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Chair

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc

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• (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP)): Welcome to the 21st meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

The committee is continuing its study on the economic leadership and prosperity of Canadian women.

To refresh the committee members' memory after over two weeks without a meeting, I want to remind you that, in keeping with the stated priorities of the Status of Women Canada, we are carrying out a study on the economic leadership and prosperity of Canadian women, as well as on entrepreneurship among women.

We are considering the economic leadership, but also the prosperity of Canadian women. There are some nuances between those two considerations in our study's interpretation. So I am asking you to keep that in mind. Your questions can be about economic leadership and prosperity, but they can also be about entrepreneurship among women.

Today, we are pleased to welcome Kate McInturff, from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and Alex Johnston, the Executive Director of Catalyst Canada Inc. By videoconference, we will hear from Shannon Phillips, Policy Analyst for the Alberta Federation of Labour.

Each witness will have 10 minutes to make their presentation, which will be followed by a question period.

Ms. McInturff, you can start us off. You have 10 minutes.

[English]

Dr. Kate McInturff (Senior Researcher, National Office, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives): Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members, for the opportunity to speak to this committee today about the economic leadership and prosperity of women in Canada.

My name is Kate McInturff. I am a senior researcher at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Today more women than ever are attending university and college. They are going into the workforce in greater numbers and entering new fields, yet young women graduating today will still be paid less than their male peers. They will be promoted less often to the ranks of senior management, and they will spend twice as much time doing unpaid work at home.

What is at the root of the persistent gaps in women's employment, pay, and promotion?

It has been argued that women, particularly women with young children, do less paid work as a matter of choice and that this is the source of their gap in pay. Yet when we look at the results of the labour force survey, we find that 69% of women with children under the age of 6 are employed. That's only 1% less than the employment rate for women overall.

It has also been suggested that in households where there's a male breadwinner, women will be more likely to choose not to work. Yet again, if we look at labour force survey data, we see the opposite is true. If you look at the choices families are actually making, you will find that in families where the fathers are working, the mothers of young children are actually more likely to be employed and more likely to be employed full time. In families with young children where the dad has a job, 63% of moms work full time.

Whether by choice or out of economic necessity, the mothers of young children are working women. Many of these working women are working full time while performing twice the number of hours of unpaid work at home. That time deficit plays a significant role in the inability of more women to move into demanding, higher-paid, and higher-profile jobs.

What can we do to address the time deficit faced by women in Canada?

While some of the answers are easier than others, I'm going to start with one of the most obvious: safe and affordable child care. Economists from across sectors have demonstrated the benefits of affordable child care, benefits reaped by children, benefits to women's economic security, and benefits to the overall economic health of a community.

Women in sectors as diverse as health care and mining report that the lack of access to affordable child care is a significant barrier to doing the work they want to do and achieving their professional goals.

What is the difference child care can make?

An analysis of the impact of subsidized child care in Quebec found that by 2008 the program had directly contributed to a 3.8% increase in women's labour force participation. The program also provided a broad economic benefit to Quebec's economy, increasing Quebec's GDP by 1.7%. An equivalent boost to Canada's GDP would contribute an additional \$31.9 billion to Canada's economy.

Opening the door for more women to engage in paid work is a first step. However, once there, women continue to face the persistent problem of unequal levels of pay and unequal rates of promotion. Canada's gender pay gap is the eighth largest among OECD countries. Women's median employment incomes are 34% less than men's incomes. For some groups of working women, the picture is even worse. Visible minority women earn 17% less than non-visible minority women and 25% less than visible minority men. The picture is similar for first-generation immigrant women and for aboriginal women.

Here again it has been argued that women's paycheques may be smaller because they choose to work fewer hours; however, that is not entirely the case. Comparing the wages of women working full time, full year, to the wages men earn working full time, full year, we still see women taking home 20% less than their male peers.

One of the reasons for this has to do with industries in which men and women work and the value we place on that work. Women and men tend to work in different industries. A recent study by Statistics Canada found that women with university degrees today are most likely to work in the same fields they worked in 20 years ago, education and nursing. Men tend to work in technology and finance. One reason for the pay gap is that workers in male-dominated fields are paid more in general than are workers in female-dominated fields. This is to say that both men and women working as computer programmers will earn more than will men and women working as elementary school teachers.

• (1535)

However, even within the same industry, women and men experience pay gaps. For example, in the female-dominated education sector, male elementary school teachers still earn \$10,000 a year more on average than do female elementary school teachers. So what can we do to make a difference?

When we look at wages across sectors, across industries, and across regions, there are patterns to pay and equity. One of the patterns I've been able to identify, looking at regional differences, is that where there is a proactive pay equity policy in place, the wage gap narrows. For example, if we look at median employment incomes in Canada's largest cities, women in cities with large public sector employers with proactive pay equity policies in place see the smallest gaps in their earnings. Yet these same cities do not have the highest overall incomes, a fact that runs counter to the idea that closing the wage gap is merely the result of higher overall wage increases. Indeed, the city with the highest average incomes, Edmonton, also has the biggest pay gap, with men bringing home \$21,000 a year more than women on average do.

Narrowing the wage gap is a matter of fairness. It's a matter of non-discrimination, and it provides a clear benefit to women's prosperity and to the economy. Estimates from the World Bank suggest that closing the gender wage gap in industrialized nations like Canada could boost our GDP by as much as 9%.

Narrowing the wage gap can also make the difference in whether or not women and their families live in poverty. Poverty rates are highest among families that depend on a female income earner. This is true not only of families led by single mothers but also of two-

parent families with children in which the woman is the sole income earner.

Consider the women in the lowest-paying of female-dominated industries, the service sector. Women working in retail sales in Canada earn just over \$12,000 a year annually. Their male counterparts earn \$18,000 a year. That \$6,000 pay gap can mean the difference between having enough for rent and food and not having enough.

There are solutions to these problems. I've mentioned just a few here, but I would be happy to speak further about the public policies that have been demonstrated to make a real difference in the lives of women and in their economic well-being.

However, I want to close by reiterating what every small-business owner knows. There is no free lunch. Without a stable, upfront investment, any enterprise will falter, and the same is true of our investments in the policies and programs that can increase women's economic well-being in Canada. With adequate and stable support, our economy and the women in Canada will reap multiple dividends including significant GDP growth and the concomitant increase in government revenues. Without that investment, we are setting up our own programs to fail just as inadequate access to credit and financing causes small enterprises to fail.

Right now, in the last fiscal year, the budget for Status of Women amounted to 0.03% of direct federal program spending. As a percentage of federal program spending over the last several years, this is very little.

Let me repeat. The federal government allocates three-one hundredths of 1% of its total program spending to a department that is tasked with ensuring equality and the full participation of women in the economic, social, and democratic life of Canada.

Gender inequality is a crucial barrier to growth, to good governance, and to well-being. An investment of political and financial resources into increased economic security for women in Canada will pay dividends, not only in the quality of life of Canadians but also in the economic stability of the country.

Thank you.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Johnston, go ahead for 10 minutes, please.

Ms. Alex Johnston (Executive Director, Catalyst Canada Inc.): The challenge with going second is that Kate took most of my good material. That's fine. I have a couple of good jokes left.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to present today. My flight was delayed. I made it just in the nick of time, so I'm grateful for that.

For those of you who aren't familiar with Catalyst, we are a global organization. We work with businesses around the world to support them in creating diverse and inclusive workplaces and in fully leveraging their talent.

We've been around for over 50 years, and we try to produce a really strong body of research to drive and shape the conversation around women's advancement globally. More important, we take that research and we turn it into very practical tools and resources for business leaders and companies to make change.

I am delighted to contribute to the important work you're doing, looking at systemic barriers to women's advancement. I think this is a timely and important conversation because of the importance of talent to Canada's economic competitiveness, but I also think the bigger question for this group is the fact that we're still having this conversation and it still really matters.

In my view, this conversation really is about Canada's economic competitiveness and our talent. As you well know, Canada, like many countries around the world, is facing a labour shortage, with aging baby boomers who will move out of the workforce, with slower population growth—although I'm doing my part; I had three children in 12 months; I'm trying to increase the stats—and with an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

Our talent gives us a competitive advantage because we have a highly skilled workforce. Kate touched on this. We put more people through post-secondary education than almost any country in the world. We need to capitalize on that talent, but we do not. We are now falling behind—and you know this—at least insofar as we can start tracking progress for women on boards, which is one example but an important example. We're falling behind comparator countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and much of Europe. That is something that I think is driving a very different conversation in this country today.

