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**Thursday, June 1, 2017**



**Chair**

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu**



## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Thursday, June 1, 2017

● (0845)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)):** Good morning, colleagues. We are excited to have gender equality, gender parity, before our committee today. How wonderful that is.

Today we have a very exciting bunch of witnesses for our study on the economic security of women in Canada. We have from the Business Development Bank of Canada, Lesley Lawrence, the senior vice-president; and Michelle Scarborough, the managing director of strategic investments. We also have, from Globacon, Ramona Benson, the chief commercial officer.

[Translation]

Also with us are Marilyne Picard, Geneviève Dion and Marie-Ève Tétreault, from the organization Parents jusqu'au bout.

Welcome ladies.

[English]

We are going to give you seven minutes per organization, but before we do that, I want to let the committee members know that our analyst, who works so hard on our behalf, is getting married on Saturday.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Chair:** She's normally joyous. I expect to see only an improvement in that over time. Congratulations to you.

We'll begin with the Business Development Bank of Canada. I will turn it over to Lesley, for seven minutes.

**Ms. Lesley Lawrence (Senior Vice President, Ontario, Business Development Bank of Canada):** Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members, for having us here today.

My name is Lesley Lawrence. I am the senior vice-president overseeing the financing and consulting activities in Ontario of the Business Development Bank of Canada. I have also championed the bank's initiatives to support women entrepreneurs. I would also like to introduce my colleague, Michelle Scarborough, who is the managing director for strategic investments and women in tech at BDC.

Before I touch on women entrepreneurs, I would like to share a few notes about BDC. We are Canada's only bank dedicated exclusively to entrepreneurs and are a financially sustainable crown corporation. We provide support to small- and medium-sized

businesses in the form of loans, investments, and advice. We do not provide grants or subsidies, rather we support viable and creditworthy businesses.

One path toward achieving economic security can be entrepreneurship, and as you know, women are changing the face of entrepreneurship. Their businesses contribute greatly to Canada's economy—\$148 billion annually, according to RBC Economics.

I want to share with you a few of those faces of women-led companies that BDC supports, like Caitlin MacGregor of Plum, who has a SaaS, or software as a service platform, that removes the bias in hiring to help employers pinpoint the best applicants for jobs. There's also Jodi Glover of Real Tech, who designs and manufactures water quality analyzers that detect common impurities in real time to improve global water quality. Fairware is another company that creates sustainable custom promotional materials. They are passionate advocates for changing the way business is done by sourcing not only sustainable materials, but also ethically sourced materials, and they also happen to be a B corp-certified company, or beneficial corporation. However, as you've heard throughout your study, women are not only under-represented in entrepreneurship, but also face distinct challenges when it comes to starting and growing a business. At BDC we are continually working to improve how we support women entrepreneurs to ensure their full participation in the Canadian economy.

Let me take you back a couple of years to where we started the women entrepreneur initiative. In 2014, BDC created a women entrepreneur task force to determine potential gaps between the needs of women entrepreneurs and our services, and then put forward recommendations on how to improve that support. This led to the launch of our women entrepreneur initiative in March 2015, which would be threefold: first, we committed to increasing our lending to at least \$700 million in loans to majority-owned women businesses; second, we earmarked \$150,000 for sponsorship for specific programs, events, and initiatives focused on women entrepreneurs; and third, we would create a pan-Canadian delivery and support system, a network of people within BDC to support women entrepreneurs.

Where are we today? I'm very pleased to report that at the end of two years of the three-year initiative this past March, we reached 89% of our \$700-million target for women-owned businesses. That means we've lent nearly \$621 million since March 2015, and will definitely exceed our \$700-million budget, with less than one year of the initiative remaining. But rest assured, we are not slowing our pace at all.

Perhaps even more impressive is how many more women entrepreneurs we now support. Over these same two years, the number of women-led businesses supported by BDC has grown by 27%, from 3,300 to just over 4,200. The 27% growth of the women entrepreneur portfolio outperforms the growth of BDC's overall portfolio for the same period, which was 22%.

We know that we can't go at this alone, and that is also why we partner with different organizations already doing great work in the space, so we can improve our collective impact to women entrepreneurs.

We partner closely with Futurpreneur Canada, whom I know you've also heard from in the context of this study. By working with Futurpreneur, we can help extend the amount of capital available to young entrepreneurs.

Another great partner is the Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba, whose CEO I believe you heard from earlier this month. Yesterday we announced our partnership with them, whereby we can match up to 100% of the money that the Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba lends to women entrepreneurs. This provides more capital to women and helps them scale up their business.

In skills development, we also partner with CPA Canada and Community Futures Development Corporation to deliver financial literacy workshops across Canada, which also play an important role in confidence building for women entrepreneurs.

• (0850)

Futurpreneur pairs each entrepreneur with a mentor, which we all know to be crucial to their success. We also recently worked with Futurpreneur on an awareness campaign through social media, which promoted entrepreneurship as a viable career option and shone a spotlight on successful positive women entrepreneur role models.

As you may know, we also recently stepped up our commitment to women entrepreneurs by dedicating an additional \$50 million in growth and venture capital for women-led tech firms. That said, we know it can be particularly hard for women starting tech companies or growing them. That is why we launched this program and recently hired Michelle to run it. She is an accomplished serial entrepreneur and has been a pioneer in the venture capital industry in Canada over the last 20 years. As you may know, in venture capital, simply having a woman investor on the team increases the likelihood of a woman-led business receiving an investment. To date, of the companies we've invested in through the venture acceleration program, 15% are women-led.

To conclude, be it lack of access to capital, developing networks or mentorship needs, women entrepreneurs continue to face many challenges in the business world. However, we hope that we can continue to be part of the solution. Our aim is to be a world-leading financial institution for women business owners, and Michelle, and I, and others will always remain open to your questions and feedback.

Thank you very much for your attention today.

**The Chair:** Excellent. Thank you very much.

We'll go now to Ms. Benson for seven minutes.

**Ms. Ramona Benson (Chief Commercial Officer, Globacon Inc., As an Individual):** Thank you for having me here today.

The economic security of women cannot be addressed unless we look at three factors: education, employment, and entrepreneurship. What I'll do is go backward and start with entrepreneurship.

I've looked at a study conducted by the OECD in 2014, named "Enhancing Women's Economic Empowerment Through Entrepreneurship and Business Leadership in OECD Countries". It found that when it comes to entrepreneurship, more men prefer to be self-employed than women. The reasons for that, as noted in a European Commission study in 2013, were a fear of bankruptcy, a lack of available financial support, and the complex situation of reaching funding.

They found that women, more than men, start ventures for non-pecuniary reasons, such as satisfaction with their work, the possibility of making a difference in the community, or a search for a good balance between work and family life. What it came down to was that women started businesses out of necessity, becoming entrepreneurs because they could not find employment in the labour market.

If we look at employment, we see that women need to have equal access to opportunity. That comes down to really making sure that top management and leadership are committed to making sure that there is equality in hiring and that they promote women in organizations. That comes down to the actions of CEOs, senior managers, and managers, who influence this entire gender change and gap in corporations.

Let's look at education, which is really the core fundamental. I'm here to suggest a drastic change to our education system. I've been fortunate enough to work for many companies, including two German companies, an English company, and a Malaysian one. I've worked all over. I come with 10 years of experience in telecommunications. Prior to that I worked for Correctional Service Canada here in Ottawa. In-between, I've worked in small business and government, with international experience.

I found that the best labour force was in Germany, and it came down to their education system. They do a lot of aptitude tests. They do a lot of testing for the process until the age of 11, and after that, based on the testing they do, students have a choice of going into five different types of schooling. After they finish that schooling, up to about grade 9 or 10, they go into an apprenticeship where they work for a few days a week and go to school. It's actually training in the field.

Based on the studies they go through, they either go into a college where they learn a skill, a trade that is matched to a job when they graduate; or they go to university and study, whether it's in engineering, legal studies, or whatnot.

What Germany does is to test their students throughout, from the early age of six. They put them through the right schooling and then then through part-time work where they get paid as well as going to school.

One important thing is that even the students who have finished university have to do one year of internship. Because of the European Union, they are able to go and live abroad, all over the EU, and work. When they graduate, they have a network and real-life experience are able to go to work. They're matched to jobs. That's why their labour market is that much more efficient. When you talk about German efficiency—and we consume their cars, their medicine, and their top technology—it's because of that.

As for what we do here in Canada, I can only speak of Ontario, where a minimum wage of \$15 was just announced. I think that is dangerous.

I started my first job when I was 16 years old. I worked at Canada's Wonderland. I thought that was the greatest thing. I decided to do it because I was able to work and then go and play, but I was getting paid \$6.40. My first job was selling ice cream out of those carts. I was selling ice cream and cotton candy, but you could pay me \$6.40, or whatever the minimum wage was then. If you start at \$15 per hour, I would never be hired if I were 16 years old, because why wouldn't you hire somebody with far more education and experience? We're heading down a path that could alienate not only the youth, but also women.

● (0855)

I want to clarify one thing. In Canada, we bring in—what is the quota?—fewer than 300,000 immigrants every year. What you see in Germany is that immigrants from Pakistan, India, China, and Vietnam perform exceptionally well because they go into a system where they are tested in aptitude tests and go through the education system. The parents and teachers discuss the path they want their children to take, so it's a collaborative effort. Today, you have people going to school to become teachers, but there aren't many jobs left.

My brother, for example, started his own company. He creates websites and does marketing, search engine optimization, and branding. When he went to college, he couldn't find an up-to-date coding course and anything on what the disruptive market has introduced in California—the sharing economy and whatnot. He had to learn it on his own and start his company, and he's been successful.

