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Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio



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• (1550)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Good afternoon, and welcome to meeting number 68 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely by using the Zoom application.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike, and please mute it when you're not speaking.

For interpretation for those on Zoom, you have the choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use your earpiece and select the desired channel.

This is a reminder that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can.

In accordance with the committee's routine motion concerning connection tests for witnesses, I'm informing the committee that all witnesses appearing virtually have completed their required connection tests.

Today, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the committee is commencing its consideration of the main estimates for 2023-24 with votes 1 and 5 under the Department for Women and Gender Equality, which were referred to the committee on Wednesday, February 15, 2023.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses.

We're honoured to have the Honourable Marci Ien here, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth. With her are members from the Department for Women and Gender Equality.

We have in person Frances McRae, who is the deputy minister; Gail Mitchell, who is the assistant deputy minister of departmental programs and operations; and Stéphane Lavigne, who is the chief financial officer and director general of corporate services.

Online, we have Crystal Garrett-Baird, who is the director general of the gender-based violence branch.

Minister, I am going to give you the floor for five minutes. You know me. When I start going crazy, it's time for you to wrap it up.

Minister, you have five minutes.

[Translation]

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth): Thank you for inviting me to appear before the committee.

[English]

Thank you so much, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to discuss the main estimates of the Department for Women and Gender Equality Canada.

[Translation]

Before I continue, I want to take a moment to highlight the excellent work that the members of this committee do, and their important role in moving gender equality forward in Canada.

I appreciate your sharing all of your insights.

[English]

It is such an honour to meet with you today on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

Canadians deserve an equal opportunity to succeed, and there is a clear link between social and economic prosperity and gender equality. I'm here to speak about how Women and Gender Equality Canada's main estimates put that perspective into concrete action.

WAGE is receiving \$290 million via the main estimates, of which \$225 million is in grants and contributions. This funding supports our work and, more importantly, will go toward equity-seeking organizations that help to drive systemic change.

We've been tested these last few years, but we've seen who we are and what we're capable of as Canadians. The pandemic made clear where we have challenges, and it shone a light on who has been disproportionately impacted and who our most vulnerable are. It strengthened our resolve as to why we are in this work. It revealed opportunities: How do we build back better and stronger? How do we embrace what full inclusivity looks like?

It also reinforced the core of our most important policies and inspired the design of new ones. The truth is that dental care, rental affordability, child care and support and funding for women, girls, youth and the 2SLGBTQI+ community are not just good policy; they are vital parts of a just and equal society.

We are moving full speed ahead. Budget 2023 included \$160 million for the women's program that is to go to grassroots organizations. We stepped up and provided \$300 million in emergency funding to organizations across the country. This funding has reached more than 1,400 frontline organizations and helped more than two million people experiencing violence get the support they need. It helped them find a safe place to stay and it helped them get out of unsafe situations.

The work continues. Emergency funding was necessary to address real challenges, but without ever losing sight of finding longer-term solutions, which is why our work with provinces and territories is so vital. We have worked to support crisis hotlines across the country. We've signed agreements with nine provinces and territories for a total of \$23.2 million.

I want to highlight this because it's really important. Why? Because 24-7, 365 days a year, if women and children are fleeing violence, someone will answer the phone at any time of the day, any time of the year, and they'll hear their own language on the other side. These crisis hotlines will save lives.

The 10-year national action plan to end gender-based violence is a key partnership between our government, provinces and territories. It is specifically designed to stabilize the gender-based violence sector. We provided half a billion dollars for the first five years to support provinces and territories in implementing it. We're negotiating right now. We're at the table right now.

These plans must show what's needed and where to end GBV, because each province and territory is unique.

[Translation]

They must be aligned with our agreed upon principles, and once they are signed off, the funds will flow quickly.

[English]

Talks are going well. This summer, when I meet with my provincial and territorial counterparts, we're looking forward to a done deal.

• (1555)

[Translation]

Thank you.

I'm happy to answer questions from members of the committee.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

We'll be going around for our first round. Our first round is six minutes each, and we'll be starting online with Dominique Vien.

Dominique, you have the floor for six minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Good afternoon, Minister.

Welcome to all of you. I'm not sure whether we have any men in the room, but if we do, welcome to them as well.

Thank you for your opening remarks, Minister. I'd like to talk about something very specific. Last year, if I'm not mistaken, \$25 million of the 2022-23 health care budget was earmarked for you to develop a pilot project, a national menstrual equity fund. The pilot started a year ago, and my understanding is that it will continue next year. We are talking about a significant amount of money, \$25 million.

Can you give us an overview of the pilot—where it's been rolled out, how much has been spent and who has benefited?

Have you transferred funding to various organizations?

Could you give us an idea of what you've done so far with the \$25 million, Minister?

Hon. Marci Ien: Thank you for your question.

[English]

It's a really good question.

You're talking about the menstrual equity fund. Yes, \$25 million was ascribed to it; it is a pilot project. Our parliamentary secretary, Jenna Suds, and her team—our teams—have done tremendous work on this. As a federal government, we are leading in this area.

The Minister of Labour—and this is a cohesive effort—has rolled out plans to make sure that menstrual products are available in all federally regulated areas, businesses and organizations. We have to lead by example. This fund puts those most vulnerable at the centre of it. I cannot tell you how many places I've gone to across this country where women—young women in particular—can't afford menstrual products. There's a stigma around that. This is why this fund is so very important. There will be a national organization that will roll this out for us. We are in the midst, right now, of accepting—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you, Minister.

The program you're talking about is for public servants. The measure that appears in chapter 6 of budget 2022 seeks to “make menstrual products available to Canadians in need”. Presumably, that refers to women and girls who can't afford to buy menstrual products.

Where are you in rolling out that program, for the public, not just for public servants?

Hon. Marci Ien: Thank you for your question.

[*English*]

I am going to go to my deputy minister because we're getting into the process here, Dominique, and I want to roll this out for you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Frances McRae (Deputy Minister, Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Department for Women and Gender Equality): Thank you for your question.

As the minister and you yourself said, it's a national pilot that we were asked to set up. Budget 2022 was released in April. As the minister and Ms. Sudds, the parliamentary secretary, pointed out, we've done a lot of research to identify best practices around the world.

The pilot is meant to help the most vulnerable segments of the population, which is especially important. We are at the point now of working with a national organization. We have a call for proposals out and should be able to make a more formal announcement soon.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you, Deputy Minister.

Ms. Frances McRae: We will be discussing the next phase of the rollout in the next few weeks.

● (1600)

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Madam Chair, I'd like to ask the minister's team to provide the committee with detailed information on the research the deputy minister talked about regarding best practices around the world.

Can you tell us a bit more about the national organization that will be selected to deliver the pilot?

You have been working on this for a year. How much money have you spent so far, and which organization will be in charge of delivering it?

Ms. Frances McRae: In our consultations, we noted that a number of national organizations were interested in working with us on the pilot.

You're right, \$25 million is a significant amount of money, but we are talking about a national pilot. We need to be able to draw lessons from the pilot, so we are working with an organization that will help us explore that further.

An organization hasn't been selected yet. We are in talks with the organizations that are interested in participating.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's excellent. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy.

I'm now going to pass the floor over. We have both Jenna Sudds and Sonia Sidhu for the next round.

Jenna, I'm passing the floor to you. You have six minutes.

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Minister, last week in the House we were discussing Bill C-311, and a week ago today, we also witnessed the March for Life here on Parliament Hill.

You are on record multiple times as saying how important it is for women to have the right to choose and how important access to vital health care decisions is for women and how we can't go back in time. We know collectively that we need to speak up when we see these rights threatened. At the same time, there was, of course, talk about how Bill C-311 does not explicitly mention abortion.

Can I ask you to explain, from your perspective, how the two are linked, and can you share why this issue sparks so much resolve in you?

Hon. Marci Ien: Thank you so much for the question, Jenna.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Listen, we have a great committee here. I really think we do. We've been really clear about where we sit. I do not think it is fair to be opening up a waste of time when none of us wants to talk about abortion. We want to hear about the programs the minister has to offer. I think this is not the political climate we've built in this committee. I think we're very collaborative, but this question feels very underhanded.

The Chair: Perhaps, Ms. Ien, we can stick to.... I understand the question on Bill C-311, but I do not believe it is in the scope of this committee. It will not be coming to this committee. It is a justice issue, so I would ask that we continue.

I know there was spending announced last week. Perhaps that's something we can talk about. I would question trying to define a bill under this committee and I would say that it seems out of scope with regard to funding. There is no funding. You will not find it in the main estimates.

I will carry on. Thank you.

Ms. Jenna Sudds: With respect to my colleagues, no disrespect was intended to anyone. I'm simply raising an issue that I think is important to everyone. I know it is important to the minister and the work that we do day in, day out. I'm happy to reposition that question as suggested, Chair. Thank you for that.

We know as well that just last week, Minister, you were making an announcement in B.C. with respect to women's reproductive rights and health funding. Perhaps you'd like to comment on your resolve around that.

Hon. Marci Ien: Thank you so much for the question.

We indeed made these funding announcements. What I'd like to briefly talk about here are the people behind the numbers that we see. One announcement is for a crisis line. Another one looks at underfunded communities with regard to sexual health and reproductive rights. The points that were made by those who attended were to put forward the people behind the numbers and the case studies and all of these things.

Something that stuck with me was that mothers have abortions too.