When we look at the numbers and the pyramid we put together as an organization, it's typically focused on FP 500 companies, our largest Canadian corporations. Roughly 50% of the entry level workforce in those companies is women, and 36% of management positions, 16% of board positions, and 18% of senior officer positions are occupied by women.

Common wisdom—and you hear this often—suggests that women's choices are responsible for the lack of progress through the ranks. We frequently hear the following. Women have babies. We take time off to care for our babies. We often take on additional caregiving responsibilities in the broader family. We may be less ambitious because we want a different quality of life. We make different choices. The evidence does not support those as the key reasons why progress through the ranks is so slow.

What is the evidence telling us? The evidence is telling us, in a nutshell, that this is not a glass ceiling. Women are not entering as 50% and then moving up to management consistently through the ranks and then all of a sudden hitting a barrier. Increasingly we are saying it's a sticky floor. When we are looking at men and women with similar skills, similar education, similar experience, similar aspirations, using similar strategies to get ahead, we see that the differences emerge immediately and they grow with time.

I have brought a table today as a piece of information for you that I think might be useful: a Canada-specific report that we put out last December. It's part of a global long-term research project we're doing, tracking MBA grads, men and women. We chose MBA grads because they cut across sectors. What we're finding is that right out of the gate there's a compensation gap. Globally the compensation gap is \$4,200. In Canada it's \$8,200.

The question I always get when I table that is, “Isn't that just men going into investment banking and women going into marketing?” No. That is men and women going into similar jobs and similar fields. The compensation gap starts early and grows with time.

There are differences in sponsorship. Men are typically benefiting from mentors who become sponsors who are more senior in an organization and better positioned to create opportunities for those individuals. Most importantly we are finding differences in the critical work experiences that men and women are getting right out of the gate, to advance. Men are benefiting from files and projects with bigger budgets, more direct reports, significantly more exposure to senior executives. That is what the evidence is telling us is directly attributable to different progress through the ranks. My hope is that we can move the conversation away from so much focus on the individual and onto the organization and some of the things we need to be doing as leaders to really drive that into organizations across this country.

Where are we now? Systemic challenges continue to undermine equal opportunities and women's ability to advance into leadership roles. At the risk of boring you with numbers, I've brought two additional pieces of information that I think will be useful for you, two short summaries of our census data.

● (1545)

One year we put out a census tracking progress for women on boards. One year we put out a census tracking progress for women in executive officer positions. There's a tonne of detail behind that. I've just brought the short summaries today. But when we are looking at progress through the ranks, if you want to put the numbers in context, what I always say to people is that if we felt that today 25% for boards and 25% for executive committees was the sweet spot, we are on track for it to take 15 years to get there for executive committees and 20 years for boards. So if nothing going forward changes, with the current rate of progress year over year it will take 15 and 20 years to get to a quarter. That feels shocking to me and typically when I put it in that context people say that does not feel right.

I think increasingly international and domestic pressure is starting to drive this conversation into boardrooms and executive committees across the country, which is a real positive. We are seeing in the census data, for the first time ever, the numbers are just starting to move. I always joked that when I saw the data last year for boards and I knew I had to be a public spokesperson around it, I said to my colleagues, I'm going to have to drink a carton of Red Bull to go out there and speak enthusiastically about these numbers, because there's nothing in here that is a positive message and nobody wants to just talk about negativity.

Where are we headed? I'm extremely hopeful about where we're headed. I don't think that's naive, I think it's based on the fact that more business leaders are speaking about these issues publicly and passionately. More importantly, they are being challenged on these issues more regularly. I do believe the Ontario Securities Commission's proposed comply or explain regulations will have a significant impact. I believe they're already having an impact. I give them huge credit for moving forward with this. But I give credit to people in this room and others who have been driving this conversation for a very long time and trying to get it on the radar of leaders.

Australia is a wonderful comparator jurisdiction, and I would have brought a chart that we prepared comparing where Australia was four years ago to where Canada is today, but I just didn't have time to get it translated so I think I'll submit it later on. But we looked at where Australia was in 2010 when they just started to talk about comply or explain—and again boards are just an indicator—but the numbers started to move. They implemented comply or explain and there was a 7% increase in three years in their board numbers. They absolutely took off. What you're seeing is that seat turnover now is increasingly being filled by women. That to me is where we're headed. Again, boards are one example, but a very important, significant step in this country.

Two years ago, Catalyst challenged all FP 500 companies to commit to an initiative we moved forward, the Catalyst accord. We've asked companies to set a goal and a target for women's board

representation and I think increasingly the focus, rightly so, is on boards and executive committees to help lift the FP average to 25%. So if you're at 0%, don't worry about getting to 40%. Get to 15%, get to 20%. Start to focus on what is realistic for you, but help lift the average to 25% by 2017. So far 26 companies have made the commitment and more and more companies are contacting us every month and bringing the information to their board and having the conversation, which I think is a real positive.

Again, to put this in context, to get to 25% would require every FP 500 company to add one more woman to their board, so 90 more women a year for the next five years. That is out of 4,200 board seats. You cannot tell me there is a dearth of women who are qualified to take those 90 spots. We simply need to increase demand. Supply is well in hand.

If I could ask one thing of you as influential leaders looking to understand or remove systemic barriers getting in the way of women's advancement, it would be to challenge Canadian business leaders to do just this: to set targets, to set goals around women's representation, to develop the strategies to help them get there. Our experience with the accord is that as soon as a company has this conversation, there's no turning back. Out of the probably 40 or 45 companies who have contacted us so far about the accord, only one company has taken the issue to their board and come back and said they won't sign the accord. Typically what we're seeing is that companies have the conversation at the board level and the changes are immediate. They're not necessarily dramatic, but you see over two or three years something very significant start to change in that organization.

I'd also ask you to challenge leaders to align their business and their people strategies and really connect those two things very powerfully together. This really is about creating inclusive workplaces where men and women can fully contribute and we fully leverage our talent.

•(1550)

You know that leveraging our talent is too important for economic competitiveness not to get it right. I think we're on the right road, but there's a lot more work to do.

I'm delighted to be here today. I'm pleased to support you in any way I can. The one thing I would flag is that most of our research is publicly available. To the extent that it can be useful, I'm a resource, and the website is www.catalyst.org. I think you'll probably find a number of things there that will support your conversation.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame Johnston.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Ms. Johnston.

You can send the clerk the comparative chart of changes in Australia.

Ms. Alex Johnston: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Phillips, the floor is yours. You have 10 minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Shannon Phillips (Director, Policy Analysis, Alberta Federation of Labour): Good afternoon, Madam Chair, and hello to the committee. Thank you for accommodating me via video conference.

My name is Shannon Phillips. I'm the policy analyst for the Alberta Federation of Labour.

I live in southern Alberta, in Lethbridge, and I am in Edmonton today. I am often back and forth for work, so I will be bringing you a perspective that I think is going to come down a little from the heights of corporate boards and the Fortune 500, down to ordinary working people in the rural communities and the small cities of southern Alberta in particular and in Alberta as a whole.

While Kate and Alex have given us some very good context for women's inequality, I want to zero in on what we see happening in Alberta, which is frequently described as the economic engine of the country.

The last time I appeared before this committee was in 2010. I was the chair of the Womanspace resource centre in Lethbridge, which had its funding cut after 25 years of continuous Status of Women funding.

I remember my committee appearance like it was yesterday, as I was a few weeks pregnant with my second son and appearing in front of a House of Commons committee, and that is a stressful thing to do. I was utterly nauseated at the time, and I was also very annoyed, frankly, because I couldn't have a beer after all was said and done. So just to let you know, you can go as hard as you like on me in the Qs and As, as that little boy is now three and a half years old, and it's a beautiful spring day here in Edmonton to have an after-work beer on the patio.

I was the chair of Womanspace. Our project worked at ground zero of women's economic independence and economic literacy. Our project served low-income women, often indigenous, with financial

literacy support services of various kinds. In two years, and on less than \$150,000, we served 825 women with financial literacy one-on-one services, tax filing, and group classes that taught women how to do things such as transition to the paid workforce and save for retirement.

I remember one woman in particular, Donna. That's not her real name. We worked with her and the CRA to get several thousand dollars back in child tax credits that she had missed out on due to a bitter split from her ex. She used that money to buy a minivan so she could enrol her kids in better after-school activities, and as important, so she could take a job, transition to paid work, and get off social assistance. When she came to Womanspace, she was a broken woman, frankly, and today she holds her head high. I've just checked in with her. She is still in the workforce.

