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Chair

Ms. Marilyn Gladu

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)): Good morning, and welcome. We are excited to be beginning our new study on the economic security of women.

We have some excellent witnesses with us today. From Status of Women Canada, we have Lucie Desforges, the director general of the women's program and regional operations directorate; and Justine Akman, the director general of the policy and external relations directorate. From Statistics Canada, we have Andrew Heisz, assistant director of the income statistics division; and Anne Milan, the chief of the labour statistics division.

We are pleased to have you here today, and we'll begin with your opening seven minutes of comments, beginning with Ms. Akman.

You may begin.

Ms. Justine Akman (Director General, Policy and External Relations Directorate, Status of Women Canada): Thank you.

[Translation]

I'm pleased to be here today as you launch your study on the economic security of women and their equal participation in the economy. This study is relevant and timely. Significant momentum to address gender disparities has been created, from achieving gender parity in federal cabinet to the commitment to include gender-based analysis in federal budgets, starting in 2017.

[English]

This study will help drive forward our shared goal to achieve equality for women, particularly for the most vulnerable, including indigenous women, visible minorities, persons with disabilities, and youth. While there has been progress, there is still much more to do.

The Canadian gender pay gap is the eighth largest among OECD countries. According to the most recent data available, the average earnings for women in all full-time jobs were 73.7% of men's earnings in 2014, suggesting a gap of just over 26%. For all tenures—full-time and part-time—women earn 68.4% of what men earn, a wage gap of 32%.

Two-thirds of part-time workers are women, concentrated in sectors that are traditionally lower paying, such as teaching, nursing, sales, and service industries. Women face barriers to achieving full economic equality in Canada, including systemic discrimination or bias and also social roles and norms such as being primary caregivers.

When a diversity lens is applied to the economic situation for women in Canada, it becomes more clear that some groups of women are more significantly disadvantaged than others. For example, 13.3% of women live in poverty, but the rate of poverty for indigenous women and single mothers is three times that.

Even for those groups of women who have made advances, barriers remain. For example, women represent roughly 61% of post-secondary graduates in Canada. In some male-dominated sectors, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, STEM, the numbers are improving. In 2011, women aged 24 to 34 represented 39% of graduates in STEM. But in 2015, only 22% of workers in STEM fields were women, suggesting that barriers exist not only in the school-to-job transition but in retention of women in these fields.

In other areas, women collectively have made little progress. For example, from 1997 to 2013, the percentage of Canadian workers earning the minimum wage who were women remained stable at 59%.

Achieving equality for all groups of women requires a collaborative effort across the federal government, but also with provincial and territorial governments. Employers and society also play a significant role. Consider, for example, the gender wage gap. Reducing the wage gap requires looking at caregiving, which overall remains a gendered role most often performed by women. Addressing this challenge requires joint efforts between governments and employers, such as enabling more equal take-up of parental leave; increasing flexibility in the workplace, such as for scheduling and leave; and creating more family-friendly workplace policies for men and women.

In terms of the federal role, a range of initiatives is under way that seeks to address some of the common issues that women face in maintaining labour market attachment. You'll hear more about these when my colleagues from other departments come to committee. Some examples are more flexible work arrangements under the Canada Labour Code, changes to employment insurance and parental benefits, and the development of a framework for early learning and child care.

Status of Women Canada acts as a centre of excellence on gender issues, as you're very aware at this time of the year. We develop training tools for gender-based analysis plus. We create networks, promote information sharing, and provide advice, expertise, and guidance to departments on GBA+ implementation. We work with departments responsible for addressing employment and economic issues, both to build their capacity in GBA+ and also on specific strategic proposals.

The agency also engages in targeted actions that support the Government of Canada's efforts. For example, the agency promoted economic security for women by funding a cluster of projects in rural and remote areas through our women's program. These projects broke down silos, leading to more collaborative approaches to program and service delivery, and improved access for women to employment in these areas.

● (0850)

We have also launched a call for proposals to empower indigenous women to create stronger communities, in particular to address issues affecting them or hindering their advancement in all aspects of life. The agency has also funded economic prosperity projects to increase the participation of women in key sectors of the economy, as well as in leadership roles in such diverse domains as the mining and construction sectors.

In addition to our targeted actions that complement the mandate of other departments, the agency also supports improved access to data. Strong and reliable disaggregated data is the foundation of good policy and programming.

For over 25 years, Status of Women has contributed funding for *Women in Canada*, the pre-eminent and comprehensive statistical portrait of women in Canada. The seventh edition of *Women in Canada* contains 14 chapters, including on women's economic well-being, education, women with disabilities, labour force participation, and indigenous women.

Budget 2016 also allocated new resources to the agency for a dedicated research and analysis unit. These new funds will allow us to lay the groundwork for future collaboration with Statistics Canada to address current data gaps. This would support a broad range of data needed to advance future policy and program development in both the public and private sectors.

The forum of federal-provincial-territorial ministers responsible for the Status of Women is working to identify actions that can be taken to address the gender wage gap, including through data collection.

Going forward, to address women's economic security and their equal participation in the economy, it will be imperative to continue to encourage and engage leadership across governments; create and

support interdepartmental and inter-jurisdictional networks to facilitate, among other things, the collection of shared and disaggregated data and indicators; and encourage collaborative partnerships between levels of government, non-governmental organizations, institutions, and employers.

This committee's work will help inform and strengthen future work of Status of Women and our other colleagues in other departments. We very much look forward to this study and to the final report of this committee.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

Now we'll hear from Andrew Heisz from Statistics Canada.

Mr. Andrew Heisz (Assistant Director, Income Statistics Division, Statistics Canada): Good morning, and thank you.

[*Translation*]

I will speak in English, but you may ask your questions in French if you wish.

[*English*]

I have a presentation for you today. If you'd like, I can guide you through the presentation and inform you when I'm changing slides.

I'll begin with slide 1. As Canada's national statistical office, Statistics Canada is responsible for the systematic and coordinated collection of data related to women and girls. Together, the data we collect at Statistics Canada cover the wide spectrum of socio-economic conditions affecting women, such as the representation of women in the labour force, the enrolment of women in post-secondary education....

It appears to me that maybe we don't have the deck. Am I right?

The Chair: You're exactly correct. We don't have the deck.

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I guess you don't have a photocopier hidden in the back.

The Chair: Not in my pocket.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Is it critical for your remarks?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I think it would be helpful, but certainly it's not critical. I can try my best to walk you through it.

The Chair: Let's continue without it.

Mr. Andrew Heisz: Okay. I'll try my best to convey what the slides would look like, were you able to see them. Honestly, some of them are just text slides, so we're not too far behind.

For the purposes of this presentation, I'll focus on four high-level topics. The first will be post-secondary access and attainment. The second will be wage and occupational differences. The third will be women with low income. The fourth will be retirement preparedness for women.

Slide 3 presents selected results for women in the area of post-secondary access and attainment. My colleague from Status of Women also gave some similar results. Following a long-trending increase in graduation rates, women now complete post-secondary at higher rates than men, and are also well represented in co-op programs. Particular interest is often paid to the share of women in STEM fields—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—partly because it could reflect an influence of gender stereotypes about female and male capabilities that steer girls and boys, women and men, toward different educational and career paths.

Slide 4 looks at how young women are less likely to choose STEM studies than men. A recent study recorded high school math scores from the year 2000 for a cohort of Canadian girls and boys. They were then followed up 10 years later to determine if these mathematics scores were related to STEM program choice at university.

• (0855)

The Chair: If I may, I'll interrupt for a second.

If you have your iPads with you, the presentation is accessible on your iPads.

I'm sorry, Mr. Heisz. I'm giving you extra time at the end to make up for all these interruptions.

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I'm going extra slowly just for that reason.

For those of you who are following along, I'm on slide 4, which shows a graph comparing the entrance into STEM fields for girls and boys and women and men according to their grade 10 mathematics scores. Essentially, the graphic shows that even women with high grade 10 math scores were less likely to enter STEM fields than were men or boys who had high grade 10 math scores at the same time.

Going on to slide 5, in the next two slides I will discuss wage and occupational differences between men and women. In 2016, the average hourly wage of full-time women workers was 88% that of men. I'd like to highlight that there are different ways to calculate the gender wage gap. The one that I'm choosing to present here shows the hourly wage of women working full time, but you could also look at the annual earnings of women overall and you could look at the annual earnings of women who worked only full year, full time. They would give different levels. An important feature is that the wage gap is narrowing regardless of which level you use.

The wage gap persists even between men and women with the same level of education. For example, in comparing men and women with a bachelor's degree, women's hourly wages were still 88% that of men in 2016. Likewise, women working in university-level STEM-related occupations earned on average \$61,000 annually, compared to \$71,000 earned by men. Part of the gender wage difference might be associated with the share of women who attain senior management positions. In the government sector, where employment equity legislation is in place, women are slightly more likely than men to be incumbent in leadership positions. In the private sector, only 26% of senior managers were women. Indeed, turning to slide 6, while the share of the top 1% of earners who were women rose steadily from 10% in the mid-1980s to more than 20% in recent years, the share is still well below 50%.