I'm going to get a little bit personal, but it is important, and without getting into this whole debate, I have to say it.

I have an 11-year-old boy, and before I had him, I miscarried. I was thinking about this last week. When that happened, I was given a choice, and that choice was to pass this at home or go to the hospital to get a D and C. I was thinking about it because when we look at this, it's not always about 14-year-old or 15-year-old girls. It's about moms too.

When I look at what's happening in the States and see that there are women who are going into septic shock because they can't go to a hospital before a certain period of time or get the treatment they need, I think we need to talk about these things here, so I put myself up as an example.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1605)

Ms. Jenna Sudds: Thank you so much, Minister.

I will turn it over to Sonia Sidhu.

The Chair: Sonia, you have about a minute and a half.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Jenna.

Thank you, Minister Ien, for your unwavering commitment to supporting women, girls and gender-diverse people in this country.

Minister, on International Women's Day, my municipal colleagues at the City of Brampton unanimously passed a motion to

implement mandatory gender-based analysis-plus training for all senior staff, using our federal tool.

We both had the chance to attend the UN Commission on the Status of Women, where Canada is a world leader on gender equality and GBA+. As Canada is a leading international model, can you please provide an update on the government's effort to promote the use of GBA+?

Hon. Marci Ien: Thanks so much, Sonia.

I know that your riding and my riding in Toronto Centre are a lot alike, in that they are so diverse

That's just it. Your experience and my experience are not the same. When we're dealing with refugees and newcomers, racialized people, indigenous people, Black Canadians and gender-diverse people, those experiences are all different. That's where GBA+ comes in, because it's disaggregated data. It's saying that we are not living in homogeneous societies.

We need to understand who people are and make sure that we have culturally appropriate supports and understand that experiences are different. Not one of us is the same, but we're stronger because we are this way.

You are right. Canada is seen as a leader when it comes to GBA+.

The Chair: Awesome. Thank you so much.

We're now going to move it over to Andréanne Larouche.

Andréanne, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here this afternoon, Minister.

I have a lot of questions, so if you could keep your answers as brief as possible, it would be much appreciated. I'd like to cover an array of issues. Women are facing major challenges right now, and the causes are many.

In your opening statement, you said you had set up crisis hotlines all over the country, signing \$23.2 million worth of agreements with nine provinces and territories.

Which provinces and territories have not signed an agreement, and why?

[*English*]

Hon. Marci Ien: Thank you for the question.

I will be in the Northwest Territories next week to sign with that province. Nunavut is the only other territory, but Nunavut is aligned with Ontario, so that is being worked out.

With New Brunswick, it's just a matter of working some things out as far as location goes. It will be signed soon enough.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Increased federal health transfers are one of the solutions that often come up, especially in Quebec, when it comes to dealing with issues in the provinces. It's something the provinces have called for unanimously. In Quebec, that funding would give our network of community organizations a boost. That includes shelters, which work closely with health and social service authorities. Aren't those transfers a good way to help community organizations and prevent overlap?

• (1610)

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: I'm sorry. Could you repeat that?

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: I'm talking about health transfers to give more support to organizations on the ground. For example, our shelter organizations in Quebec—

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: I'm sorry. I don't have any translation.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Can I start my question over? Can you please stop the clock, Madam Chair?

[English]

The Chair: Give me one moment, please. We're going to pause for a second. I'm trying to see if it's working for French.

Is it all good? Are you able to hear your translation now, Andr anne? Can you hear me?

Yes, you can hear me speaking in English. Excellent.

I stopped the clock. Go back to your question, Andr anne.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Thank you.

Minister, I was simply talking about health transfers to help organizations on the ground. In Quebec, community organizations like women's shelters are funded by the department of health and social services, so I was asking whether it wouldn't be a good idea to consider increasing the transfers to prevent overlap.

Hon. Marci Ien: Thank you for your question.

[English]

I will talk a bit about the national action plan to end gender-based violence.

What that does is bring together provinces and territories, because those provinces and territories, including Quebec, know what they need. Federally, we are working together with all provinces and territories, Quebec included. I have had extensive conversations with Madame Biron to make sure that what Quebec needs, it gets.

That's why provinces are at the table.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: You're talking about Martine Biron, the Quebec Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, are you not?

Hon. Marci Ien: Yes.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: All right.

Your department's funding has decreased significantly, from \$325 million in 2022-23 to \$290 million this year. That's an 11% drop.

Why has your funding decreased? All the studies carried out by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women show how significant the needs are and how important it is to continue investing, not invest less.

Hon. Marci Ien: Would you mind repeating the question? Where is the decrease you're referring to?

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Your department's funding has gone from \$325 million to \$290 million this year. That's a decrease of 11%. All the studies done by the status of women committee show the need for investment, for a sizable budget, and especially, the importance of not cutting the department's funding. Why, then, has your budget gone down?

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: Is it shelters for grassroots organizations that you're talking about, all around?

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Yes. Your budget has decreased by 11%.

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: It's a pleasure to take this question and clear this up.

It was \$300 million in emergency funding that we stepped up and brought to the table during the pandemic. That meant that shelters were able to keep their doors open. It meant they were able to keep their lights on and, most importantly, able to serve the people who needed help most.

We are at a point now—and we learned a lot then—when this isn't about band-aid solutions. We can't keep going from emergency to emergency and say we're going to plug this hole, plug this hole and plug this hole. This is why we have a 10-year action plan to end gender-based violence. It's why provinces and territories are part of that plan.

This is about long-term solutions. It is not about band-aid solutions. It is about looking at what we need, involving the provinces, making sure they're at the table and holding them to account.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: The pandemic isn't really over, with many organizations still in need of a lot of help, and yet, your department's budget has gone down by 11%. The pandemic has made existing problems worse. What we've seen is just the tip of the iceberg, so it's something we have to continue to address.

You say you are a feminist. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy was adopted in 2017 to help close gender gaps around the world. We can see, however, that the federal government isn't able to show how that assistance has contributed to better outcomes for women and girls.

How do you explain that? Have you spoken to your colleagues in foreign affairs? Are you going to make sure that your government puts measures in place to monitor and evaluate feminist international assistance?

[English]

Hon. Marci Ien: Again, I'm not just saying that I'm feminist; I am indeed feminist, and so is this government. I'll just say that off the top.

These are places that we have stepped up where provinces, frankly, should be, and that absence is not going to continue. We have to work together. Provinces and territories have to be engaged, and this is why a national action plan to end gender-based violence—and that word “end” means something—is in place. Those negotiations are happening right now. I look forward to meeting with my colleagues in P.E.I.—

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

We're now going to move over to Leah Gazan. Leah, you have six minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): It's nice to see you, Minister.

My first question pertains to charitable status. In 2021, your government promised to remove charitable status from anti-choice organizations that provide false information about reproductive health. Why has nothing been done to date?

Hon. Marci Ien: If you're talking about Canada summer jobs... Is that what you're talking about?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Crisis pregnancy centres, for example, still receive funding, and they provide false information about reproductive health services.

Hon. Marci Ien: This is something that we'll look into and take back.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you very much.

I know that your government acknowledges the right to reproductive health services, including access to safe abortions. I certainly support upholding that right, but the reality is that a right is only as good as access.

I'll give you examples. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario only provide abortion in urban centres. Depending on the province, you can access an abortion depending on the weeks of

gestation. In New Brunswick, the province illegally refuses to pay for abortion services outside of hospital settings.

I'm wondering if there's any sort of will from your government to uphold the Canada Health Act and intervene in places and provinces that fail to ensure fair and equal access to abortion services and other reproductive health care services.

I share this because although there's a lot of talk about the right to reproductive health services, a lot of people can't access those services, including, for example, people in remote northern communities in Manitoba.

Hon. Marci Ien: It's a great question. Thank you so much, Leah.

It really has everything to do with the announcements that we made last week and the organizations that we fund, the crisis lines that I was talking about. In rural communities where, you're right, abortion services aren't always available—places like New Brunswick or rural Manitoba—people phone a number, and they are given transportation, they are given advice, and they are given everything that they need in order to get where they need to go.

We continue to work on this. I know we're not there yet, but we're funding grassroots organizations that can provide the advice, the travel and the money that's necessary. That is what's happening right now, and it's working very, very well.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I certainly don't oppose any advancement of rights, but I think people should be able to access reproductive health services, including safe abortions, where they live, and not have to travel across the country during a very traumatic time. We know that for many people, it's a very traumatic experience.

The federal housing advocate and the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network called the current housing crisis a human rights crisis fuelled by government failure, saying that it is disproportionately impacting women, gender-diverse and indigenous people. I know that the government made a specific investment of \$150 million during the pandemic. What I've shared often in the House of Commons is that we still have a pandemic, an ongoing crisis of gender-based violence. Maybe the pandemic has shifted, but gender-based violence has, in fact, increased.

I'm wondering if your government is exploring changing its decision about removing the \$150 million from shelter funding. We know this is going to cost lives. I know, certainly in my riding, that some of the worst stories of gender-based violence in the country are coming out. This money that was provided during the pandemic literally kept women and diverse-gender people alive. People are panicking on the ground.

Is there any hope that your government is going to reverse that decision?

Hon. Marci Ien: Leah, you and I have done some great work together. I think about Velma's House in Winnipeg Centre. When I first visited Velma's House, there were women sleeping under the porch. There were meals being churned out—I don't know how—on a rickety stove. I will never forget a woman named Swan, who said to me that this house can't go and that they need this place; it keeps them safe.