Not everybody is going to have that entrepreneurial spirit. Not everybody is going to be able to have such a job. It starts from early on. I know the education system is under the mandate of the provinces, but I think the federal government should start a process wherein—just like with the marijuana legalization—they would develop a framework that the provinces would then have to manage X, Y, and Z. This is what I believe we should do with our education system, which is really where it stems from. We could throw money at everything and have access to opportunity and funding and education, but it really comes down to what I suggested. That's it.

● (0900)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Let's proceed to the presentation by Parents jusqu'au bout.

**Ms. Geneviève Dion (Cofounder, Parents jusqu'au bout):** Hello.

It is an honour to appear before you today to talk about the inequality that we, as mothers of severely disabled and seriously ill children, experience as compared to other Canadian women.

We are women with degrees, we have a career, financial independence, plans and purchasing power, but life has thrown us a curve ball by giving us a child who is seriously ill and severely disabled.

This situation leads to the separation of over 85% of couples like us. That means that 85% of mothers are left to shoulder all these responsibilities alone. Our children require care that we could never have imagined providing, such as tube feeding, suction, tracheotomy care, and the administration of various medications.

**Ms. Marilyne Picard (Cofounder, Parents jusqu'au bout):** To give you an idea of what our lives are like, here is a typical day.

We often wake up during the night to make sure that our child is breathing properly, has not pulled at their feeding tube, to reposition their oxygen tube or to restart the feeding tube. Also, we often have to stay up half the night because our child simply does not want to sleep.

We wake up in the morning at the same time as our child, at 4 a.m. or 5 a.m., we unplug their tubes, administer their medications, and prepare their purees. Feeding our child can take up to 90 minutes for each meal.

We go to medical appointments once or twice a week at the hospital, which in many cases is an hour from home. We have to prepare the tube feeding bag, medications, wheelchair, papers, paperwork and prescriptions, just like for a little baby.

When we get home, we do the daily physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and respiratory therapy exercises.

In the evening, we look after their personal hygiene, which can sometimes take up to an hour.

At bedtime, there is more medicine to be administered, a feeding tube to start up, and then we start all over again the next day.

That is an example of a typical day when everything goes smoothly: no convulsions in the middle of the night, no ambulance, and the child does not catch a virus. This typical day does not consider their siblings either.

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** Yes, medicine saves our children, and we are very grateful for that. The assistance programs are not there, however, and it is us, the mothers, who pay the price in 98% of cases.

Stress is a central aspect of our lives. Whether it is owing to fear of losing our child at any time, the family situation that requires hospitalization, or financial stress, we face tremendous pressure.

The care we provide to our children 24 hours per day because of their fragile health means that it is often difficult to return to the labour market, even when our children are adults.

We end up in physical pain from lifting our children, who get heavier every year. We are constantly on the verge of exhaustion. We neglect our own health, our appearance, and our personal development. Unfortunately, our freedom is severely limited.

In this whirlwind, we have realized that there are a lot of gaps in the public system, in particular as regards the financial assistance provided to families such as ours. In 2015, we therefore founded the movement Parents jusqu'au bout, whose goal is to obtain equality between families with a seriously handicapped child and host families. We have received considerable media and political attention, culminating in the support of the CBC television program, *Tout le monde en parle*.

In a campaign of just 16 months in Quebec, we got the provincial government to create a new program, the supplement for a handicapped child with exceptional care needs, which will provide additional assistance to some 900 Quebec families.

● (0905)

**Ms. Marilyne Picard:** This assistance is greatly appreciated and is necessary to meet our children's many needs: their specialized therapy, expensive uninsured medications, ambulance fees, and fees related to hospitalization, such as parking and food.

At the same time, however, we as Canadian women are not offered any compensation for the loss of our employment income.

Given our financial situation, we cannot afford to contribute to any retirement savings plan or save for anything. We no longer have any purchasing power. So it is difficult if not impossible for us to purchase a house and a specially equipped vehicle, which we need for our children. We become financially dependant on our spouse, for the 15% of us who still have a spouse, or on society, which puts us back in the 1950s or even back to before women had the right to vote.

In Quebec, the low-income threshold for a single person is \$24,000 in 2016-2017. A single mother who is looking after a disabled child receives \$9,132 in social assistance in Quebec, which is less than half the low-income threshold, even though it costs \$10,000 per year to look after her disabled child.

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** We cannot make ends meet. We have to put our dignity aside and expose ourselves to everyone by holding fundraising activities. We feel judged, excluded, and like we do not mean anything to society.

We keep going, of course, out of love for our children.

At the federal level, there are a few small programs that provide assistance under certain conditions. A number of them are tax credits, which do not help most families because their income is too low.

Why can a mother with a seriously disabled child under the age of 18 not benefit from a family caregiver program and receive the refundable medical expense supplement?

Why can a mother with an adult disabled child not claim the tax deduction for child care tax expenses and the child disability benefit? A disabled child is still a child, even in adulthood.

We have to become a priority for the government. We have been left by the wayside for too long. By investing in us, the government would make it possible for us to give back to society, contribute to the economy, reclaim our potential, and live in dignity.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

All right, we're going to our first round of questions, beginning with my colleague Mr. Fraser.

**Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you all very much for being here today. I appreciate your presentations. I have just a few questions.

Ms. Lawrence, thank you for your presentation on the BDC.

You talked about \$150,000 in program support, I believe, to promote the services that you provide for women in business. Could you describe a little bit the promotional aspect of BDC's encouraging women to use your services and how that's applied across the country?

**Ms. Lesley Lawrence:** Sure. I'd be happy to.

Starting out we had allocated the \$150,000, which we envisioned to be \$50,000 per year. I can tell you that in the first year, we spent more than \$150,000. Basically the focus of that was to build awareness and work with partners. We went out and did a number of events on a regional basis.

Maybe I'll take a step back. As part of the structure in the team for this initiative, we have VP sponsors in each geographic region across Canada. As well, we have people from all lines of business, Michelle's line of business and others, who are part of this larger team.

The money that we deployed was really in partnerships with other associations. I talked about CFDC, the Women's Enterprise Centre, and the awareness sessions. We did many sessions on financial literacy. It was really about skill development of women entrepreneurs and building their awareness of what capital is available to them, not just through us but also through other partners in the community, and through a number of different events that we were involved in and actually sponsored.

● (0910)

**Mr. Colin Fraser:** Being from a small town in Nova Scotia, I know the challenges that many entrepreneurs in rural areas, but in particular women in business, face. There are different challenges, I think, in cities versus in smaller towns.

I wonder if you could comment on that and on what BDC is doing to help encourage women in business in rural areas.

**Ms. Lesley Lawrence:** We have found that a key element to the success of the strategy so far has been to align with partners and regional partners. We're working with regional development agencies. In particular we do a lot of work with the CFDCs and partner with them. We run sessions that bring women entrepreneurs together, and we come out and help bring them awareness about our financing. We talk about what we can do on our advisory services side.

We run financial literacy sessions, with the CFDCs and the CPA association of Canada, in markets where we know it's not as accessible as it is in a more urban market. We have put more of an emphasis on ensuring that we're doing outreach in the more rural markets with local partners in those markets.

**Mr. Colin Fraser:** When women entrepreneurs come to the BDC to access funding, counselling and all of those types of programs and services that you deliver, do you see that assisting them in leveraging funds from traditional sources of financing such as banks? Do you at BDC fill a financing gap, which then helps leverage other kinds of investment for women in business?

**Ms. Lesley Lawrence:** We do. We are a complementary lender. We are meant to fill gaps in the market that others don't fill. To me, because we don't do everything, it's important that they have key relationships with other financial partners to be able to sustain and grow their business.

We will often partner on deals. We'll give some money, and a chartered bank or another lender will give money. It's not just one person at the table to support women entrepreneurs.

**Mr. Colin Fraser:** Do you have any recommendations or suggestions for this committee as to how the federal government could be assisting BDC in helping to promote or make more easily known the services you provide for women in business?

**Ms. Lesley Lawrence:** That's an interesting question. I must say I hadn't thought of that when I was coming here today.

I think one of the big things that we have found is the the value of our just building awareness of who we are and what we do in the marketplace, honestly. Support for that is great. We've seen big growth as you've heard. Actually, our portfolio has grown in terms of a higher percentage, as I mentioned, in the bank overall, as well as our number of clients and our market share. We really want to increase the market share.

The visibility part is a big thing for us in terms of women entrepreneurs.

I'm not sure if we could reflect on that and get back to you a little bit more. I certainly appreciate it.

**Mr. Colin Fraser:** Okay, sure. If you do have thoughts on that, I think you could just submit them.

**Ms. Lesley Lawrence:** I don't know, but maybe my colleague Michelle does.

You come at it from a different perspective than I do—more traditional. Maybe in terms of your world, you may have other suggestions.

**Ms. Michelle Scarborough (Managing Director, Strategic Investments and Women in Tech, Business Development Bank of Canada):** I would need to think about it.

We certainly partner with a number of organizations to expand the message. Certainly the venture capital side is just starting to take off, and there's lots of work to be done there.

Perhaps between the two of us we can reflect on that and provide some commentary back to this committee.

**Mr. Colin Fraser:** That would be great. Thank you.

Ms. Benson, perhaps I can turn to you for a moment. Thank you for your presentation.

You talked a little bit about corporate boards and some of the challenges that women face in various aspects of business. I wonder if you could comment on specific barriers to women getting roles on governance boards, or becoming a CEO. Are there specific challenges for women in particular that you could identify?