Moving to slide 7, I'll switch to talking a bit about low income. Low income, of course, is a strong signal of low economic well-being. It is important to underscore that low income is measured at the family level, so family characteristics play an important role in understanding low income. Many of the numbers I present are family-level statistics rather than those for women specifically.

Although family incomes have grown steadily over the past two decades, low income for women has been fairly steady, neither rising nor falling. In 2014, 13.5% of women lived in families with low income. This compares to 12.5% of men. Low income is higher for women and men in certain socio-economic groups, such as aboriginal persons, recent immigrants, persons with disabilities, unattached persons, lone parents, and persons belonging to a visible minority group. Lone-parent families, unattached seniors, and women aged 75 and over stand out as groups where low income is much higher for women than men. For example, women aged 75 and over had a low-income rate of 17%, compared to 9.4% for men.

Going to slide 8, it is well known that federal government transfers reduce low income. Different transfer programs affect different family types. For example, older families may receive OAS and GIS, while younger families are more likely to receive child benefits or employment insurance. In slide 8, we show how much higher the low-income rate would have been for different family types if their income did not include their main federal transfers. OAS and GIS reduce the low-income rates of elderly unattached and couples by a large margin, while child benefits reduce the low-income rates among lone parents and couples, though by a lesser degree.

Looking at elderly unattached women, we see that their low-income rate was 30%, but without their OAS and GIS it would have been 25% higher. Looking at women in lone-mother families, we see that their low-income rate was 40% in 2014, but would have been 8% higher without child benefits. In some cases, the transfer is not enough to lift the family above the low-income threshold, but it still reduces the gap, that is, the dollar shortfall below the low-income threshold for that family. For example, for women in lone-mother families, the low-income gap averaged \$11,400. That means their shortfall, on average, was \$11,400 below the low-income threshold, but it would have been nearly \$20,000 without the child benefits they received.

• (0900)

On slide 9, I introduce our final topic today, which is retirement preparedness. Briefly, moving to slide 10, unattached women and lone mothers were less confident about their retirement prospects than other family groups were. They were less likely to be planning for their retirement. They were less likely to think their retirement income would be adequate, and for earlier retirees living unattached, they were less likely to think their current retirement income was adequate.

That brings me to the end of my discussion. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Excellent.

We will begin our round of questioning for seven minutes with my colleagues on the Liberal side, starting with Ms. Ludwig.

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Good morning. Thank you for your excellent presentations.

Looking at the position of women in Canada is of great importance to this committee. Recently the federal government announced, in the 2016 budget, the Canada child benefit, which is tax-free. How significant is that to women living under the low-income status line?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: We don't have statistics on the new Canada child benefit, but we do have statistics related to the previous child benefits that were available to families with children. I can say that they have a significant impact on the low-income rate and the numbers of women and children living under the low-income lines.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Great. Considering that this Canada child benefit now is tax-free, hopefully it will have a greater benefit for these women. Would that be fair to say?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I'd prefer to wait and see the numbers. It would depend on the magnitude of the benefit on an after-tax basis and how that would....

You're right that the new one is not taxed and that the old one was taxable, or some of them were taxable. The UCCB, for example, was taxable. I think we want to look at the numbers when they come in and see how that all balances out in the end.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Thank you.

During the discussion this morning, there was definitely a correlation between education and levels of income. I'm wondering if you can speak to the difference in levels of income and education, for example, in trades training. We know there has been a significant and increasing number of women participating in post-secondary education, particularly in universities, but we haven't seen the same significant comparable increase for women in the area of trades.

Looking at the income from trades, as well as the shorter time for education and greater application within the field, how significant is it that women are more involved or have more access to trades training and access to trades positions in Canada?

Ms. Justine Akman: I'll try to answer that at a high level.

As you've mentioned, women are participating more in STEM education, but resulting levels of employment in STEM are not reflective of their education rates. When they do get into the STEM

field, they tend to stay in lower-paying jobs and not rise in the ranks in the same way men do.

So, clearly, it's an area that governments are focused on at all levels. In particular, in resource-intensive economies, it would be very important that women continue to get training, apprenticeship training, skilled trades training, etc., so they can enter the workforce and perhaps move out of poverty in some cases. Then, of course, it's very important to adjust the wage gap as well now that there are an increasing number of women in more senior level positions in these industries.

• (0905)

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Great, thank you.

Throughout your research and the data you've collected, have you done a study or an analysis of rural versus urban, in terms of women and men and their wage gaps, and also of regional differences in Canada?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I'm not aware of a study that focuses specifically on those issues. I'm probably not the best expert on the wage gap to answer that, but I believe we do have more statistics available at Statistics Canada on the gender wage gap according to different characteristics, such as occupation of employment and industry of employment. These would make up part of our *Women in Canada* series that compiles statistics on women, which is available on the Statistics Canada website.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Okay.

Ms. Akman?

Ms. Justine Akman: At least in the last studies I looked at, I think the wage gap was worst in Alberta. This was before oil prices declined. As I mentioned before, it does tend to be worse in resource-intensive economies.

I also don't have a study top of mind, but I'm sure that's information we would be able to access for you, if you would like, in terms of follow-up.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: I would be really interested in that.

I'm honoured to represent the riding of New Brunswick Southwest. We have a high concentration, in the community I live in, of people with Ph.D.s and people who have come from different areas. But certainly outside of that, in the rural areas, it is challenging. There isn't the same level of access to education. Within the riding itself, there's one college and there is one private non-denominational faith-based university. The universities are in what we would call the larger cities in New Brunswick, but there isn't the transportation to get there as well. We see that certainly there is a wage gap within the rural areas, because there isn't the same access to some of the higher-level jobs and there's also the issue regarding transportation.

The other question I had for you, Mr. Heisz, was around how the calculation of the gender wage gap is used. Is there a standardized measure that's being used for measuring wage gap that is across departments?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I'm not aware of a standardized measure.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Okay.

Ms. Akman?

Ms. Justine Akman: We are exceedingly careful to explain which number we're using and how it's been calculated, because it is calculated very differently depending on what you're looking at. Even in my speaking points today I tried to be careful to make sure it was clear what we were speaking about.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: I did notice that. Thank you.

In our previous study, which was looking at violence against women and young girls, certainly the issue or the challenge regarding evidence and data was a common theme we heard, as was how the data was collected, because there wasn't that same level of consistency. The stories in some cases were anecdotal, which is certainly a case for research. The work that you are doing here is certainly very valuable, because it's evidence-based research that we can use in terms of implementing policy.

Have you come across any research, or have done your own research, in terms of the importance of women being involved in occupations that are unionized? Does that increase the wages or have more gender equality in terms of wages?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I can speak to that. One factor that's important to consider, when considering occupation and the gender wage gap, is the high proportion of women in public occupations, government sector occupations. Of course, these occupations are also mostly unionized. There are studies on the gender wage gap that explain the impact of unionization on the gender wage gap, and I believe it is an important factor.

It would probably be prudent, rather than saying how much more important I think it is, to point you to the research.

Ms. Karen Ludwig: Okay.

• (0910)

The Chair: That was a good thing to do. You're out of time.

I'll now go to my colleague Ms. Harder.

You have seven minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): All right.

Thank you so much for being here and for presenting to us.

First, to Andrew, one of the things that's highlighted in the deck is just the difference in terms of occupations. We enter different occupations from men, right? Women are hired within full-time work at different rates than men are. Is this because women are actually being turned away? When we look at the number of men and the number of women who are applying for the same job, is it that men are being chosen over women, or is it that women just simply aren't applying for the same jobs men are applying for?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: At Statistics Canada we're very careful to try to present what we call the "stylized facts", the statistical results. We do, of course, also do research on the gender wage gap, which tries to get at some of the more causal factors involved. It's notoriously difficult to get at the causal factors, basically because we simply don't know everything about the pathways women are taking to get to the point where they are earning, and earning less than men.

We do know, for example, that women are more likely to work part-time. We know they're more likely, when they do work part-time, to state that one of the reasons for working part-time is choice or family responsibilities.

There are ways that one can de-compose the gender wage gap into components like that. Certainly choice must play a role, but also, as I mentioned in my speaking points, there are norms in society, and the ways that women and girls are steered towards different occupations may also play a role.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Right.

It would appear to me then that the most important factor here is protecting a woman's choice. Should our goal at the end of the day be to have 50% and 50% in every single field across the spectrum, or should it be to protect a woman's choice?

Ms. Justine Akman: We do have data. About 70% of part-time employment has consistently been by women, since data began being collected in 1997. While there are many reasons for working part-time, and sometimes the reason is choice, we do know that 37.8% of women working part-time indicated that they do so involuntarily. So, if there were more supports by private sector, public sector, and other employees, then they would prefer to work full-time. The main reason, again, as my colleague Andrew said, is often care responsibilities at home.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Andrew, you also said that the wage gap is narrowing. I wonder if you can comment on this further.

Mr. Andrew Heisz: Again, there's a bit of research around why the wage gap is narrowing. I think the narrowing of the wage gap is consistent with other socio-economic changes that are associated with women's participation in the labour market. Rising participation in the labour market and rising educational attainment by women would be important factors to consider when considering the narrowing gap.