It was our government that stepped up and provided the funding needed for Velma's House to move into another facility.

Here's what I'm saying about that with regard to shelters and shelter space. When I saw that, I asked for half a billion dollars to support our national action plan to end gender-based violence and I got it. I saw that situation and I said that it can't continue. I said that we need it long term, that we need to put teeth behind our national action plan, and I got it.

• (1620)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Minister, I'm grateful for that and I know our community is, but we just had a woman, Linda Mary Beardy, who crawled into a garbage dumpster. I mention her out of respect for her family and the community because she didn't have a safe place to go.

I know that Velma's House was monumental. I'm not saying that.... It was monumental, but housing has been so underfunded. I do agree with what they're saying, particularly the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network, which is that this is a critical area. This is going to result in the loss of life.

Again, I'm urging you and your government to reverse that decision, because I know it will cost lives.

The Chair: You got your six minutes. You're good.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I thought I had 30 minutes.

The Chair: I know; next time. I'll make sure you get another two and a half. That's coming very shortly.

I'm now going to continue to our second round. We're going to start with Michelle Ferreri for five minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thanks, Madam Chair. Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to start with asking about WAGE. In 2015, WAGE had a head count of 92. As of 2022, this number has increased by 324%, to 390. However, the public service has grown by only 31%, which is smaller in comparison.

Why has WAGE seen its workforce increase this significantly, and what's its impact?

Ms. Frances McRae: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Women and Gender Equality, as you may know, became a full department in December 2018 through legislation. We also grew that number that you're talking about essentially in the pandemic, when we received a significant influx of funds and other significant investments from the government for things like crisis lines and pandemic shelter support.

All those investments require people to advance them. The national action plan on gender-based violence and the 2SLGBTQI+ action plan, for example, were significant lifts for the organization. That explains the numbers going up the way that you see them.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thanks.

I'm wondering if it's possible to table to the committee the breakdown of what that looks like. Could we get that information?

Ms. Frances McRae: What could I clarify? Is it the breakdown of...?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: You gave generalizations. I'm wondering if we could see where the money is going for that employee increase. It's such a significant one compared to the public service. I'm looking for where it is and what it's doing. It's a breakdown of what you said, basically.

Budget 2023 proposes 3% spending cuts across the board for government departments. Minister, where do you think your 3% cut is going to be?

Ms. Frances McRae: Thank you for the question, Madam Chair.

As you will know, the expenditure review is being managed through the Treasury Board Secretariat. At this time, that organization is the one that will determine how all of us will participate in the expenditure exercise. The question is best directed there.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Minister, this is your file. This is tough. You have to decide who gets money and who doesn't. Everybody wants money.

Is there anything you can see that would be easier to remove when you're going to be mandated to cut?

Hon. Marci Ien: I can't at this time. It's hard, Michelle, to deal with hypotheticals.

We didn't see a pandemic coming. We don't know what's around the corner. It's hard to answer that. I'm here to answer all of your questions, but I wouldn't want to say yes or no to something because, literally, we don't know what's coming. We're not sure.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's fair.

The mandate information for the Department of Women and Gender Equality says, "The mandate of Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) is to advance equality with respect to sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression through the inclusion of people of all genders, including women, in Canada's economic, social, and political life."

We have heard so much testimony about youth mental health, human trafficking and helping educate men, especially when we look at intimate partner violence. Under your mandate, when you say, “all genders”, is there a specific amount of funding set aside to help educate our young men?

• (1625)

Hon. Marci Ien: Thank you so much for this question.

When I first joined, I'll say, this ministry—because we're very much a team—one of the first questions I asked about was men and boys. I have had the honour of going to organizations like White Ribbon and others where that is the focus. In many indigenous communities—I'm thinking of Nunavut in particular—that is the focus. It really is a primary focus. It is part of our national action plan to end gender-based violence, because it's about prevention. This isn't about being reactive; it's being proactive. If we're going to do that, we have to fully engage men and boys.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I don't think I can get out much in 20 seconds. Thanks.

The Chair: Thanks very much. I'm now going to pass the floor over to Anita and then Sonia Sidhu.

Anita, you have five minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I do have a question, Minister, but before that, I want to address what just happened here in the last round of questioning.

My colleague opposite, Ms. Ferreri, interrupted my colleague Ms. Sudds, using the excuse of collegiality to silence her from asking a question that clearly mattered significantly to her and to a lot of women. I don't think it's very collegial to use a point of order to interrupt one of us on this committee on something we really, truly believe in. I want to get that on the record.

I also think defending a woman's right to choose is not politicizing.

Minister, I want to say to you that by telling your story in the courageous way you did today, you helped a lot of women. I want to thank you for doing that.

I did have a question that's unrelated, but I feel we have to make sure that when we are being collegial, it also means letting us talk about the things that matter to us and to very many women.

My question is about youth. I want to draw your attention back to a really happy day when you came to my riding of Ottawa West—Nepean and met with the Boys and Girls Club. We know that the young people we met there are diverse, as are many young people across the country. They are passionate, they care deeply about their communities, they want to make the world better and they are looking for the kinds of skills that are going to get them better jobs, good-quality jobs, so I want to ask you about the Canada summer jobs program.

I understand that around the entire country right now, especially in my riding, employers are hiring young people. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit more about the importance of the Canada summer jobs program.

Hon. Marci Ien: Thanks so much for the question, Anita.

The Canada summer jobs program is part of a suite of programs. It's the youth employment and skills strategy. There are several parts to it.

CSJ means that 70,000 jobs will go out across this country this year. Many of them will be to high school students or even to those who are just getting their footing back. They will be their first-time jobs—memorable jobs. They'll create experiences.

Also, part of that suite is work-integrated learning. The work-integrated learning initiative offers internships. We know that internships are very important, especially these days. When employers want to hire people, they will either put forward everything in their power to train that person, if they have those tools, or they will look for people who have those tools already. When you have those tools already, then you're in great shape.

You mentioned diversity, Anita, and that's really important. When it comes to these programs, we really do shine a light on those who are disabled, Black, indigenous, racialized and 2SLGBTQI youth, and it's working. We see the numbers, and it's working.

There's the student work placement program as well. There's the Canada service corps, which encourages volunteerism from our young people.

I will just mention that the last time I was here, we talked about the age of young people. We talked about 15 to 29 being the definition for youth. I said that's way too late. On my streets in Toronto Centre and on many streets across this country, our kids are gone or in places we don't want them to be by the age of 15. We are now piloting, in our Canada service corps, kids who are 12 years of age. We're doing that because of what happened here. I'm thankful for that.

I often say we should forget about the leaders of tomorrow; it's about today. These kids are fearless. I was with a group of 2SLGBTQI youth in my riding yesterday. It was the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. It was the first annual summit. I heard young people say that they felt like they were in a safe space for the first time. Teachers who brought their kids to that summit said that this wouldn't have happened a year ago, two years ago, three years ago. There were young people who were taking leadership roles within their schools who were standing up. They are not faint of heart, and that's for sure.

• (1630)

The Chair: Thanks so much.

I'm now going to pass it over to Andréanne Larouche. You have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, you talked about the Canada summer jobs program, so I have to take this opportunity to let you know that constituents in my area are not happy about the budget cuts to the program. You're going to tell me that the budget is simply back to prepandemic levels. Unfortunately, as I said earlier, the pandemic may be over, but the problems that young people, businesses and organizations are facing remain. We take issue with this year's budget cuts, which mean that far too many people won't have the chance to benefit from this great program.

Now, your government's LGBTQ+ action plan paved the way for promoting the rights and equality of members of that community. Has any funding been earmarked to support senior members of the community? As you rightly pointed out, yesterday was an important day, the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. To mark the occasion, I met with the people who run Fondation Émergence, and they underscored the importance of raising awareness about elder abuse against members of the community. They talked about their disappointment over the lack of funding for an education campaign.

What is your department going to do to support senior members of the LGBTQ+ community?

[*English*]

Hon. Marci Ien: There are a couple of questions there. First it was CSJ and then we got to seniors, so maybe I will deal with the CSJ portion first.

I talked about recovery and I talked about the postpandemic situation. I like numbers and I like disaggregated data, so I want to look at some of those numbers.

In 2019, Canada summer jobs had 70,000 jobs. During the pandemic, those jobs were increased because student unemployment, or I should say youth unemployment, was at a high of 30% in this country. As it stands right now, youth unemployment is at 9.8%, so as we are on this road to recovery, we are now at 70,000 jobs.

While we just looked at 2019 prepandemic and those numbers, in the numbers for 2023, there's an additional, I believe, \$15 million on top of what we had in 2019. Each riding, including yours, Andréanne, is actually getting more now than it did in 2019.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: It's 30% less, Minister.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Excuse me. I am now going to pass it on to Leah Gazan. Leah, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, in 2019 your government launched a new national strategy to combat human trafficking, a whole-of-government approach that brings together federal efforts. This was supported at

the time with \$57.22 million over five years and \$10.28 million ongoing.

My question is this: How much has been spent to date? As I've brought up many times in the House, in 2020 the government put forward \$724.1 million to deal with the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. Five per cent has been spent. I know that certainly in my community of Winnipeg Centre, I'm seeing people sitting on money while women are turning up deceased, sometimes on a weekly basis.

