million in year one and \$4.8 million each year thereafter. Supplementary estimates (B) confirm funding of \$4.2 million, which was approved by Treasury Board on October 16, 2016, to increase the capacity at Status of Women Canada. These new funds are being used to achieve a number of goals, including ensuring more consistent gender-based analysis across the federal government, which I described earlier.

We're also enhancing the research and evaluation capabilities of the organization, including recent online surveys about priorities for the federal strategy against gender-based violence. Through a short questionnaire on gender-based violence, we engaged expert service providers and front-line workers and solicited their feedback on challenges and priorities.

A number of research papers were also commissioned, and we hosted a two-day panel discussion with experts on the prevention of violence against women and girls.

●(1540)

This enhanced research capacity underscores our commitment to listening to Canadians and taking an evidence-based approach to the design of policies, programs, and legislation. Over the past few months, we have begun to expand the regional presence of Status of Women Canada to better engage directly with local organizations, community groups, other federal departments, as well as provincial and territorial governments.

[Translation]

To ensure a presence for Status of Women Canada in all provinces and territories, we have established new full-time presence in Toronto and Vancouver, and a part-time presence in nine other locations across the country.

[English]

This enhanced regional presence will help us to better leverage the agency's investments through collaboration with partners at a local or regional level.

Now I'm happy to take your questions on both the government's response to the GBA report and the supplementary estimates.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now begin the question period.

Ms. Vandenberg, you have the floor and you have seven minutes.

[English]

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you.

Minister, I want to thank you very much for coming here.

Our committee did a lot of work on gender-based analysis plus. I want to thank you for accepting the committee's recommendations and for taking action on so many of those recommendations in your action plan.

In particular, I noted that for the budget, and every budget going forward, there's been a commitment not only to do gender-based analysis but also to publish the results. I wonder if you could let us know the significance of that and why that is very important.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thank you very much for your question.

The federal government, as you know, is very committed to this initiative of gender equality. One of the things we can actually measure our commitment by is how we spend our money. To do a gender-based analysis on our budget is something that not very many governments do. It's kind of a unique thing. It certainly is something that will give us a very good indication in terms of the gender implications of how we're allotting the money that we spend as a country.

This is the first budget ever in which we will publish the results of this analysis. It's a very important step. It certainly will further the strong signal we are giving to departments that they need to consider the implications of gender when they're planning their programs,

spending their money, and making decisions on behalf of Canadians, including Canadian women and girls.

I'm very proud of Finance Canada, which has made this commitment. They're leading on the commitment, so it will be happening under its portfolio. We are currently supporting Finance in any way that they need, to make sure they have the tools and the resources they need.

We will also be working closely with the OECD to learn from other countries that are practising gender-based budgeting, to see what we can import into Canada as we begin this very important step.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I noted also that you mentioned that GBA+ is now mandatory for cabinet submissions, that this is now a requirement. You also said that there are areas where more consideration could be given.

Could you let us know if there are challenges or barriers that are being faced by government in terms of implementing GBA+?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Absolutely.

GBA has had some version of being mandatory for a long time. Now that I understand this file so much more clearly, simply to make something mandatory will never be effective, unless you have the depth of knowledge throughout the department. That's why I'm really excited about this GBA action plan. What we're trying to do is actually shift a culture and the way that people think throughout government. It is probably easiest to say it's mandatory and then have a tick box where people can say they did it, but there's not really any depth of effort, especially if no one is watching and there's no accountability.

To be able to have a commitment from the Prime Minister to have a full Minister of Status of Women, to have Status of Women have the capacity to support that in-depth knowledge, I think will begin to start to see the success in a far more rapid rate than simply having a mandatory requirement.

Having said that, we've put into place conditions.... I can speak really clearly about the memorandum to cabinet component. What we found was that the tick box just wasn't enough. Now, in fact, there's a separate section that people have to be very thoughtful about in filling out.

Maybe I can turn it over to someone from the department to talk a little about what that's meant for Status of Women.

●(1545)

Ms. Justine Akman (Director General, Policy and External Relations Directorate, Status of Women Canada): It means we are run off our feet, our phones are ringing off the hook, and departments are asking us—often at the very early stages of thinking on a new policy—how they should think about GBA.

Most important and exciting, I think, from our perspective, is that not only are they digging harder for data—sometimes it's there and sometimes it's not—but they are doing much better GBAs. They are also, I think, starting to talk about mitigating strategies, so not just the impact it will have on women, men, etc., but also how they might address that through the policy process.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: In terms of shifting the culture and creating more awareness, I noted that you said 29,000 public servants have taken the online course. Being in a riding that represents a number of public servants, I'm starting to see it, anecdotally speaking. People say that they hadn't really thought about it that way but that after they took the course, they had an "aha" moment.

I wonder if you have those kinds of examples or know about areas where that is happening and where there is actual improvement in the culture because of people taking the online course.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Absolutely. I can tell you that, first of all, the kinds of conversations we're having, in general, about gender-based analysis are far deeper. That's because ministers are, for sure, coming much more prepared, because their department is doing so much more thorough a job. Not only are they being held to account for their work but they're actually asking questions about each other's work, which to me is phenomenal, because now I'm not the only one speaking up.

The true indication of the beginning of a culture shift is that the spokesperson for women is not the only person speaking for women, and you start to hear other people saying, "Wait a minute. That doesn't seem like a very thorough GBA. How would that affect this group or that group?"

Also, because of the "plus" component, there is an openness to talking about the aspects of other vulnerable populations, whether it be culture, religion, sexual orientation, or whatever. For me that's very affirming on the large scale.

Certainly, GBA of the federal social infrastructure strategy has resulted in the identification of the need for a greater investment in shelters and transition houses, as well as talking about affordable housing and the impact it will have on women, who are disproportionately heads of single-parent families and households, and their children.

Those kinds of conversations indicate to me that people are starting to understand that this has impact no matter what their portfolio is.

We are using GBA in the analysis of large-scale procurement projects so that we consider the workforce makeup of the industry and ways to ensure that more of these people benefit—

The Chair: I'm sorry. That's your time on that question, Minister.

We're going to go now to Ms. Vecchio for seven minutes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Thank you very much, Minister Hajdu, for being here. It's great to have you here to answer questions about GBA+ and the work that was done.

One of the questions I have for you—and I do appreciate the answer to this—is regarding the commissioner. There was a commissioner used and recommended in many of the things we put forward. I personally don't always see a commissioner as being the best source, but what will we be doing for measurements once we have this?

I know with the commissioner, there's the idea that everything comes to that person. They are able to use a system in which they can say that this is what they have seen and this is how it's measurable, and I agree with you.

What was the reasoning in deciding not to have a commissioner, and what measurements will you be using so that we can see how GBA+ is used?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: We definitely know that we need to strengthen accountability and oversight for GBA, but I think the first thing was my appointment as the first-ever full Minister of Status of Women. I can tell you that I've heard throughout different layers of government and our political biosphere that having someone who is focused solely on gender equality is making a huge difference in terms of accountability. Before, a minister of status of women might share the portfolio with another file like labour or health—which, as you know, are massive files that can consume a lot of energy—and status of women would sometimes fall to the side through no neglect, necessarily, of that particular minister but just through the sheer volume of work that particular minister had with another weighty file.

Having a full Minister of Status of Women at the cabinet level drives change from the leadership place. It also provides that accountability to cabinet and government, because there is someone who is watching, essentially. I also have the support of the Prime Minister, who has been extremely adamant that the work I do and my mandate be taken very seriously; so there is certainly that, as well.

Also, I've been working with my colleagues to make sure their officials and ministry staff are also included in the oversight. At every level we have ongoing communication, whether through the deputies, the ministry staff, the chiefs of staff, or the senior officials.

I don't know if you want to speak a bit more about how you see that working.

• (1550)

Ms. Justine Akman: As I mentioned earlier, we get a lot of questions. We're networking with department officials at all different levels on a memorandum to cabinet at every level of the organization, but very importantly, we're also working on the downstream parts of gender-based analysis so that when the Treasury Board submissions come, and when evaluations are done, you can really make sure the right questions will be asked about gender at all stages of the policy and program implementation.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you.

Moving on, looking at the supplementary estimates, we did hear a lot, especially during the study of violence against women, about the need for more funding, and I noted here that \$3.9 million will be going in for operating. Now my concern is, is this going to be for operating those sorts of programs, to put more money into the funding of those programs, or are we going to be looking at Status of Women offices being reopened throughout Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I'll tell you how the money is broken down.