Ms. Rachael Harder: One of the things that you state in the deck here is that women actually complete post-secondary education at a greater degree or greater level than men do, so how did we arrive at that place?

I think that's very positive. Clearly, women are making their way in the world and doing very well for themselves. So, how did we get there?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: Again, it's a matter of changes in society and in the way people are entering post-secondary education. Speaking to the statistics, I can say that what you say is correct, that more women than men are now graduating from university. However, it's much more difficult to say why that is.

• (0915)

Ms. Justine Akman: Can I add to that?

Ms. Rachael Harder: You can.

Ms. Justine Akman: The wage gap at one point, when women were just entering the labour force, did decrease significantly. But now it's sort of stubbornly staying at approximately the same rate, depending on how you calculate it, whether it's full-time, part-time, the two combined, etc. It is a harder thing to move at this point, but because it's somewhere around the 30% rate, there's still a concerted effort by governments at all levels to try to address the wage gap.

The reasons that explain the wage gap—and there are a number of them, and not a one-solution-fits-all kind of thing—are caregiving, labour-market segmentation, continuing bias and discrimination in the workplace, and women's overrepresentation in part-time work.

To actually address the wage gap at this point would take a number of different kinds of initiatives. I would also add that it's much worse for some women. It's less for women of a certain education level, but if you actually go deeper, it's much worse for some women.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Andrew, when we look at the difference in earnings for women, if we compare a full-time worker to another full-time worker, the average earning for women is less. I guess I'm wondering if we are comparing apples to apples.

Are we comparing the same job description? For a man and a woman with the same job description, is the woman making less? Is that what the statistics are showing us?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: The statistics I presented here are a little bit less processed than what you're describing. They compare only the full-time wage of women and the full-time wage of men, and they don't control for differences in occupation or differences in other background characteristics.

There is research that does that kind of comparison. To the best of my memory, when you control for all of those factors, the wage gap becomes 92¢ on the dollar rather than the 88¢ that we have here. So some of the wage gap can be explained by what we would call “observables”, but there remains a part that's unexplained.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

The Chair: We'll go to Ms. Malcolmson for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Thank you, witnesses. You've set us up with some really good material that's going to be very helpful for our study. I appreciate your diving into the intention of our study, which is women's economic insecurity.

To the Status of Women witnesses, I note your condensation of some of the sad stories on the pay gap. Canada has the eighth-largest pay gap among OECD countries and that gap is between 26% and 32%, depending on whether it's part-time or full-time work. Given that, I'd like to know why Status of Women Canada didn't encourage the government to enact, and ensure that the government enacted, pay equity legislation. Given that the legislation was mostly written in 2014, why not do it right away instead of allowing the government to delay pay equity legislation until 2018?

Ms. Justine Akman: As I believe the committee is aware, the government has committed to coming back with a proposal in 2018 on pay equity. Status of Women has been part of the analysis related

to that file, including ensuring that people understand the difference between the wage gap and pay equity. They're two very different concepts. Our focus is obviously on both issues.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Last November, we got a report from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. I'm noting that indigenous women have poor access to employment and continue to live in poverty. The United Nations also expressed concern over the lack of a coherent plan or strategy by this federal government to improve the economic security of indigenous women.

Can you tell us what are the government's plans to implement the recommendations of the United Nations to create a specific plan to address the injustices facing indigenous women, including low employment rates and low income?

Ms. Justine Akman: The government is working across all federal departments together—that would include the Departments of Indigenous Affairs, Employment, Social Development Canada, Health Canada, etc.—to work on the response to the recommendations of CEDAW, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Under the rubric of the reconciliation agenda, a number of different federal initiatives address poverty in indigenous communities .

For Status of Women itself, I don't know if you wanted to jump in, Lucie, in regard to some of our programming to address the economic challenges for indigenous women.

• (0920)

Ms. Lucie Desforges (Director General, Women's Program and Regional Operations Directorate, Status of Women Canada): Sure. I can speak to an initiative the women's program recently launched. We had a call for proposals in 2016 to very specifically invite indigenous people to put forward proposals to advance the empowerment of women in their communities. That was the first time the agency had a very distinct call that was tailored to indigenous women. Our evaluations recently concluded and the announcements will be done shortly. Minister Monsef will be able to do that shortly.

Under this call for proposals, we'll be funding several organizations that will be working with their partners in the communities on different issues—economic issues, violence, and leadership per se—so that indigenous women can have full participation in their communities. You'll be able to hear more about this soon.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: If the department is able to update the committee on the result of that work, that would be helpful.

I want to switch to Stats Canada. We've been hearing that a lack of child care programs keeps women out of the workforce. Affordable, accessible, high-quality child care is essential to women's being able to get out into the workforce and, therefore, their participation in the economy; but in order to be valuable, it has to be priced so that families can afford it. We're hearing that child care costs today have reached unacceptable levels, increasing almost 10% in the last two years. We had a report that was in the news last year from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It was saying that \$7-a-day child care in Quebec had increased women's participation in the labour force by 8% to 12%.

Is StatsCan gathering any data? Can it provide this committee with data from across the country about how the availability of child care increases women's participation in the labour market?

Ms. Anne Milan (Chief, Labour Statistics Division, Statistics Canada): I don't have an answer to that question specifically, but in one of our *Women in Canada* chapters on paid work, we have done some analysis by geography, by province, and by CMA, looking at the employment rate for women and men and the median monthly child care fees in those areas. That does provide some information on that topic.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Would you be able to commit to providing that to the committee? It would be helpful for our work.

Ms. Anne Milan: It will be published March 8, so probably after that we could provide it.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: That fits our timeline. Thank you. It's will be good to start to see that.

I have another question for Stats Canada. We have been hearing from workers that when they don't have the assurance of stable, well-paying employment, then the economic prosperity of women is put further at risk. We've been hearing that a \$15 federal minimum wage could help address this threat to women's economic security. Do you have data available that would help us understand the benefits that a set federal minimum wage would provide for women's economic security?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I think it would be a difficult question for me to answer. Of course, we collect statistics on people's wages, and often people will work for minimum wage. We see that in our statistics. To look at the impact of a set federal minimum wage, I think, would be an analytic step beyond that. I don't think Statistics Canada has done that particular analysis.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: If you find they have, would you be able to update us?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I would, but again, I'm not aware of any.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you.

The Chair: That's your time. Before we go to our next witness, I just want to give some information to the committee members. There was an excellent piece of work done on pay equity, a recent study led by Ms. Vandenberg. There's a lot of data in there that will help you on both the wage gap, pay inequity, and a lot of different things. I would encourage you to read that as your homework.

We go to Ms. Damoff for seven minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Thank you to the witnesses for your testimony.

One of the things I want to talk about is the wage gap and attaining senior management. I worked in investment banking before I was a member of Parliament. I can remember comments made where I worked that if it came down to it between a man and a woman, a woman of childbearing age would not be hired because they were worried about the training costs and the costs of their being off on maternity leave. It happens in the real world, as disturbing as it is.

When I look at your chart—I see you've got extra charts in your presentation—there's one about the voluntary reasons for leaving work. Caring for children is the reason given by 25% women, 4.7% men, and then there is caring of another person or family responsibilities, which I suspect is probably caring for seniors, parents. Again, the rate of women doing that is almost double that of men. Obviously child care is a huge issue for women attaining those senior management positions. Does Status of Women do any programs to help with that?

Also, having men take paternity leave would probably help, but a lot of men don't take it, either because they're worried about their job advancement possibilities or the stigma attached.

Those are my two questions.

• (0925)

Ms. Lucie Desforges: Thank you.

Over the past few years at Status of Women we have funded several projects, I think it's 130, for close to \$50 million. We had different calls for proposals tailoring different sectors regarding women's economic prosperity and security. I can give you an example, but the projects last over 36 months, so many of them have just concluded or are going to be concluded in the next year.

One example I could give you is that we had a call for proposals for women in technology. The organizations were also working with a Canadian organization called the Information and Communications Technology Council. Through this work, all of the partners engaged in this, especially in the private sector, looked at their policies, their talent management plans, etc., and, a big revelation, they applied a gender-based lens. Many of those partners who engaged in this are now realizing that they had implicit biases, etc.. Therefore, as this work is concluding, our next step will be to reap the fruit from these projects and share the information and the lessons learned. Several of these projects will be unfolding in the next few years, and we'll be able to see their results. But definitely, recruitment, retention, and talent management were areas that many of the organizations dealt with, identified barriers, and the ways to address them.

Ms. Pam Damoff: What about men taking paternity leave? Have you done any work on that at all?

Ms. Lucie Desforges: Nothing specific on that. I'm not able to say at this time. I don't think it was done, largely speaking, but maybe my colleague has more on that.

Ms. Justine Akman: I'd suggest to you it would probably be better to take the question to our colleagues from ESDC who will be appearing soon, but it is certainly part of their mandate commitments and platforms to be working on flexible work arrangements and altering EI benefits.

Ms. Pam Damoff: It's not just about offering it either; it's about making it such that a stigma isn't attached to it and that men don't also suffer what women have been experiencing for years, that when you take maternity leave you aren't advancing at the same level as you would have been. It's the reason I've heard most often that men don't take paternity leave.