How much of this money has been spent to date?

● (1635)

Hon. Marci Ien: Thanks so much. Again it's the numbers, and thank you for pointing to them, Leah.

Within WAGE, there are 63 organizations to implement projects designed to prevent and address human trafficking and to support at-risk populations, victims and survivors. There are 63 of them, okay? There are 42 projects, and there is \$14 million as part of the human trafficking initiative. Nearly half of them—so 45% of these programs—serve indigenous people.

Now let's turn to where the money is going.

The Women's Centre for Social Justice is receiving up to \$550,000. I'm rounding it off—

Ms. Leah Gazan: Can you just submit a list to the committee, because I have—

Hon. Marci Ien: Absolutely. I have disaggregated data, so I have a complete list of what we're doing and where the money is going.

Ms. Leah Gazan: There was \$14 million... There is \$57.22 million. I think that's what my concern is. It's kind of like Velma's House—when it happens, it's wonderful, but when I'm talking about the \$724.1 million, it's just not happening fast enough. I just don't understand why, when we see gender-based violence increase to crisis levels, it's not getting out the door more quickly.

I'd like a list of projects. Also, if you could submit what percentage has been spent to date, that would be very helpful.

I just have a quick question on....

I don't have any time.

The Chair: No, we're a little bit over.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm sorry.

The Chair: We are going to do the last round.

We have two questions. We have Anna, and then we have Jenna and Anita. It's going to be four minutes each for the last round.

I'm going to pass it to Anna Roberts for four minutes.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here to help us understand what's going on.

I have two parts to my questioning today. I want to go back to the summer jobs program, because my budget this year, compared to last year, was cut in half. I have a lot of constituents who have been declined for the summer jobs program. A lot of these people who have been declined provide jobs for youth that nurture them, get them off the streets and help them to stay away from trouble, human trafficking and the rest of the craziness that goes on in this world.

A couple of my constituents are concerned because they have been informed that the applications are approved by MPs. Can you set the record straight for us that this is not the case?

Hon. Marci Ien: MP recommendations have everything to do with CSJ. You get a list as an MP. I do this in Toronto Centre. I go through that list and take ownership of the organizations on that list—yes; yes; no; yes. That's one of the things I like most about the program, because MPs know their ridings best.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Okay, so here's my question: If their score is way down there, is it my decision to disagree with Service Canada and say that I want them bumped up?

Ms. Frances McRae: Thank you for the question.

In terms of how the scoring works, when Service Canada has information sessions with MPs, they do go through the process of explaining what happens with the applications.

The applications have to be assessed. They have to be looked at by the Service Canada officials. Clearly, it's a program that's massively oversubscribed, and it always has been. That's why the MP input on which ones will make the most difference in the community is so critical. There would be many more applications eligible than could possibly be funded. That happened before the pandemic and it's going to continue to happen.

That's really how the two pieces weigh in.

• (1640)

Mrs. Anna Roberts: If somebody scored, say, 36, could I recommend that they be bumped up and remove someone else?

The reason I'm asking this question—and please help me understand this as a new MP—is that we were told by the director of our area that we cannot move someone into the program if they've been declined with a low score, but my constituents have been told, “Well, we've contacted other MPs in the GTA, and they've told us that it's the opposite. We can bump someone out and include the ones with the lower score.”

I'm getting mixed messages, and I really need to understand this.

Ms. Frances McRae: Madam Chair, what I'd suggest is that we deal with this specifically, because we're talking about very specific situations and conversations that we wouldn't have been involved in.

Generally speaking, the MP's views are very much considered. If an organization has not met the general bar for being, for example, a safe workplace or a workplace where you would want to have a youth, then those kinds of decisions would have to be looked at carefully.

What I would suggest we could do is take it off-line with you and address it with your own constituency office, if that's okay.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That time is over.

We're now going to pass it over to Sonia Sidhu—

Mrs. Anna Roberts: I wasn't finished.

The Chair: You weren't finished? You only had so much time. I'm so sorry, Anna.

I'm now going to pass it to Sonia Sidhu online.

Sonia, I know that you're sharing your time with Jenna. You have four minutes.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Minister, I know that you are very passionate about helping young girls, but how is our government working to increase economic security and opportunities for women and under-represented groups in the workforce?

Hon. Marci Ien: Thanks so much for the question, Sonia.

I like to think that my riding of Toronto Centre is a good microcosm of the country. I say this because during the pandemic, a lot of the people in my riding—I'm thinking of St. James Town in particular, which is one of the densest neighbourhoods in this country and happens to be where I come from as well—worked on the front lines of this pandemic. They did not stop. Many of them had kids at home. It was really very hard.

To have \$10-a-day child care, to have dental and rental benefits for a family, for a single mom to be able to take her child to the dentist—these are big things where I come from. To have a grocery benefit is a big thing where I come from. There are those who might say, “What's a couple of hundred bucks? What's 300 bucks? What's 400 bucks?” Where I come from, the women in my community in particular can make \$50 go a long way.

When it comes to women joining the workforce, when it comes to women being able to make decisions based not just on their family's needs but also on their own needs to achieve their goals, child care is huge. Again, rental and dental benefits are huge.

There are stats that show a huge percentage—I believe it's an 85% increase—of women who have returned to the workforce since child care was introduced. That is not insignificant. That is huge, because we know who the caregivers are predominantly. What this means is that women, those who choose to work outside the home, can do so knowing that their kids are taken care of. That's huge.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you, Minister.

It's over to Jenna.

Ms. Jenna Sudds: Thank you.

Minister, I wanted to probe a little further on MP Gazan's question, because she's asked it a few times in the House and I feel like we never have enough time to answer it.

You mentioned around \$150 million for funding for women's shelters. I don't want to put words in anyone's mouth, but as you've acknowledged the national action plan, the timing of that is coinciding with the expiration of that funding.

I want to give you the floor to give you a bit more time for that answer.

• (1645)

Hon. Marci Ien: I appreciate that, because Leah wanted 30 minutes—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Marci Ien: —so we're going to give you some more time, Leah.

I do want to set this straight, because this really comes from a place of not just practicality but also empathy.

I've visited transitional houses and shelter organizations in each province and territory in this country. I see the need. I understand the need. That \$300 million was an emergency measure, and you are right that it went a long way and it saved lives. That was short term, and short term—because we need to look at long term—

The Chair: Minister, thank you very much. I know there's much more to this discussion, but our time is actually up for the hour.

On behalf of all of the members of this committee, I would like to thank you, Minister. I'd like to thank all of you for coming. Thank you, Crystal, for being online as well to support the minister on her visit here.

I want to turn it back to the committee and go on to the votes on the main estimates 2023-24.

Does the committee wish to dispose of the main estimates 2023-24?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

DEPARTMENT FOR WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY:

Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$59,176,748

Vote 5—Grants and contributions.....\$225,416,914

(Votes 1 and 5 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I report the votes on the main estimates 2023-24, less the amount voted in interim supply, to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We'll suspend now so that we can get the witnesses back on here for our second panel. We're going to do it as quickly as possible, so we're going to suspend hopefully for less than two minutes.

• (1645) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1650)

The Chair: I would like to welcome both of our witnesses for today's study. They are returning as witnesses on the human trafficking study.

I'm going to remind everybody that pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 1, 2022, the committee will resume its study of human trafficking of women and girls.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses.

Kelly and Cathy, I believe you've been shown how to select English or French interpretation.

I'm also going to remind everybody not to put their earpieces close to the microphone. It's giving feedback to the translators.

Before I welcome our witnesses, I would like to provide this trigger warning. This is a difficult study, of course, and we'll be discussing experiences related to abuse. If there is anything triggering to viewers, members or staff with similar experiences, or if you feel distressed, please advise the clerk and we can see how we can assist you.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses for today.

As an individual, we have Cathy Peters, an educator. From Courage for Freedom, we have Kelly Tallon Franklin, chief executive director, and from DisAbled Women's Network of Canada, we have Bonnie Brayton, chief executive officer.

You will each be provided with five minutes for your opening statement.

Cathy, we'll begin with you. I pass the floor to you for five minutes.

Ms. Cathy Peters (Educator, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am a former inner city high school teacher and private citizen raising awareness about human sex trafficking—sexual exploitation for the purpose of prostitution—in order to stop it.

Prostitution would not exist without trafficking. Prostitution would not exist without buyers. Prostitution everywhere in the world is unequal, unhealthy, unsafe and unfair to women. In regard to any federal policy or law regarding women and girls, the question to ask is, does this practice or industry make women more equal and advance the equality of women and girls, or does it set the equality of women and girls backwards?

Since 2014, when the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act became federal law, I've been doing presentations to politicians, police and the public. I just presented at the Canadian Sexual Exploitation Summit.

The most notorious cases in Canada for human sex trafficking and sexual exploitation are from British Columbia: Amanda Todd, victim; Reza Moazami, trafficker, 23 years in jail; and Robert Pickton, sex buyer and serial killer.

B.C. is an example of PCEPA not being enforced, and the result is that sex buyers and sex traffickers act with impunity. British Columbia has become a magnet for criminals and organized crime. B.C. urban centres have become sex tourism destinations. Sex traffickers are targeting very young girls from 10 to 12 years of age.

Dr. Jacqui Linder, a traumatologist from Alberta, states, "Human trafficking is one of the forms of trauma that when you really understand what people are going through and what is being done to them, it is true evil."