But at that time, this government had deliberately frozen out long-standing feminist organizations like Womanspace in favour of other organizations such as for-profit ventures and other untested organizations that did not necessarily serve women, forgoing southern Alberta's chance at even more stories like Donna's. The opportunity for more women's economic independence in southern Alberta was squandered, which is, by the way, the place where you will find the lowest-waged economy in Alberta, where you will find more women working for low wages, Canada's largest indigenous reserve, and a high proportion of off-reserve indigenous peoples in cities and towns. If I have one goal today, partially it is to remind you and all the women about all of the women in my community who didn't get that same leg up that Donna did, because instead the decision was made to play politics with women's lives.

Alberta is often described as the economic engine of the country, but replicating our resource extraction economy across Canada is also a good way in down times to apply the brakes. Let's talk about where we're at in terms of women's economic equality in Alberta. The story you hear from the business pages of *The Globe and Mail* is that wages are growing very quickly and everything is totally great all the time for everyone. That is, I think, a convenient narrative for the business press, because it keeps wages low, especially in low-wage sectors, but directly linked to that, it keeps profits high.

Alberta has the highest pay gap in Canada between women and men. As Kate said, it's 80% Canada-wide, but on average, Alberta women who work full time for the full year earn about 65% of what men earn. I think no one would have predicted that the pay gap my mother's generation faced in the 1970s would be the same pay gap that my generation of women in their late thirties faces, but that is the reality in Alberta.

I think women's economic participation is hindered by some of the lowest levels in the country for investment in child care and early learning, by extremely low government spending as a portion of GDP—as we know, women are the majority of public sector workers—and by the concentration of private sector jobs in a few select industries, which is another way of saying there's a lack of economic diversification.

● (1555)

Alberta is also showing now and we are finding data of stagnating wages in low-skilled occupations. Prevailing wages in the service, hospitality, and accommodations sectors have barely inched up since 2008. The majority of workers in these sectors are women who are often trying to supplement the family income and juggling child care responsibilities when children are very young.

The result of a low-wage economy is visited upon children. An astonishing 60% of Alberta children who live below the poverty line have at least one parent in the workforce full time, full year. One in five full-time working Albertans earns less than \$15 an hour and one in four of those is a woman. Sixty per cent of low-wage earners in Alberta are over 25.

I know that many of you on the government side are students of history, in particular of your own party's history in western Canada. I probably do not need to tell you that western economic diversification has been a long-standing mirage for our Conservative governments, both federally and provincially, since Ernest Manning.

Western economic diversification was one of the big reasons why Peter Lougheed, for example, had a policy of upgrading and refining bitumen and natural gas in our province rather than shipping the raw product down the pipeline and shipping the associated manufacturing and other spinoff opportunities to the United States, in his day, and increasingly, in our day, to China. That is why Mr. Lougheed opposed the Keystone XL and other bitumen export lines. It was not the pipeline he opposed. It was what was in it. He shared that position with my employer, the Alberta Federation of Labour.

We take this view of economic diversification and using public policy instruments in order to accomplish it because we see the results of intensifying economic concentration. What are the results?

First, you have a commodity-price roller coaster. During the recession, Alberta went from the lowest unemployment to among the highest. Our social assistance caseloads shot up at the fastest rate in the country. The recession hurt ordinary people. As the energy sector put projects on hold, that increased poverty in Alberta at an astonishing rate. No person in their right mind would predict eternally high global oil prices. Any financial speculator who took that view would immediately find him or herself disabused of most of their earthly comforts and delights, but that is what Alberta, and increasingly all of Canada, is banking on.

The petroleum sector has among the lowest share of labour income as a share of total revenues in any industrial sector. Even with Alberta's housing boom and rising wages, it still has among the weakest wage growth in Canada.

Here's the context for relying on commodity prices. We only derive benefit from commodities in one of three ways. One way we derive benefit is from direct jobs in the petroleum sector, which delivers about 16,500 of these. However, the number of long-term spinoff jobs in upgrading and associated manufacturing processes, plastics and so on, is projected by the Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada to flatline.

The second way we derive benefit from commodities is through royalties and taxes so we can pay for public services and keep the economy stable and running even when a commodity price dips. As we know, it always will. However, Alberta has the lowest royalty and tax take from heavy oil in the world. We lag behind Angola, where extraction companies contend with the cost of sifting through hundreds of thousands of land mines in order to get to the heavy oil deposits they want.

The third way we derive benefit is from whatever we can add to the commodity. Alberta is projected to upgrade only 26% of its bitumen production by 2020, when the provincial government's own policy goal is 65%.

Because we are singularly fixated on extraction jobs, which are in male-dominated fields like power engineers and others, we miss out on many opportunities to have long-term stable employment close to home, which is what women want and need. Someone has to go to work close to home; not everyone can go to Fort McMurray. Someone needs to take the kids to hockey practice.

We can use this bounty of natural resources well, to upgrade the resources here and to diversify the economy. We can ensure that we are getting our fair share so that we can take that money and use public policy instruments to incentivize a different kind of economy. We're building green technology, retrofitting buildings close to home, and making a sustainable economy where someone is home in the evening to put supper on for the kids.

•(1600)

We can ensure that we have the money for good child care and the jobs that will carry us through the next century, not the next business cycle. We can ensure that we have the right budget amounts going to the right places, and that we can address systemic poverty and inequality. But we cannot do that on a roller coaster.

The Chair: Ms. Phillips, thank you very much.

We'll now move to the questions.

Madam Truppe, you have seven minutes.

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome, good afternoon, and thank you for being here today.

I have some questions for each of you, but I think I'll start with Alex.

Alex, you said in your statement that there are systemic challenges in getting women into leadership roles. What are some of them, or what are the ones that come most to your mind?

Ms. Alex Johnston: Of the ones I tabled, I think sponsorship is relevant. Sponsorship is subtle. For this conversation, I think sponsorship is one of the two critical ones. If men and women are entering the workforce in roughly equal numbers, and early on men are benefiting from more senior people in organizations who really are sort of creating a path, creating opportunities, paving the way for advancement, that is a huge systemic barrier. It's also very subtle. No one is waving a red flag. These things are powerful but are often not effectively addressed.

We were stunned by some of MBA research we did on this. When we asked these MBA grads if they were getting "hot job" experience—mission-critical files significant to the organization, a big budget, a significant number of direct reports—the men and women all said, yes, they were. These were the men and women who had all been tapped as high potentials in their organization, many of them put into management training programs, who really viewed their stars as rising. We then analyzed the projects—this was for thousands of people—and were stunned to realize that men's budgets were twice that of their female counterparts, men had three times the number of direct reports, and men had significantly more exposure to senior executives.

So when I talk about systemic barriers, these kinds of things are barriers. They're just not obvious and orchestrated. They're often very subtle but very powerful behaviours and patterns in organizations that replicate themselves at all levels over time. You see the pyramid doing this....

Up until, I'd say, five years ago, the only conversation we ever had was about women not putting their hands up, women not leaning forward sufficiently, women making choices that self-select them out, women not having the confidence to go for the promotion. I can't tell you whether all of that is going on. I can tell you that we do know what's going on in organizations—systemic things that are preventing organizations from fully leveraging their talent. Those are just two examples, but I'd say they're critical examples.

With regard to sponsorship, Tom Falk, the CEO of Kimberly-Clark, just won our global award two weeks ago, and he gave an amazing speech. He said that when he took over in 2008 and started to focus on diversity and inclusion, he went across the world, met with his regional country heads, and asked them to give him a list of the people they were sponsoring, the top five. He looked at the lists they gave him and said, "You're an Asian man, and every name on this list is an Asian man", or "You're a white European male, and every name on this list is a white European male." He told them that when he went back in six months, those lists needed to look different.

That's the kind of leadership that will break those systemic barriers.

•(1605)

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you. Good for Kimberly-Clark; that was really good.

You also mentioned that you had asked companies to set goals for board targets. I think you said that 26 companies had set some goals. That was 26 out of how many?

Ms. Alex Johnston: It was 26 out of the FP 500.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Oh, wow.

Ms. Alex Johnston: Yes; so there's work to be done. We've seen, in every country where they've done this, that....

The U.K. took a voluntary approach. They asked board chairs to challenge other board chairs to make a commitment. The umbrella is the 30% Club. The numbers are moving. I think they're at maybe 80, 90, or 100 companies after three years. We're on our way.