To our friends at StatsCan, you've looked at what our current study is focusing on. Are there any areas in your research that you think are lacking that would be beneficial to what we're doing? I've heard you say a few times that you don't have any data on that, so is there anything you could be focusing on that would help with what we're doing here to get data?

• (0930)

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I can't really think of a way to answer that question because it pertains to data gaps and I wasn't really prepared to speak to data gaps.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Could you think about it a bit and let us know?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: Certainly. I'll bring that back to Statistics Canada.

Ms. Justine Akman: If you like, I can try.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Yes.

Ms. Justine Akman: As you're aware from our other appearances in front of the committee, we at Status of Women are doing a lot of work on gender-based analysis plus with other federal departments. That includes the economic departments. The discussion is in the context of departments where there is a data gap in doing gender-based analysis. You'll be hearing from my colleague Neil Bouwer from NRCan and ESDC. We've spoken to them about getting together with other economic departments—resource-based departments, science-based departments—and making sure that the data they need to do proper gender-based analysis does exist. That in turn, of course, will hopefully ensure that programming is developed in a way that will benefit women.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I only have 30 seconds left, so I'll end it there.

The Chair: All right. That's very good.

Now we will go to the next round of questioning with five minutes for Ms. Vecchio.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Thank you very much.

I want to start with Stats Canada once again. Can you clarify the cents versus dollars in earnings between women and men when it comes to occupations in the exact same sectors, the exact same job. Was it 92¢ or 96¢ per the dollar? Do you recall those numbers?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: It was 92¢.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: It was 92¢, okay. I just wanted to clarify that.

When we're looking at situations and comparing full time to full time jobs, I come at this from a mother's point of view, recognizing that I was in and out of the workforce. Do we have any data that clarifies that? If we're trying to compare apples with apples, taking somebody who's been out of the workforce—let's say a person who is aged 35 may have had two children and, therefore, may have been off for two years—is that taken into consideration when you're trying to compare men to women with the same education, at the same age, and those things, or is that not part of the data or study?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: In the adjusted number that I referred you to, the 92¢, work experience is included and it's an aggregated work experience. So it compares women and men with similar ages, similar levels of work experience, working in similar occupations and similar industries.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That's awesome, thank you very much.

Going on to the trades—I liked where Ms. Ludwig was going with this—we talked about the STEM fields. Let's get a little bit more specific. Do we have data showing the increase of enrolment of women in the trades fields, comparing it over the decades?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I believe we do. I didn't bring anything specific to trades and enrolment.

Do you mind if I look back in my deck for a second?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That's not a problem.

Mr. Andrew Heisz: If you have another question at the same time, go ahead. I don't want to use up your seven minutes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I appreciate that. I was just going back to my other questions so I could get that going. When we're talking about the trades, I really like to look at those sorts of things and what's going with them.

Also, I know that we were looking at graduation rates, but do we have any comparative data showing the enrolment in universities in these STEM fields over the decades as well, showing that in 2015 or 2014, x number of women or x percentage of women were in this field and that it's an increase of 5%, 10%, 15%, compared with the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, or 2010? Do we have any of that data to show the increase?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: Yes, we do. In the appendix slides to the deck, on slide 13, for example, there's a picture that shows completion rates of apprenticeship trades for women and men. This is using data from the labour force survey. Again, this shows that apprenticeship trades, at least in the recent decades, have declined for women in terms of completion. It's still much higher for men there. That's where you also see this trend towards more completion of post-secondary for women.

Regarding the second question that you had about women enrolling in STEM, slide 17 doesn't show the enrolment, but it shows the flip side of it, which is the percentage of university graduates across three decades. It shows an increase of women in virtually all STEM-related fields, with the exception of computer science.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I was at the Lawson Health Research Institute in London, Ontario. It was incredible the number of women, compared to men at the time, who were part of the STEM fields and part of the research hospital. Marilyn would have absolutely loved that, if she went there to see it.

I'm going back to some of the different questions that I had. I know we've talked about single mothers. Comparing single women and single men, there seems to only be a difference of about 1% when it comes to poverty. In that calculation of single women, is there any data on whether it is with or without children? Is there any data on that, or does "single woman" mean a single woman with no children whatsoever, with no extra responsibilities?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: We do differentiate what we would call an "unattached woman" from a lone parent. Some of those statistics are available on slide 21, which shows men and women of different family types and ages. It's a select view of the different statistics that we have. For example, about five lines from the bottom, there's a statistic for the unattached non-elderly. This would be single women who are not lone mothers. The difference there is 27.6% for women versus 26.4% for men—or about a percentage point. Then we have a number there just slightly above that of 42.2% for people in a female-headed lone-parent family.

• (0935)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Excellent, thank you very much.

The Chair: Now we go over to Ms. Vandenberg for five minutes.

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

I'd also like to thank you, Ms. Gladu, for the work you did on the pay equity committee. I recommend that everybody look at that, because there was a substantial amount of work done in this area.

Specifically, I'm looking at slide 5 from Statistics Canada, where you're saying that the hourly wage gap of 88% is narrowing for full-time workers.

With regard to precarious workers, the part-time workers, one of the things we looked at was that women are taking more time out of the workforce. Sometimes it's a self-perpetuating cycle, because women are making less, and therefore they're the ones who take leave for caregiving, and therefore they make even less over the course of their lifetime.

We were looking at statistics showing much lower earnings, in one case 73%. We heard testimony that the wage gap was actually not narrowing; in fact, it had gone up slightly.

If you were to add all women—not just comparing full-time to full-time, but adding the fact that women are working in precarious work and part time—is the wage gap narrowing, or is it stagnant? Do you have statistics on that?

Mr. Andrew Heisz: On slide 5, there are two time series shown. I'd like to underscore that these are just two of the different ones that could be prepared. The top one was the one I referred to, which was the 88¢ on the dollar. That compares hourly wages for full-time workers.

The lower one is maybe more reflective of the one you described, wherein more factors are associated related to the intensity of work, as well as the pay. The level is much lower and perhaps doesn't show the same amount of increase since the mid-1990s.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: If I could go to Statistics Canada on.... We heard a lot about the difference between pay equity and the wage gap, pay equity being specifically about people who are working in something with the same level of effort, skills, and qualifications. There was a significant gap there. Then, when we talk about the wage gap, we're talking about the kinds of things you mentioned, such as the caregiving responsibilities and other factors that are leading women to have even more of a wage gap.

Could you explain a bit the difference between the wage gap and pay equity?

The Chair: Do you mean Status of Women?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Sorry, Status of Women....

Ms. Justine Akman: I think you've just articulated it very well. Pay equity is a technical calculation. It's supposed to be comparing exact jobs with exact jobs. There are different ways of doing that, which I believe have been discussed with this committee before. The wage gap is more a social phenomenon that's made up of a whole bunch of different factors that lead women, generally, to earn less than men—when you're comparing full-time work, in different ways, of course. We've discussed it, and I think you described it very well.

• (0940)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Okay. Thank you. Then, when we talk about intersectionality, we talk about women....

Statistics Canada, I notice you have a slide in which you talk about different low-income groups. One of them is women with disabilities. I wonder if you have specific statistics on the wage gap between women with disabilities and men.

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I'm not sure that we have that prepared. We do have surveys that would contain all of the information you would need to do that.

We have recently looked at, for example, employment rates of persons with disabilities. We've been doing some other work, from my own division's perspective, to improve our statistics on persons with disabilities, but I don't think we've looked at that particular aspect of it.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Does Status of Women have any specific information about that?

Ms. Justine Akman: I might come back, but I believe that one of the upcoming chapters of *Women in Canada* is going to focus on women with disabilities. I assume it would include a lot of data about employment.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: One of the other things we've heard is that when an occupation starts becoming more female than male, the wages in that occupation actually start to go down. Is there anything from Statistics Canada or from Status of Women that can correlate that? That was one of the things we heard in the testimony, that the feminization of the workforce actually reduces wages.

Mr. Andrew Heisz: I'm not aware of anything.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Those would be interesting things, I think, for the committee, if there were any.

Ms. Justine Akman: I haven't seen that either, of course.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Okay.

Ms. Justine Akman: As you're well aware, there are many studies about pay equity and differences in wages, but I'm not sure about that trend line.

The Chair: You're out of time.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: I want to take the opportunity to thank our witnesses. The work you're doing is amazing. It's going to be very helpful to the committee as we go along. As you know, we may call you back later in the study, as we find gaps in knowledge that we want to have you fill.

Thank you for your time. If there are things you think you want to send—we talked about a few of them—please direct them to the clerk, and then the committee will get them.

At this time, I'm going to turn it over to Sheila Malcolmson, just before we break and suspend.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you, Chair.

I want to introduce to the committee two up-and-coming women leaders, who I'm really proud are with me today. Tajinder Rataul from Brock University's Women in the House program is here, and also I'm very glad to be supported by Astrid Krizus, who is one of the parliamentary interns. She's from both Queen's and U of T.

The Chair: Welcome, girls.

I believe Ms. Damoff also has some girls here.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I do. One of the students is Jacqueline, and I see that Madi Fuller has joined us as well. Madi is another student with Brock Women in the House.