**Ms. Ramona Benson:** Absolutely. In my own work—and I can only state this from my experience and from that of other women I have met, in telecommunications in the the voice and messaging and data industry—I have been in the 1%. Now there are more women in our industry, but I'm still at a senior level and I'm a minority.

There are challenges. Even when I was hiring, and this is a true story, my CEO said, "Can you find out if they're going to have children?" It's that glass-ceiling effect. You study it. You think it's theoretical, but it's actually there in practice. A lot of employers do worry that if they promote a woman, is she going to have a child and pay less attention to her work?

What it comes down to is that when it gets to a senior level in management, it's all about performance. It's all about profit. It's all about growth month over month, and it's about dedication. When it comes to the private sector, you do work 10 to 12 hours a day. If it's a demanding role, you're travelling and everything else, so it does affect your personal life, and you really do have to forego certain things if you do want to be that ambitious and go to an executive-level role. Those are simply some of the opportunity costs that exist.

I'm also against affirmative action, though. Norway introduced a mandatory quota for the proportion of women on boards, increasing it from 9% in 2003 to 40% five years later. This rapid increase was a national policy. Do I agree with it? Not specifically, because there's the question of performance. You need to have people who are right for certain jobs, for the sake of performance. You cannot simply place them in certain jobs because they fit a quota. That's why I go back to education. It's so important to not just throw money at it and say there are resources available, go after it. It starts early on, to be able to match people to jobs.

●(0915)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we'll go to my colleague, Ms. Vecchio, for seven minutes.

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

All of you have made fantastic presentations. I'd really like to thank you.

Ramona, I want to start with you because we read in your background that you had worked with people who had been incarcerated and helped them get back. By no means am I trying to say this is a parallel, but I'm trying to take some of the tactics could perhaps parallel what we do with our new immigrant population. Is there anything you can see from the work that we do with new immigrants coming to Canada, or some tactics that we can use, comparing it to the work you've done with those who have been incarcerated?

**Ms. Ramona Benson:** Yes. I graduated from Carleton University. I studied criminology and criminal justice, and I was lucky enough to do a one-year internship at Correctional Service Canada, which hired me when I finished my field placement. That's what it was called back then. I worked in a department called CORCAN, which has five lines of business: farming, services, manufacturing.... You'll have to excuse me because this was a long time ago.

There were work sites within the federal institutions, and I was lucky enough to visit Kingston Penitentiary and a few others. We put incarcerated individuals to work. If they had an education level of grade 10, they were able.... Again, the aptitude test is so important, because you want to match people to jobs. Based on their aptitude test and their educational requirement, they were put to work in the institutions. They made, back then—this is going back to 2004—\$5 and some cents. It created a savings account for them when they were in the prisons.

My role was a project officer. I also worked at the community centres where, when they came out with their certification, their job experience, and money in their back account—and this was of course to prevent their re-offending—we put them into employment community centres that were funded by Correctional Service Canada, and there they were able to get jobs and go to work.

Before I left Correctional Service Canada, we were working with Service Canada to do some sort of a merger program, because the concept was, why reinvent the wheel? There were about 35 employment centres across Canada, and why not do a collaboration with Service Canada where they learn how to treat previously incarcerated offenders to be able to assimilate them into society?

Going to your question, I had to lay the groundwork, but I think it's very important that the English speaking.... They do need to speak English. For immigrants coming here, it's about aptitude tests to be able to put them in an apprenticeship or an internship, whatever you want to call it. If they can do part-time work and get paid a few hours a week, then they also shadow somebody and work. I got my start in the government because I did a year of field placement. Everything I've done has always been: go to work, show your skills, and learn, because when you do it for free, they'll teach you anything, and they'll let you do anything. That's how you learn.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Thanks so much, Ramona. You have awesome testimony.

I'm going to switch over to the BDC. A lot of times, we're talking about financial literacy with women. This is a two-part question looking at the financial literacy piece. Do you see this as something that we still need to tackle, even with the women you're dealing with in your own work and some of the hurdles they have to face?

When we're talking about the comparison, I applaud you for all the money that you've put out, but if we're trying to compare men and women, do you still see more of it going to men or do you see that gap beginning to decrease as well? I'm looking at financial literacy and the money that has been going out the doors in the last few since you put out the program in 2015. If you could give me a little idea on that, it would be great.

• (0920)

**Ms. Lesley Lawrence:** To answer the first question, yes, there's still a need to help women entrepreneurs with financial literacy.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Is there a big gap between men versus women? Do you see a gap there?

**Ms. Lesley Lawrence:** Potentially yes. Certainly we've been focusing more on women. We haven't really been assessing the male level of financial literacy because we recognize this is a focus area for women, so let's do that with women. That answers your first question.

In terms of access to capital and lending more to women versus men, what we're trying to focus on, quite honestly, is the fact that we're lower than where the market is in terms of our concentration of majority-owned businesses. I want to focus on majority-owned women businesses. We're trying to really move the needle on that. In terms of our lending last year, we did have increased growth organizationally. However, if we grew our lending by 22% last year, but we targeted and grew majority-owned women businesses by 27%, we have done more lending in that space.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** That's excellent. Thank you very much.

Marilyne and Geneviève, first of all, I would like to applaud everything that you do as mothers. It's incredible. I'm looking at your statements, and I recognize that, yes, you would be very dependent on others because you're the primary caregiver. I have a couple of questions on this.

Do either of you think it's most cost-effective and beneficial for the children to be with you, or what's the best option for the children? That is kind of a hard question.

[Translation]

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** Since we know our child's medical file by heart and have looked after them since birth, being with us is what is best for the child. Whether a child is disabled or not, they belong with their parents, for as long as they are able to carry out that responsibility. That is another aspect as well.

Our organization represents at least 2,000 parents, in Quebec alone, who have a severely disabled child. The vast majority of them want to look after their child and are able to do so. We work closely with our people. We have a Facebook page, people call on us, and ask us many questions. We are a resource for those families. They want to look after their child.



[English]

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** You're working in a partnership then. By no means am I trying to go after these people, but we just heard things on autism, so I'm trying to compare it to something on autism. We're working with CAPP, the Canadian Autism Partnership Project..

Do you believe these partnerships are really quite important so that you will have that support from other like-minded parents?

[Translation]

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** Yes, partnerships with the government and community organizations are crucial to us. We need financial support and competent people who can offer help at home and respite services. Respite services are one of the strengths of community organizations on the ground.

[English]

**The Chair:** Excellent.

Now we'll go to my colleague, Ms. Malcolmson, for seven minutes.

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

Ms. Picard, and Ms. Dion, Tétrault, thank you for your very powerful testimony. I can't imagine what you're living with. I also am amazed that, given the life you describe, you have time for advocacy and to come here to tell the story. That's an extra challenge, and it's very important.

This is just what our study is looking at. We're looking at the women in Canada who are having the hardest time economically, why, and what policies we can put in place to try to support them.

If I understand the way you described it in your testimony, the major federal programs that might assist you are federal tax programs, for which you have to make enough money so that you are paying taxes and can then qualify for a tax rebate. Those programs are irrelevant to your families. We hear this in other areas as well. You can get a tax rebate, but you have to be wealthy enough to qualify.

That means that you and your families now live in poverty, and when you...I want to say retire, but you might not really exactly retire in a conventional way. As the members of your organization age, you will not have the pensions to support your life, and neither will you have the savings to pass on to your children for them to have security.

We need to do something. I mean that's not tenable because this has a multi-generational impact.

Can you tell us more? The personal story is very powerful. Tell us more about the impact both on you and your members and then on your children of this economic scarcity, and what the long-term implications are of that.

• (0925)

[Translation]

**Ms. Marilyne Picard:** Let me give you a few figures about our personal situation, which is similar to that of others here.

My spouse and I both used to work and each earned a salary. Since I no longer work, our income has plummeted. Moreover, our child's needs, which entail certain costs, have increased our family expenses. We have found ourselves in a hole, with no way out.

We had to do fundraising to dig ourselves out. As we have explained, this is very difficult and hurts our pride. No one wants to pin a photo of their child on a little donations box at the grocery store.

Yet, we had the necessary motivation to create this movement. We thought about the fact that we have degrees, and that we worked hard to earn those degrees. Out of love for our children, we stay at home, and it feels like we have fallen into a deep hole.

I am still able to work though. I have a tremendous amount of energy. It makes no sense. I want to keep contributing to my retirement plan and save money. The government offers a very good program, the registered disability savings plan, or RDSP, but you have to have the money to contribute to it. When our child's therapy costs between \$3,000 and \$4,000 per year, that is where our money goes, and not to savings. We are constantly trimming our expenses. We do not talk about the siblings enough, yet the other children in the family are greatly affected by these financial difficulties.

Founding this movement provided an avenue for personal growth. We rolled up our sleeves. We said that it is not 1940 and it is inconceivable that, in 2017, we should end up as housewives again.

We work; our commitment at home is definitely work. We would like the Government of Canada to recognize the work we do at home for our children. When they become adults, the situation will be the same. We will still have to feed them with a spoon. We will still have to take everything with us, including their wheelchair, whether we are going to the grocery store or somewhere else. We are not recognized as family caregivers for tax purposes because our child is under 18. Yet I certainly am a family caregiver. There are all kinds of little anomalies like this and they put us at a disadvantage.

[English]

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** I have another question on a related area. A constituent in my riding, a mother in Nanaimo, has a daughter who is fed with a feeding tube. She is very concerned about the nutritional elements of what's required.... The only coverage is for a certain formula that's provided by Nestlé, or something like that. She's concerned that it isn't healthy, and there's no food labelling to say what the nutritional content is.