As you know, the government is not actually in the business of core operating funds, and I'm sure that you have heard, as I have, pleas for support at the grassroots level for core operating funds. As a matter of fact, when I ran a homeless shelter, I could certainly have used an extra half a million dollars, from any level of government that could have provided it, for core operating funds.

However, that is not the role of the federal government, and it's certainly not the role of Status of Women to provide operating funds. The funds that we spend, though, support that kind of work at the community level. We support provinces and municipalities with the structure and the framework, if you will, to enhance what they're offering at the ground level.

How we've broken down the additional \$4.2 million is, first of all, there's \$1.9 million to expand our regional presence, for a dedicated research evaluation unit, and to produce more meaningful and informed gender-based analysis. Then \$2.3 million is for ministerial support and Status of Women Canada internal services, and \$27,000 was also transferred to Global Affairs Canada to support the business women's trade mission.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: The reason I ask is that I had worked in the field. I worked for a member of Parliament for 11 years, and unfortunately not one time did we have somebody come looking for a Status of Women office until it was about to close down. We had offered at the front-line service those contacts to the ministers, to the departments, and things like that. That's one reason I ask, because I think we need to look at it as a nationwide thing. Every community could, of course, use a new office, because it's such an important issue, but how would we pick and choose where it goes? That's just one of my concerns, those offices, and that's why I was specifically asking that question.

Carrying on with some different things here—I have a lot of things going on in my mind—back to GBA. When we talk about GBA, the choice of not legislating it.... I understand the answer that you gave to Anita. Understanding the mandatory legislation and things like that, it would be very very difficult.

What was the decision not to legislate it?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: As I outlined, the choice to not legislate it happened because we don't feel necessarily that legislation is going to produce any better gender-based analysis at this time. It doesn't mean that we're not open to examining legislation, but in fact, when I draw on my experience in public health and behaviour change, what we know is that first you need to create an awareness of the problem. Then you need to do the education of whoever has the behaviour you're trying to change—in this case the federal government—and then you need to make sure that there are supports in the environment so that people can actually choose that preferred behaviour. Then finally, the legislation can be applied, and you need to have a capacity to enforce that legislation. What happens if you break the legislation, for example?

As I said earlier, what we are trying to do is shift the culture, and we're focusing our efforts right now on the awareness, education, and supportive environment stages, if you will, of changing behaviour, which is to say that what we're trying to do is make sure that people have the awareness to do GBA, the education to do it well and thoroughly, and the environmental supports such as

Status of Women, which has better capacity to actually support departments in implementing that gender-based analysis. We're open to looking at whether those things will produce the kind of change that we're hoping for, but at this point we know that it will take more than legislation.

• (1555)

The Chair: All right, and that's your time.

We're going now to Ms. Malcolmson for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks, Minister, for being here. We've been looking forward to it.

I have really limited time, so I'm going to try to ask for yes or no answers that align us right into some of the core issues of the work.

With regard to GBA, there is the Beijing Declaration, and several of the Auditor General's reports indicate that Canada has not lived up to its commitment. Your leadership has done a lot of work, which we definitely recognize and acknowledge; however, as my colleagues have alluded to, we recommended unanimously that legislation come into place to implement GBA. We had testimony from witnesses at Immigration Canada about how, when they were legislated to deliver on GBA, it made a big difference to them. Of course, they had to do the training and the culture shift.

I'm very concerned—and I hear this out in the world—that a culture shift doesn't bind the next government, which might have a different attitude towards this. Canadian women can't count on the goodwill of this government and this cabinet to do the right thing.

Again, will your government introduce legislation, as we recommended, before June 2017?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I know that the committee has heard about the legislated requirement of the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada report on gender in its annual report to Parliament on immigration levels.

What we notice in those gender-based analyses is that they're very good at giving desegregated data, but they don't necessarily take it to the next step to say, "Then, knowing what we know, what should we do?" That's getting back, again, to that cultural change.

We want more than the departments to say, “Well, it will affect these women this way, and these woman this way”, or “We know that 36% of women experience this, and 42% of men experience that”. It's important, for sure, to have the data and it's a great step, but what we want is to actually have GBA applied. We want people to be looking at their decisions through the lens of gender. We don't just want them reporting out on what the impacts are, but also on what those mitigating strategies are. Will they change policy?

In order to do that, as I said earlier, it does require a shift in culture. We're trying to work, for example, with departments now at the conceptual idea of programs and policies and approaches because, in fact, when you lay on the GBA at the end, quite frankly, it is very late in the game and sometimes unavoidable in terms of the impacts on women.

What we want to see is that departments progressively move towards using gender-based analysis at the conceptual stage. That's why—

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I'm just going to interrupt because I need to move on to another area, but I'll just flag that nothing any of our witnesses or you have said would say that legislation would prevent that. Again, we're disappointed that you're not following our recommendations.

I do appreciate your commitment to publish the results of GBA on the budget.

Can you also commit to publicly releasing the analysis of GBA on several megaprojects, which witnesses here also identified as being an issue of concern? Megaprojects can have unintended consequences on women around rates of violence against women. The Site C dam is one federal approval that has been given, and then another approval that we think is upcoming is that of the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

Will you commit to releasing the results of GBA on those two federal decisions?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: All cabinet documents are subject to cabinet confidence, so we would not be able to release those particular analyses.

In terms of your earlier question, I just want to be clear that we have not ruled out legislation and that in March 2018, as we committed in our response, we will report back. We will have a better sense at that time, after having a little bit of a longer period to assess, whether or not we are making progress and whether or not we need to consider legislation.

• (1600)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Can you tell me whether GBA was done on the Site C dam and whether it will be done on Kinder Morgan? Whether or not you can release the results, can you confirm—

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I can't actually discuss what happens in cabinet, as you know.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Okay.

I thought all cabinet decisions were going through that lens, but that's—

Hon. Patty Hajdu: All departments are required to do the gender-based analysis, but I can't discuss the contents of a cabinet conversation with you.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: We had a lot of outrage from both of our parties when the Status of Women regional offices were closed. Your critic at the time called the closures “reprehensible”. I asked last week in question period about whether your ministry agreed with the United Nations report that the 12 regional offices should be reopened.

You have given us information today about the re-establishment of the Vancouver and Toronto offices and the part-time offices. Do you consider that to be a fulfillment of the recommendation of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: As I indicated, we've begun to expand beyond the four offices. We know that by having a better regional presence we're going to be able to increase the reach of the agency. We're going to be able to also liaise more thoroughly with local organizations and community groups, and that really important piece, which is to partner with other government departments and provincial and territorial governments to leverage our agency's investment.

Regional presence is going to increase from four to 15 locations, including a full-time new presence in Toronto, two full-time equivalents, and in Vancouver, two full-time equivalents. The addition of Toronto and Vancouver means that full-time on-site service is now available in five of Canada's most highly populated areas. Staff in these two cities are currently co-located with other federal agencies.

The part-time presence will be established in nine other locations. They are Charlottetown, Halifax, St. John's, Quebec, Regina, Winnipeg, Yellowknife, Whitehorse, and Iqaluit. This fiscal year, Charlottetown, Halifax, St. John's, Quebec, Regina, and Winnipeg will each have been visited six to nine times. Going forward, they're going to be visited monthly.

As for—

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Sorry, Minister. I'm just going to ask you a final question so I can fit it in.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Sure.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: If you are able to follow up on that with the details, we would have it on the record.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: We certainly will.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: That would be great.

We got jammed on this because we're covering both GBA and supplementary estimates. If the committee invited you, would you be willing to come back for another hour for us to be able to dive into some of these topics later?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Absolutely.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Right, thank you.

I'll ask just a final one. We talked earlier about shelter operational funding.

If your department would be able to provide us with some of the history of when in the past operational funding was provided federally, that would be great for us to have on the record for our future work.

The Chair: All right. You can direct those bits of information to the clerk.

We're going now to Mr. Fraser for seven minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here. It's a pleasure, as always.

I'll hop right to it, because I have more than I can get to in my allotted time I'm sure.

First, very quickly, as a matter of process, when a memorandum to cabinet comes before cabinet and it doesn't have a GBA analysis at the Privy Council stage, or the Treasury Board, could you describe the mechanics of what actually happens? Is it sent back?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Yes.

They don't come forward without those components. In addition, when they do come forward with those components and Status of Women feels the work could be enhanced, in fact I'm provided with interventions on behalf of the department. I can then speak to additional considerations that the department may want to consider as they begin the implementation of the particular program or policy.

Mr. Sean Fraser: This whole process of the analysis will be completed, redone or done in the first instance, before all of cabinet sees it for the first time. Is that the idea?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: If it's turned back because of no work being done, yes. In fact, it would be completed before it comes to cabinet.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Perfect.