Survivors tell me that it is easy to get into the sex industry and very hard to get out.

Former MP Joy Smith states that education is our greatest weapon. Her foundation operates the National Human Trafficking Education Centre.

In my brief, I described the current trends contributing to human sex trafficking, and I gave 10 recommendations to stop human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Please read my brief to the federal justice committee of February 2022.

PCEPA focuses on the source of harm: the buyers of sex and the profiteers. The clear statement from Parliament was that girls and women are not for sale. They are full human beings with dignity and human rights.

Repealing this law would be a disaster. With the longest border in the world, Canada would become America's brothel. Indigenous women and girls would be the first casualties.

The reason we have a growing problem with sexual exploitation today is that PCEPA was never consistently enforced across Canada. Police were not trained to enforce it, attorneys general and justice systems had no training about it, and there was no robust prevention education rollout campaign to explain it, so Canadians do not know about it.

The idea that sex work is work is completely contradicted by the preamble in PCEPA, the testimonies you have heard and my 40 years in prevention education.

Men and boys are the key to end sexual exploitation and trafficking, because they are the perpetrators and buyers of sex. They need

to be taught that girls have value and worth and that every woman and girl has the right to be free of violence.

Please check out my website at beamazingcampaign.org. It is a one-stop shop on the issue. My book is finished, hot off the presses: *Child Sex Trafficking in Canada - and how to stop it*. It has the resources and research to stop this in Canada. I have a book for each party, including the Bloc. MP Andréanne, I want to make sure that you get a copy as well.

Thank you very much.

• (1655)

The Chair: I'm now going to pass the floor over to Kelly Tallon Franklin.

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin (Chief Executive Director, Courage for Freedom): As a survivor of human trafficking, I ask for your indulgence with accommodation if my brain stops to work and I stall.

I want to first just say thank you, Madam Chair and members, for your hard and ongoing work.

I'm going to outline my collective points at the beginning so that if I'm not able to speak to them, you can reintroduce them to me in the form of questions so that I may respond.

My collective points are that prevention and law enforcement are separate issues.

National strategies require a national action plan or adoption of an existing national referral mechanism as a right to safety and providing access.

Intersectional issues include biases, discrimination, lack of agency, harms and needs definitions of terms and standards, including ageism in that collective.

Another is legal reforms with witnesses, bail policy, sentencing, policing gaps and inconsistencies and the need for coerced crime understanding and record impunities.

Law enforcement focuses need to be extended to corrections, probation and parole as both support and prevention and can provide reformation to this issue.

Another is cross-border allowances for travel without harassment and stigma for survivors like me.

Another is tri-governmental delivery in safety and child protection responsibilities as a matter of federal oversight and policy expectations in all activities.

There are the matters of core issues, such as risk mitigation, housing, a living wage, mental health, addiction, child services, labour, immigration, migration, refugee supports, access to basic needs, food security, education, jobs and skills. As survivors, this is what we call prevention.

Reporting soft and complex data, grey data and anecdotal data that can be verified and deemed statistical, both from survivors and under-reporting provinces, will support both the reporting and the non-reporting. It's the number one under-reported crime in Canada.

There are research biases and duplication, and instead we should aim for trial projects that are pan-Canadian that will be deliverable in capacity and shareable like a template. We need to learn to test drive and then have the funding ready and available to roll out. We can't call in to crisis centres when we don't have somewhere to support somebody who's in a crisis.

Issues of ownership and solution planning in agencies, industries and stakeholders must include mental health and addiction awareness, including our understanding of sexual impulsive behaviours as part of the DSM description of perpetrators.

Another is community responsibility to work under and with strategies for survivors of human trafficking and sexual exploitation to form a future association. It needs to include the government, first nations, Métis and public engagement all interfaced at the table.

With over 500 personal engagements to support survivors, I can say that some common threads shared in my case notes are statistical and anecdotal. I use these to share those points above. This committee can confirm these surveyed lines. We cannot ignore or conflate the issue that there are victims of this crime. We, Courage for Freedom, have travelled across provinces and territories in Canada, the U.S.A, Costa Rica and India and other global destinations that I cannot share to support women and girls who are asking for support, not for rescuing but in exiting the industry with opportunities regardless of whether or not they're available to become witnesses. Pursuant to your standing order, I am speaking directly to preventing trafficking and improving law enforcement capabilities. I am not conflating it with other issues today.

Time on our streets, in courts, jails, probation homes, system supports, food banks, subsidized everywhere and everything in addiction, incarceration areas, child sexual abuse areas, domestic violence, sexual assault, in court and in homes—that was my life, which I now share with the survivors I support.

Yet I came from a demographic with a father whose basketball friend was Ken Dryden. My godfather was the Honourable Gilbert Parent and my grandfather was Wilbert Tallon, the chief of detectives in Welland, so please do not offer that there's only one specific demographic that we need to address in this committee. I think that you are well aware of that.

Recently we shared public statements with allies, 180 different organizations that are aligned with what we are looking at putting

forward and asking our government to take action on. We have addressed many of the things that have been brought forward in the meetings and presentations. We have been watching intently and reviewing every witness and every brief, because survivors need to be able to vet the information with and for you.

• (1700)

You've heard and read about the breadth of the issues. That's one of the reasons that we often end up siloed and infighting about actions, resources and approaches. We're overwhelmed in our work. The core causal issues are broad and more comprehensive than any resources we have ever had.

• (1705)

The Chair: Kelly—

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: It mirrors the same problems I suffered—and Kelly Mombourquette and Amber Carrie Potts—at the hand of North Preston's Finest in south Regent Park.

The Chair: Kelly, thank you so much. I know you have so much to offer this committee.

We do have to get to Bonnie, who is going to be our next witness, so that we can get these questions in too. I'm going to pass it over to Bonnie for the next five minutes. If there's additional information we need to get the committee, we can do that as well. I have your talking points here.

Bonnie, you have five minutes.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton (Chief Executive Officer, DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair. It's nice to see everybody. I'm sorry I couldn't join you in person today.

Girls, women and gender-diverse people with disabilities are vulnerable targets of human trafficking.

I'll remind the committee that we submitted a brief that I hope has been circulated by now. If not, I'm sure it will be soon. Please make sure you do take the time to review that and the recommendations. Of course, we can speak to them today.

Disability is the centre of the cycle of violence, trauma and revictimization that many trafficking survivors experience. Women and girls with disabilities are more likely to experience childhood sexual violence. Childhood sexual violence is linked to revictimization through the course of life and has negative impacts, including mental health conditions, addictions, social exclusion and poverty. In turn, these factors have been identified by Public Safety Canada as risk factors for human trafficking.

One thing I decided I would talk about today, instead of what I originally had in my speaking notes, is an important case that DAWN was consulted on by an Ontario Crown attorney last year. The reason we were consulted by the Crown attorney was that they had five people for whom they needed to prepare sentencing. They asked us to prepare something that's called a "community impact statement", which is very similar to a victim impact statement but focuses on an entire community that is likely to be victim to a specific type of crime.

I thought I would just share the facts. In this instance, a father began sexually assaulting his daughter at the age of four. As she grew, he began trafficking her to other men. By the time she was an adolescent, her father and four men were trafficking her, and trafficking her to other men. By the time this stopped, this woman was 30 and had been sexually assaulted, in all likelihood, thousands of times. This is the form of trafficking that I think is the most egregious, and it is something that I think is very important for the committee to consider.

Notwithstanding that, of course there are all kinds of other forms of trafficking that take place, including some you've heard about from other witnesses, including those here today. Of course, sexual trafficking is a huge and important problem. It is a fact that 24% of all women in Canada live with a disability, and if we add the lens of race in terms of indigenous and Black women, we're above 30%, so we know that a huge number of women who live with disabilities are at other intersections.

In terms of what we put in the community impact statement, I'll quickly share a few things that I think are important.

The victimization of women, girls and gender-diverse people with disabilities is indicative of the systemic factors. The sexual violence we experience occurs repetitively and frequently precisely because of the fact that a woman is disabled.

As stated in the community impact statement, "The sexual violence we experience involves multiple perpetrators, often individuals who are in positions of trust; starts when we are young children and is compounded into adulthood; is a spectrum of verbal and physical abuse to severe sexual attacks; is coercive and exploitative and this is viewed as socially permissible because of our disabilities; is often dismissed simply because we, the victims, live with disability and our inherent dignity is discounted; and is rarely subject to serious denunciatory findings because we are treated as less credible."

A later section reads, "Disability scholars point out that women with mental disabilities are often taken advantage of when they are most vulnerable—by people in positions of trust and authority and in places such as shelters or institutions. Often, sexual favours are traded for money, cigarettes, or some other form of reward. Much of this abuse is often chronic and often goes unreported (one in 30, according to one study). This is often due to their reliance on others, including those that may be exploiting them.

A later paragraph reads, "Women with intellectual disabilities and cognitive disabilities, including women with brain injuries—frequently acquired as a result of violence—experience staggering rates of sexual assault and are seen as easy targets. As recognized in

the Supreme Court case *R. v. D.A.I.*, perpetrators believe that disabled women are powerless to complain or will not be believed even if they do complain. Because of their precarious status and limited reach within their social networks, women and girls with disabilities are easily marginalized and their concerns delegitimized simply because of their disability and ingrained images of disability as lacking capacity. Women and girls with disabilities are at a high risk of violence due to social stereotypes that often serve to reduce their agency by infantilizing, dehumanizing and isolating them."