I don't want to put you on the spot, but I wonder whether, for your organization, I can share with you the correspondence we've had with the health minister. Maybe you have parents who have the same concern, or maybe you've already advocated in this area and might be able to give us some advice, or maybe together we could encourage the health minister. There is a commitment to food labelling and nutrition, but it doesn't seem to be applying to those who are dependent on force-feeding, as you say.

Would you be willing to look at that material with us? You might have some advice as well. It's not related to economic security, but of course it is for the benefit of the children.

● (0930)

[Translation]

**Ms. Marilyne Picard:** Yes, of course.

Labelling issues, expiry dates, and all those things are very important to us as parents. Our child has to consume a certain number of calories. Everything is weighed and calculated, so I can understand the concerns of that mother.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

We will now move on to Mr. Serré for seven minutes.

Excuse me, it is actually Ms. Nassif's turn.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses for their presentations.

I would like in particular to thank Ms. Dion, Ms. Picard, and Ms. Tétreault. I had the honour of meeting you in Laval. I am the only committee member from Quebec. My heartfelt thanks for coming to talk to us about your experiences.

I was a nurse for eight years. After giving birth to healthy triplets, I had to give up nursing and go back to school in another field. You are full-time nurses yourselves, and will be permanently. I salute you and thank you for taking the time to come and tell us about your situation.

I have a few questions for each of you.

First, can you tell us more about the type of funding available to you in Quebec? Does it differ from the other types of funding provided to host families or is it the same?

**Ms. Marilyne Picard:** We have received compensation. We reached out to the Quebec government to point out that host families received about \$15,000 in respite services. Various costs are reimbursed to those families, including the cost of medications and ambulance fees. We have calculated all of that and have concluded that a host family in Quebec receives \$40,000 per year to look after a child who is not their own.

**A voice:** And that is non-taxable.

**Ms. Marilyne Picard:** That is correct. As a family, we receive \$4,000 from all programs and services.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** You said \$4,000?

**Ms. Marilyne Picard:** Yes, \$4,000. So our salary was increased by \$4,000. That includes federal financial assistance. Quebec provided \$2,000 and Canada provided the same amount.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Per year?

**Ms. Marilyne Picard:** Yes, per year. So we told the Quebec government that something had to be done. We were successful and obtained equal treatment, or at least something approaching equality, which we are pleased with. We got \$957 per month tax free. As we said, this is because of the child's complex medical condition, for ambulance costs and so forth. This provides additional support.

The shortcoming of the new program is that the assistance is not scaled to the severity of the child's condition. The program is for parents whose children are in the most serious condition, the ones at greatest risk, if I may say, with multiple disabilities.

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** This program stops when the child reaches the age of 18.

**Ms. Marilyne Picard:** Yes.

Unfortunately, in the case of a child whose condition is borderline, who is not considered to be sufficiently disabled, the request is refused and the family will continue to receive just \$2,000 per year.

There are still shortcomings, but we are working to resolve those as well. Today, we would like to make you aware of our situation so the federal government can help us, especially with our retirement plan and purchasing power.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** I have another question.

Can you tell us about the government's calculations for a single-parent family versus a two-parent family?

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** It is the same amount.

● (0935)

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** If one of the spouses is working, does that make any difference?

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** Are you talking about the new measure that was established?

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Yes, exactly.

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** Yes, it is the same amount for everyone. Someone who earns \$100,000 per year and has a severely disabled child is entitled to \$950. The same amount is provided to someone who earns \$9,000 per year and is on social assistance. They all receive the same amount.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** The program ends when the child turns 18, even though they are still sick.

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** The assistance is cancelled on the child's eighteenth birthday. The child is still disabled though, even though they are 18. It is simply a number.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Can you tell us a bit about other measures that could be adopted, not only in Quebec, but throughout Canada, for people in your situation?

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** The ideal would be to be treated the same as women who work, since they have the right to contribute to a retirement plan. What we do currently is not recognized as work. We are therefore deprived of all the rights that a working woman has. That in itself is patently unfair.

Assistance that is based on the seriousness of the disability would also be welcome. That is how it works in France: there is a rule whereby the amount provided is scaled to...

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Is it based on the parents' income?

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** No. It's based on the seriousness of the disability. I don't know whether the income level is also taken into consideration. However, it's definitely based on the seriousness of the disability, which is much more logical.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Okay.

I have another question.

On your website, the parents of a child with a severe disability can fill in a form. They can share their story and talk more about their child.

How many responses have you received since posting the form on your website?

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** We've received 5,000.

We said earlier that we were close to our people. That's truly the case. Parents jusqu'au bout is a cause that speaks for itself. We've received a great deal of media and political attention. Our organization is also very well known in pediatric hospitals. Even the doctors who announce diagnoses to parents tell them about Parents jusqu'au bout and the government's new measure. The movement is very well known in the field.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** What are the most common issues and needs indicated by parents who complete the form?

**Ms. Marilyne Picard:** The issues are home support and the need for respite.

**Ms. Geneviève Dion:** The parents talk about the major lack of support.

**Ms. Marilyne Picard:** It's terrible that a mother—we're talking about a mother because it's mothers in 98% or 99% of cases—who takes care of her child for 24 hours a day has only four hours a week of home support. That's unacceptable.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

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

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

Thank you so much for coming and being willing to share your stories with us, especially you three because I know it must make you feel quite vulnerable to welcome us into your personal lives. Thank you for being brave and allowing us that opportunity to learn from you today. We do appreciate it.

My first question is for Ms. Benson. I'm going to pick up on where you left off with regard to quotas. You mentioned that you don't believe quotas are the best way to move forward to create equality for women, or an equal number of women around the board table or in an institution or organization. Why do you believe that to be the case? What do you believe would be some of the messages that might be communicated toward women by our going to a quota system?

**Ms. Ramona Benson:** Absolutely. I do believe that you need to train, educate, and mentor people for certain jobs whether they be men or women so that people can be good at their jobs and competent. They don't want to be benchwarmers, though I do believe, yes, that you need to have representation of ethnic minorities, women, and all of them, in government and the private sector. But it's interesting that in this day and age we still equate women with a minority group in the way we treat the situation. I think we need to go back having that mentorship available for them, as well as having somebody who is trained and educated for a certain role whether it's through work experience or...

As for me, I didn't study business in university. I didn't study telecommunications or technology. I gained that over a 10-year period through work experience and dedication. I've worked internationally. I've had to give up a lot of my personal time to do that, and not everybody is fortunate enough to do that, but you need to create streamlines. That's why I go back to the German system and how they're doing it.

In the economic recession of 2008, I was living in London, working for a German company. When I saw everybody in the financial sector in London carrying boxes out of their offices, Germany was still hiring. I still had a job. Even western Germany, Bavaria, had more jobs than qualified people, even in small towns. I worked for two companies: one was based in Munich, the other in Würzburg, just south of Frankfurt.

There is a lot of opportunity in Germany because they have a system where they look at the industries they have, the sectors, and try to match people to jobs. I think that is the best way to go to have a dedicated, competent, qualified workforce.

• (0940)

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** When we impose a quota system or make it mandatory that 50% of staff in a work setting or a board, or in some sort of leadership capacity, have to be men and 50% women, does that send a specific message to women? Does it send any negative messages with regard to women?

**Ms. Ramona Benson:** I think it's an opportunity at the same time, because you get to be placed. But the reality is that there aren't fewer women than men. That's the reality. Even though it's two-sided, even though it's an opportunity to be somewhere, I believe you don't just put them there. You have to educate and graduate them through the process so they can contribute.

In a work environment, when you're given a role because of your ethnicity, your gender, whether you're a minority or disabled, your colleagues treat you differently if you're not up to the job. So I believe that you also need to be up to the job and still have opportunity. That's usually given through internships and all of that, because you really get to learn hands-on that way. That takes away from someone being labelled.

With the education system that I mentioned, I was suggesting that you take away from the labelling and to treat men and women the same way and be able to just graduate them for their God-given talent and for what they can learn through the process by enhancing their capabilities and aptitude.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** That's the end of our time.

I'm so thankful to all of our witnesses for their time and testimony today.

If there are things you've thought of that you would like to have the committee review, please send them to the clerk

Ms. Malcolmson.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Madam Chair, if I could, I'd like to put on the record that I'm hoping our cost-recovery policy will compensate Ms. Tétrault, Ms. Dion, and Ms. Picard for their travel. Perhaps I could sow the seed that, if the clerk identifies any gaps in their expenses, our policy might be able to cover them for child care and so on, which isn't always included.

**The Chair:** You will be happy to know that the clerk and I have already been having this discussion, so we are on the same page.

Thank you very much again.

We'll suspend while we get ready for the second panel.

● (0940)

(Pause)

● (0945)

**The Chair:** We're starting the second panel with some very exciting witnesses.

We have, from an organization called Women in Governance, Caroline Codsi, president and founder. From Shopify, we have Lynsey Thornton, the vice-president of user experience, and Alexandra Clark, the director of public policy. We also have, from the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, Shifrah Gadamssetti.

Welcome to you, ladies.

Each organization will have seven minutes for comments.

● (0950)

[Translation]

We'll start with Ms. Codsi.

**Ms. Caroline Codsi (President and Founder, Women in Governance):** Hello.

[English]

Should I do it in French or English? My notes are in French. They've been distributed, I believe.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** You can speak in either language.

**Ms. Caroline Codsi:** Okay. I'll give my presentation in French.

[English]

I'm happy to answer questions in English.