To both of you, thank you for being here. This is awesome.

The Chair: Wonderful. We love to have more women in the House, although the gender parity is also appreciated.

We're going to suspend for a minute to get our next panel going.

● (0940)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (0945)

The Chair: We're happy to be back with our second panel. We have an exciting bunch again for the second panel, from more government departments.

We have, from the Department of Industry, Shereen Benzvy Miller, the assistant deputy minister for small business, tourism and marketplace services. From the Department of Employment and Social Development, we have Doug Murphy, the director general for social development policy. We have Andrew Brown, the executive director for employment insurance policy, skills and employment branch. We have Catherine Demers, director general, strategy and partnership, skills and employment branch; and we have Drew Leyburne, from the Department of Natural Resources, who is the director general, strategic policy branch, strategic policy and results sector.

We're going to start with the Department of Industry. We'll start with Shereen.

You have seven minutes.

Ms. Shereen Benzvy Miller (Assistant Deputy Minister, Small Business, Tourism and Marketplace Services, Department of Industry): Thank you. Good morning, Madam Chair and distinguished members.

My name is Shereen Benzvy Miller. I am the assistant deputy minister for small business, tourism and marketplace services, at Innovation, Science and Economic Development.

I'm pleased to be here today, alongside my colleagues from ESDC and Natural Resources. Thank you for providing us an opportunity to speak to you about how ISED is supporting the economic security of women.

There is a growing understanding that addressing the constraints of women's economic empowerment is fundamental to lasting, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth and to the achievement of gender equality

[*Translation*]

However, women continue to face challenges. We know that women are generally under-represented in entrepreneurship and small business ownership, in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and on corporate boards. In addition, sometimes general programs and services don't take into account the distinct needs of women.

[*English*]

Let me walk you through some of our department's initiatives and programs that aim to address these issues.

First, women entrepreneurs represent a significant source of untapped talent and potential in Canada. Only 15.7% of small and medium-sized enterprises are majority owned by women, as opposed to 64.7% majority owned by men.

As well, only 5% of women-owned businesses export, as opposed to 12% of male-owned businesses. Despite expressing high growth intentions, women are less likely to scale up their businesses and export due to a number of barriers, such as limited business networks, lack of financial literacy, inconsistent levels of training and mentorship, and lack of access to capital for financing.

For instance, Statistics Canada found in 2014 that only 78% of majority women-owned businesses that requested debt financing has those requests approved as opposed to 91% of majority male-owned businesses that requested it. That's only 78% of women-owned businesses being approved for financing.

ISED is working on determining how to best support women entrepreneurs. As part of this, the program is continually engaging with stakeholders. For instance, on November 9, 2016, the Honourable Bardish Chagger, Minister of Small Business and Tourism, hosted the Canadian Women's Entrepreneurship Conference in Toronto. Businesswomen from across the country came together, as did Minister Hajdu and Status of Women, to discuss the challenges that women entrepreneurs face and to collaborate on ideas to provide better support for them. I am very pleased that more than 250 inspiring women business owners and organizations that support them were able to participate. Going forward, this engagement will inform policies to promote the full participation of women entrepreneurs in Canada's economic development.

During the conference, Minister Chagger announced that she had asked the Business Development Bank of Canada, the BDC, to become a world-leading financial institution for women business owners. This will involve an introspective look at their business processes and how they meet the needs of women.

Minister Chagger also announced BDC's creation of three new initiatives to support women entrepreneurs in the technology sector, totalling over \$50 million in investments.

• (0950)

[Translation]

BDC has also committed to increasing its term lending to majority women-owned businesses to at least \$700 million over three years ending in fiscal year 2018. BDC is on track to exceed this commitment.

The six regional development agencies support women entrepreneurs and organizations that support women starting and growing their businesses.

For instance, FedDev Ontario announced in June 2016 \$880,000 over two years to directly support women's entrepreneurship through Fierce Founders, a specialized program for women in technology industries.

[English]

Both Western Economic Diversification Canada, WD, and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, ACOA, provide financial

support to member organizations, like the Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada. These organizations provide critical business management skills.

ISED programs that support women in business include the Canada Business Network, a comprehensive directory of services for business provided by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, which has dedicated a landing page for women entrepreneurs featuring the profiles of successful women entrepreneurs. I would also ask you all to follow the Canada Business Network on Twitter. Their handle is @canadabusiness.

Futurpreneur Canada, another ISED program, is a national not-for-profit organization that supports young entrepreneurs aged 18 to 39. Over 40% of Futurpreneur's clients are women.

ISED is also committed to working to improve the representation in the STEM disciplines. For instance, ISED is working with ESDC to help employers create more co-op placements and work-integrated learning opportunities in the STEM and business fields for young Canadians, including young women and indigenous peoples.

The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada's, or NSERC, chairs for women in science and engineering program was launched in 1996 to increase women's participation in STEM disciplines and to provide career role models for women in those disciplines. NSERC's PromoScience program also helps promote STEM culture by supporting non-profit organizations that generate public excitement in STEM and motivate and encourage youth, specifically young women and girls, to participate in STEM activities.

Increasing women's diversity on boards is also recognized as important. To address this, Bill C-25 was tabled in the House of Commons on September 28, 2016, by the Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. The bill concluded its second reading on December 9, 2016, and has been referred to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology for further study. It will require directors of federally incorporated companies to disclose to shareholders the diversity of their boards.

In conclusion, ISED's policies and programs are helping to foster a workforce that is more inclusive for women. ISED is striving to better support women entrepreneurs and ensure the representation of women in STEM, and to improve diversity on corporate boards. Moreover, by applying the GBA lens to new initiatives, ISED will ensure that women are considered in policies and programs. Together, these actions contribute to the economic empowerment and security of women.

Furthermore, as we look to the future, ISED's new innovation agenda will pursue inclusive economic growth to help realize our country's full economic potential and help strengthen the middle class.

The innovation agenda will help unleash the economic potential of women and other under-represented groups in Canada's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to your questions.

● (0955)

The Chair: Well done.

Now we'll go to Doug Murphy from the Department of Employment and Social Development, for seven minutes.

Mr. Doug Murphy (Director General, Social Development Policy, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you, Chair, and thank you distinguished members. It's really a pleasure to be here.

My team is leading the development of two key initiatives that will really support the economic security of women. One is a poverty reduction strategy and the other is an early learning and child care framework.

As we heard this morning, poverty and women and gender is a large issue. Andrew and Justine, my colleagues, talked about some key areas of concern—lone parents and unattached seniors—and poverty is a complex issue. It's for this reason that the Government of Canada has committed to developing a poverty reduction strategy that will set targets and timelines. This is being led by Minister Jean-Yves Duclos. As a first step, a discussion paper towards a poverty reduction strategy was tabled at the human resources committee on October 4, and that paper frames the issue of poverty. It raises some of the multi-dimensional aspects of the challenge, and I would encourage members to have a read if they have not. It's at canada.ca.

As I said, we had a very good discussion about some of the key challenges this morning, when we heard from Andrew from Statistics Canada and Justine from Status of Women Canada.

As a next step in that process, Minister Duclos will be announcing a very comprehensive engagement strategy to hear from a variety of stakeholders and Canadians about the real challenges of poverty and how the government can best address them.

Another key element that has tremendous implications for the economic security of women is, of course, child care. I was happy to hear the discussion this morning about the importance of child care in terms of labour market participation. We use the same studies, which look at Quebec. That's where most of the research has been done, and it really shows that affordable child care is a key element in promoting labour force attachment.

The return on investment on child care is also very high. We have studies from the TD Bank that show that for every dollar invested, you can get as much as three dollars in return.

We've had a good discussion about affordability. When we do our work with provinces and territories, our work in developing a framework is very much guided by the mandate letter commitments, which talk about affordable, high-quality, inclusive child care.

Finally, we touched on some really interesting and compelling issues around indigenous women, and I'm happy to say that there will be an indigenous early learning and child care framework. This

will be a very co-developed framework with extensive engagement and consultation to address the very compelling issues on that front.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the committee very much for inviting me here, and I am happy to address any questions.

The Chair: I'll turn it over to Andrew.

Mr. Andrew Brown (Executive Director, Employment Insurance Policy, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you, Chair, and good morning to all the members of the committee.

[*Translation*]

I am pleased to have the opportunity today to give you an overview of the employment insurance program and the way in which it supports the economic security of women.

[*English*]

Employment insurance, EI, is a foundational program that supports millions of working Canadians every year through life transitions. Regular benefits, of course, assist workers who experience job loss, and EI special benefits play an important role in helping women and men balance work-life responsibilities. They provide temporary income support to workers and self-employed individuals in specific circumstances such as sickness and maternity, and to those providing care to a family member at the end of life or to a new child.

To better understand and inform existing and proposed policies, the department analyzes the use of the program by women and men and conducts gender-based analysis on proposed changes to the EI program.

Over the years, the EI program has adapted to better reflect the changing labour market and the evolving needs of workers, including pressures on families.

In 1971, maternity and sickness benefits were introduced into the program, and in 1990, parental benefits were introduced so that mothers and fathers could receive support by taking leave from work to provide care for a newborn or newly adopted child.