You mentioned during your remarks that there was a survey done that highlights the internal capacity of the different departments. Did you get many responses from all the different departments? Was it unanimous?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: In terms of the...?

Mr. Sean Fraser: In terms of who actually gave you a response.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Yes, I think we did.

I will turn that over to my officials to speak more about the details of the response.

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes, we did do that survey. We didn't go to every single department and agency, but we did get very thorough responses. In fact, we were able to follow up. Now remember, we did this survey for the year 2014-15, so we don't have results from this past year. It was a practice run at getting those kinds of results, and it certainly shone a spotlight on some areas that needed some work.

• (1605)

Mr. Sean Fraser: On that, were there certain themes you saw that crossed departments, where there are capacity shortfalls internally to the federal government?

Ms. Justine Akman: They were the themes that we've discussed at this committee before, so training, access to data, and certainly

needing to spread out the information about how to do gender-based analysis throughout the departments, the cultural shift that's required. Those were the kinds of things that were highlighted and that the departments over the past year have been working very hard to address.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I guess while we're on shortfalls like training, maybe I missed this in the remarks, or maybe it wasn't there. I'm not sure. Are new employees going to be required to go through the training process? We had great success in blasting the tool out. I think you said there were 29,000 folks in civil service who have completed it.

When new people come on board, is this something that we're going to require of departments?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Some have, yes. The Canadian Armed Forces, and Innovation and Science have.

Each department would be responsible for making the training mandatory. Certainly I can say from my collegial conversations with my ministers that there's a very strong desire to get this right. Ministers are giving very clear directives to their staff, both at the department level and at the ministerial level, that gender-based analysis must be considered.

What's very exciting, for me, is that I'm starting to see those conversations happen. They're not just about, for example, memoranda to cabinet or those larger policy decisions, but even things like communications tools, some of the programming they're offering, some of the ways they're thinking even about internal processes.

There's definitely a move afoot to understand that this government is very serious about gender-based analysis. People seem very eager to take the steps they need to take to make sure all of their team understands that it is very important.

Mr. Sean Fraser: When we identify best practices through this process with the departments implementing it, when it goes well, are we collecting the best practices under your portfolio or within departments? How are we spreading this information between different departments?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: We have a number of case studies. When things go well, or when we can use a case study to illustrate why gender-based analysis is good not just for women but also business, this is one of the things that I think are very compelling. We can actually demonstrate that not only does this have a good impact on Canadian women and girls, whatever the case might be, but the department that does this might also be able to save money for the government. They might be able to do things more efficiently and they might be able to reach different populations that they haven't been able to reach.

I think those are the kinds of things that are really starting to inspire my colleagues. We've moved away from this as being solely what is a human right. It undeniably is a human right that we have gender equality, but this is also good for business. This is good for Canada. This is good for achieving the goals that we've each set for ourselves and our departments.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I couldn't agree more. I think it's the right thing to do but also the wise thing to do.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Right.

Mr. Sean Fraser: On that, I'd like to pick up on where you left off with Ms. Vandenbeld's questioning. You were discussing new infrastructure projects or other public procurement projects and how we'll be analyzing things through a workforce composition lens. I didn't think you got the opportunity to finish that thought, and it's one of the things I'm most interested in. What are we doing to measure the gender composition of the workforce?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: We do have statistics on the gender breakdown in the workforce. Of course, one of our concerns is how to make sure that women will benefit to a degree that's at least somewhat similar to men in terms of some of the infrastructure spends. We know that women dominate the administrative end of the construction trade but not necessarily the trades.

You can't think of any one of these actions as being the silver bullet to end inequity, but at least we could be thoughtful about it. For example, we could work through procurement to have criteria that companies could be assessed on. One of the criteria points might be whether or not they have policies on gender equity. We can start to actually drive companies to think about gender equality through the way we're assessing procurement criteria. In terms of STEM trades, can we work more closely with, for example, unions and groups that are working on improving the number of women in trades so that they can benefit from some of the spending as well?

None of this, of course, can happen overnight. To go back to the culture shift, it does take time to turn a boat around. We're talking about a country that has not considered the needs of women for, well, time immemorial. We are actually trying to change the way we do business. I'm very excited about the enthusiasm and the willingness of my colleagues to put into place practical applications where we can influence, where we can as a federal government, even the considerations of the private sector.

• (1610)

The Chair: Wonderful.

Now we'll go to Ms. Harder for five minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you for being with us today, Patty.

My first question has to do with the events that took place just this weekend with regard to the passing of Fidel Castro. Now, as you know, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that Fidel Castro was a "remarkable leader" and a "legendary revolutionary".

Let me also fill you in on a few statistics. Under Fidel Castro, 1.5 million people were exiled and 582 were killed by a firing squad. Gays were rounded up for "re-education". He consistently mistreated

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): I have a point of order.

Ms. Rachael Harder: —or altogether degraded women in the society he ran.

The Chair: Excuse me. Just hang on a second.

I have a point order from Ms. Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I just don't see how this fits in with estimates or GBA+. We're going down a very strange path here.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Sorry. I'm getting there.

The Chair: All right. Please get there.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Sure.

We're talking about a leader who clearly supported violence against women and violence against the LGBTQ community, yet was responded to as a remarkable leader or revolutionary. Given that we, as a country, are trying to lead in GBA+ and are trying to set a new standard, do you agree with the Prime Minister's words?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I think our government has been very clear that the only way we make progress in the sense of being an international citizen is by dialogue and relationships. I firmly stand by the Prime Minister's belief that in order to actually support change, whether it's human rights or economic change or increased geopolitical stability, we need to have conversations with countries.

We also need to have to conversations with countries that are, quite frankly, sometimes very difficult. It's been my privilege to learn how to do that, because it is delicate. It is very complicated. There are times—

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'm sorry, would you stand with the Prime Minister for his speech and would you say that his words help reinforce GBA+ both in our country and abroad?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I think the Prime Minister was not specifically speaking about GBA+. I'm happy to take a question about GBA+.

Ms. Rachael Harder: It is exactly about GBA+.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: If you're asking me about how we feel about international relationships, I can tell you we believe that when we talk to countries and when we work with countries we have an opportunity to support democratic and human rights across the world. I'm very proud of that.

The Chair: That's very good.

Ms. Damoff, you have a point of order.

Ms. Pam Damoff: It depends if we're continuing down this line, because this has nothing to do with why we have the minister here today.

The Chair: All right. Please direct your questions to GBA+ and the supplementary estimates.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Sure. With all due respect, it had everything to do with GBA+ because we're talking about our country and the standard we're setting here within our own country. If we're going to stand behind the dictatorial actions of Fidel Castro, it doesn't help reinforce that.

The Chair: Order, please.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'll move on to my next question.

Can you tell me a little about the action plans being put in place with regard to the Yazidi women and girls coming in? Has there been a GBA+ analysis done on that?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: As you know, the Government of Canada has made a significant commitment over the past year to resettle vulnerable people who have been victims of Daesh. We're working very diligently toward that commitment. As we move forward with the situation you're talking about we'll provide further details as we have them.

I am so proud of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada in how they are addressing this from a very compassionate place. We know that people who come from extremely traumatized circumstances, whether they are Yazidi, Syrian, or from other extremely war-torn or vulnerable countries, have tremendous needs. That is exactly what we're trying to do by supporting the community agencies, by supporting refugees as they settle to make sure they get those support services.

Let me tell you this about trauma. I don't know, Rachael, if you've ever worked with people who are traumatized. It is an extremely complex process to recover from trauma and all trauma requires compassion. I am so proud of a country that believes in compassion and is putting into place exactly what those people will need when they come to a country that will support them in their recovery.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Is the plan put in place to make sure that we're responding with compassion and with the proper care that these women will need?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Absolutely. I am very confident, as I said, in my colleague and in the department to consider the needs of people who have been traumatized, who are suffering many times from post-traumatic stress disorder, who have extreme and extraordinary needs in recovery. I think the first step is getting to a safe place. I am so proud of a country that believes that.

•(1615)

The Chair: We go now to Ms. Ludwig for five minutes.

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Good afternoon, Madam Minister.

Thank you so much for joining us and the work that you and your entire department and your committee has done.

Gender-based analysis permeates everything we do here on the Hill and elsewhere. I too am very proud of our government leading by example. Certainly the initiatives that you've taken in cabinet, talking about it with your fellow cabinet ministers, is a demonstration of not just talk but also action. Thank you very much for that.