[Translation]

Women in Governance is a non-for-profit organization founded in 2010. The goal is to help women develop their leadership, enhance their career and access board seats. Alarming statistics inspired the creation of this organization. Women constitute only 5% of CEOs of FP500 companies and only 15.9% of board members. It's quite abysmal.

If you've already heard that women constitute 20% of board members, I want to specify that these are TSX 60 figures, meaning the figures for the 60 largest companies in the country. The figure doesn't represent the situation in our society as a whole.

While women constitute 47.3% of the workforce, only 5.3% of them are business leaders. That's the situation, in our country, in 2017.

Among all the G7 countries, Canada has one of the highest participation rates of women in the workforce. Although the wage gap has been reduced, Statistics Canada data from January 2017 shows that the average hourly wage of women, in all employment categories combined, is 16% lower than the average hourly wage of men. Moreover, women continue to bear a greater share of the burden of unpaid work.

In Quebec, we've made fairly dramatic progress in recent years. The participation rates of women aged 25 to 54 are around 86%, a record high. Since 2000, this rate has jumped by almost nine percentage points, one of the most spectacular increases in Canada.

Let's compare Quebec to the four most populated provinces in Canada. It currently ranks first in terms of the number of jobs held by women, whereas 16 years ago, it lagged behind in this area. Quebec's family policy has certainly played a role in this progress. Women in Governance encourages the government to support measures that help more women participate in the Canadian economy.

Research shows that there's no shortage of qualified women ready to hold senior management positions. They're educated and prepared. That's not the issue. A lack of self-confidence and assurance is sometimes an issue. At Women in Governance, we've been addressing this issue through our mentoring program. However, women lack sponsors, meaning men or women who can not only act as their mentors, but also help them by recommending them, speaking about them, and directing them to decision-making bodies. The likelihood of obtaining this type of sponsor is supposedly 46% higher for men than for women, which is a significant difference. Also, the business world doesn't sufficiently support work-life balance. This continues to be a women's area, and constitutes a gap.

We're emphasizing the need to implement strategies to help women join not only decision-making bodies, but all levels of a company.

We also maintain that quotas must be set. Why? It's not enough to simply disclose objectives. All the country's financial market authorities have implemented the "comply or explain" principle. The principle has been in effect for two or three years, and the results are, at minimum, lukewarm. However, certain countries that have set official quotas obtain good results.

In Quebec, under the Charest government, legislation on women's parity in stated-owned enterprises was passed, and the objective was very quickly achieved.

At Women in Governance, we've decided to create parity certification. It's a bit like the ISO. It measures what companies have implemented to achieve parity, not only in decision-making bodies, but at all hierarchical levels. The idea is to have a talent pool when there's a desire to promote women to senior management positions.

We held a public consultation with McKinsey & Company, a consulting firm, and the Ordre des conseillers en ressources humaines agréés, the equivalent of the HRP in Ontario. We're talking about human resources specialists here. The consultation involved checking the whole questionnaire and making sure it was strong enough.

● (0955)

We want to award parity certification to companies. Companies that stand out will be honoured at our gala on September 12, at the Palais des congrès. It's our way of focusing on the subject. For the first year, the certification will be awarded only to companies that have 400 or more employees. For the second year, we intend to apply this initiative to SMEs, given that Quebec has many of them. For the second year, we also intend to establish the certification outside Quebec.

I also want to provide a brief global perspective.

In Canada, we encourage companies to disclose their objectives. For example, Bill C-25 really focuses on the disclosure of objectives. However, things aren't really changing in Canada. Only objectives set internally are disclosed. Only 9% of Canadian companies have set clear objectives. In comparison, in Australia, 82% of ASX 200 companies have clear objectives. The percentage of women on boards rose from 19.4% in 2012 to 23.4% in 2016.

[English]

Am I speaking too fast? I have so much to share. I have seven minutes, and I could spend the whole day.

**The Chair:** No, no, that was your one-minute warning. Now you have 30 seconds left.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Caroline Cods:** Oh, my one-minute warning. My God.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Caroline Cods:** Okay. I'll be very quick.

I also want to talk about France. In France they have quotas, as you know. In 2010 in Canada and France, women made up 12% of boards. If we fast-forward to today, France is at almost 40% when we're at 15.9%. That's *la loi Copé-Zimmermann*. I was invited by Marie-Jo Zimmermann, the deputy who put this law in place, to speak at the National Assembly in Paris in December two years ago. She also invited a woman from Sweden to share their experience. They were the very first ones to have quotas. I was kind of the example of what not to do—that is, not putting in place quotas—and the Swedes were the example of the very first one. They have parity. They've had it for a decade.

What is very striking to see, however, is that in Norway, Sweden, and Finland, yes, they have parity on boards, but at the executive committee level fewer than 20% are women. In other words, when you legislate, there are results, and they legislated only for boards. There's no legislation for executive committees or anything else, so nothing is happening at that level. That is why we've decided to put this corporate parity certification in place, so that we're able to have an impact.

I have so much more to say. I hope you read what I've left here for you. It's in French, but I'm happy to...and then there are questions, of course.

[Translation]

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Now we'll go to Lynsey and Alexandra for seven minutes.

**Ms. Lynsey Thornton (Vice-President, User Experience, Shopify Inc.):** Shopify is a company that has close to 2,000 employees, and four offices in Canada and one in the U.S. We support entrepreneurs and SMBs in over 175 countries worldwide. For a company that has seen 100% growth year on year, the topic we're talking about today is absolutely crucial for our growth and success.

I lead a team of about 200 highly skilled designers, writers, researchers, and developers at Shopify, and I'll speak to some of the barriers that I've seen exist for the women around me.

The first is return to work and workplace integration after maternity leave. Access and costs of child care remain a critical barrier to women's economic security. In our company alone, a number of women have faced serious challenges returning to work, as a result of child care availability and the financial hardship incurred. As a result of the recently introduced child care rules, the number of children a day care centre or individual can take is limited for safety. The unintended result of this is that the availability of day care facilities has decreased, while costs have increased.

For example, many day care facilities will not take children until they're 14 or 18 months old, making it nearly impossible for women to return to the workplace before this. This timeline does not line up with company maternity policies, leaving women relying on family to bridge this gap for them.

Costs of child care are high—on average, \$30K per child per year in Toronto, or \$26K per child per year in Ottawa—making the return to work an impossibility for lower-income women and a significant challenge even for higher-income women.

The lowered capacity for day care providers has led to women on our team needing to sign up for waiting lists when they're three months pregnant, leaving absolutely zero flexibility for the woman to move house, job, or location in the early years of their child's life. Mobility is a need for modern careers, and this lack of mobility leads to devastating consequences for that woman's ability to advance her career while growing her family at the same time. We've seen this first hand when headhunting senior women: they're often not willing to move their families due to the high cost of losing their support networks, while knowing the difficulty involved in reintegration. The same problem does not exist to the same degree for men, who frequently move their families for job opportunities at Shopify.

Infant and child sickness is another frequent reason for employees to take time off. If any company isn't open to working from home or where sick days are limited, there's no question that women are sidelined as a result of this incompatibility between workplace and child care expectations.

Women on our team have told me it was very difficult for them to even find child care when interviewing to come back to work after taking leave. Our interviews are typically full-day events, so it's not easy or cheap for women to accommodate this. More recently we've begun paying for the child care needs of women we invite to interview, but most companies do not.

The truth is that while, for most parents, both face barriers to work as a result of family commitments, it is still the woman who experiences the full consequences. If this is to be truly addressed, the government needs to put in place a framework for child care that is not only safe, but affordable and accessible too.

When it comes to hiring and income gap, we frequently see women reporting lower base salaries despite their talents and experience. We've worked hard internally to define salary bands that ensure we pay correctly for the role, regardless, but most companies do not. We know women today still struggle to fight for the correct level of pay, and if companies still choose to hire women at lower salary levels, this ensures that women's salaries will remain lower.

When it comes to interviewing, we see many unconscious biases come into play. Almost every interviewer at Shopify has received some sort of training to make them aware of these unconscious biases, and every interview panel openly discusses possible biases when we get together to recap a candidate's next steps. We're highly aware of these biases, and even we are struggling to overcome them day to day. It remains difficult for women to overcome the systemic biases of how they're required to act by society's standards. All this to say, in comparison with other companies, we've invested significantly in educating ourselves and the people around us about these biases and our problems are still not solved. Imagine how difficult it might be for a woman to be hired or advance in a company where these things are not in place.

Lastly, concerning advancement of women in the workplace, for the most part it's still women that I see as the primary champions of other women. In my experience, female-led teams are much more likely to hire and promote females. Technology professionals are in high demand, and senior females tell me that they won't even consider a company that doesn't feature women in high profile or senior positions.

• (1000)

Professional development opportunities like training or conferences frequently happen over the weekend and can be particularly challenging for those with families. Shopify runs a conference that features female-led speaker lineups called Beyond the Code. We offer free child care for attendees, alongside some other inclusive conferences run by others in Canada.

Showcasing, mentorship, and sponsorship of high potential women have been successful methods for us to highlight and advance women in the company. They give a platform to those who don't necessarily feel they're entitled to one, despite high quality

work. As a fast-growing company, we've seen the need for coaching internally to help us develop the leadership skills we need. I can personally attribute a lot of my personal growth to the focus of a coach who has been able to provide me with a lot of the focus as I've moved into a VP position.