I think the objective really is to have leaders talk to other leaders and say that having the conversation matters. As soon as you have the conversation, people around the table typically will say that they don't want to be a mining company at zero. I mean, five years ago I could have said, "I can't find one qualified woman", but increasingly when I walk into rooms will people say, "Out of 12 directors, you can't find one woman with the qualifications to sit on this board? It just doesn't feel right."

Mrs. Susan Truppe: You're doing a lot of great work at Catalyst. Certainly a best practice would be what Kimberly-Clark is out there doing. With all of the people you've talked to, and probably in your travels, are there other best practices you've discovered that would help women, or that would help us in this study that's to help women? Are there some other best practices that come to your mind as being really good—i.e., “I wish we could get other people or other companies to do this”?

Ms. Alex Johnston: Yes, for sure. I think there's a policy conversation to be had, and there are policy things you can consider. If, as a first step, you're considering anything, I do think something like the OSC's proposed comply or explain regulations matters, because I do view that as essentially voluntary. There's a huge amount of flexibility. People will be required to set goals that are relevant for them and their sector, and then to disclose the strategies they'll use to meet them. I think that is a best practice and a really good model for Canada right now.

I think, in terms of sponsorship, we're seeing that many organizations are now asking how they can take all this information and create something that works, and saying, “I don't want to force you to choose x to sponsor so-and-so.” Some of this is somewhat organic, but it can't only be organic. It has to be structured. So, we're seeing more and more companies starting to look at mentoring and sponsorship differently and creating more structured programs.

I love the example out west of Lorraine Mitchelmore at Shell. Lorraine was our individual business leader winner for our Catalyst award last year. Her position as country chair for Shell and as EVP for heavy oil globally....

In the oil industry, 11% of senior executives are female. Thirty-three per cent of her executive team is female. Lorraine did this in a very deliberate, intentional way. Fifty per cent of those who start out in the workforce are women. She believes it should be 50% all the way through. They're not there yet, but she found and groomed the talent and figured out what people needed if they had been in jobs for too long. She was very aggressive in saying, “I want to know the talent; I want diverse slates when we're looking at promotions; and I want you to go out and find a much broader group of names than the ones we typically get. I want us to have conversations around those people, and that is the basis on which I want us to talk about succession planning and promotions.”

From my perspective, 33% is really impressive, and that is individual leadership. We see that broadly throughout FP 500 companies, but we really need it to become a culture.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's right. It's not just the 500 companies. There are a lot of really good people out there and really good businesses that really want women to succeed. We just need to get the rest of them to think about that.

Kate, I have a question for you as well.

• (1610)

The Chair: Be very brief.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Just very briefly, talking about best practices, do you have a best practice that really comes to your mind?

Dr. Kate McInturff: One of the things I hear about from industries, from women working across the country, and indeed, from economists is the need for affordable child care. This is a huge barrier for women in every sector across the country.

We have, happily, in Quebec's program, an example of how this can work for the economy and for women in Canada. We've seen women's employment levels rise, at least when we've looked at the major cities in Quebec. We are starting to see pay gaps that are narrower than the national average as well as higher levels of women being promoted into senior management. So it's obviously making a difference.

I think, just on a day-to-day level, if you think about what it means to the average woman to be working and balancing double the number of hours of work at home, it's exhausting. Doing that increases stress levels, which obviously has health impacts. It's not good for anyone.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Thank you very much to all of our witnesses today, Ms. McInturff, Ms. Johnston, and Ms. Phillips, for joining us and sharing very powerful testimony.

Ms. McInturff, your research and reports on the economic costs of violence against women and the status of women in Canadian cities are extremely helpful in communicating the benefits of women's equality to the Canadian economy. You also point to the costs all of us bear when women are unsafe, unsupported, and unable to prosper.

I'd like to ask you, as an expert who has done extensive quantitative research, what your top five recommendations would be for the federal government in promoting economic prosperity and leadership for women.

Dr. Kate McInturff: Thank you.

In addition to child care, I would echo what Alex has said about the fact that we need to keep track of how we're paying and promoting men and women. It is clear, as Alex's examples demonstrated, that we cannot address, for example, inequities in pay if we don't know that they're there. So where there are policies that require employers to keep track of those things, then those employers are in a position to actually address the gaps.

I think in terms of women's pay, we also need to look at labour force segregation and the fact that men and women tend to work in different industries. I think there are two things to do there. One is to value the work that women do in female-dominated sectors so that our computer programmers and our elementary school teachers are making equivalent wages or more equal wages. The other is to remove the barriers for women to work in the sectors where they would like to work but perhaps aren't finding the jobs, or where they're facing barriers like child care or the lack of flexible work hours.

I think we need to increase the budget of Status of Women Canada. I just think we're being unrealistic about what it's going to cost to create well-being for women in Canada. As everyone here has demonstrated today, we are still facing inequalities in this country, and 0.03% is just not enough. The take-home on that for me, and I hope I repeated this often enough, is that we will see economic benefits down the road that investments in child care pay themselves back in terms of economic growth; that closing the wage gap pays back your investment in economic growth; that increasing women's access to paid work increases economic growth. This isn't about an endless outflow of government funds. I think if we make those investments, think of them as tied up investments, we will see great dividends to our economy and obviously to women in their lives.

Last of all, thank you so much for bringing up the issue of violence against women. I wasn't able to address this in my remarks. Initially, there's no question that women's economic security is related to women's personal security. Women who don't have the means to afford housing, for example, may find themselves staying in an abusive relationship. The YWCA has found, in a survey of their shelters, that the lack of affordable housing is the number one reason that women in shelters return to abusive settings.

There's also been some excellent research by academics in British Columbia looking at the long-term economic impacts of women after they've experienced violence. Among their findings was the fact that for women who have experienced domestic violence, three years after they leave the setting, regardless of what their incomes were at the time that the abuse took place, they are 13 times more likely to be using food banks three years later. So that tells us that there's a huge impact on women's economic well-being when they've experienced violence. This is a two-way dynamic. Anything we can do to increase women's economic security is going to have an impact on their personal security, and alternatively, the more we invest in women's personal security, the greater their economic well-being is going to be.

Thank you.

•(1615)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you.

Madam Chair, how long do I have?

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Excellent.

So I'd like to share those two minutes, and ask a question of Ms. McInturff and Ms. Phillips that relate to your work.

Ms. McInturff, in the report "The Best and Worst Place to be a Woman in Canada", I noticed that the two major Albertan cities, Calgary and Edmonton, rank quite low on your gender index. Of course, we know Alberta to be a wealthy province.

Ms. Phillips, you referred to the challenges that women face in your province, both rural and urban, indigenous women as well.

I'm wondering if you can both comment further on why Calgary and Edmonton don't rank higher. Perhaps, Ms. McInturff, you could take the one minute and we'll share it.

Dr. Kate McInturff: Sure.

Briefly looking at Calgary and Edmonton, what we see is a very segregated workforce. Not only do women tend to work in education, health care, and the service sector, but in those Alberta cities, women tend to work in the lowest paid of those female-dominated sectors, which is the service sector. This looks different in different provinces. So in Ontario we see women in the service sector but we also see investments through public policy in the health care sector and the education sector. That has made a big difference to women's incomes in that region. That's something we can translate to the federal level.

I'm not suggesting we shouldn't invest in jobs in construction and manufacturing and the extractive industries, but we also need to think about the industries where women work. Are we creating jobs in those industries, and of those industries, are we only creating the lowest-paying jobs? I think more jobs in health care and education are not only going to help women in terms of increasing their incomes, but they're also going to provide better services for families and communities. So it's a double benefit.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Ms. Phillips.

Ms. Shannon Phillips: There are two things I would say. Alberta does have a very low percentage of GDP spent on public services, that's both services that women access in order to achieve equality outcomes, but it's also where we find women working. So there's that part.

The second part of this is the lowest-paid sectors. While we see average weekly earnings growing in Alberta in the higher-paid sectors, what we see is a stagnation at the lowest ends of the labour market. One of the reasons for that is the massive influx of temporary foreign workers in Alberta. Only last week the C.D. Howe Institute issued a report in which they found that the TFW program was increasing unemployment in Alberta and B.C. in particular.

I'll share with you one community that I referenced in a report I wrote last year called "From Last Resort to First Choice" on the regional impact of the TFW program. Of the small cities in this report, Medicine Hat was the most shocking example of negative job growth. In one year alone, 2012, the economy shed 6,000 jobs, but 1,000 labour market opinions were issued for temporary foreign workers. You can bring in several TFWs under one LMO.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Phillips, but that's all the time we have for this question period.