Looking at regional presence, you've mentioned there are nine part-time positions. Do you mind, Madam Minister, to repeat them again?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: The part-time presence will be established in nine other locations: Charlottetown, Halifax, St. John's, Quebec, Regina, Winnipeg, Yellowknife, Whitehorse, and Iqaluit.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Do you see any time in the foreseeable future where there may be a part-time position in the province of New Brunswick?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Certainly we're not close to additional regional presence. This isn't the end of the road, but we want to thoughtfully assess whether or not we need enhanced regional presence.

There's a very delicate balance between administrative burden and whether or not we're adding any value. Certainly we'll be assessing that as we go along.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

In the short term as the Atlantic region we work really well together, so I'm very confident that members in the province of New Brunswick will also be working with their colleagues.

We have heard from other witnesses over the course of the past year, talking about whatever the issue is, whether it's violence against women and young girls, gender-based analysis, that there is a cultural end, a regional difference. I'm really thankful that we are getting regional representation. When you're drawing from your statistics and your reports in monitoring will you be focusing on the regional aspect of that as well?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Absolutely. Maybe Ms. Akman wants to elaborate a little bit about the plans on assessing the regional presence.

Ms. Justine Akman: Actually, could you pass that to Lucie?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Sorry, I just keep directing everything to Justine.

Ms. Lucie Desforges (Director General, Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate, Status of Women Canada): Our regional offices, as they liaise with the different regions, and we're not limited to those cities that the minister...

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Sure.

Ms. Lucie Desforges: Of course we will be present on occasion in other cities as the need requires, but we are definitely taking into account any intelligence that we gather on the ground from these program officers. We are sharing that information and making sure that it is available throughout the agency. Our regional officers have direct and regular contact with their provincial counterparts in the Atlantic and other regions as well.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

Just on that, for those regional offices, do you have an indication at this time of how closely they may be working with local universities in terms of the research end? When we have our students looking at public policy or even developing programs, will they also be looking at that from a gender-based analysis viewpoint? If that's not there, how could we help them make that connection?

Ms. Justine Akman: We at Status of Women are certainly working with universities and will be doing more so, as we continue to develop a research plan with the new funding from the main estimates from budget 2016. It's also part of the GBA action plan, and I believe our response to you is that we would be working with universities to ensure that they are aware that our GBA+ training is available online to all of their students.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Okay, thank you.

Will there be an opportunity or anywhere where there may be a pool of funds, not so much an NSERC grant, but some kind of grant that they could apply to for research?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: We have ongoing grants available through Status of Women Canada. About \$20 million a year is provided in grants to any agencies that are available. I'm just finding out that we don't fund universities.

• (1620)

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Okay.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I can say, though, that we work very closely with universities. For example, with the gender-based violence strategy, we were able to pull in researchers from a number of universities who are doing specific research on gender-based violence. The response that we got from the researchers was very touching, actually. They were very pleased to be asked by the federal government to share the results of the research that they've been conducting without a very large audience for a very long time.

We held a two-day conference, a national expert panel on the state of Canadian knowledge on gender-based violence here in Ottawa. We also commissioned three analytical research papers on gender-based violence to examine the issues such as risks, interventions, and future research priorities. We heard time and time again, speaking to some of the questions around capacity at the front line, that the front-line organizations and some of the smaller organizations that are working on mobilizing communities felt that one way the federal government could really support their work was actually collecting data, providing an analysis of that data, and conducting the research to determine what's working, what's not working, and where we go from here.

Many of them felt that for years and years they had not had the type of support needed to actually assess whether or not what they were doing was having any impact at all. In some cases they couldn't assess whether or not their programs might make things worse. They really wanted evaluation, support, and research, so as we move forward into the gender-based violence strategy, certainly that's something that we've been very thoughtful about. How do we work with academics? How do we work with the universities to tap into that research that is happening but doesn't have a very broad audience?

The Chair: I'm sorry, that's your time.

We will now go to Ms. Harder and Ms. Vecchio for five more minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you very much.

I have just a quick response to the point of order. When we're talking about the supplementary estimates, I actually have the ability to ask the minister about anything that might touch her portfolio or

be within the realm of her portfolio. I'm not restricted to just asking her about GBA+. You're more than welcome to look that up in the Standing Orders.

I have a question for the minister. You talked briefly before. You said that around the cabinet table there have been several decisions that have been made that have given specific attention to GBA+. In the last year of government, with the policies or the legislation that has come forward, can you give us a specific example of where the GBA+ has been used in a meaningful way to create a difference?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: From what I hear from people who have been here far longer than I, this conversation on gender has never been louder around the cabinet table, and I am very pleased and proud of my colleagues for doing that with me and taking this so seriously.

Certainly, one example is the renewed approach to indigenous policing. Gender-based analysis helped to identify some of the vulnerabilities faced by indigenous women, but also—and here is where I was talking about moving forward from just counting what happens to women—to identify strategies that can go forward to ensure gender and cultural competency training for officers. As I said of the federal social infrastructure strategy, GBA resulted in the identification of the need for greater investments in shelters and transition housing to better meet the needs of women and children.

As I said, we are looking at how we can analyze the large-scale procurement projects so that we consider the workforce makeup of the industry and find out how we can actually orient procurement processes to consider gender equality and women benefiting from those procurement processes.

Right now, we are also being consulted on a wide range of proposals, including the national housing strategy, the defence policy review, and initiatives related to clean growth and innovation.

Many of these proposals are still in development, but we also have a very important opportunity to monitor how GBA is integrated as they roll out. I think that's a really important point to stress. We are not perfect at GBA yet. This is a first-year effort in terms of the focus that we've had. No other government has focused on gender in the way this government has. We are very proud of our efforts to date, but we know that we still have a ways to go, and part of that is the culture shift.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Since our time is very limited now, I just want to go back to the regional offices, since this is a concern of mine.

I have run a small business, so I want to understand what percentage of funding will be used for utilities and things like that, over the money that could actually go into programming and funding for programs that would benefit all, whether it's the GBA+ program or.... I want to know how much we are going to spend on lights, as a percentage of that, compared with putting up posters saying we want violence against women to stop. Is it going to be 10%? I would like to know what the cost of programming versus running an office is going to be.

• (1625)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: We'll get you the percentage of the total budget. It is a tiny per cent of our total budget at Status of Women Canada.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: What I'm looking for is less than 10%. It should be—

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I don't know. I can't make up a number, but we'll definitely get you the number.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That's okay. I'm hoping that this is kind of what we are looking at, less than 10%.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: It's very small. It is necessary, in order to support the community organizations that are often the recipients of the grants and make sure that they have what they need and that we understand the work they are doing, but I can tell you that this is not the majority of the expenditures.

I would say that more than half of our budget at Status of Women is given, in the form of grants, to organizations that are doing exactly what you are talking about, working on the front lines, piloting new approaches, and looking at systemic change across all three of our priorities, which are the economic success of women, women in leadership opportunities, and ending gender-based violence. The focus of Status of Women is very action-oriented. I am very proud of this tiny, mighty agency that does so much with so little.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes, and I respect where you are coming from on that. I just think it's really important, because we know that feet on the ground are important, but we don't need just a site for people to come and lobby. We need to make sure that the work being done there is exactly the opposite, that programs are going out the door.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Just so you know, the expanded regional presence and the part-time positions.... Toronto and Vancouver are sharing office spaces, and the expanded regional presence is visits, so there is no overhead in terms of extra offices that we are funding throughout the country. We are really trying to be very thoughtful and balance the needs of community groups to have face-to-face contact with a program officer and a support person, but also to make sure that the majority of our money is spent in communities.

The Chair: That's excellent. Very good. I did promise the minister that I would keep to her time.

Thank you very much for being with us and answering our questions. At this point, we are going to give you the opportunity to leave, but your cohorts will be with us for the next hour so that we can continue our questions about supplementary estimates and the GBA report.

I'll suspend while the minister exits.

• (1625)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1625)

The Chair: We're back.

We are going to start our questioning again. Do you guys have additional comments for us that you want to make at the beginning, or can we just continue with our questions?

Ms. Justine Akman: Please continue.

The Chair: Okay, very good.

We're going to start with Mr. Serré for seven minutes.

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being in front of the committee answering our questions.

I have a few follow-ups on the comments from the minister and comments that were made earlier. When we look at the work that you do and the work that you continue to do, and the work that our government has done, I'm really proud of the work that we've done. When we look at the equality of the cabinet, the fifty-fifty ratio, and when we look at the full status, as the minister mentioned, of the department and minister responsible, not combined with another ministry.... We look at our minister going across the country, and in fact the world, promoting equality, as our Prime Minister has done, and there is also the murdered, missing, and indigenous women and girls inquiry. This is something significant that the previous government did not want to look at.