● (1000)

[*Translation*]

The duration of parental benefits was increased in 2000 and, more recently, care benefits were added to the program to provide family caregivers with support in specific situations. These benefits provide additional support to working women and men and have been widely used by women in the workforce.

[English]

A key area of interest for EI is access to the program. Statistics Canada monitors this annually. It reported that in 2015 the overall eligibility rate for EI was 82.8%, and the eligibility rate for women was 84.3%, slightly higher than for men. Part-time workers tend to have more difficulty qualifying for EI than full-time workers, due to the hours requirement. As there are proportionally more women in part-time employment, as we heard earlier, traditionally the eligibility rate has been lower for women than for men. It remains to be seen whether that will continue.

I see that my time is running out. I will just say that the government has committed to further improvements to the program following a number of changes in 2016, including the elimination of the new entrant and re-entrant rules that made it easier to access the EI program.

The coming changes reflect commitments to better help Canadian families, including more flexibility in parental benefits, and a more flexible and inclusive compassionate-care benefit that would provide access in a broader range of caregiving situations.

In conclusion, we apply a gender-sensitive lens to our policy development as we look at enhancing supports for workers and Canadian families. I look forward to your questions.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

Now we'll go to the Department of Natural Resources.

Drew Leyburne, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Drew Leyburne (Director General, Strategic Policy Branch, Strategic Policy and Results Sector, Department of Natural Resources): Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to participate in the development of this committee's important study. My focus today will be on providing concrete examples of the efforts being made by Natural Resources Canada, or NRCAN, industry, and other partners to understand and overcome the barriers to gender equity in the natural resources context.

[Translation]

Canada's natural resource industries are important economic players. In 2015, they accounted for nearly one-fifth of GDP and 1.8 million direct and indirect jobs.

Conventional natural resource industries, in Canada and around the world, are at a crossroads. Our transition to a lower-carbon future will require maximizing our potential, including women, men, youth, immigrants, Indigenous peoples and all demographic groups.

[English]

The government-wide implementation of gender-based analysis has prompted us at NRCAN to examine the natural resource landscape through a demographic lens and to consider the disproportionate impacts of resource development on certain groups.

More specifically, GBA+ at NRCAN has enabled increasingly comprehensive gender- and diversity-based assessments of policy proposals; a greater awareness within the department of gender

disparities in the natural resource and STEM workforces, as well as ranges of incomes for those women who work in the industries, and the number of women in leadership positions; and a growing understanding of the barriers to women's equitable participation in S and T occupational groups at NRCAN and more broadly in the natural resource industries.

With this greater understanding of the demographics and statistics, NRCAN's focus in the coming years will be on putting in place initiatives that actually bend the curve, whether it be in the lab, the shop floor, the boardroom, or our own department. The gender disparities in the natural resource sectors are evident within each of the primary industries—energy, forestry, and mining—and across key employment areas, including natural and applied sciences, engineering, trades, heavy equipment operators, and management. For at least the past five years, the ratio of male to female workers in the resource sector has been 80-20. I think I distributed a placemat that shows some of the facts and figures related to these numbers.

We feel there are three general areas where NRCAN is taking steps to reduce the barriers to greater gender diversity. First, we're delivering programs that seek to improve the participation of women and other under-represented groups in the natural resource industries. For example, Career Alliance 360 is an NRCAN program designed to enhance representation of women and indigenous peoples in key STEM fields, with a particular emphasis on northern Canada. Our Geological Survey of Canada has the Alice Wilson Fellowship, given to two outstanding women scientists pursuing post-doctoral research in the field of earth sciences.

Our forest service has the aboriginal forestry initiative that supports efforts that increase the participation of diverse groups of indigenous women and men in the sustainable transformation of Canada's forest sector. This program seeks to mainstream gender-based considerations in project development and capture diversity and gender-related data.

In 2013 an analysis of gender representation in the mining sector was introduced as a key indicator of social performance in the "Mining Sector Performance Report", which we publish every three years. As with other indicators, the section on gender diversity offers an overview of data trends over the past decade, as well as examples of best practices.

NRCan is also involved in international activities with the goal of enhancing participation. The International Model Forest Network is led by NRCan and includes 30 countries that are working in partnership with industry and civil society to develop a common vision for the sustainable development of forest landscapes and ecosystems, recognizing that globally women are often the keepers of culture and traditional knowledge.

NRCan is also involved with the clean energy education and empowerment initiative, or C3E, through the Clean Energy Ministerial, an international network to advance women's leadership in the global clean energy sector. The efforts of industry, academia, and other partners to close the gender gap in the natural resource industries can be instructive and complementary to NRCan's efforts.

As part of NRCan's gender-based analysis plus work plan for 2017, we're looking to engage with industry sector councils, associations, and other organizations to learn from their experiences. The Mining Industry Human Resources Council, for example, continues to actively support greater gender and demographic diversity in industry by conducting surveys and research, sometimes in partnership with allies, like Women in Mining Canada.

Our intent in consulting with industry, academia, and other potential partners is to identify collective priority areas of improvement, enabling us to focus our work on complementary actions to improve the representation of women in Canada's resource sectors.

Internally at NRCan, the majority of the department's labour force is in science and technology, but women remain significantly under-represented in some key S and T groups, including scientific researchers. This is a third area where we can do more. NRCan has been making gains in addressing this imbalance. For example, in 2012, our Canadian forest service introduced the women in research initiative, a pilot project to enable women in various S and T groups to move into the scientific research job classification. Given the high success of the pilot, the initiative has been extended to reach more high performing women in S and T across our organization.

The National Energy Board, for example, is also taking steps to enable women's corporate leadership. Their Women's Leadership Community of Practice aims to increase awareness of gender-based challenges facing women in the workplace and helps participants develop their own personal method and style of leadership. Recently under the leadership of NRCan's deputy chief scientist, we aim to inform future iterations of our employment equity action plan. NRCan completed a suite of initiatives, including analysis of two years of demographic data, gender-based demographic analysis of the career progression of NRCan's research scientists, and a study of women in science and technology in the department.

The early recommendations arising from this work include strengthening our internal processes to address unconscious bias and remove barriers to career progression, as well as to actively promote leadership opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with the committee

•(1005)

[*Translation*]

I would welcome your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will start with Mr. Serré, who will have seven minutes.

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

[*English*]

Thank you so much for all the work that all you are doing on this issue.

There are many questions, but I'm going to try to be very specific because the chair has very tight timelines, which is good.

My first question is for you, Mr. Leyburne. You talked about 19% of women in the mining sector and about three steps you're undertaking. That's great work on those three initiatives. I want to see if you could elaborate.

When we talk about the mining sector being spread out vastly across Canada, and when we focus on mining clusters, are there any benefits in those three steps that you've identified as working, in terms of focusing more on a certain three or four cluster areas in mining across Canada in order to get a better impact?

•(1010)

Mr. Drew Leyburne: By that, you mean geographic clusters...?

Yes, I would say that mining has been one of the areas where we've seen some of the most progress in terms of percentage improvements.

We also recognize that industry has been making great efforts in this regard. I mentioned earlier that we were working with industry associations. I'm going to look for my list of those associations, because in mining in particular we've been working with the Mining Association of Canada, the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, and the Mining Industry Human Resources Council, but there are also some organizations that have made huge gains in looking at this from a more regional approach. That includes Women in Mining Canada. There's also an organization called Women Who Rock, which has been looking at this as well. I think one of the things that we have to recognize with natural resources in particular is the remote community aspect of a lot of mining and other natural resource industries, which does influence how we attract labour, including women, to the workforce.

I don't know if we've done anything specific on looking at specific clusters geographically. Certainly, a lot of the efforts of all of the organizations I've mentioned, including our own department, have been focused in areas like northern Ontario, where there is obviously a real...

Mr. Marc Serré: Yes. Thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Brown and is related to that of a colleague who previously asked other witnesses a question on parental leave, but didn't have enough time. I was fortunate, as I was able to take 10 weeks at the time. That was the maximum I could take for my children.

But there is a stigma attached to taking parental leave. What is the department doing to try to promote this more? Moving forward, what benefit can taking parental leave be, and are there any statistics you have that indicate that? Are there any specific recommendations?

Mr. Andrew Brown: I think what I can do first is to speak about what we know from the EI program specifically and the use of that program and parental benefits by men and women. Then I can speak to some of the academic research we are aware of that helps to inform our policy development.

In terms of taking a look at parental benefits, which are of course available to men and women, they continue to be used predominantly by women. About 86% of the parental benefits are taken by women and only 14% by men.

Mr. Marc Serré: Can we talk about what we can do to change that?

Mr. Andrew Brown: Right now with the program, of course, it is up to parents to decide how they'd like to share those benefits. What we know from some of the academic research is that it tends to require additional incentives to get men to take parental benefits at an increased rate. This research has been coming from some of the academics, including right here in this country. We heard reference to Brock University earlier. Also, in comparing the Quebec parental insurance program with the EI program for maternity and parental benefits, in Quebec specifically there is a much higher rate of use of parental benefits by men than in the rest of the country. The latest Statistics Canada data on that is showing that about 12% of men in the rest of Canada versus approximately 85% of men in the province of Quebec will make use of some parental benefits.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you.