So today I've mainly spoken about the barriers that I see internally at Shopify when it comes to female economic security, but I also see these manifest in the female entrepreneurs who our business supports. Our customer base has changed a lot over the last couple of years, from a male majority to a female majority. This reflects some of the opportunities that are being opened up to women through the Shopify platform, when it comes to lowering the cost of running a business, as well as making it easier to get started. But despite the shift in our customer numbers, this is by no means a solved problem. We still see the most successful businesses on the platform being run by males, indicating that a ceiling still exists for female entrepreneurs.

As we've seen first hand, addressing the barrier to female inclusion and advancement in the workplace requires a long-term time and monetary investment. There's still a huge role for government to play in ensuring that, whether we're referring to women who are starting their own businesses or working within the technology industry, they have the support and backing of the Canadian government.

Thank you.

• (1005)

**The Chair:** That's excellent.

Now we'll go to Shifrah for seven minutes.

**Ms. Shifrah Gadamsetti (Chair, Board of Directors, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations):** Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the committee, witnesses, and members of the gallery.

My name is Shifrah Gadamsetti and I am president of Mount Royal University Students' Association in Calgary, Alberta, as well as chair of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations here in Ottawa. We advocate at the federal level on behalf of 21 member institutions and 250,000 students from coast to coast, based on our pinnacles of accessibility, affordability, innovation, and education of the highest quality.

Before I begin, please allow me to take a moment to thank you for having us here once again, and for seeking out our perspective. This is an issue that I care very deeply about, based on my own personal, lived experiences. I am a first-generation immigrant. I work on the front lines of health care as a registered nurse, and I am very involved with many grassroots organizations that work to eradicate violence against women. These experiences have taught me that everyone has a unique story, but at the end of the day we all face systemic barriers.

CASA sees accessibility, affordability, and high-quality education as key to fighting poverty and improving economic conditions for all Canadians. There continues to be overwhelming evidence that as long as you have access to post-secondary education, you have access to higher lifetime earnings and better employment opportunities. While more women are accessing post-secondary education than ever before, we still see that they face unique challenges and that there are further considerations to be made for those who face barriers along multiple intersections.

CASA has produced many different policies that we hope will improve the experience of women in post-secondary and their economic sustainability. We really strive to create a safe campus environment for all of our member institutions. While it's incredibly important for our campus environments to be safe for all students, we find that women face very specific challenges, especially in terms of gender-based sexual violence on our campus, which makes it unwelcoming and very unsafe as an environment.

Women represent over 93% of the survivors of sexual assault, violence and harassment on our campuses, and from my work with the Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse, we know that for every case that is reported, there are so many that are not.

For our campuses to be safe, we cannot simply be reactive, so proactive engagement such as stand-alone sexual assault policies, promotion of consent culture, and inviting all members of our campus community to participate in the dialogue makes it everyone's issue, not just those who are affected personally. We know that this committee is very familiar with the idea of gender-based violence on campuses. We had the privilege of presenting to you on that before, and we're very supportive of the report you released that addressed those issues.

Today, we would really like to highlight the barriers that exist to fully participating in post-secondary.

Women continue to be responsible for dependants at higher rates than men. For women in post-secondary, especially those who are historically marginalized or from lower-income backgrounds, mature learners' child care continues to be imperative to their success. The combined stressors of managing dependants, part-time and/or full-time work, and the dedication to post-secondary really make it hard for these women to succeed.

Student assistance plays an incredibly important role in this. The Canada student loans program currently uses a needs assessment to determine how much financial aid a student is eligible for. This current assessment factors in child care costs, but it isn't reflective of the actual costs of child care.

For example, the monthly loan limit in Ontario for child care is \$357, but in Toronto the average monthly cost for child care is \$1,700. Since 80% of those with dependants receiving loans or grants in recent years are women, we think they would benefit significantly from an improvement to this program.

A related challenge is the lack of national data about child care availability on campus or in surrounding communities. Not all campuses actually offer this service, and certainly there are communities that are disproportionately disadvantaged.

First nations students are an example. We know that one-third of our first nations students are parents, so we think initiatives such as subsidized child care on campus, indigenous family housing, and improved financial aid would significantly help those in need. We also believe that affordable child care is key to the success of women on campus, as is data collection, so that we know exactly the types of needs that are present for our students.

Supports are also needed exist for women once they begin transitioning into the workforce. For those who cannot find gainful employment immediately, there is currently a repayment assistance program. It allows graduates to hold off on repaying their student loans until they meet the threshold of a \$25,000 annual income.

• (1010)

While we're very supportive of this initiative, we recognize that there are concerns about the promotion of the program and the process for accessing the program. For instance, recent graduates who are accessing it have to reapply every six months, and there's a lack of awareness among those who are eligible to use it. Two-thirds of part-time borrowers identify as women and if they knew about programs like this, it would have a significant impact on their financial stability. We would recommend that this program be expanded to last a year without applicants having to reapply.

Student employment, of course, continues to be at the forefront of our minds. Women are engaged in multiple and often uncompensated responsibilities while attending post-secondary education, so we believe that the transition from education to employment needs to be prioritized as well.

Experiential learning continues to be an incredibly strong factor and we know that paid opportunities result in more successful outcomes than unpaid ones. As a registered nurse, I know this fact all too well. We would like to draw your attention to the need for more programs that encourage not only the engagement of women in fields like STEM and business, which are typically male-dominated and have compensated employment opportunities, but also those fields that are dominated by women employed in their professions to help with the compensation factor.

Again, thank you so much for having us here today. We really appreciate the opportunity.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

We're going to begin our round of questioning with my colleague Ms. Vandenberg, for seven minutes.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much. I want to thank all of you for coming here to testify today.

As an Ottawa MP, I would like to focus my questions on Shopify, which is a real Ottawa success story. I'm very pleased to see you here today, particularly because of some of the things you've said. We know from our gender-based analysis study that an organization can have the exact same policies, but it will impact women and men differently.

I'm struck by some of the things you said about the interview process and the fact that it, as well as child care, is a barrier; hence, the need for unconscious bias training in the interview process. It's not something we've discussed in detail in this committee yet, so I would be very interested to know a little more about the kinds of outcomes you find. You mentioned the discussions that happen about the unconscious bias during the hiring process. Could you let me know what the outcomes are—and also in terms of the child care provided during the interviews and the professional development days?

**Ms. Lynsey Thornton:** Absolutely. I'll start with the unconscious bias.

The primary objective of the discussion is to make people aware of any possible biases they might have, so that we can get past the idea of people hiring those who are similar to themselves, which is what people normally gravitate towards doing. We use those sessions as a means to out any of those biases and to try to overcome them as a group and to refocus on the actual legitimate feedback about any candidate, as opposed to personal preference or opinions. We use it as a way to level the field for that particular candidate and make an informed decision about whether we will proceed with them or not.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Fantastic.

You just mentioned hiring people like yourself. You also had mentioned that women tend to promote other women and that, when you have a woman-led team, there are more women included in that team. I'm struck by that because I know that, even in my own office, when I'm looking at volunteers, interns, and the people I'm coaching, they are the people whom I would say remind me of myself at that age. There is a very distinct factor there.

You've talked about female-led lineups, including speakers, and in the coaching and mentoring that you're doing. Have you had success in bringing in more women by doing that? Are there also men who are coaching women and bringing more women in?

•(1015)

**Ms. Lynsey Thornton:** Absolutely.

All four of my bosses at Shopify have been senior males, at different stages of my time in the company. Across the board, I think we look to feature not only females but minorities as well, whenever we're doing internal conferences or anything that provides a platform for those people.

**Ms. Alexandra Clark (Director, Public Policy, Shopify Inc.):** One thing I would just add, on the Ottawa theme, is that Shopify recently launched a program with Carleton University, in which we are allowing first-year bachelor of computer science students at Carleton to do their full degree at Shopify. It's a work-integrated learning program that we've done entirely on our own. We pay for them to be there and we pay their tuition.

When we first sent out the application for students to apply, 90% of the replies came from males, so we did a case study and looked at the letter and the language used. We looked at the words we use in technology, like "hustle", and what was forcing those students and those women to opt out. We went back, rewrote the letter, and sent it back out.

Our first cohort in 2016 at Shopify had a majority of females. We have a group in 2017, and again, I think the numbers are that a majority of the students coming into the program are female. Some are women coming back to do their education and some are first-year students whom we'll have for the next four years. So language matters.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** That is absolutely phenomenal. I've called Shopify a success story, and I'm going to be doing that even more because of this. Thank you for that.

Just before I go to my colleague, you mentioned the pay gap and the fact that if the salaries of the women coming in were lower, they will often end up asking for lower salaries and then getting lower salaries. But you're doing something different, it sounds like. What are you doing to make sure that the pay gap doesn't persist as people proceed?

**Ms. Lynsey Thornton:** We have various salary band levels. They're not public, but we do use them as a benchmark to make sure we're not bringing people in at the wrong level. I have definitely heard of a poor trend in the technology industry, particularly with smaller companies, that if somebody comes in and asks for a lower salary, they'll happily pay them that lower salary. This essentially prevents us from doing something like that if we were to make a bad judgment call on it.

We also review salaries twice a year. If somebody joined the company four years ago, when salaries were a little bit lower—when we were a less successful company, and when we actually did pay less at the time—we make sure that we up their salary so that they remain within that band as we grow as a company as well.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Thank you very much.

**Ms. Caroline Cods:** May I jump in on that topic?

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Sure, go ahead, but very quickly. I want to give Ms. Damoff a chance to ask a question.

**Ms. Caroline Cods:** Okay. That's all right.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** You have one minute and 15 seconds left.