I'm a bit concerned about the line of questioning earlier. You also mentioned in one of your statements and your comments about your phones ringing off the hook from other departments or other ministers, which is the very positive engagement that the government has. From your perspective, I want to know how those changes, which have happened in a short period of time, 12 months, have made a difference in your work as you try to integrate all of government, ministers and departments, at the federal level?

• (1630)

Ms. Justine Akman: As you're aware, as part of budget 2016, Status of Women obtained new resources for gender-based analysis. We've been able to not just staff up, but to staff up thoughtfully, in trying to bring people into the Status of Women who have expertise in different areas; that is, people who have expertise in the security sector, the science sector, the economic sector, and the labour market sector, etc. We've been reorganizing internally in order to give the best support we possibly can to other departments, but more importantly we still see ourselves very much as an enabler.

We're not doing the gender-based analyses ourselves, but we are greatly enhancing and using those new resources to enhance our training suite so that other departments are learning from each other. We have what we call the cluster approach where we bring like-minded departments together so that they can learn from each other in terms of gender-based analysis and we work with an organization at the Department of Foreign Affairs. It's a learning centre and we do this training there. Yes, it's had an effect on the agency but we're finding all sorts of creative ways to ensure that we continue our role as an enabler. What's really important is increasing and enhancing capacity in the cultural shift that the minister was speaking about across all federal departments.

Mr. Marc Serré: With that work obviously in the last few years, there was a \$5-million cut in the budget, which we are now looking at addressing.

We've heard the last witness, DAWN, who spoke about women and girls with disabilities. Have you looked at focusing on that element of disabilities as we look at some of the programs, other funding, or within the federal government? DAWN was very specific on some statistics about disabilities. Do you have any additional information that you're working on to help women and girls on the disability side?

Ms. Justine Akman: Do you mean information in terms of research that we ourselves have?

Mr. Marc Serré: Yes, for programming and then for staffing.

Ms. Justine Akman: The "plus" in gender-based analysis plus encourages people, other departments, and analysts, to look at all different aspects of diversity.

Lucie, do you want to answer from the funding side? I believe Status of Women has funded DAWN in the past specifically.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lucie Desforges: Okay.

Thank you for your question, Mr. Serré.

Through the women's program, we have in fact provided funding to DAWN.

Since I have been in my position for just three weeks, I cannot describe that process for you. We do work with that organization though, with respect to our calls for proposals. It has submitted various proposals in the past and we were able to consider them. We do have projects with that network.

If the committee would like, I could provide further details on this later on. Unfortunately, I do not have them with me now.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you.

[English]

I also wanted to ask a question about best practices.

Can you expand a bit and provide some examples that some of the departments have made on the best practices that can be shared?

Ms. Justine Akman: I should have introduced Vaughn Charlton, who is the GBA manager at Status of Women.

Ms. Vaughn Charlton (Manager, Gender-Based Analysis, Status of Women Canada): Thanks for your question.

The minister has covered a few of the good practices we're seeing and hearing about, and I would say that there are a lot of GBAs that look very promising, which we're going to be following.

We're trying to do some work on the security side with the Department of National Defence and the RCMP. It has become interesting to use GBA as a tool to look at recruitment processes so that when we're looking at how, say, to create a job description for a particular job that has been totally male dominated, we look at how the job description itself might be limiting. We talk about having neutral criteria or having a merit-based approach. Those are some of the more public things I can talk about that aren't bound by cabinet confidence, but certainly there is the infrastructure example.

On procurement, for sure we are seeing movement on this. As Justine mentioned earlier, we're seeing departments not just give us data, but they're actually identifying mitigation. If it is about, say, first nations policing, maybe we're going to think about recruiting more indigenous women into policing as a mitigation strategy where GBA is helping them find solutions to enhance programs.

• (1635)

Mr. Marc Serré: The minister talked a bit about some of the challenges and barriers to the GBA. Could you expand on some of that? The minister mentioned some of the barriers to implementing GBA.

The Chair: Unfortunately, that's your time. I'm sorry.

I wanted to welcome Anik Lapointe. I didn't introduce you earlier. I welcome you and am glad to have you here.

I'm going to share time with Ms. Vecchio.

I have one question; I don't normally ask a lot of questions. On the Canada research council hiring process, it was brought to my attention by some of the women there that in their hiring practices they don't post the jobs. There are different criteria for women who have been on maternity leave; they're only allowed to put on their CVs their last five years of experience instead of their holistic experience.

I wonder if you can comment on any changes that might be happening in the science area to address these things, because of the GBA implementation.

Ms. Justine Akman: Thank you.

I'm not sure about that; it is in the purview of a different minister. We have been working with the science departments on all manner of different issues, but on that particular one, we've committed to working. We also have met the researcher who has brought that issue forward.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Justine Akman: We are committed to working with the department officials to raise the issue.

The Chair: All right, that's excellent.

Over to you, Ms. Vecchio, for the rest.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you very much.

I want to go back to the \$27,000. Going back to the Supplementary Estimates (B), there is \$27,000 allocated for the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development to support the businesswomen's trade missions. Can you provide any examples of successful transactions and successful missions we have gone on and give us any measurements from those?

Ms. Justine Akman: There is a program run out of Global Affairs Canada called the "business women in international trade", BWIT, program. My understanding is that there is information, including success stories, on their website that you can research. There has not actually been a formal evaluation of the program, but they have been in touch with many of the different people who have participated in their trade missions and they have had very positive feedback.

Our own agency was involved in a trade mission to Brazil a couple of years ago, and there was an example of BlackBerry. A woman from BlackBerry went on that trade mission and was very excited about the new contacts she had made, but when you're talking about Brazil, these are long-term business prospects and they take a lot of work to actually come to fruition.

I know that there was one example just provided to me recently by Global Affairs of an executive vice-president of PONO Consultants International from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, where she participated in one of these trade missions, I believe it was to Texas, and made some concrete contacts and follow-ups from that trade mission.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: It's very important to have measurables when we're spending this money. Will you be looking at having a measurement system or reporting system done after trade missions in the future, or is this something you don't do very often? Are we looking at mandating or putting in, implementing, any measurements and reports that will happen following trade missions?

Ms. Justine Akman: We'd like to get back to you with the specifics on that question. Most government programs are evaluated at various times, so it would be best to get back to you because it isn't a program run by Status of Women.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Okay, that's awesome.

I'm reading the question directly. Thank you very much, analysts, very well done. It says here, the 2016-17 report on plans and priorities explains that an expected result of the agency's work should be "Celebration and commemoration events/activities aimed at advancing equality for women and girls are held in Canada." The performance indicator to measure success is that there be 10 "SWC-

led celebration and commemoration events/activities held in Canada."

Can you provide some examples of these events or activities, including a description of the scale and cost for each one?

Ms. Justine Akman: If it's okay, Madam Chair, I would like to call Nanci-Jean Waugh, director general of communications, Status of Women, to answer this question.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That would be awesome. Could you add to that, because we talked a lot about making sure that men and boys are part of the reality as well, so could you also share how men and boys are also part of that discussion?

• (1640)

Ms. Nanci-Jean Waugh (Director General, Communications and Public Affairs, Status of Women Canada): Thank you very much.

First, all the commemorative events that we have in the program we develop for all Canadians, so there is always something for all age groups and for men and boys.

Many of you have participated in some of the events we've done over the last year, for example, International Women's Day. I know you've either been at events or you have been quite actively involved in the social media campaigns, one of which is happening now: Actions Matter. Just to give you a bit of a result on that one, we trended for I think most of the day on Friday and a little on Saturday, so it's one that has completely resonated.

When we're planning events, we always try to ensure that they're open to all Canadians, as well as involving men and boys in the planning of the events, either in the speaking roles or in some of the activities going out.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I'm going to continue. It says here, federal government officials and key stakeholders have increased knowledge of gender-based analysis plus, and that this indicator focuses on the increased knowledge among officials following GBA+ training and events.

Has SWC also measured the proportion of federal government officials with research, policy, program, or customer service responsibilities who have taken GBA+ training? If so, what are the statistics in that regard?

Ms. Justine Akman: We don't keep statistics on the overall proportion of all public servants who have taken the training, but we have been able to monitor the percentage increase, which is increasing at such an exponential rate right now that we can hardly keep track of it. I think that in the future we could endeavour to collect some more accurate data about what proportion of public servants in general have taken the training.