Further, "It is no surprise then that since women with disabilities rely on caregivers to have their basic needs met, they are particularly susceptible to being trafficked by those caregivers. Girls with disabilities are seen as ready and accessible prey, easily targeted, exploited and manipulated by predators."

● (1710)

Before I—

The Chair: Bonnie, thank you so much. Your five minutes are up. I got you right at the end of that one sentence.

What we're going to do now is switch to our round of questioning. We'll be starting off with six minutes. I'm going to pass it over to Anna Roberts for the first six minutes.

Anna, you have the floor.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses. I'm very intrigued and I have a lot of questions.

I'm going to start by asking one question to all three. I'll start with Cathy.

Do you believe the laws in place are steep enough to ensure that these perpetrators are kept behind bars for a long time so that they learn and understand what they've done to society, yes or no?

A voice: That's a good question.

Ms. Cathy Peters: Yes. They're just not enforced.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: They're not enforced. Okay.

Kelly, what do you think?

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: I don't believe they're steep enough, given that the majority of them are pleaded out before they even get to court.

Also, in regard to a witness's statement, if anything is pleaded out, that witness has to go back to realign their statement and isn't allowed to talk about anything that's related to human trafficking, which is why our conviction rate is so low.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Can I also ask the same question to Bonnie about our laws?

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Yes. I'll say again... You heard me speaking about the community impact statement we created specifically for the judicial system. That is because, whether or not the laws are in place, over and over again DAWN Canada has found itself at the Supreme Court speaking to judges because, in instances of women and girls with disabilities, we find they are not believed as witnesses. In many cases, the charges are not brought forward.

What I would say is this: Before we even talk about the current laws, we have to reform the judicial system so that all people who come forward with complaints are believed.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: I'm asking this question because I recently found out that one of the missionaries from my community, I'm saddened to say, has been sentenced to 30 years in jail in the U.S. for child pornography and extortion of underage girls. The investigation went from June 2014 until June 2016. The individual from the Ahmadiyya mosque was arrested for using young girls or teenage girls from the ages of 12 to 17.

Here is what appeared in the Toronto Sun: "Of course, facing decades in an American prison, Luqman Rana will no doubt ask for a transfer back to Canada where his tough sentence would undoubtedly turn to dust. After all, if it was a Canadian deal, he'd already be sprung on time served."

That's the reason I'm bringing this to everybody's attention. Our laws do not fit the crime of these perpetrators. That's my vent for the evening.

I'm sorry. I get very passionate because I'm a mother. I have a daughter myself, and a son. It would throw me into a rage.

There is another question I want to ask.

We've heard from other witnesses that sex work is a job, a choice. I don't believe it is. Is it not a form of conditioning? In order to help these victims, do we not have to get mental health help for them? We need to sit with them and "uncondition" what they've been conditioned to believe—that they're not worthy of anything else but selling their bodies.

Would you agree with that statement?

• (1715)

Ms. Cathy Peters: I'm going to jump in and say yes, absolutely.

I brought a German brothel menu. If anybody thinks sex work is work.... I'm happy to read it out loud. I give this to every MP, and most of them can't read through it. If you think sex work is work, I have a German brothel menu right here.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: I guess what I'm looking at is that if we took the time to help these victims through their abuse and help them understand they've been conditioned to believe they're not worthy, I think we could put them back into society.

One reason I bring this up, Kelly, is because I have met with Timea on many different occasions. I have to tell you that I am so proud of you and her for being able to understand that you're more than worthy of this life. I want to applaud you for that because, as Cathy said, I do not believe women need to degrade themselves by selling their bodies to earn money. We have opportunities in Canada and the freedom to get an education to become whatever we desire, whether it's a construction worker, a doctor, a lawyer or whatever—a politician. We have that opportunity in Canada. We don't need to do it and disgrace ourselves.

I want to applaud all of you for doing that. Kelly, don't give up.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Did you want to hear from me as well?

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Sure. Sorry, Bonnie; go ahead.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: I would like to say there's an important distinction between a sex worker and somebody who is trafficked. I know of people and in fact have friends who are women with disabilities who are sex workers, and there is an important distinction. While it's a nice thing to say, "It's all over here," it isn't that simple.

When it comes to your statement regarding people and choice, the highest unemployment rates in this country are among women with disabilities. The highest rates of poverty are among women with disabilities. There are lots of women in this country who don't have agency and choice, and won't, and—

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Bonnie, I'm sorry to interrupt, but I don't have lot of time.

I've also volunteered with young adults with disabilities for many years. I will tell you that it's our responsibility to make sure we provide them with those services, because they deserve our help.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: But they aren't being provided, Madam.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Well, we have to change that.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Yes, I agree.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I know, Kelly, you have something to add, but I have to pass it over to Marc Serré for six minutes.

Go ahead, Marc.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you to the three witnesses for their participation and the work they do day in and day out.

Ms. Brayton, I spent a decade in northern Ontario as the regional director of what was then known as the Canadian Hearing Society, some 30 years ago. As you know, violence against women with special needs—especially deaf women who use American, Quebec or another sign language to communicate—is extremely common. There isn't much research on the subject.

That's why I'm very interested in your views. We haven't heard a lot about women with special needs. I know you weren't able to finish your opening statement during your five minutes. Do you have any recommendations relating to women with special needs, who are at extremely high risk? Specifically, I'm talking about recommendations for research or supports. You gave the example of the girl who was sexually assaulted by her father from the age of four until she was 30. That's absolutely appalling.

[English]

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Actually, Marc, if you'll let me, I'll read something that was from the last part of what I was going to say, because I think it helps to speak to this.

The Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking names isolation, poverty, homelessness, language barriers—i.e. communication barriers—and being unaware of your rights as risk factors for exploitation. Whether it's labour, trafficking or sex trafficking, this is applicable.

Despite this, and despite the fact they name people with disabilities as one of the most at-risk groups, this organization doesn't report disability data in their reports. The federal government has also not named people with disabilities in the trafficking space as a group that's at risk, despite the fact that, as I said, we tick all the boxes. Again, inside indigenous communities and communities of colour and in all kinds of at-risk communities, if we just look at this realistically, one-quarter at least of those people, if they're women, live with a disability.

That's Statistics Canada. That's not my data; that's the government's data. As I said, not naming us because it somehow is not there is simply footnoting a group that has to be named and, as I said, centred.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Sorry, I was more comfortable answering in English, and my notes are in English.

Thank you very much for your question. Having said all that, I do want to point out that I was the last witness to appear. Perhaps I could have met with the committee on Monday, but the fact remains that discussions on women's issues tend to overlook women with disabilities even though they are almost always the group most at risk. For that reason, I want to thank you for your consideration.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you for your participation and the work you are doing.

I know I don't have much time left.

[English]

I'll turn it over to our other two witnesses.

Thank you so much for being here and for caring.

We heard from witnesses about developing parent kits and the role of the parent. We've heard of young girls, 12 to 16 years old, doing sex work, not really as sexual exploitation, but we've also heard of young boys, 15 to 16, who were their pimps.

I wanted to get some recommendations from both you. What can we do to better educate and provide the necessary information, either to schools or communities, about targeting 12- to 16-year-olds, and also the role of the parents?

Ms. Cathy Peters: I'm going to jump in quickly and I am going to talk fast.

I think we have to teach our young boys not to exploit. They are our only hope. I'd really recommend the new movie called *Women Talking*. It is really worth watching.

To quote indigenous leader April Eve Wiberg, with Stolen Sisters and Brothers Action Movement, “the biggest challenge and the most important focus needs to be to change the heart and mind of the consumer who creates the demand.” She is an indigenous leader from Alberta.

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: I think one of the most important things is to pose the questions to survivors or those who are currently and not just historically working with minors.

I can tell you stories from today on my drive here. I can talk about yesterday and last week. I can talk about what's currently happening to young boys who are under-supported and are being trafficked because they can't afford their transitional medication, so pimps are taking advantage.

This issue is so huge, and yet here we are again, after 2014, saying that it needs to be treated as a unilateral issue, not lumped in with everything else. You need to listen to survivors, because they have the resolve and they will have the trust of current people who are looking for agency either to keep themselves safe within the sex industry or to exit.

With all due respect to everybody else who has done all the research, who has done all the talking, we are still at the same place.

Mr. Marc Serré: Bonnie, do you have anything—

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: I encourage everybody on this panel to research and listen to survivors who are working in real time. Our research is people.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to move it over to Andréanne Larouche for the next six minutes.

Go ahead, Andréanne.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We're coming to the end of our study, and a lot was covered today. Our time with the minister and with you went by much too quickly. I didn't have a chance to ask the minister this, but I'm going to ask you. If you'd like to share your opinion, I'd be glad to hear it.

When it comes to policies introduced by the government, the committee has noted on several occasions that monitoring and evaluation are sorely lacking. Right now, for instance, the committee is studying human trafficking of women and girls. Although the government has adopted numerous policies to end human trafficking, the most recent being the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024, the government departments and agencies responsible lack not only data, but also a coordinated approach. It's hard to believe the policies are missing a monitoring and evaluation component—a crucial part of the policy cycle. The national strategy will fund 42 projects, for a total investment of \$14 million.