Ms. O'Neill Gordon, go ahead for seven minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you all for taking time to be with us today.

As you know, we are focusing on women's place in the economy and at the same time we continue to look at ways to create greater economic importance for women. We certainly appreciate your contribution here this afternoon.

My first question is for Alex Johnston. You mentioned Catalyst as being an important tool in helping Canadian women to prosper and to succeed economically. What does your network accomplish as a whole that you couldn't have made happen as a singular company? I'm simply wondering.

Ms. Alex Johnston: What does our network of companies accomplish? There are three things.

One, the power of peer pressure is quite significant. I've seen, even in two years, the OSC is driving a different conversation around boards. I think international pressure drove us to a different place, but individual leaders started to drive people to a different kind of conversation. So I think in a network of companies and business leaders, seeing each other connecting has an impact.

We're seeing it in the mining sector. Mining sector stats for boards and executive committees are terrible. Five years ago this wasn't a conversation. You have two worlds in Canada, a place where the conversation isn't happening around talent development, men and women fully leveraging talent, and a place where it is. That's changing, but that's changing because individuals are starting to say, "I don't want to be a zero. I actually don't want to be a zero anymore, so help me find qualified women. That's starting a conversation around engineers and geologists. You don't have to be in a mine in Angola to be on a board, but you do need to have the requisite experience.

Peer pressure is huge. Best practices is huge. The reason I share an example like Tom Falk is because it matters. The year before, Muhtar Kent was one of our global award winners. When you hear him—CEO for Coca-Cola, employing 700,000 people worldwide—talk about why he's betting the farm on women and developing women, it is very powerful and influential. That creates culture change.

I think the third piece, beyond best practices, really is strategies. There is no one-size-fits-all. That applies to most things in the world. But there are core things you see as very effective. When we look at companies setting goals, building their strategies, sometimes tying

achievement of those goals for diversity and inclusion to compensation, pushing the envelope, when you share through your network those kinds of things, they create change that is much broader than a company having an isolated conversation here, a company having an isolated conversation there. Sector conversations—IT, mining, oil and gas—knowing that their sectors, on the face of it, don't feel like they are fully leveraging their talent, that is beneficial as well.

Mining isn't necessarily comparing itself to banking, but they are finding sectors where they have common challenges, common opportunities. So I think it's having a network of business leaders and companies sharing a lot of this. It's a lot of practitioners working together that really matters and is quite powerful.

• (1620)

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Thank you.

In the work you are doing, I imagine you are hearing about the work experiences from different regions of Canada. How does equality for women vary from region to region across our great country, and why do you think that is so?

Ms. Alex Johnston: It's a very interesting question. When I look at it from a corporate perspective, it's a smaller sample size in smaller jurisdictions where you don't have as many headquarter companies. When we put out the census data we typically look at provinces and what's happening; I do think there are cultural differences, industry differences in provinces.

One of the things we are finding now, and this is relevant for you, is that governments are playing a leadership role. Governments typically, especially with business, don't want to be mandating things, but I'm interested that in Newfoundland and various places they are requiring goals and targets to bid on public projects. That is a real positive.

Different people are playing different roles. On Friday I'm speaking at a conference in Moncton. New Brunswick is trying to put together an action plan around women. I love the lineup of speakers. I love that they're bringing together 150 professional women. People are trying to figure out the right way to insert themselves. The federal advisory council led by Kellie Leitch is the same thing. What is our role? How do we assume that role?

My view is that you as a government and as a committee have a very influential platform. Partly it's driving the conversation, and partly it's honing in on two, three, or four things that you want to be pushing, with the influence you have to sensitize people, and beyond that, to move them to a different place. Is it a carrot or stick? I don't know. I like what the OSC has done because I don't think it's a carrot or a stick. I think it's somewhere in between, but I think it will have an impact.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: I'm glad to hear you are coming to New Brunswick. That is my province. I have seen gradual changes with women getting more involved in the economy and it is a great welcome to our economy.

My next question is for Shannon Phillips. Considering the vast natural resources, I would say a large part of your labour force is employed in skilled trades. Our government has recently invested in encouraging people to join the skilled trades through things like the Canada job grant to transform skills training and allocation, allocating \$4 million over three years in programs that help apprentices in the skilled trades. I wonder how women have benefited from these skilled trades initiatives, and has this brought greater representation of women into the skills trade workforce?

Ms. Shannon Phillips: I can give you some insight into apprenticeship numbers in Alberta, and what we've seen in terms of the results of the various public policy initiatives. We have not seen a large growth in the number of women receiving Red Seal or other certifications in the building trades. What we see in Alberta, in fact, over the last few annual reports for our training and apprenticeship board is that the number of women in traditionally female apprenticeships and trades, which is to say hair stylists, some bakers and chefs, those kinds of trades have increased. This data lags a little bit too. The number of women in non-traditional trades, particularly the ones that are really exploding in their demand—steam-assisted operators, power engineers, and these kinds of trades—those numbers of women are not increasing.

We have seen some increase in the number of electricians, which is good, but where we find electricians and to a lesser extent plumbers and pipefitters, they are in municipal infrastructure projects. We see those women working in cities and towns where they can go home at night, not in the middle of nowhere up in Fort McMurray.

That says something about the kind of economy we are building if we want to attract women into the trades.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Ms. O'Neill Gordon.

Mr. Casey, it's now your turn. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Ms. Phillips, I want to come right back to you on the very same theme.

I'm from Prince Edward Island, and two very common themes that you touched upon, I hear over and over again. Those are the need for long-term jobs close to home, and the choices that have been made with respect to the provision of government services, or the removal of government services over the years.

I can tell you that I did a bit of a double take as I heard your opening remarks. I had to keep looking at the sign over your head to see that you were speaking from the economic engine of Canada and not from my part of the world, because the themes you touched upon, I hear about so much.

Going back to your last answer, you talked about apprenticeships and opportunities in non-traditional work. The federal government programs that were hugely successful in our part of the world were the labour market agreements and the labour market development agreements. In particular, there was a program administered through the Women's Network in Prince Edward Island called Trade HERizons. I'm aware of one particular success story of someone who went from receiving social assistance to becoming a welder, making over \$40,000 a year, which is certainly darn good money in our parts.

May I have your comments, first of all, if these—the labour market agreement and the labour market development agreement—are programs that have resulted in some significant value also in your part of the world? As well, what are your comments more generally on government programs as they relate to making opportunities for women in non-traditional fields?

Ms. Shannon Phillips: First of all, I think we need to do more than advertise to women, if we want women to work in non-traditional fields. It has historically been the approach of the provincial government, as you know. There is a lot of overlapping jurisdiction in this area of training, and so on. It hasn't been a roaring success in Alberta, because the approach taken is essentially to advertise to people rather than to actually support people.

That doesn't just come from being able to access bursaries and so on. It also comes from being able to relocate to where the work is, and it also comes from the policy environment around apprenticeships. Are those apprenticeship spots available? Are the right incentives being made for employers to hire apprentices? I think that's something that the Canada job grant misses, and I think that's something that many provinces miss as well.

In terms of long-term jobs close to home and removal of government services, I note for Atlantic Canada that there is a lot of pomp and some very excited talk about the energy east pipeline. Quite frankly, all of those projects ship the raw bitumen straight past the refineries in New Brunswick, and even the refinery in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, is facing closure.

What we need to understand about upgrading and refining is that those have spinoff effects throughout an entire region, because it means that your economy can engage in things like tertiary manufacturing—plastics and other kinds of manufacturing processes that didn't exist before. If you're just shipping the raw bitumen away, you are taking that economic base away from an entire region, and I think that matters to people in Atlantic Canada.

Finally, the last point I think I'll make is about the EI program. Canadians need to be given a proper incentive to relocate to where the work is. I am not going to argue that there is an economy-wide labour shortage. I think there has been enough work done on that, and Stats Canada will tell you that there are six unemployed Canadians for every job vacancy in this country. What we have are skills mismatches, and potentially we have people needing more incentive to relocate to where the work is, or at least relocate temporarily. I think we can address that through the EI program, and we can make it so that we can relocate people—at least potentially short term for construction jobs, particularly in northern Alberta—so that we can fill those jobs with Canadians first; so that Canadians can have first crack at that employment and take the money they earn back to their communities in P.E.I. or elsewhere; so we do not have to bring in temporary foreign workers to fill those spots.