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Shifrah, my question is for you. The previous witness talked about the benefits of doing an unpaid internship, or one that's paid less than minimum wage. I wonder if you could comment on the economic status of those who are able to take advantage of unpaid internships after school—not during school. As well, do you have any views on unpaid internships?

**Ms. Shifrah Gadumsetti:** I do, both personal and with regard to CASA.

I'll bring it back to a report that we released on student employment. Essentially our research has shown that with unpaid internships, you have the exact same success rate as someone who hasn't participated in one, with a 33% chance of finding employment. But if you do have a paid internship, your chances double. You have a 67% chance of finding gainful employment in your field of study or area of interest.



If you look back at and cross-identify those things with the feminization of labour, fields such as nursing, social work, health care, or any of those that actually require unpaid internships that aren't even optional, you are required to participate in an unpaid practicum in order to earn your accreditation. You are then also automatically set up to be less likely to find gainful employment after you've graduated. We also look at things like representation and someone's exposure to the workforce. Someone who is likely to have a paid internship is less likely to be distracted by also working on top of that in order to fund their education, and things like that.

We really, really do believe in the value of paid internships. The data shows us that if you are able to compensate someone, they are more willing to be engaged with their work. They're more willing to participate in the culture of the workforce rather than feeling dejected or tired or having to juggle multiple responsibilities, especially financial, at the end of the day.

• (1020)

**The Chair:** Very good.

Now we'll go to my colleague Ms. Harder for seven minutes.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Thank you very much.

I'll start with a question for you, Ms. Codsí. You talked about "sponsors" and how beneficial they are in helping to champion a woman and to introduce her to people, to network, and to perhaps move through the ranks or find those connections that are helpful to her being able to get to the places she wants to go.

At your organization or elsewhere, how are sponsors encouraged to get involved and champion a woman? Whether it's another female sponsor or a male sponsor, how can we encourage greater engagement there?

**Ms. Caroline Codsí:** We work with both men and women. First of all, we encourage women to go after those male champions and get closer to them, because you still see a separation in the workplace. It's still the old boys' club. It's still the same people who go for a drink after work. Women don't go with them. We encourage women to have these conversations with the men who they think could be good mentors. Often when you have a mentor, they will become a sponsor.

We have a mentoring program at Women in Governance. Our mentoring program is for women who are over 35 and who are very close to that glass ceiling. We ask the mentors, both men and women, to go beyond just the one-on-one mentoring and to have opportunities to bring these women to functions and to the galas they are attending, etc., so that these women are also more out there. That's another issue we see. Women don't network. They go home after work. That's a problem.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Why is that? Why do women struggle with having the confidence to initiate—go over, shake a hand, introduce themselves, exchange a business card—or take an interest in a position that they're, let's say, 80% qualified for but not the other 20%, though they could learn those skills if mentored? Why do women hesitate with things like that?

**Ms. Caroline Codsí:** I think it's going to take decades before that changes. It's very slow, because we've been brought up this way.

Women have certain qualities that make them amazing leaders, but there's also a downside to this.

What types of qualities are these? For instance, they're very inclusive, very democratic, very empathetic—they have a lot of empathy. That's wonderful. When they have to negotiate in a business development situation, however, they don't succeed as much as men, especially if it has something to do with their own person, such as, for instance, negotiating their salary. If they get a promotion, they'll be so thrilled about the promotion they'll forget to ask about the money that goes with it.

What I wanted to add about the gender wage gap is that in the corporate parity certification we're launching, one element we're requiring of corporate Canada is to stop asking women during the interview, "How much are you currently making?" We're only replicating that scheme of unfairness and injustice, because if you're making 20% less elsewhere, why wouldn't I keep paying you 20% less? Just look at the candidate's qualifications and how much you are willing to pay. That's all that matters, not what she's making now.

I've been lying about my salary throughout—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Ms. Caroline Codsí:** I've just completed 25 years in corporate Canada, the last 10 years as VP, executive VP, national VP. I've always lied about my salary. I can tell you that when I left my last job, the CFO leaked my salary, and there was a huge scandal, because I was the highest-paid senior vice-president of this company. If I were a man, though, there wouldn't have been a scandal—somebody has to be the highest paid as VP—but oh, my God, it was a woman.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** It's an interesting point. Thank you. I appreciate your being willing to share that.

My next question is for Ms. Thornton. It sounds as though Shopify is doing some incredible things. I took the time to read a little bit about what it is that you folks are doing. You talked a little about this. I don't have the exact quote, but you said something along the lines that you take the time to educate yourselves with regard to cultural trends and attitudes towards what's going on, and then you try to mitigate the risks of having negative trends and attitudes perpetuated within Shopify.

Can expand a little on what you mean by saying you educate yourself or maintain an understanding of what's going on? What do you mean by that? What are you doing to come against some of those negative trends you're observing in order to create a different culture within Shopify?

• (1025)

**Ms. Lynsey Thornton:** There are two things. We've started taking a more serious look at diversity and inclusion in the company, as of about 18 months ago, when we hired a director-level person. She is not responsible for the advancement of this—everybody in the company is—but she helps us identify specific areas in which we can improve. She has started, for the first time in the company, tracking some breakdowns of the people we have and helping us move forward to understanding where we have gaps in areas that we might want to specifically address both for diversity and inclusion.

Do you have something you want to add?

**Ms. Alexandra Clark:** Also, we have an entire team that's the culture team. That team is entirely focused on how we communicate with each other, how we're getting together, how we're sharing problems. We say that "default to open" and "be vulnerable" is one of the cultures at Shopify.

We host things, such as a town hall every single week on a Friday. The whole company stops. We get together, we stream it live to all of the other offices, we allow employees to take 15 minutes to present. Employees talk about personal things that they're going through, they talk about professional things that they've done. Always, when we think of the makeup of who's presenting, we ensure that we then start going after people who potentially aren't using those platforms, aren't using that opportunity. As Lynsey mentioned, the director of inclusion and diversity at the company is watching those presentations and tracking them through employee engagement.

We do something called "the big moral question lunch". It has to be inclusive, so all employees can Google in and be present. You talk about big questions that are on people's minds, and it's a safe space to do so. Then there's always follow-up.

**The Chair:** That's excellent.

That's your time.

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

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Thank you, Chair.

All three witnesses, we're going to use all of your work.

Shopify, I really appreciate your call to action on a universal accessible child care program. It's really important to hear.

I want to ask the Women in Governance witness something just really briefly. I don't know if you heard the previous witness, Ms. Benson, talk about how, when you have quotas, you have unqualified seat warmers. It was hard to listen to.

**Ms. Caroline Codsì:** Who is she?

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** From what you studied, is there evidence that, when you have quotas, you end up with unqualified women representing corporate boards?

**Ms. Caroline Codsì:** Not at all. That actually really hurts my ears.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Mine too.

**Ms. Caroline Codsì:** You know, when we sometimes say that women are women's worst enemy, that's a good example.

No. First of all it's demonstrated that, when you have more women around the table and diversity as a whole, you get to a more robust decision-making, obviously, because you have different perspectives. Why do we not wonder whether the men are competent? Why are we always asking if these women are going to be...? How are we choosing them? Are we choosing them because they are educated and experienced? Then why would they be incompetent?

So, no.

I think the reason why we need quotas or some form of encouragement for corporate Canada to get on that bandwagon is

that it's going to be a very positive impact for our economy. Did you know that 40% of boards in Canada don't have one woman? We're not even talking about parity. We're talking about boards that don't even have their token woman.

We have asked officially for Justin Trudeau to sign letters to all chairs of these boards that have no women. David Cameron did that in the U.K. a few years ago. I met with Susan Vinnicombe who is on the steering committee of Lord Davies, and they did a phenomenal job without quotas. They have no quotas in the U.K., but they did a phenomenal job with a continued focus. They really asked things like this. It came from the top.

I've had the opportunity to meet Justin Trudeau three times. I told him it's great to have parity on your cabinet, and it's wonderful to say you're a feminist, but that hasn't trickled down into the corporate world.

A letter would be a strong signal.

Maybe also because we know it's going to be good for our economy, we might consider tax breaks for those companies that have put an emphasis on parity, because we know that they will perform better financially. It shouldn't be any loss to the.... I don't know if the government gives a priority to suppliers that have parity, or tend towards parity, or demonstrate that they.... Does the government put an emphasis on this?

•(1030)

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Not yet, but we have witnesses coming on that too.

I also really appreciated hearing you say that it's not that women are not good networkers; it's that either they aren't invited or else they've rushed home from work to pick up their kids from child care. That's helpful for us as well.

I wanted to ask some questions of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. We want to hear more in this study about the collateral impact of students graduating with tremendous debt, then being put into the position of part-time, precarious work, especially women who are more likely to be in the care industries, which are historically underpaid.

Can you talk a bit about what you've seen in your graduating...in the millennials who are coming forward with that triple whammy?

**Ms. Shifrah Gadamsetti:** This allows me to highlight the lack of data that we currently have on this issue.

We do have a lot of data on employment, on recent graduates, and unpaid internships but with the GBA+ program, for example, we lack data that looks at them from a gender perspective in the ways that intersectional marginalization can affect these populations. We have broad data but we haven't broken that down to see what it looks like.

I can also speak from personal experience. I graduated from nursing at Mount Royal. It is incredibly difficult because when you're looking at fields dominated by women, they often also come with very significant emotional stressors. They're very laborious, not only physically but emotionally, so there is less opportunity for you to succeed as an individual if you've been set up from the very beginning with the gender wage gap, and with the lack of compensation for your practicums, for example.