This question is for you, Ms. Miller, on the great work you're doing at ISED, with all of the initiatives that have been started and are being promoted. In the limited time I have, I want to focus on the statistics in regard to woman entrepreneurs and how we can....

You have an initiative with FedDev for funding over two years. I want to ask about it. I know it's just starting, but is there a plan to roll this out to other economic development agencies across the country? In my region, it's FedNor. Can FedNor access some of these funds? I just want to get a bit more of a sense from you of this initiative expanding to all the economic development agencies.

Ms. Shereen Benzvy Miller: That's a great question. Thank you so much.

All the regional development agencies have different models for assistance and funding. When FedDev announced the \$880,000 over two years to support Fierce Founders, that initiative arose partly because the incubator Communitech came to FedDev and said they'd really like to support women entrepreneurs in this way. They already had a very sound model.

In a way it is really dependent on what resources are available in those communities. FedNor, for example, has invested \$3.6 million since 2006 in supporting microcredit to women in northern Ontario through the PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise.

It often has to do with community resources and their capacity to roll out programs, but all the development agencies have initiatives in this area.

• (1015)

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you.

I only have 20 seconds. Mr. Murphy, I'm looking more on the senior caregiver side. What can we do specifically to promote that when we look at some of the poverty levels among seniors, especially women and single women? Maybe we could table the answer for later.

The Chair: That's a great question for later.

We'll go to Ms. Vecchio for seven minutes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you very much.

I want to start by talking about the early learning and child care framework, which has been talked about today. It's wonderful to see Drew Leyburne here. We're both residents of Sparta, Ontario, a huge area, but one thing that's very important to me, when we're looking at this framework, is how we are approaching the differences between the rural and urban settings. How are you doing that? When you're living on a farm, you may be five minutes from house to house or 15 to 20 minutes outside a city that may have a facility for this. What are some of the things you're thinking of to bridge that?

Mr. Doug Murphy: That's an excellent question.

We're working with provinces and territories, which are the primary deliverers of child care. One of the principles I mentioned was inclusiveness. Within the bounds of a developing framework that involves the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, we want to ensure that child care is available for a variety of different circumstances.

At this point I can't get into how it will roll out in terms of the urban-rural split, but accessibility to child care is very important.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I want to add to that the ability to do shift work. I come from an area that had primarily automotive employment. The fact is shift work was predominant in our area and making sure that there is something 24 hours.... I'll be honest, it's not something that I'm 100% behind.

I think child care is extremely important. There are so many different mechanisms for using child care and many varieties, whether it's at-home child care in where you have a caregiver within the home with five children, and things of that sort.

Are these things going to be looked at or is it going to be looked at more as an institutional area?

Mr. Doug Murphy: The very issues that you have raised, including non-standard work, will be within the realm of developing the framework.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That's awesome.

Mr. Doug Murphy: Again, that's being manifested under the inclusiveness and accessibility of the child care, but those issues are important and recognized.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Great. I'm glad I have your ear because I want to make sure that when we're looking at this framework and if we are going forward, it has to be inclusive of those two factors. Thank you very much.

Andrew Brown, thank you very much for the information. What increase and take-up in parental leave have we seen in the last five to 10 years by men? Being the critic, I've looked at many of these figures. What have the increases or decreases been?

Mr. Andrew Brown: There has not been a large increase in men taking parental benefits over that period of time. We can certainly go back to the Statistics Canada data, but I think it has been a slow uptick.

To build a bit further on your question, it's not just a matter of the government programs, but also the kind of supports that are provided in the workplace, and sometimes supplementary payments that may or may not be provided by employers. That can create an incentive for parents, including fathers, to take a longer period of parental leave.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That's one thing I want to look at. We've talked a lot about the wage issues. Is there any data showing that if a woman were to take time off and receive the maximum benefit, which I believe right now is \$555...? Is it still around \$555 per week?

Mr. Andrew Brown: That's about right.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: They're getting that. Is one of the reasons we're seeing a huge gap between men and women in terms of what they are bringing home as net income that they say no? The woman takes it because there's less of a gap. So when it comes to family budgets this is what we're needing to do. Is there any data showing the causality of that?

• (1020)

Mr. Andrew Brown: That's not data that we have, but that is certainly one of the things that make their way into our thinking, that families would be making the decision in terms of who would provide care on a financial basis. If that is a household where a woman is earning less than her partner, she may be the one to provide care because it's less of a hit to the family's income.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Okay.

When we're talking about the top-up in incentives for women, I dealt with employment insurance for many years, where we saw a top-up, through the Thames Valley District School Board, for any of our teachers taking time off. Would those not be also available to the men regardless? It's going to be gender-balanced, is it not, or are we seeing a gender imbalance when it comes to these top-ups, men versus women?

Mr. Andrew Brown: In terms of top-ups, that's something that would be in the hands of the employers. To my knowledge, those would typically be available to men and women.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Okay.

I'll move on to the topic of financing for women doing business. We see a huge gap when it comes to men being financed. What is the primary reason? Are we looking at the fact of the business plan? Are we looking at financial backing? What is the cause of someone being denied, rather than it just being women versus men? What is it? Is it the business plan that's flawed? What are the stats on that?

Ms. Shereen Benzvy Miller: Thank you for the question.

It's not just denial; they also may not ask for financing and just don't get financing. We don't know specifically what the cause is. That's part of what we're looking at. It is potentially a question of lack of financial literacy. BDC is exploring this, because it is an area that they will likely provide consulting services on.

It's probably because of their not asking for financing, and probably not having the business plan properly vetted. Interestingly, if you go to events with women entrepreneurs, they will tell you that there are still locations where they are being asked if their father will sign for a loan.

The Chair: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Shereen Benzvy Miller: Sorry. This isn't scientific. This is anecdotal.

The Chair: No, it's true.

Ms. Shereen Benzvy Miller: There may also be some systemic issues around the way in which women are perceived as being successful in entrepreneurship. We are looking at a variety of issues around that.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Okay.

When we're looking at layoffs, do we have anything predominantly showing—in seniority that may not be the case—that more women are being laid off than men? Do we see anything like that when there are bouts of layoffs? Is there any data showing more men versus women, or are we seeing it based 100% on seniority when it comes to layoffs?

Ms. Shereen Benzvy Miller: I don't have statistics on that.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Drew, do you have anything like that when it comes to that information?

Mr. Drew Leyburne: No, I don't. I know that in cyclical industries like natural resources, which are affected by commodity prices, it tends to be the men, because of their overrepresentation in the workforce, who are affected. But there's nothing about selective benefits.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Excellent.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: We'll go to Ms. Malcolmson for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses. I have a couple of pieces that I want to follow up on.

I think this is probably for Mr. Brown, but maybe also for the broad department. I'm very concerned about the plight of women between 2002 and 2013 who were not able to collect their EI benefits because they were sick during their parental leave. That is an example of a barrier that women face in terms of economic security and their fair participation in the labour force. There was a promise during the 2015 election campaign to end the class action lawsuit involving sick mothers on parental leave, but those lawsuits have continued.

I'd like to hear that there's a plan to ensure that these women get access to those benefits and also that there's a plan going forward to ensure that economic security of other women is not threatened in this way.

Mr. Andrew Brown: Thanks for the question. This does relate to an ongoing case that's before the court, so I can't speak to that class action in particular. I can speak to the current situation and note that in 2013, in fact, the rules of the employment insurance program were changed. It is possible now for a man or a woman receiving parental benefits to interrupt those parental benefits, switch to sickness benefits, and subsequently return to their parental benefits, if needed.

That was changed in 2013 and is why this covers the period up until 2013. There is ongoing litigation with respect to the situation between 2002 and 2013, when it was not possible to access sickness benefits in that way.

•(1025)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you.

I have a second question, which I think is also for you, but maybe again for your department, I'm very concerned about the effect of domestic violence on women's economic security. Violence against women resulted in an economic impact of approximately \$21 million in lost wages in 2009—that's from the Department of Justice—and domestic and sexual violence also cost the Canadian economy more than \$12 billion a year. I'd like to be assured that the department is aware of and is discussing the legislation that's been adopted in Manitoba and tabled in Ontario and British Columbia, and also the new contract language that was just negotiated by a local of the United Steelworkers union in Alberta, to ensure that leave can be taken in situations of domestic violence. In those situations, the woman usually needs to take time off work so she can find a new apartment and get her children settled as they change their lives.

Mr. Andrew Brown: Perhaps I'll just try to jump in a bit there to mention that, certainly, leave is something that ESDC takes a lead on with our labour program. They've undertaken consultations over the last year with respect to more flexible leave provisions, and have received feedback that went beyond that and have since published their report on those consultations. However, I'm not well placed to be able to speak specifically to what may be going on with respect to domestic violence and potential changes to leave provisions.

Mr. Doug Murphy: I can't get much more specific on that, but I do know that our department is working with other key government departments on the issue of domestic violence—Justice, I believe the Public Health Agency as well—but I don't have any more specifics on that work.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: If your department does see this evolve, because we're going to be involved with this study for several

months, we'd certainly benefit from knowing what the federal leadership is on this topic.