• (1630)

Mr. Sean Casey: Don't get me started on the EI program. I'd invite you to come door to door with me if you want to learn a lot about it.

Ms. McInturff, I will start with you, and maybe there will be some comments from the others.

There's been a fair bit of discussion, certainly even within the Conservative Party, with respect to income splitting. Some Conservatives like it; some don't. What are your views, or the views of your organization, with respect to income splitting and how it fits with the causes that you advance, if at all?

Dr. Kate McInturff: Income splitting is not something that is going to benefit the families that need it most. It is essentially an upside-down benefit, so the wealthiest families reap the greatest rewards. I think there are many ways that we could better spend the billions of dollars that an income-splitting program would cost, not least on a federal child care program, which would itself yield great rewards, as I've said before, for our economy and for families across the country.

My colleague, David Macdonald, has written extensively and done the economic analysis of this. What you see is a huge concentration of benefits at the very highest income deciles and little to no benefit at the lowest income deciles. That in itself is a problem. Then if you look at the economic inequality between men and women, of course women tend to be concentrated in those lower income deciles, so women benefit the least.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Ambler, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our three witnesses for being here today and providing such interesting testimony.

My first question is for Ms. McInturff.

I was wondering if you could tell us a bit more about the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' Making Women Count program. I was just reading a little bit about it on my iPad here and I was hoping you could tell us about it.

Dr. Kate McInturff: Absolutely.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives is a public policy think tank. We have a national office, as well as several provincial offices. I joined the national office a little over a year ago as part of this new initiative called Making Women Count, which is aimed at conducting research that examines the public policy challenges and solutions to the problem of gender inequality.

Most of my work so far has focused on economic analysis, the economic analysis of the different economic status of men and women, but also looking at, for example, the economic cost of violence against women.

• (1635)

Mrs. Stella Ambler: I've noticed you've published a number of papers and done a fair bit of research, including one on the job market and how it remains divided by gender despite progress in women's access to education. We hear all the time that more women graduate from university now, more women are graduating from law schools and medical schools. I'd like your opinion on why that doesn't seem to be translating into overall better economic outcomes for women.

Dr. Kate McInturff: I think there are a number of reasons. One is that even earlier than the university level, at the secondary level, in high school, we see girls tending to move away from the math and science classes that they would need as prerequisites to go into those male-dominated fields like engineering and the technology sector. There's not only a sticky floor, but women aren't even making it out of the basement at that high school level.

For the women who are going into education—and it's absolutely true that we have very well-educated women in this country and we should be proud of it. We've made huge strides in the last several decades and we have seen a steady increase in women's employment levels. But the thing that's happening, at least what the numbers seem to be showing, is that once men and women have graduated they're facing that sticky floor Alex mentioned, which has to do with a variety of factors. I don't think that there's any evidence that the reasons overwhelmingly are preference. It's hard to track what people's intentions are, but what you can see is how they behave. The way women are behaving suggests that they want to work full time, that they want to work in well-paid jobs, that they are going into these professions, but not only are they not making it to those senior levels, they're having a really tough time in the sort of mid-career level. Part of that, clearly, has to do with that work-life balance.

This is not just an issue for women. Women are, obviously, disproportionately impacted by the fact that they do that double burden of unpaid work. But if you look at the kind of inflexibility of our labour market, in terms of men and women both still tending to go into particular job types, men's roles in the job market have also been fairly inflexible. So I think when we talk about moving women into non-traditional trades, we also need to think that this could be a real benefit for men, that we could also open up new doors for men who maybe don't want to be engineers, maybe they want to be nurses and we're still putting up barriers to that kind of labour force flexibility.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: It's interesting that you would mention that double burden of unpaid work. A few weeks ago, some of us were at the Women in Communications and Technology dinner. I don't know if you recall, but I thought the comments of the guest speaker—the one who won the award, who worked at Bell—about balancing family and work were fascinating and interesting. I've never really heard it said like this before. If I could paraphrase, she said, so often we women try to micromanage our families and our work and we feel this burden of guilt that men never do. She said, get over it. Other people can make your kids' lunches and kiss their boo-boos too. I thought that was good advice for women. I know I had to get over that myself when I first arrived here in Ottawa three years ago. I was trying to micromanage.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. Ambler.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: I don't do that anymore, and they're still alive and it's all good.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Sellah, the floor is yours for five minutes.

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

I would like to begin by thanking the analysts joining us today. They can provide us with more information about the prosperity of women.

My first question is for Ms. Phillips.

You are a policy analyst at the Alberta Federation of Labour. You have already talked about temporary workers.

Can you provide us with a comparative analysis between genders under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program in Alberta?

• (1640)

[English]

Ms. Shannon Phillips: Sure. I'm happy to talk about that program as are many Canadians I think these days.

The Chair: *Un instant*, Madam Phillips.

Madam Crockatt.

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): While it might be fascinating for the witness to be able to share her thoughts on this, I wonder if you could direct my colleagues opposite to try to keep their questions on the topic of this study, which is the economic prosperity of Canadian women.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Phillips, I ask that you answer the question, but focus on the women who could be affected by some of the programs.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Absolutely. We know that women have jobs that pay them less than men. In addition, women are more likely than men to work part time.

The Chair: Ms. Phillips, can you give a short answer?

Ms. Shannon Phillips: Thank you.

[English]

We have seen, particularly in Alberta, an explosion of the use of the temporary foreign worker program in low-skilled occupations. This is not simply in the food service sector, although we do see it there. We see that the majority of those workers in Alberta who are Canadians or permanent residents are in fact women. They are in the hotel and hospitality industries, the service sector.

We also see a large number of temporary foreign workers in nurseries and greenhouses. We also see many now coming in, not through the live-in caregiver program, which has a pass to citizenship, but in fact as temporary foreign workers. I would argue that about a 100% of those workers are women.

What we've found is that employers across the board, in Alberta—we released this data on Friday—are receiving labour market opinions for lower than the prevailing wage rate. What that means is that employers are being allowed, by the government, to pay less than what is being paid to Canadians.

We know that in the service sector, the Canadian workers who are having their wages undercut by temporary foreign workers are women—

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Phillips, I don't want to discriminate, but I would like you to limit your answer to the effects of the program you are talking about and to tell us whether there is any impact on Albertan women.

[English]

Ms. Shannon Phillips: I was getting there.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

Ms. Shannon Phillips: The impact on Canadian wages is that prevailing wage rates, which we've obtained through access to information from ESDC, have stagnated for the lower-wage occupations in Alberta. That is the impact.

For women who are working in low-skilled occupations, their wages have essentially remained the same since 2008. Now it is small wonder that you cannot attract people to work in those occupations if wages are not keeping pace with the economy. That is a recipe for women's poverty, and it's also a recipe for a continual hamster wheel of the temporary foreign worker program, instead of making sure that Canadian women have access to those jobs first.

[Translation]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: How much time do I have left, Madam Chair, with these interruptions?

The Chair: You have two minutes left.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: My next question is for Ms. Johnston.

Research shows that gender diversity provides business with some benefits in terms of the decision-making process and performance.

Can you tell us more about how gender diversity improves the decision-making process within companies and corporations while at the same time generating better performance for them?

Ms. Alex Johnston: In companies that have more women among their senior ranks, that increased presence clearly has an impact on performance. We consider the averages. Of course, we could choose companies with many women in senior positions that are performing poorly. However, generally speaking, the average economic performance is higher when more women occupy senior positions.

Moreover, if more women—three and above—are on a company's board of directors, over a five-year period, the same changes are noted within the executive committee and the organization. We don't know exactly why this is, but it is clear that cultural changes are occurring in the organization.

Although there isn't much research to definitively confirm this principle, common sense says that an individual dealing with a complex problem will definitely not select as external advisers five individuals who think, reason and present their positions exactly like them. When dealing with a complex problem, it is clear the person will seek different opinions that reflect different perspectives in order to make the right decision.

That's exactly the personal experience that has been shared with us by people who are represented on executive committees and boards of directors.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mrs. Sellah.

Over to you, Mr. Young.

[English]

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): You tried that before, Chair. Thank you, Chair.

Kate McInturff, thank you for coming. Thank you for coming, Alex and Shannon, and as well for your time.

Kate, you said that in the education sector men still earn 10% more. It's a fully unionized environment. How is that possible?

Dr. Kate McInturff: Good question.

That was the median employment incomes for elementary school teachers, so it's not taking into account differences in the number of hours worked.