How are program results and effectiveness measured? You work on the ground, talking to survivors. You're able to see the impact. Unfortunately, I didn't have time to put the question to the minister, but I'm curious to hear what you think.

• (1725)

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: Yes, we have seen a marked impact.

In the province of Ontario, we have probably the strongest strategy. It was dovetailed right after #ProjectONroute was created at the hands of a 16-year-old survivor. It was created to wake up our community about what was happening and start the conversation about a corridor. It was in our chair's riding. It was not funded. We are still not funded because we don't fit in your box, but we are called on continually to meet every gap.

In six open court files right now, I am supporting not only the girls and the young boys but also their families and the police officers and those who are involved in this because of the vicarious trauma.

I am tired of the money going to the big box stores that are set up to receive the dollars and don't know what the fuck they're doing.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Brayton, I'd very much like to hear the perspective of those with disabilities and members of more vulnerable groups.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: In Quebec, as you know, the population is now referred to as "*femmes en situation de handicap*" in French. The term denotes the fact that the disability is the result of unfortunate circumstances or something that's missing in the woman's community or surroundings. The French expression "*en situation de handicap*" is a better way to describe us, and it's too bad that it doesn't translate.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: You're absolutely right.

It can certainly be dictated by circumstances. Numerous factors play a role. In Quebec, we use the French expression "*en situation de handicap*".

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Yes, it's better.

Coming back to your question, I can tell you there wasn't a single cent spent on women and girls with disabilities. The DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada is not represented in any of those 42 projects; nor was it invited to apply for funding. It's not one of the groups that received funding. We weren't consulted for our expertise on women with disabilities. My answer is that it's not a satisfactory solution or a satisfactory approach because it excludes certain groups. The most vulnerable groups are the ones excluded, yet again.

Thank you for your question.

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: We know that there continue to be gaps everywhere in all of our responses, but I'm going to take us back to the fact that we do have a national strategy, yet we do not have a national action plan. The first pillar in our strategy was to strike a survivor table. Where is our survivor table? Where are our voices to lead this conversation?

We continue to do the work. We are not funded and we are conflated with every other issue in the sex industry. I am not somebody who chose prostitution by way of agency. I am not talking about whether that's an issue before your committee. That is a separate conversation.

We want to prevent sex trafficking. We want to prevent it and supply support beyond being able to allow somebody to get a conviction, but I don't believe that just convictions are the answer either. We have to understand mental health and sexual impulsive behaviour as it is addressed. Mental health is our community responsibility.

There is an intersectionality between government and the public, and we have to work together on this. I believe that if this committee is addressing human trafficking right now, if you look at some of my brief.... There will be a more robust document provided with lots of information and research. We can't cherry-pick the current and most popular thing we need to deal with within this issue. We have to look at it all. We have to table a national action plan that has oversight by cohorts that are established as your survivor table to give you guidance to get through this so that you're not here dealing with this once again when I'm in the ground.

I just want to say that it might take subsectioning and dividing some of the issues as you prioritize them to be able to manage the work, because right now the fight between labour trafficking, cyber-trafficking, sex trafficking, child trafficking.... There's no such thing, because that's called child rape under our laws. The division that happens between us is not going to help. I implore you to work through this. We need a national action plan.

• (1730)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I've allowed it to go a little bit longer, and I know Andréanne had another question. There are a few other things going on here, but I'm going to let Leah have her next six minutes.

We're just going to try to do our best, because I know this is a very passionate group here today with amazing information. It's all good.

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: I apologize for swearing.

The Chair: It's all good, Kelly. We understand.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Please don't apologize for swearing; I swear frequently. I know it's shocking to the committee, but I do swear the F-bomb quite frequently.

The Chair: We'll give the F-bomber her six minutes now.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm glad that you shared that. First of all, I want to acknowledge your space as a space of frustration. I feel that quite often in this place, especially coming from the community that I come from.

That's what I've been really pushing in this committee: When we conflate sex work, sex trafficking and child sexual exploitation, nobody is looked after. It actually places people at risk and it totally washes away story, place and experience. I want to honour you for that, and I think you said it better than I ever have, ever, in this committee.

I want to ask about one of your programs. I looked on your website and I want to ask about the fact that you use horses to heal trauma.

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: Yes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Can you talk briefly about it? I want to ask another question, and I have questions for Bonnie as well.

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: We actually started these programs because we had no responses in our chair's community to address this in 2018. We had already worked in the trauma area, seeing over 5,000 children and youth through our programs. The hole in the bucket was getting bigger when it came to human trafficking.

We went on a journey and visited Wounded Warriors on the west coast and got their protocols. We did our research with Dr. Jacqui Linder and.... I have too many cohorts and colleagues to list. They are the whole reason that we are successful with helping a survivor self-direct to find their own agency in order to make decisions about what they want to do—to either exit or keep themselves safe.

We don't empower anybody. We assess people through the horses because they're the number one trauma resolver. It's funny to see a girl who's been in intercity trafficking walk down the driveway to

our barn. She has her nails and hair and she says, "Oh, they stink." Then we watch the horses respond and tell the girl that she's safe enough in the community. They hold space and help her ground, even if it's for two minutes. We know from the psychology behind this that it allows her neural pathways to start to reconnect through the frontal lobe and the cerebral cortex so that she will have the capacity to mitigate her own risk in the future.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Can you send more information about that to the committee? I'm just so interested.

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: I have tons.

You can look up Dr. Jacqui Linder as well, because she also supports this.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I have limited time and important questions for you again.

I have a question for Bonnie, picking up on what you said.

You spoke about agency, Madam Brayton. I want to read from—

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: Just call me Bonnie, Leah.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'll call you Bonnie.

I'm going to read from your Parliament brief. You say, "Multiple factors, rooted in systemic ableism and other forms of oppression, make girls, women, and gender diverse people with disabilities, especially those from historically marginalized groups (i.e., racialized, Indigenous, 2LGBTQ+, and those living in poverty)" more at risk.

We talk about agency, but in society not everybody's given the same agency. I would put ableism within that category. It's that members in the disability community, through an ableist lens, are not given agency. How does that impact safety?

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: It's almost a redundant question, even from your perspective, Leah, because that's exactly the point. In terms of agency and in terms of lots of the situations that put women with disabilities at risk regarding agency, I think that's important to understand.

Again, a human rights framework is an equity framework. It needs to understand that what each woman needs to be safe is different.

When I was speaking on the committee to your colleague from Quebec about the use of the words *une femme en situation handicap*, I think it comes right back to that, really. The French word for a disabled woman is a woman who is disabled by her environment, essentially. I really want to make that point. Systemic ableism is about all of the things we aren't giving to women and girls with disabilities for them to have agency. We live in an ableist society.

• (1735)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Yes, we do, 100%.

I have one last question that I'm going to ask to both of you.

We spoke about funding. I've been pushing hard. We have a national violence prevention strategy, but funding is not going out the door. The groups who are made most vulnerable by systems, as I call it, don't get the money.

Your organization, in terms of survivor voices, is survivor-led. That's something that came out in the national inquiry.

You mentioned, Bonnie, about your group. How is the lack of funding impacting the safety of women in the community?

It will have to be very quick—Madam Franklin, and then Bonnie.

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: It means that sometimes we have to say no—and I don't. Sometimes I put myself at risk.

Ms. Leah Gazan: In terms of your...?

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: It's travel, accessing girls, making sure their needs are met when they can't fill out applications or the funding has run out for something.

I think the committee needs to take a look at how funding is allocated. If it's only through the law enforcement lens or through those victim lenses, then it's very difficult to deliver. It doesn't go to the survivor. It actually is funded by the agency. Sometimes that money is being spent and the survivor doesn't even know it, and then is told there's no more money for their mental health.

The Chair: Leah, with your permission, I'm taking the two minutes that you're getting later and I'm adding them to these two minutes, if that's okay.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I don't get 30 minutes. Okay.

Go ahead, Bonnie.

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: There are a couple of things.

I want to say something that I'm sure all of you are thinking about, which is, of course, that one of the most important things that this government can do is pass the national disability benefit to lift as many women and girls as possible out of poverty.

It's the national disability benefit, because when you're talking about funding and poverty and all of the things that lead us to a place where somebody becomes exploited or becomes trafficked, whether it's sex trafficking or labour trafficking—whatever type of trafficking it is—it is about that same magic word. It's the “agency” word.

I was going to say that in terms of funding to address this from a disability or an intersectional perspective, it is absolutely about starting to think, again, in terms of the national action plan. There is a way we have to dismantle it, and it's not going to happen overnight. We have to think about this across the life-course, because we know that it starts with girls in the case of girls with disabilities.

As I said, in terms of the funding question, Leah, it's a complex one because it's a complex problem.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I have a solution. I have a bill, Bill C-223, to put in place a guaranteed livable basic income. When we're talking about education, I'll be ramping up my campaign, FYI.

Do you think a guaranteed livable basic income is important if we're really going to deal with the issue of human trafficking head-on? It's a yes-or-no answer.

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: Yes, it's one of the things in my brief.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay, so it's yes from Madame Franklin.

Madame Peters, is it a yes or a no?

Ms. Cathy Peters: I'm going to say no, because you need to deal with the demand of the sex buyers.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay.

Bonnie, is it a yes or a no?

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: I'm going to say yes. I'm not going to say it as a simple answer, but the answer would be yes. We need that first.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

We're now going to go on to our next round. I'm going to start off with Michelle Ferreri.