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: We could probably tell you by department, but we would have to come back to you on it. We're not allowed to keep specific information because of the Privacy Act, and in part because it's a web-based course, but we could probably give you the percentage of a department's employees who have taken the training.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: We have talked a lot about the federal departments since we've been doing GBA+. Since it's become a focus of this government, have you found any departments that are failing and have not held the torch for Status of Women on GBA+? Has it been surprising that any of them haven't picked up the phone, or they're not looking at any submissions, or would you say every department is actively part of the GBA?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: There are definitely departments where it's been done longer and where that awareness, especially in the social departments or justice or health, is maybe a bit more obvious and people have been doing it longer. There are departments that are newer to it, so they struggle with the basic understanding of how it relates to them. I can't think off the top of my head of any department that doesn't want to work with us. We're very popular all of a sudden.

The Chair: All right, we like that.

Ms. Malcolmson, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thanks, Chair.

Amnesty International was quite critical of the government around not having used GBA on its Site C dam approval process, but I'm also hearing that your department is being consulted in advance of its decision-making. I'm hoping that you can let us know whether Status of Women was consulted around GBA on either of those resource decisions, the Site C dam or the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

Ms. Justine Akman: We consulted on various initiatives, including ones in the realm of natural resources, but I'm not in a position to comment on cabinet confidence-related issues.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I'm talking about the pre-cabinet part. Are you being consulted on those projects, which doesn't go to what happens in cabinet discussions? Are you engaged at a staff level?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: It may be a clarification of our role. We would not be in a position to do a GBA of a pipeline proposal because we don't have that internal expertise. However, I think what we are good at is being technical experts on what those underlying questions are that may not be obvious, but that you need to ask. We're simply not able to provide specific advice on a specific proposal in many cases. We are consulted frequently by departments, including Natural Resources Canada, on the types of questions that we would want them to be asking in relation to a specific proposal. We may not actually see that proposal specifically, but we can help them to identify some of the questions that need to be asked. I can definitely say that we're frequently consulted on that type of project.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: But you can't say whether it was those specific projects?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: To be honest, we may not even be aware of which specific project it is. There are certain rules that govern some of these documents. Again, our technical advice would be on, if you were undertaking that type of a project, how would you do a GBA, and I can definitely tell you that we are consulted.

• (1645)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: To try to make it more general, let's say there was a federal approval coming on a major new hydro dam or on a pipeline, both of which would involve significant construction. Are you getting asked, generally, about those kinds of projects?

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes, we are.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: That's good news.

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes, and it is more important from our point of view because we always remind people that we are not going to be the experts on everything. That's a very dangerous road for us to go down. However, we've done extensive training with the science cluster in the past year and, as Vaughn said, I think we've set an excellent foundation for people who are involved in those kinds of projects to be asking the right questions.

Whether or not Status of Women itself is an agency and whether the employees that we have in the agency have intervened in a cabinet proposal or not do not necessarily have an impact on the quality of the gender-based analysis at the end of the day.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I have two questions related to your ministry coming out of the November 18 United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. I'll note that in paragraph 24 they say:

The Committee notes with appreciation that the Ministry of Status of Women is currently working with other Ministries to develop a federal strategy against gender-based violence.... However, the Committee is concerned about:

...The lack of a national action plan, bearing in mind that the strategy will only apply at the federal level;

That's one, and the second is:

The lack of shelters, support services and other protective measures for women victims of gender-based violence, which reportedly prevents them from leaving their violent partners....

Does your ministry have a response yet to those two suggestions or criticisms of the work that's been happening over the past year? Are there active staff proposals that would help reassure the United Nations in time for their next report that these have been achieved?

Ms. Justine Akman: First of all, it was a very successful appearance before CEDAW earlier this fall because of the many actions that the government has taken, including the inquiry on missing and murdered women.

In terms of it being a federal strategy as opposed to a national one, I believe when our minister appeared in front of the committee earlier she explained the distinction. As far as we understood it at this point, it was very important to get the federal House in order on this issue before trying to go out with a full national strategy. That being said, we've been working extensively with the provinces and territories to ensure that there is good communication and collaboration with other levels of government. In fact, at our FPT meeting in September—the ministers' federal-provincial-territorial meeting—there was an agreement to do a common monitoring and reporting framework on gender-based violence, and also an agreement to work very closely together on different initiatives. Certainly provinces, including Quebec, in particular, have expressed a very strong interest to collaborate right down to the level of doing joint funding to ensure that the gaps that are out there are being addressed.

In terms of shelters, I believe this committee is aware that there was greater investment in shelters both on and off reserve as part of the first phase of infrastructure funding. We have been working very closely with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and with Infrastructure Canada to look at the future in the context of the national housing strategy.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I'll note that Status of Women appeared before CEDAW's committee that examined those things and still made these two recommendations. They found that these two areas were inadequate. Is your department now taking action in order to meet the recommendations of this UN committee?

Ms. Justine Akman: The federal strategy, as the mandate letter commitment said, will be a federal one, but we are working very hard with the provinces and territories to ensure that there is national-level monitoring and reporting out on gender-based violence. As I mentioned, there has already been an increase in shelters, and we're anticipating that hopefully there will continue to be further investments in this area.

Both in terms of the national housing strategy...and as you're aware, the minister did an extensive engagement strategy related to the federal gender-based violence strategy. We heard from Canadians from coast to coast to coast about shelter needs in that context as well, both on and off reserve, and in the north. We're very aware of the gaps that exist.

• (1650)

The Chair: Very good. That's your time.

We're going to Ms. Damoff for seven minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thanks to all of you for being here and also for all the work you do at Status of Women. I think the minister said that you make a little bit go a long way, and I think we all recognize that.

That actually leads me into my first question. We made a lot of recommendations in our GBA+ study. I'm going to put you on the spot a bit. Do you have the funds in your department to implement those recommendations? The minister said that you're being pulled in many directions on it. Do you have the resources there to do the work that needs to be done?

Ms. Justine Akman: The difference that budget 2016 made is enormous, certainly, in order to be able to increase our own capacity. Again, as enablers, we feel that right now we have our hands full and

we're doing what we can. The question is, what is the perfect number of people?

What will be really important is that all federal departments don't have just one gender focal point, which is what had happened previously. It was often delegated to a fairly junior level in a department. A proposal going to cabinet would be quickly run by that analyst, for example, and given a yes or a no, or a green light, and off it went. Our job, really, is to encourage departments to build their capacity across the board at all levels of the organization, both in the policy fields and in the implementation fields, etc., to ensure that this is top of mind for people going forward.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I think all of us saw you as a resource for the departments. They could come to you to help where it was needed, but it was certainly not for you to be implementing it in each department.

Ms. Justine Akman: Exactly. We're enablers.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Yes, exactly.

I noticed that in the report the minister did she talked about updates and enhancements to the training tool. I wondered if you could give us a bit more information on what is happening on that front.

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: Yes. The course, as you see it now, is actually version two of the course. We launched it in 2012 and then closely monitored the feedback we got on it to make sure that it was meeting people's needs. Then we did a more formal evaluation, and based on that, we changed the content. I think it's always been our intention to keep refreshing that content, because things change, we learn more, and we start doing things better.

We do intend to take some of the committee's recommendations into account in terms of enhancing the definitions of sex and gender to include more content on non-binary gender. We are also working with different types of departments. One thing we always want to do is to make sure we're expanding the content so that it reaches more functional communities. I can't say exactly which ones those will be, but I think we would certainly like to add some content on non-binary gender.

On intersectionalities, I think that's something we're hearing a lot. People want more of the plus, so it's about the "+" in GBA+ having a more intersectional approach. We'd like to enhance the content in that way.

We're also developing a series of micro-learning tools. Those are three-minute videos that are meant to facilitate uptake and retention of key concepts. We're hoping to be rolling some of those out in advance of GBA awareness week in May.

Ms. Pam Damoff: One of the comments that I heard from some of my male colleagues was that they weren't sure how many men had gone through the development of the tool. I want to make sure that's part of what you're doing as well. When they looked at it, they were looking at it quite differently from how I perceived some of the questions.

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: Absolutely. We try to take the feedback on. When people do that evaluation at the end, it's not just going into the void; we really do look at it. We are looking at things such as who's taking it, and language differences too, whether it's making sense.

Ms. Pam Damoff: You recently gave some funding to Equal Voice to try to increase participation of women in politics.

Could you tell us a little bit more about that?

Ms. Lucie Desforges: The minister announced about \$1 million to Equal Voice to support and enhance the participation of women in democratic institutions. As for the details, if Madam Chair agrees, I could call upon my colleague, Pascale Robichaud, who could give you a bit more detail about what this project entails.