What I would suspect is that the reason for the \$10,000-a-year gap in salaries would have to do with that problem of rates of promotion, so, say, you see more men going into school administrator positions, which are higher paid. Also it's to do with the fact that in any sector, women tend to be overrepresented in part time, temporary, and contract work.

I suspect that in education you would also see an overrepresentation of women on contract or working as substitute teachers, essentially, so even though you have a highly unionized sector and some good policies in place to try to equalize pay, we're still facing challenges around promotion and around access to permanent, full-time work.

Mr. Terence Young: Understood. Thank you very much.

I only have four minutes left.

Alex Johnston, I think you're right on. You have identified subreasons or subgroups of reasons that women don't make it into the higher levels of management and on boards. You talked about sponsors and mentors. You talked about how when they are hired, they don't get the projects with the biggest budgets, etc., so they can show what they can do or create more success for the company. You also talked about access to the executive floor, so the senior people don't bear witness to their talents and skills. Can you give me, in a minute, three ways those things can be promoted?

Ms. Alex Johnston: In an organization?

Mr. Terence Young: Yes.

Ms. Alex Johnston: Leadership, it's as simple as that.

Mr. Terence Young: With specific actions...?

Ms. Alex Johnston: Yes, 100%. What I love about the evidence is that it takes the conversation away from anecdotal examples where people go, “My God, I offered her a promotion and she said no. I just don't think women want it. Who cares?” That's an anecdotal example.

As soon as you have evidence, you have an informed conversation. What I love about the evidence is that you table it with CEOs and business leaders, and they go, “There's no way this is happening in my company, there's no way.” If I look at the project allocation, we'll see these differences, and they come back and go, “Oh my God, this is happening in my company.”

As soon as people are aware and they take the steps to be informed, change likely happens. I think the challenge with dealing with business leaders in particular is that they're juggling a lot of staff, and it's easy to say, “I have serious priorities for my shareholders. I have serious priorities coming down from the board. I don't really have time to think about diversity and inclusion.” It's about talent development, and they—

Mr. Terence Young: Like, for example, mentoring.... Do you have any companies that have a formal mentoring program for women?

Ms. Alex Johnston: Tonnes, and mentoring has been happening for quite a while.

Mr. Terence Young: How does it work best?

Ms. Alex Johnston: It depends on the companies. Some companies have something quite structured. Some companies say, “You as a senior leader need to be mentoring three to five people; that's part of your performance evaluation. I'm going to find out from those people how you're mentoring them.” There are different models, but companies are doing that well.

The sponsorship thing is different, and I like what Tom Falk did, because he said that sponsorship is succession planning and getting people into senior roles, and if you're only sponsoring people who look exactly like you, there's no way we're leveraging our talent.

•(1650)

Mr. Terence Young: You say that the companies you're dealing with are making progress and you're pleased about the progress.

Ms. Alex Johnston: One hundred per cent.

Mr. Terence Young: So you want to get more of it done in more companies.

Ms. Alex Johnston: One hundred per cent. The thing with the file allocation is that what we're saying to business leaders is if this is going on in your company, you have two problems. One, you need to be dealing with the front-line people who are allocating the files; and two, three to five years down the road when you're talking about promotion decisions, everyone thinks they're being objective. They think they're evaluating people fairly, and they're saying that they're both great and they think they're superstars, but look at what he took on and delivered, compared to what she took on and delivered.

Right out of the gate, they weren't put on the same path, and those are the kinds of things that good business leaders—and this is about leadership—understand. They take steps to say, “That's not happening on my watch. Now what are we going to do about it?”

Mr. Terence Young: Their companies benefit....

Ms. Alex Johnston: Yes.

Mr. Terence Young: What relevance is there to the social circles of private schools, Ivy League schools, and family connections with regard to holding women back who are talented, but don't benefit from those connections?

Ms. Alex Johnston: That's a complex question. I frankly don't know.

I would speculate there is certainly an advantage to building influential networks, but what we see in companies is building a network. You could start with great talent and advance. You need to be building a network. So whether you bring influential people from your previous experiences with you through life, building networks in your company matters, and building networks with senior people in your company matters, but I don't know how much of an impact—

Mr. Terence Young: If publicly traded companies had to have independent directors, say, on a board of 12 you had to have two or three—

The Chair: Yes, very quickly....

Mr. Terence Young: —would that increase the possibility that there would be more women on corporate boards?

Ms. Alex Johnston: Yes, 100%.

There's no reason whatsoever right now why companies couldn't just add a director, quite frankly. It's great. There's no magic to the number of directors you have.

The Chair: That was a quick question, a quick response.

We'll now move to Ms. Crockatt.

[*Translation*]

The floor is yours for five minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Thank you very much to all our witnesses.

I'm finding this testimony today quite fascinating. Alex, in particular, I was so captivated with what you were telling us because it looks like you're providing some solutions. We're looking for some solutions and some economic leadership for how to improve the prosperity of Canadian women.

I particularly like the fact that you're talking about some things that have worked. One of the things I'd like to know, though, is what is the business case? It's great to say we would like to see more women higher up in corporations and more, but we know that these decisions are often driven by economics. My understanding is that there is a sound economic case for them. In fact, I worked for Southam newspapers and they realized their circulation was declining at one point because they weren't attracting enough women readers. They looked around and saw that most of the editors and publishers were men. They decided to make a very significant change to that. They did put in place practices that dramatically increased both the number of women in those positions as well as their bottom line.

Can you tell us what is the business case? What do companies need to hear in order to be spurred to take the actions that you're talking about?

Ms. Alex Johnston: The business case is solid. We've done research, McKinsey has done research, Credit Suisse has done research, and it's all coming to the same conclusions. The "why" is not well established, but the "what" is well established. Companies with more women at the top on average outperform companies with fewer women. You have a connection between more women on boards within five years and more women on executive committees. We always say higher employee engagement scores when you really have a diverse and inclusive workplace, that makes sense. Making sure you're comfortable bringing yourself to work and feeling comfortable being who you are matters to how you perform at work and how you feel at work.

We often say to people, reflecting your client base matters. The reason that Muhtar Kent, the CEO for Coca-Cola, became so fixated on women was that he said 80% of purchasing decisions were made by women but this was not reflected through the ranks, so over the course of time there was no way they could continue to be a successful company if women weren't developing products and making decisions. Not reflecting their customer base was going to catch up with them, so they had to start changing that now because it would take time to do so.

In terms of core values, what we see is not simply internal change—when you really have a diverse and inclusive workplace that benefits employees and higher employee engagement scores—if you reflect your customer base and your values speak to your client base, that is often reflected in better business performance.

In the Canada high potential report I tabled with you, we were very interested to see that in Canada alone two out of ten women leaving their MBA move right into the public sector—hospitals, universities, and government—to build their career. That is completely different from the rest of the world. What they're saying is that they want something that's connected to a mission. They want a sense of job security—although to some degree in government this has changed. They want to feel that the place they're working for reflects their values. Those are important things. Ultimately for business leaders, you want the best people in the best places. If right out of the gate you're losing a whole cohort of women, that's going to impact your bottom line.

• (1655)

Ms. Joan Crockatt: What would your recommendation be to this committee for how to actually leverage this if there's an economic imperative for companies? It seems there is a fairly significant gap because a lot of companies aren't getting it.

Ms. Alex Johnston: Yes.

I always frame it in my remarks as an economic competitiveness argument. Fairness resonates with some people, equal opportunity resonates with some people, and economic competitiveness resonates with everybody. I think there are multiple things involved in this conversation. If you distill the research, the research is there and the business case is there. You start with the business case and you move out. I think you build an argument as an influential group of people about Canada. We bring people from all over the world here and we pride ourselves on a great education system. All that is very real but the stats are showing us very clearly that we're not doing nearly enough with that. We talk the talk—

Ms. Joan Crockatt: What should we be doing?

You mentioned the women's advisory council led by Kellie Leitch. I think you said you loved it. Why do you like it? What should we be focusing on now in order to leverage this economic imperative?

Ms. Alex Johnston: I'm on it, so I have to like it. I do like it. She's a very good chair.

I think the way I view that is as an influential platform. I think government in particular can use its influence as a convenor to the point of independent directors. Yes, that can make a difference because it creates spaces, but you need shareholders to be demanding diversity among those directors.

I think if you as a convening body can start bringing the right people to the table and having this conversation, such as the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and investor groups, these are important people who shape the conversation. I think we need to make sure they're fully engaged in the conversation.