It's going to be four minutes, four minutes and then two minutes for Andréanne. Leah, I've given you your extra minutes.

Michelle, you have four minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thanks a lot, Madam Chair.

Thanks a lot, ladies, for being here today and for bringing your passion and your experience—and a bit of levity to laugh, because this is just so heavy. It's just such heavy topic, and I'm glad you brought up vicarious trauma, because it's a very real thing.

It's nice to hear you speak about equine therapy. We have an amazing place in my riding of Peterborough called The Mane Intent. I had to experience it, and it is powerful. It is powerful when we look at holistic treatment methods and helping a lot of survivors work through their crises and getting back to who they were.

This book, Cathy, is pretty great. I've had the opportunity to read a lot of it in a short amount of time. It's a great read. It's succinct, and I like how you've done it.

One of the things I'm really hyperfocused on is youth intervention and prevention—I see you've touched on it in this book—when we look at helping parents understand social media and how to talk to our kids. We've seen great success in some of the education programs. My youngest—I've talked about this before—in grade 8 is being educated, and through his education, it's helping that intervention.

What can you share with the committee about your research and work in terms of the prevention end of things and social media? What do you think we need to do?

In particular, I'm looking for a very specific answer, which is if you think we should change the age of kids on social media.

• (1740)

Ms. Cathy Peters: Absolutely.

I think the U.S. surgeon general just said that people shouldn't be on the platforms at 15 years of age. He has young children and he's very concerned.

I am a prevention educator. That is the big piece that is missing countrywide. As an educator, I've been working in this space for 45 years. In the last 10 years, really, it's almost turned into full time, and I even get flown into indigenous communities to educate and to educate parents on how to keep their children safe, but I try to keep everything very simple.

I say there are five points. Let's raise awareness—that's big—and then there's prevention education, intervention, active collaboration—let's all collaborate together—and reducing the demand.

I am very focused on the demand. I don't want to miss that piece. It is the buyers who are causing this problem and who perpetuate sexual exploitation.

The number one question I ask when I present.... I've been presenting to a lot of high schools lately. The number one question they ask is, "What is a healthy relationship?"

They're hooked on pornography. They hate it and they know it's not what a healthy relationship is, but that's where they're going for their sex education, so I talk about what love looks like, and they have no clue. I will hear boys, in particular, saying, "Ms. Peters, we're hooked on porn. We don't know what a healthy relationship looks like." That is really a key piece when I'm presenting to high schools.

With the indigenous communities, it's similar. They're just not getting anything to counter the pornography. We have such a hypersexualized, toxic environment online, and we really need education in that space.

I just met with Senator Miville-Dechêne, and she has the age verification in process for access to porn.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Yes, it's a powerful bill.

It's a difficult conversation, and I don't think I have the amount of time I need. Leah wants 30 minutes and I want about two hours, to be honest with you, to do—

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: I think you also need to loop into your conversation the new sexy, AI, because that is the most concerning thing. After being at the United Nations in March and working through this with UN Women, I think that Ontario has a great strategy. There is education across the board for this, but not one single one of the 500 survivors I've worked with who actually knew what this was was able to keep themselves safe. I believe in peer education and adult education, concurrent to what my colleague Cathy is working on.

The Chair: Thank you so much. I'm sorry; you're done on that.

I'll pass it over to Anita for four minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much.

I'd like to start with Ms. Brayton.

There's some good news. We just got word that Bill C-22, the national disability benefit, passed the Senate today. You mentioned that in your testimony, so I'm pleased to have seen in the middle of this committee meeting that it was posted.

I want to say to Ms. Brayton that I am very happy you are here speaking to this committee because of everything you described about women and girls with disabilities being invisible, and particularly that those who are intersectional with disabilities being invisible. You're the first one who's testified before this committee who has specifically talked about that. I'm very pleased you're here.

We know what the problems are, and.... I'll give you a few minutes, and then I do have another question. Can you tell us really quickly what the solutions are? When we're doing our recommendations as a committee, what should we be recommending?

• (1745)

Ms. Bonnie Brayton: I'm going to go to the recommendations that we wrote.

Address the systemic barriers that make women and girls with disabilities and other groups more vulnerable to trafficking: isolation, social exclusion, discrimination, low income, poverty, housing precarity and inadequate access to support services.

Dismantle laws that perpetuate discriminatory law enforcement practices with Black, indigenous and other racial groups.

Establish funding and partnership mechanisms that strengthen community capacity and connect and sustain allies in their collective work to recognize, prevent and address gender-based violence and trafficking.

Integrate an intersectional approach to provincial, territorial and federal inquiries. Of course, a national action plan is a perfect opportunity for us to really work on this with our provincial and territorial partners.

Explicitly name women, girls and gender-diverse people with disabilities, especially those living with intellectual, invisible or mental health conditions as well as those who are racialized or indigenous, as facing a higher risk of trafficking in human trafficking policies.

Collect disaggregated data.

Centre disability and trafficking responsiveness in public education, as many survivors become disabled because of trafficking, and their disability makes them targets to be trafficked.

Commit to an anti-racist, anti-colonial and anti-ableist framework and to meaningful participation of the disability community of civil society working with diverse women and girls with disabilities and our partners.

Connect funding to appropriate, accessible, inclusive, affirming and culturally sensitive trauma-informed supports for survivors of GBV.

Of course, based on what I talked about at the very beginning in terms of the case I discussed, we're not always talking about trafficking for the reasons many other women are trafficked. In the case of women and girls with disabilities who are vulnerable, this is simply somebody taking advantage of an individual, perpetuating that and repeating it. The idea is that, as I said, it starts at childhood and is repeated and repeated.

Again, we have two Supreme Court cases. That is not because there are only two cases but because those are the only two cases that made it to the courts.

Thank you so much, Anita. I really appreciate your giving me some time on the floor.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you so much. Those are very good recommendations.

I know there's only a little bit of time left, but I want to ask Ms. Tallon Franklin something.

You mentioned two things that struck me. One was repeating the word "bias" a couple of times. Could you tell us what you mean?

Also—and maybe this might have to be in writing to the committee, because we're very short on time—what funding criteria should there be? I was very moved by what you said about the funding not going to organizations like yours. How would we have to change the criteria in order for that to be solved?

I'll leave which parts to send in writing—

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: I don't know which one. Those are big conversations.

The Chair: You have about 15 seconds to respond here, so....

Mrs. Kelly Tallon Franklin: I think we have to look at all the biases all the way around. They start with misogyny, patriarchy and colonized thinking and how our system is set up to address this. Then we need to look at biases at all levels, from ageism to sexism and racism and all those things in between, and we have to acknowledge them when we're going to come to the table.

I will write about this. There's a lot of information that's already out there that will help support the committee's research.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

For the final questions, two minutes go to Andréanne Larouche.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Brayton and Ms. Tallon Franklin, thank you both for your insight.

Ms. Peters, I look forward to reading your book. You said that you recently presented at the Canadian Sexual Exploitation Summit. Did you take anything away from the summit that could be germane to the committee's study, anything that could help us make the right recommendations?

[*English*]

Ms. Cathy Peters: The French translation stopped, so I didn't hear the question.

The Chair: Can you ask the question again?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Peters, I said that I was going to read your book.

Madam Chair, the interpretation still doesn't seem to be working.

[*English*]

The Chair: It must be on your end, because I do have translation.

If you want to check, at the top, does it show "01 English"?

Ms. Cathy Peters: Yes.

The Chair: Andréanne, could you speak a little bit?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Can you hear me, Ms. Peters?

• (1750)

[*English*]

Ms. Cathy Peters: Yes.

The Chair: That's fantastic. We're good.

Let's go back to your question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Peters, I was saying that I was really looking forward to reading your book.

In your submission to the committee, you mention that you presented at the Canadian Sexual Exploitation Summit. Did you take anything away from the summit that should inform the recommendations the committee makes at the end of its study?

[*English*]

Ms. Cathy Peters: That summit was absolutely wonderful, and I think you introduced the beginning of it, and thank you so much.

I think someone who stood out was Dr. Ingeborg Kraus. I would recommend that everybody here look her up. She's a German psycho-trauma therapist globally. She's the one who prints out the German brothel menu. She has started an organization called Scientists for a World without Prostitution. I would recommend looking at her research. She really addresses what's going on in Germany, and if you want to see what full decriminalization or legalization of prostitution looks like, just go to Germany.

I would say out of everything I heard at the summit, her presentation was absolutely compelling. She made the point that every day in Germany, 1.2 million men buy sex. It's unbelievable that 250,000 to 400,000 women are prostituted in Germany. She then compared that to Sweden, which has the same equality model of law that we have here in Canada, and there are fewer than 1,000 women who are prostituted. That is absolutely remarkable.

I would say that Dr. Kraus was exceptional.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Your time is up.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: All right.

[*English*]

The Chair: On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank Cathy, Bonnie and Kelly for coming up and providing us with such extraordinary testimony today.

Before I let everybody go, we need to spend a little money. Everybody will have received a budget indicating the money required for the study of the main estimates. The total budget was \$1,000. I'm looking for approval and a vote to accept the budget so that we can do what we have done.

All those in favour?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That's great. Fantastic.

Seeing no other issues today, I would like to wish everybody a great holiday weekend. We will see everybody in a week and a half from today.

Take care. The meeting is adjourned.

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