Mr. Doug Murphy: Yes, and I think you'll probably have witnesses from our department, or other departments, because it's an important issue undoubtedly.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you.

I'd like to ask you another question in relation to some of your very positive words about the impact of child care on women's economic participation, and looking forward to the implementation of a national early learning and child care framework. But I would like to know that you're able to allay the concerns noted by groups like the Childcare Resource and Research Unit that this kind of framework might still result in an uneven child care system rather than a national plan where women across the country have equal access.

Mr. Doug Murphy: It would be difficult for me to speak in great detail about the framework as it is still under development now with our provincial and territorial partners. I can't get into specifics. I can tell you what the principles are for guiding that work, which are affordability, inclusiveness, high quality, and flexibility. Those are guiding our joint work on that with the provinces and territories.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Is even access one of the principles?

Mr. Doug Murphy: I think access will be covered, but in the mandate commitment those were the principles that were articulated.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you.

I'd like to switch to Natural Resources Canada. Because we've heard about uneven impacts, both harmful and beneficial economically, for women around major resource projects, can you tell us whether the department is using gender-based analysis to ensure that the economic changes created by recent approvals, such as of the Site C dam and the Kinder Morgan pipeline, were screened specifically to make sure that the economic benefits were not concentrated only on traditional male employment?

•(1030)

Mr. Drew Leyburne: As you know, any of the projects that go forward through approvals by Natural Resources or other departments are subject to that gender-based analysis plus. In the case of those specific projects, I don't know if I can speak to the details of that analysis specifically, just because I don't know them offhand, but I can certainly get back to you on the specifics of those projects.

I would say generally that we are very aware of the differences between the impacts on women and men from natural resources development. I mentioned earlier the remote community aspects of a lot of natural resource development, the fact that fly-in/fly-out operations can have really disruptive impacts on family life. We know, for example, that when there are new natural resource projects, there can be inflationary impacts on communities with a disproportionate impact on women. These are all things that we look at when we're studying projects. They are part of the calculation that goes into a policy-maker's decision on this.

What I would say, though, is that the natural resource economy of the future will not look like the one of our parents or grandparents. Increasingly for industries that were driven by brawn, the stereotypical pick axe and lumberjack, a lot of these operations will be run by an iPad 10 years from now, and they will be much more open to that balance.

The Chair: That's her time.

Now we're going to Mr. Fraser for seven minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Thanks very much for being here. I really appreciate your testimony. I'll jump right in because I can't possibly cover everything I'd like to in seven minutes.

Starting with you, Ms. Miller, I found very interesting the stats you shared about women owning businesses and scaling up at a much lower rate than men. I'm curious first with respect to the scaling up. You highlighted some of the obstacles, like access to capital, relationships, and a few others, but ultimately we're going to be making recommendations to the government. What do you see as the best steps that we could take to help overcome these obstacles?

Ms. Shereen Benzvy Miller: That's a great question. I think we have a number of opportunities related to the organizations, both the regional development agencies as well as the banks, BDC and EDC.

We've started something called the Accelerated Growth Service to get a number of these organizations to work together to help accelerate growth for companies that are acceleration-ready; so not at the start-up space, but in the growth space. I think that the more we can focus on women entrepreneurs working with the organizations that actually bring them together, the better we will coordinate with their needs, because the needs are obviously in access to market, access to financing, and access to talent. Those are the three pieces that you always need to accelerate growth and to create viable enterprises.

The more we can galvanize the institutions that exist and actually specifically focus, the more likely we are to succeed.

Mr. Sean Fraser: That's great. It's an interesting initiative that's a key part of the Atlantic growth strategy. I'm from Nova Scotia, and there was an announcement recently around that.

Ms. Shereen Benzvy Miller: The AGS with the AGS.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Yes, that's right, not complicating things at all.

With respect to that initiative, but not specific to Atlantic Canada, will there be an analysis to make sure that the firms you target are both helping female entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, as well as targeting industries that are going to help benefit women generally?

Ms. Shereen Benzvy Miller: That is our hope. We have really been at the initial stages of adopting this program to try to figure out what the gaps are in terms of our ability to offer a more seamless service. With it still being in its infancy, we haven't been that ambitious, but I do think over time it will be developed to do that.

Mr. Sean Fraser: You mention as well that women own businesses at a much lesser rate, that it's not just a matter of their inability to scale up at the same rate as men, as the statistics suggest. Are there certain things that we could be doing to help spur entrepreneurialism with more women in Canadian communities?

Ms. Shereen Benzvy Miller: Yes, I do think that a lot of the things that we have discussed here, both this morning and with our previous panel, are really important, focusing on ensuring that women and girls from a young age are encouraged to go into STEM areas, including engineering, and also that we start to talk about entrepreneurship as a viable career path.

I had one young future entrepreneur say to me that, when he told his mother he wanted to be an entrepreneur, she said, "What is that, French for unemployed?"

That's an attitude that we need to really overcome. So that really stuck with me. I thought, oh my God, that's not crazy. I think we really need to focus on entrepreneurship as a viable option for young women and encourage them to succeed in that area.

• (1035)

Mr. Sean Fraser: I may come back to you, if I have time, but I wanted to shift briefly to Mr. Murphy.

One of the previous witnesses on our last panel suggested that, as StatCan's data would show, targeted transfers from the federal level do help people get out of that low-income threshold. I assume the same would be true with respect to the poverty line. In your opinion, are these targeted transfers effective strategies? I'm thinking of the Canada child benefit, CPP, OAS, GIS for low-income single seniors, and those sorts of things. Is that an effective strategy?

Mr. Doug Murphy: That is an effective strategy. I think I can actually answer Mr. Serré's question too.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Perfect.

Mr. Doug Murphy: Undoubtedly, the Canada child benefit will make a different. Nine out of 10 families benefit from that, and it is targeted to those families that need it most. So we will see, undoubtedly, poverty reduction impacts of that.

On the issue of single seniors, this is an outlier. Generally, we've done very well on seniors' poverty, but single seniors still have high rates.

In Mr. Heisz's presentation he actually showed a bar chart of the impact of using the old age security guaranteed income supplement in reducing seniors' poverty. As of last July, the guaranteed income supplement, which is the most highly targeted program for low-income seniors, was increased by about \$950. In total about 900,000 seniors will benefit from that. So, yes, it is a very effective tool.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Are there certain other targeted benefits that don't exist now that we could potentially recommend and that would have a similarly substantive impact on poverty or low income?

Mr. Doug Murphy: I think that as we engage and talk to experts on the poverty reduction strategy, we will certainly hear about that instrument for addressing poverty.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I'm changing gears but I'm still with you, Mr. Murphy.

EI sickness benefits are something I find important. There's an interesting dissonance between the compassionate care benefit, which was recently increased—I thought that was a great thing—and the EI sickness benefits. I think it is now 15 weeks for the sickness benefits and 26 weeks, if my memory serves me correctly, for compassionate care.

The issue I have is that there are now fewer benefits for someone who gets sick and has to leave work than for someone who needs to take care of that person. This issue is important to me.

I have a constituent who lost her husband and only qualified for 15 weeks of EI support. She has made it her cause to try to bring about a policy change to extend that, because, as in many other families, the husband was the breadwinner in their family. It caused them great turmoil because her capacity to enter the workforce did not meet their needs.

Is this something that you think would make a difference? Is there anything in the works to bump up sickness benefits?

Mr. Doug Murphy: Thank you.

I think I'll respectfully defer to my colleague on that.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Sorry. Yes, of course.

Mr. Andrew Brown: Thanks for the question.

You are absolutely correct that there are 15 weeks available through the EI program for a worker who falls sick, whereas for a caregiver providing care for someone at the end of their life, and only in those end-of-life situations, there is up to 26 weeks of caregiving income support available to the caregiver through the EI program.

This was one of the things that came out of the consultations held at the end of last year on changes to EI parental and caregiving benefits. A key commitment of the government is to provide a more

inclusive compassionate care benefit so it would cover more situations than simply the end of life.

Consultations followed budget 2016, and there was a commitment to follow through over the course of the mandate. We're now continuing to analyze the input we receive from various stakeholders and Canadians, to support the government moving forward on that commitment.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

I want to thank all of our witnesses who have been with us today. Certainly, we reserve the right to call you back later. If there are things that came up that involve data to be sent to the clerk, I invite you to do that.

Just for the information of the other committee members, the reason I have ended witness testimony at this point is that I want to give some information to you.

You may be aware that Bill C-309, the gender equality bill, is coming to our committee. So we will have our first chance to look at some legislation. In order to look at that, suggested amendments to the legislation are due to the clerk by February 16. That includes everything in the bill, its preamble as well its clause-by-clause section. I ask each of the committee members to take a look at the bill, prepare any amendments you would like to see, and make sure that the clerk has those by February 16.

The intent is that during the week of February 21, depending on the availability of Sven, the sponsor of the bill, we will do the review of C-309. In addition, the new minister has her mandate letter. We will be inviting the minister to appear that same week, and you may certainly prepare questions or anything you would like to have her say to us.

Thank you again for your co-operation today. We will see you on Tuesday.

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