• (1655)

Ms. Pascale Robichaud (Director, Strategic Partnerships and Operations, Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate, Status of Women Canada): Yes, we gave roughly \$1 million to Equal Voice for a three-year project to look at some of the barriers in the different legislation—provincial, federal, and municipal—so that women can participate better in federal, provincial, and municipal politics. That may be in terms of the way you vote, the voting system, or if there is child care in some areas. It's different ways of looking at the barriers and the legislation to see how we can come up with a better approach for women's participation.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Do you know how they'll be using that data? They'll be doing this over three years. Will that, then—

Ms. Pascale Robichaud: They will do a needs assessment; they'll have to do that. They will also be working with other organizations that were funded under that theme in order to come up with the best questions, have a good portrait, and look at the set of actions to implement.

Ms. Pam Damoff: That's great, thank you.

In the estimates there was some money being put towards research and evaluation. Could you give us a bit of an update on the progress to date on that?

Ms. Justine Akman: This past year the focus of the new funding for research and evaluation has been to support the minister's mandate item related to gender-based violence. As the minister referred to earlier, we did commission a few studies related to data needs on the issue of gender-based violence. We also were able to support an expert panel—two days of academics speaking about the gaps and needs for information and data and research related to gender-based violence.

In the meantime, we continue to do “Women In Canada”, which is an international best practice in terms of collecting gender-disaggregated data. It comes out in different chapters on different

themes. We've also recently done a business case on supplier diversity that we're hoping to make public soon.

Our attention now is focused on doing a strategy for the research going forward.

The Chair: That's your time.

Now we're going to Ms. Harder, for five minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you very much.

I'm sure we're all aware of what's being reported in the media with regard to the military and the assaults toward women that are taking place there. Can you tell us a bit about the actions being taken by Status of Women with regard to responding to this?

Are there any actions being taken? Is there a role to be played by Status of Women?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: Thanks for the question.

I think it was in January that the chief of defence staff issued a directive on fully implementing the women, peace, and security initiative, the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325. It encompasses a whole bunch of things, and one of those is gender-based violence. It's about encouraging women's participation in the military, in peacekeeping. We were invited to be a part of the working group that developed the action plan that came out of the directive. Gender-based analysis plus has been a key aspect of how they're looking to integrate a competency, not only as part of recruitment but also as part of Operation Honour, which is their response to sexual misconduct in the military.

We've certainly had a chance to meet with officials many times, and we've heard the chief of defence staff's commitment to GBA. He really does see it as a way to spread a basic competency to have that baseline awareness of gender issues. While we aren't directly engaged in the activities under Operation Honour, we do see GBA capacity as being one small piece of, first of all, shifting that culture and gaining greater awareness, and on a broad scale, rolling out those skills that are needed to appropriately address those types of issues.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Are you saying then that there's a GBA framework that is being used on the ground with our military men and women?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: In my understanding, the intent of the directive is to integrate gender considerations into operational planning. The idea is that, if an operation is being planned, they will be looking at the gender considerations on the ground and I've heard the chief of the defence staff say that it was his experience in Afghanistan that really led him to the conclusion that this is something that needs to be done. I believe, in his view, they could have been a lot more effective, if they had been engaging women in a different way or had thought about those things instead of having to react to them on the ground.

It's quite an amazing directive. If they're able to pull it off, I think that we would be international leaders in this, in terms of using this as a way of being operationally effective and that's his language on it.

• (1700)

Ms. Rachael Harder: What's the dollar amount being given to be able to pull that off on the ground?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: We don't have that information.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Would there be money that's coming from the department to support that effort though?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: From us...? We would be offering in-kind support, so I've certainly been engaged in a lot of training, but they want to develop their own gender-based analysis training. They're using our course as that awareness piece, knowing that in an operational environment, they're going to need to do something that's more tailored, but they're using our online course right now as a way to raise that awareness. As you've seen, it's 18,000 members and that rises every day. It's probably 20,000 today.

Ms. Justine Akman: We're doing security cluster training and they are also involved in that, so they will be investing in that training themselves.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

There's money going out to individual organizations. My colleague mentioned earlier that Equal Voice is receiving some money from the department. There are other organizations that are receiving money from the department. I'm wondering if you can just explain for me what accountability mechanism you use with regard to that funding going out and making sure that it's being used in the way that it was designated.

Ms. Lucie Desforges: Each proposal is assessed on its own merit against a series of criteria that, of course, will vary depending on the call for proposals, but in each case, we ensure that it's a good investment for Canada, in terms of the results that will be coming out. For each project, we ensure that the performance will be measured and we're also piloting a project in which we're trying to look at all the results of a series of projects, so that we can consolidate the learning, the performance, and communicate that outside.

Definitely, there is a component of performance measurement for all our projects. We work with the proponents and the organizations that are funded to give them, I would say, support in that respect because that's not their bread and butter, so we make sure that it is a robust process.

The Chair: All right, that's your time. I'm sorry.

Now we're going to go to Ms. Ludwig for five minutes.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

Has any previous government integrated GBA to the extent, in action, that our current government has?

Ms. Justine Akman: I don't think any of us has been here since the beginning of GBA, but what I can say is that there has been a very large shift. It is a big ship to turn, but in the past year and a half, there has been a very concerted effort by departments to do GBA in a very different way. The new template for memoranda to cabinet asks

for GBA to be done in a more extensive manner than it ever has before, so that in itself is a giant leap forward.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

Canada is certainly leading by example and that's a very important international message to be sending because there are a lot of eyes looking right now at Canada. Are there other countries that you've looked at as examples of good practices, in terms of the GBA implementation?

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes, we have done fairly extensive international comparisons. For example, last year as a follow-up to the Auditor General's report on gender-based analysis, we did that. Also, I was in Europe last year and had an opportunity to speak to other countries that we tend to look up to for their gender mainstreaming or gender-based analysis, but my personal resounding conclusion, from the analysis that we've done, is that we are, in fact, quite far ahead of most other countries on this.

• (1705)

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

On that—I want to keep on this theme here—how is the Status of Women communicating that message, and in what ways can we as a committee help you to communicate that message on the work that is being done and the outcomes of the actions?

Ms. Justine Akman: If you recall, part of the action plan on gender-based analysis that came out of the Auditor General's report indicated a few different actions, one of which was monitoring and reporting.

We've started this process with the deputy minister survey we mentioned to you, to get at least a starting point on that. We are also monitoring very closely our own involvement in the gender-based analysis process and doing best practices, and we will be coming forward with some proposals about how we can actually report out on this going forward. There's a wide variety of ways we could go about that. We do it in that context.

Then, of course, when we head down to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women every March in New York, we speak to other countries about what we're doing on GBA, and we speak to our federal-provincial colleagues as well. In that context, one of the action items that came out of our last FPT meeting was to continue sharing best practices on GBA.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

We're looking at it now in terms of the federal government, but in terms of trying to encourage business to take on and identify the value of GBA, can you help frame up how GBA makes good business sense, so that we could also sell that message to business?

Ms. Justine Akman: Do we have a bullet point on it?

Feel free to jump in on that one.

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: I was going to say that I think there are two dimensions to it.

One is that if you believe in diversity and people thinking in different ways as adding to the conversation, then one would see how that would be effective.

Where I think we have more room to grow is on the innovation side. We tend to look at the sciences and innovation strategies, and diversifying them and looking at the people working in them. There's some really interesting work out there that I think we could be leveraging more, to try to do GBA within the actual work itself instead of looking at the people doing the work. Diversity is important.

For example, there's an amazing project out of Stanford University called "gendered innovations". Dr. Londa Schiebinger has really looked at very specific engineering, math, science, and technology questions and infused gender and has found scientific solutions to things, through thinking about gendered questions, that have helped both men and women when it pertains to....

I'm sorry I can't go into more specifics, but that's where I think there is tremendous potential.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

There was actually an interview recently. I don't know if she's the president of Apple or the president of Microsoft. She's the first female president of that tech company. One of the things that came out, which I thought was really resounding, in the interview was her approach to the business model, which is quite different. She focuses on the people and does that investment. She has the conversations and really listens. She believes that, on the stock market, the company has been consistently rising because she's focusing on a very different style of business that we could all learn from, regardless of our gender.

The Chair: Well said, but that's the end of your time.

Now we're going to Ms. Vecchio, for five minutes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thanks very much.

I just wanted to look at two of the programs that we have done before. One was introduced, I think, in 2014, and another in 2015. Could you tell me if the GBA+ idea was looked at when these programs were being created—I recognize it was from the previous government—and if you saw results from those?

The first one I'm going to talk about is the action plan for women entrepreneurs. It was the "Just One Pledge" campaign. Were there any measurables from that you could talk about, something you saw and the promotions of that? As well, is this program something we're going to continue to support? Having women entrepreneurs, we recognize, is a huge thing, and it's great for the economy and continued economic growth. That's one thing.