I couldn't graduate without participating in a practicum. It wasn't optional for me to choose a paid or an unpaid internship. It was required of me, and it is very much like that in fields dominated by women. A lot of data show that even in these fields that primarily employ women, men still seem to rise through the ranks in leadership. In these fields that have more than gender parity, why are we still seeing men continually access more senior leadership positions?

Addressing that issue is incredibly difficult because when we look at financial aid through the Canada student loans program or Canada student grants program, for example, your assessment doesn't necessarily take into account your gender. Irrespective of whether or not you are a male or female student, if you note your child care needs in the application, both parties will still receive exactly the same amount, even though one is significantly impacted while the other is not, because the former tends to be the primary caregiver or responsible for those dependants, whether informally or formally.

We don't have the data to inform us at this point so we can move forward. That is one of our calls to action. We would like to see that program applied to existing policies, frameworks, and assistance that comes from the federal government.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Are you seeing in the cohort that you graduated in the inability to pay off student loans and be able to then invest in a home or make investments as a professional, because you've got the burden of student debt plus a low wage?

**Ms. Shifrah Gadamsetti:** It depends on your situation.

For example, we see data that emphasizes that the fields that are hiring most right now are in health care. It doesn't necessarily mean that if I have a passion for a certain type of health care, I'm going to get hired into that position. It's speaking of areas where people are desperate for work. If someone engages in employment in that field, something that they haven't necessarily been passionate about or studied or is super-relevant to what they might be really successful at, it causes extra stress. You look at factors such as child care, are you in a double-income household, a single-income household, and do you have dependants?

Women are very much responsible not only for child care but are also in the sandwich generation right now. Their ability to invest in their future is hampered not only by their dependent children but by their dependent families as well.

**The Chair:** That's very good.

We'll now go to my colleague Mr. Serré for seven minutes.

• (1035)

[Translation]

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

I want to thank the witnesses for their presentations and preparations for today's meeting, and for their work in the field. Obviously, we can use much of the information you provided, as others have said.

My first question is for Ms. Codsí.

You spoke passionately about Bill C-25. You seemed to say that we may not be going far enough. It would be a good step forward, but work would still need to be done.

You mentioned the need for legislation to increase the percentage of women on boards and executive committees of companies. Currently, women constitute 5% of CEOs and 15% of university board members. Minister Duncan also suggested the withdrawal of funding from universities that fail to increase the quota to over 15%.

We've heard witnesses say that we must shake up the system. Quotas have been mentioned, but the idea has been rather negatively received.

You spoke of research on the topic. I really want to look further at this area.

I'm very proud that women constitute 50% of the federal government's cabinet. These women are exceptional and highly qualified.

Why do people continue to say that quotas aren't necessary to shake up the system? What research do you have to try to change this mentality and make progress? You said that France planned to have women constitute 40% of board members in 2017. In Canada, women constitute about 15% of board members.

How can we shake up the system and make radical changes to increase this rate?

**Ms. Caroline Codsí:** Thank you for the question.

I sincerely believe that one of Canada's main problems is a lack of understanding of the issues.

First, people don't understand the figures. They're always shocked. Most often, people react by telling me that equality has already been achieved, and that the only thing left to consider is the number of women in senior positions. They give me examples of the two or three women CEOs they know. They tell me that everything is settled, that everything is fine, and that things will happen on their own. Everyone thinks that things will happen naturally on their own. We must look at the progress. In seven years, we've gone from 12% to 15.9%. At this rate, we'll need 72 years to achieve parity in Canada.

At home and abroad, Canada is considered very progressive and egalitarian. However, the reality is different, and therein lies the danger. In other countries, even macho countries, the situation is better. This difference must also be noted. Spain, Italy, France and macho countries have set quotas and achieved parity.

At home, the evidence of the quotas' effectiveness is glaring. I'll give you the Charest government's figures. We must remember that Jean Charest was the first to have a gender-equal cabinet. When he formed the government, the percentage of women on the boards of 22 state-owned enterprises rose from 27.5% to 52.4%, over five years, under the Act respecting the governance of state-owned enterprises. It's obvious. The evidence is there.

There's evidence outside Canada and evidence at home, in Quebec.

However, until about two years ago, the executive committees of state-owned enterprises had almost no women members. Hydro-Québec had parity, but women constituted perhaps 10% of its executive committee members. Why? When we legislate, we have women. When we don't legislate, we have excuses. It's that clear.

Ultimately, we must tell people who don't believe in it and who think there will be incompetence that the choice must be based on equal qualifications. There's no desire to look for women who don't have the required qualifications. When the qualifications are equal, women must be favoured, to help close the gap.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you.

**Ms. Caroline Cods:** Also, for the studies conducted regarding the impact on financial performance, I must say that a great deal of research has been carried out. This includes the research carried out by Mercer, McKinsey & Company, Korn Ferry, Spencer Stuart, and major firms such as Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton and Ernst & Young. It's all there. The evidence is there.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you.

Ms. Gadamsetti, you talked about students. You said there was a lack of data on the subject.

The government restored Statistics Canada's long-form census. Do you have specific examples of questions that could be added to provide accurate data on students? You spoke of transition services, which must be a priority. Do you have specific examples of items that could be added to the long form and that would provide more accurate data on youth, colleges, universities and employment?

• (1040)

[English]

**Ms. Shifrah Gadamsetti:** Absolutely. As I had mentioned earlier, we would love to see the gender-based analysis of existing policies, for example, the Canada student loans program, the Canada student grants program, but also breaking that down by intersections. I talked about first nation students, for example. One-third of that population are parents.

At my university, one of the initiatives that we've brought forward is indigenous family housing, because indigenous students are often hesitant to enter post-secondary education because they don't have adequate child care or the opportunity or resources to necessarily support their families as well as participate in education. So anything that we can do to reduce those barriers.... That was a really helpful statistic for us to have.

So it's a matter of breaking those statistics down and using that gender-based analysis to really provide data on existing policies.

As well, we're really encouraged to see the investment in youth employment through budget 2016 and 2017. However, we'd like to see the data on those investments. We'd like to see whether those investments are really meeting the policy objectives and how can we improve those.

What we as the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations want to ask for and see is how we can better inform our students back at our campuses to pursue certain opportunities.

As well, we have lots of gaps in data when it comes to the specifics of investing in co-op and paid internships. When we saw the investment in budget 2016, for example, in co-op and paid internships, or work-integrated learning, those tend to favour existing programs, meaning those in STEM or business. But, unfortunately, those really benefit male students over female students. We'd like to see data that shows how many women are really participating in those STEM and business programs and where the gaps are that we would like to see investments made. Are we looking at physical therapy, nursing, social work, things like that, and how can we better support those students to help decrease their financial burden?

**The Chair:** Wonderful.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We don't have time for a full second round, so my proposal is that Ms. Vecchio and Ms. Ludwig have one question each before we finish.

We'll go to Ms. Vecchio.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Shifrah, I want to start—and finish—with you. When we talk about the data, we're talking about the fact that we see pay gaps and the different issues that arise with men versus women, but when you're graduating students.... I've always said, as many of us have heard, that we know that STEM fields would help women get those great jobs. From the data you have for graduates in 2016—potentially, because I was thinking there may be data from then—how many women are graduating from those fields, and are they going into those fields with regard to work?

**Ms. Shifrah Gadamsetti:** I don't have the specific numbers for you today, but we can definitely follow up and provide you with them. I do know that there is a significant disparity, though. We aren't even close to critical political mass, which is what...30%? We'd like to see that increase.

There has been an increase gradually over time, but we're not at a point where we're seeing parity in those organizations or in those fields at this moment.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Ludwig.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.):** Thank you.

Thanks to all of you for your testimony this morning.

My question is also for you, Shifrah, a nurse. There are 300,000 nurses in Canada, so that's roughly 1% of the population. I'm biased now because my daughter just graduated in nursing from Dalhousie University, so it's current.

Do you see a disparity in the nursing profession itself? It is definitely dominated by women, but LPNs are now being hired in the field of health, versus RNs. We also could look at the pay discrepancy and how to get more males into the field of nursing.

**Ms. Shifrah Gadamsetti:** I'll speak from my personal experience, because we don't necessarily have data at CASA on this topic, and I was very much involved with our program.

On average, you see an intake in nursing education at about 20%, and then there is an attrition rate of about 4% to 5% throughout the years. Not that many male nurses are graduating, but the interesting part about it is that those who do graduate and enter the nursing workforce tend to continually rise in leadership and, within five years, actually end up making more than their female counterparts.

Then are the opportunities in the more advanced fields of nursing—for example, the operating room, ICU, emergency, etc.—and that has a lot to do with the economic status of things, but also with the social perceptions of the field. As my colleague said, women

sometimes are their own worst enemies, so there's a perception that you're coming in with a certain qualification that I may or may not have. We want to adjust those societal perceptions.

In regard to the field of nursing, I'm glad you brought up the LPN versus RN ratio. There is a significant difference in that education, not in practical skills, but in the critical thinking and the knowledge. Really promoting the critical thinking aspect of that education, both through the curriculum for LPNs and nursing educators, not only allows them to be a little bit more diversified in their qualifications, but allows them to ask questions as to why we are seeing males rise through the ranks, and not women, even though they comprise the majority of people employed in those ranks.

● (1045)

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Can I slip in one little—

**The Chair:** No. We're out of time. I'm sorry.

It was great testimony. Witnesses, if there are other things you want to send us, I encourage you to do so. We would love to hear from you. After we adjourn the meeting, I'm sure Karen will have another question.

Have a great day. We're adjourned.

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