Also, there was the women on boards program—that was in 2014—that was delivered from the Status of Women committee as well, working towards having 30% by 2019, with gender equality in the future following that.

Perhaps you could just talk a little bit about those two programs, what they looked like, whether they got to their targets and goals,

and whether we're going to continue with those sorts of programs, as well.

• (1710)

Ms. Justine Akman: I may invite my colleague, Nanci-Jean Waugh, up again, but I'll do my best to at least start an answer.

In terms of entrepreneurs, there were three parts to that programming. There were trade missions. There was the "It Starts With One" campaign, which was a mentoring campaign. Then there was an online platform, which we are still working on.

The Status of Women and the minister are looking at entrepreneurship and women in business in a new light, and with new government priorities related to innovation, to procurement, supplier diversity, etc. We're still very much in the assessment phase of where we'll be going with all of that work. We are working very closely with economic departments, including Global Affairs, International Trade, and Innovation, Science and Economic Development, on the concept of women entrepreneurs, and more holistically in terms of women's contribution to the economy and helping women both join the middle class, and of course stay and contribute in the middle class and in leadership positions.

There was a business case done for the women on boards program, and maybe this is where I'll ask Nanci-Jean to talk about the past of that program.

As you're aware, this government has made commitments related to women in leadership for the GIC appointments it's doing. Also, our women's program, which Lucie heads up, has a focus on leadership right now. That would definitely help support increasing the number of women in leadership positions across the country.

Nanci-Jean, I don't know if you want to add anything on the women on boards initiative that happened under the previous government.

Ms. Nanci-Jean Waugh: I have nothing on women on boards, but going back to the mentorship and the "It Starts With One" program, which you asked about, the previous minister of Status of Women introduced that project in the late spring of 2015. Then, there was an election. It is still on our radar, and something we're going to be looking at again in conjunction with where we're going on the women entrepreneurship file.

We do hear that the mentoring, sponsoring, and championing of women are very important to women. It will continue to be something we'll look at quite closely in the context of the women entrepreneurship file.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Excellent.

I spoke the other day on Bill C-25, which is the corporations act. They are changing a variety of things like that.

When developing this sort of legislation that has to do with women on boards, was Status of Women part of that preamble so this legislation could be created? It really does have the GBA+ portion that needs to be looked at, so I am wondering if you were incorporated in those discussions on that legislation. It does include women on boards as a big part of it.

Ms. Justine Akman: We were involved in the corporations act work.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes, Bill C-25.

Ms. Justine Akman: We were very much at the time....

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: You were involved in that.

Ms. Justine Akman: Yes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I'm looking...because part of the information was very similar to the 2014 plan, which was women on boards. I see a lot of duplication from that, from looking at the bill compared with the work that was done by the Status of Women minister as well as the committee back in 2014.

That's why I wanted to see that, initially, you were part of those discussions, since the women on boards was part of that as well.

The Chair: That's your time.

We're going to Mr. Fraser for the last five minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thanks very much.

It's really fascinating. I think we could always spend more time than we have with you whenever the department comes in.

One of the things the minister mentioned in her remarks was the fact that some of the monies outlined in the supplements was going, I think, to research. I think she mentioned that there were some papers that have been commissioned.

Could you briefly mention what the areas of research were, or the biggest areas of future research for Status of Women?

Ms. Justine Akman: The papers were related directly to the minister's mandate letter item to develop a federal strategy on gender-based violence. They were examining different aspects of the gaps in data and research that are available, and knowledge transfer, in relation to this specific issue.

As I mentioned earlier, we're still doing "Women in Canada", and the Status of Women will continue to do so. There are new chapters coming out each year. We're still in fairly early stages of developing new research priorities going forward, but they would fall under the three areas of leadership, violence, and women in the economy.

Mr. Sean Fraser: While we're still on the research piece, our next study is going to involve, in broad terms, empowering women in the Canadian economy.

Are there certain areas that are a priority from the department's perspective, that you could use more information on, to make a bigger difference in the lives of Canadians?

• (1715)

Ms. Justine Akman: That's a great question, and it's one that I'd love to give some thought to and get back to you with a considered answer.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I'd love to hear your opinion at some later date, if you'd like time to ruminate.

Just very quickly, before I pass on my remaining time to my colleague, Ms. Nassif.... Actually, I think that catches everything.

If you want to take the rest of the time, Eva, feel free.

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you for coming and sharing with us your great work at Status of Women Canada.

In a follow-up to my colleague's previous question on administering and implementing GBA, in your opinion, what is the biggest barrier to ensuring that GBA is done adequately?

Ms. Vaughn Charlton: I still think they are the same barriers that have been identified previously. It's really about having competencies.

It's different for different departments. In some cases, there is just not an awareness of what this is or what you're supposed to do. In other cases, they're aware of what they're supposed to do, but they don't have access to the data or the research they need that is gender disaggregated.

You can never discount the power of leadership, and not just at the political level but within departments. That takes having people in senior leadership positions who really understand what this is for and why they're doing it and buying into it.

I think that probably those three things together are some of the challenges, but they are things I think we can make progress on.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Can somebody else add to that?

Ms. Justine Akman: It's very much a process about the memorandum to cabinet proposals that we're seeing. They're getting better and better all the time, but we're going to be working more and more with departments on mitigation strategies.

Once again, if they have good research available to them—and there are gaps, and I just thought of one, women in trades probably would be an area—then what are they going to do with that information? We are working with departments and pushing them in that direction, as much as possible.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: On July 1, 2016, it was announced that Status of Women Canada would provide support for advocacy work, which was something that had been removed by the previous government back in 2006. Can you explain to the committee, please, what this means for organizations that do this type of work?

Ms. Lucie Desforges: Thank you.

You're quite correct that in July the minister did announce that activities that pertain to advocacy would be eligible for funding under the women's program. The reason for that, as the government presented it, was a strong belief that dialogue between decision-makers and the community organizations is very positive in improving and informing decision-making. That was the rationale behind it.

What this means concretely for the women's funding program is that if there are activities that are directly related to advocacy, they can now be part of the project, and they can be funded and supported by the women's program. We've seen several projects that now include advocacy-related activities as part of the overall proposal.

The Chair: Excellent.

I think we can fit in a three-minute round with our NDP friends before we go to the vote on the supplementary estimates.

Ms. Malcolmson.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thanks, Chair.

To the witnesses, we heard from DAWN, the DisAbled Women's Network, that they were not eligible for any of the Status of Women funding because the funding model was described in a community by community way, as opposed to something that a national organization like theirs could apply for.

Is that true, and has Status of Women been able to remedy that situation, so they can have access to funding?

Ms. Lucie Desforges: I believe the funding call for proposals that Ms. Brayton, from DAWN, was referring to is our call for proposals that is currently open. That proposal is designed to bring together women leaders who are associated with local and regional projects.

We've just recently met with the leader of DAWN, and we're exploring options whereby they could partner with other groups to make sure they can be supported through this call for proposals. There are several avenues that we're considering. It's our view that they are certainly not excluded from this call for proposals, and we're waiting to hear back from them very shortly, so that we can give them some advice on designing a proposal that is eligible.

• (1720)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Because disabled women have experienced gender-based violence at three times the rate of others, this is of great importance.

Have there been calls for proposals on violence against women over the last year, since this new government took control?

Ms. Lucie Desforges: I believe so, but Pascale can probably provide more details.

Ms. Pascale Robichaud: We have started the calls for proposals since the government was put in place. We had a call in the spring, and we have a call right now. They're both for leadership, but leadership that could address violence against women, depending on the type of subject you want to discuss in terms of the leaders, what barriers you want to remove. There were some on housing, there were some on violence, and there were some on the economic side. We do look at that.

We also receive proposals in a continuous fashion, and we can also entertain proposals for violence against women and girls.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: So any organization could apply.

The Chair: That's your time.

I want to thank all our witnesses from Status of Women: Justine, Vaughn, Lucie, Anik, and Pascale and Nanci-Jean, who didn't know they were going to be called upon. Thank you again for the work that you do.

Committee, we're going to go to the asking of the questions with respect to the supplementary estimates.

As with some other government language, it's not always intuitively obvious when you hear the language as to what we're doing, but this is the vote that seeks to approve the supplementary estimates.

OFFICE OF THE CO-ORDINATOR, STATUS OF WOMEN

Vote 1b—Operating expenditures.....\$3,911,600

(Vote 1b agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I report the supplementary estimates (B), 2016-17, to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Well done.

I declare this meeting adjourned.

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