Executive search firms in the U.K. are developing a voluntary code. In Canada we're trying to figure out how to have the conversation. I think you can be influential in helping to drive a conversation around economic competitiveness that really matters—

[Translation]

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

Mr. Casey, go ahead for five minutes.

Mr. Sean Casey: I have no further questions. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: So we will move on to Ms. Young.

Ms. Young, you have five minutes.

[English]

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Thank you very much to all of you for coming and speaking so passionately about this very important issue.

I wanted to just finish off and continue on with where Ms. Crockatt was questioning you, Alex. Your mother says hello. I saw her yesterday.

Just to say Catalyst has been around—I was actually fortunate enough to attend some of the Catalyst events in New York, so I'm aware of the organization and what they do, and how much of an impact they've had in the United States. In Canada, of course, it's been a little slower because they came here a little later—20 years as opposed to 50 or 60, or whatever.

The question I have for you, actually, is this. Given the economic imperative that you outlined for us that women on boards and women in senior positions have proven to have a positive impact on increasing business and returns for businesses, why aren't you getting more people running to your gates to sign up for the Catalyst accord, and all of that sort of thing?

Ms. Alex Johnston: I'll say three things. One, I'm always amazed when I'm driving how often my kids remind me to put my seat belt on. I'm an adult. I know the stats. I understand very fully how important it is for me to have my seat belt on. I care about my health because of my children, and still, halfway through the drive they say, "Mom, you're not wearing your seat belt". Just because we have the information, just because we've internalized the information, it doesn't mean it leads to a behavioural change.

Secondly, a lot of these patterns have been around for a very long time. Until you point out to someone that the list of people they're sponsoring are all Asian men and you're an Asian man, I don't think that person would have thought of it. I think that a lot of these patterns are very—it's well-trodden ground and cultural change is challenging.

I think the third thing is leadership and making the time for this, from a competitiveness perspective, as business leaders or organizational leaders. I think all the information is there, but I think continuing to give people a push to do their part in contributing fully to the Canadian economy is important.

• (1700)

Ms. Wai Young: Let me respond to that and probe a little bit deeper, though. You outlined three things, right? The first one was around awareness.

Ms. Alex Johnston: Just awareness.

Ms. Wai Young: But you've been at this for 20 years, so are you saying that you've been ineffective in your awareness? Or is there more that government, as you said earlier, as a convenor, or even legislators could do in that regard?

I just want you to think about that a little bit. If you have some thoughts or some best practices or something that you want to propose, you can certainly do it through the women's network, of course. But you can also submit additional information to this committee in our study here.

Ms. Alex Johnston: Yes.

Ms. Wai Young: The second piece was around leadership.

Ms. Alex Johnston: Yes.

Ms. Wai Young: Correct?

Ms. Alex Johnston: Behavioural change. Patterns that are very well-established patterns—

Ms. Wai Young: Therefore, I'd like to ask, MBA programs and senior management courses that everybody at those levels take, are

they not sort of giving people that lens to look through to say, "Why aren't you guys considering this or not?" Is that learning not happening at those senior levels, and why not?

Ms. Alex Johnston: I can't say definitively, but I suspect, no. We always say that we don't have impact; companies have impact. So we're there and we'll provide the information. We'll provide the support. Ultimately, we're not moving the numbers. Companies and business leaders are moving the numbers, so our objective is to support the heck out of them in doing that.

Behavioural change can be hard to come by. I think it's happening a bit more quickly now. But I do think that—I don't like to say it takes time, but finally we have the right kind of pressure that's changing the conversation fairly dramatically.

Ms. Wai Young: But if I was a shareholder in any one of those Fortune 500 companies, I would be asking my leaders why they aren't producing more returns for me. If this is a tangible benefit to your moving further along in this area, why isn't that out there?

Ms. Alex Johnston: We've had all the information for so long, and the thing that's really created a shift is the international context. I always say that we didn't find religion early; we found religion midstream. I'm glad we found it, and I'm glad we're actually starting to have a much more meaningful conversation. I can't tell you why things stagnated for 20 years—and they really did stagnate. But I suspect.... If you just look at boards, we had a CEO summit in New York in December with 60 CEOs. There was no consensus on what the right strategies were, and different information sharing, but what became clear is the network that gets people onto boards is very powerful. That network has existed for decades.

Ms. Wai Young: Yes.

Ms. Alex Johnston: Cracking that network is very tough, and individuals would say, "I want someone I trust; typically I get names from a network of people I trust", and they're often the same names. It's only in the last two or three years that they're starting to say, "I don't want to get the same names over and over again", but that was so well established that reshifting it takes a lot of work, and it's not just information. It really is taking that information—

Ms. Wai Young: Would you say we've done that, we've cracked that nut in Canada? Is it bursting wide open, or is it still a very fine crack and we have to jackhammer that a little bit?

Ms. Alex Johnston: We made a really good crack in that. Yes, I think we're on our way—I really do—but we're only seeing shifts in numbers. Numbers have not taken off. I'll get you that chart, and it will knock your socks off.

Ms. Wai Young: Please submit that to us, and any additional information.

Do I have more time, Madam Chair?

The Chair: You have one minute, maybe a little bit more.

Ms. Wai Young: I just want to address some things that Ms. McInturff has said.

You said earlier in your testimony that 0.03% of the federal budget for the status of women committee, etc., was not enough. Are you aware that earlier, from other testimony we had from the department and other departments, that it is just this one little department within the federal government? The federal government is very big. We expend program dollars in all kinds of different areas, whether it's Industry Canada, Employment Canada; hundreds of thousands of millions of dollars that do focus on women's programming, whether it's skills training, whether it's targeted programming for aboriginal women, etc., but it's across the board. Unfortunately these funds are not captured, and we've asked the department, in fact, to capture them all, across all departments in government.

So I just want to let you be aware of the fact that it's not 0.03%. It's because this is a very tiny department. However, when you look across all government departments, all government levels, there's a substantive contribution. In addition, not even including the international work we have done.... Let me point to the human trafficking area, where we—as a strategy—have put in \$25 million, and that is primarily women and children.

A voice: Is there a question?

Ms. Wai Young: Let me also point to the maternal health and children area—

The Chair: Ms. Young, is there a question for Ms.—

Ms. Wai Young: I'm getting to the question for Ms. McInturff, thank you very much.

The Chair: Yes, thank you.

Ms. Wai Young: If given our...other people have strayed; I wanted to make that point.

The question is this. In all of your studies, have you accommodated and looked at all of these other programs to see how effective they are, and how we can, as a government, leverage them and/or make them more accessible, more effective?

• (1705)

Dr. Kate McInturff: Thank you for that.

Two things: one, I am aware, obviously, that other programs, departments, and agencies spend money on programs that impact women's lives. I have looked at, in particular, federal spending broadly across all departments on violence against women. What I found for the year 2011-12—which was the most recent year for which I had fiscal data—

Ms. Wai Young: Can we just talk about the economic, because—

The Chair: We're out of time.

Ms. Wai Young: What can we do more of? That is my question. Please submit that to the committee, in terms of whether these programs are not being effective—

Dr. Kate McInturff: Do I have any time?

The Chair: No, but if you could briefly submit an answer to the question, or how you would complete it, or maybe a member could —

Dr. Kate McInturff: Yes. The second point is that there was an Auditor General's report on the extent to which the government is not, in fact, conducting gender-based analysis of the impacts of its programs. Although there's been an action plan put in place in response to that, the only thing that's been documented subsequently is the number of trainings conducted in gender-based analysis. There's been no analysis of the actual impact—differential impact—of gender-based analysis on program decisions and policy decisions.

The Chair: Thank you very much for completing. It's always a very difficult job that I have, because I am as interested as all the members to know the answer.

Okay, thank you very much.

Ms. Ashton, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you.

I want to pick up on that piece. In fact, we did have the Status of Women officials at our committee earlier this week. When we asked the question about gender-based analysis across departments we were told that they did a boot camp and that 12 or 13 departments came, but they weren't able to tell us which they were. We're waiting for that response in writing. I think we can certainly say that we're very concerned, not only that GBA+ isn't being adhered to, but that it's clearly not a priority of the Status of Women department or the government to make sure that all departments are taking a lead in this area.

I do want to go back to something that came out in your work, Ms. McInturff, and that is the best and worst place to be a woman. I'd like to again ask you and also Ms. Phillips to comment. You talk in your report about public sector jobs that are available, and of course we know that public sector jobs are unionized in most cases. We know according to Statistics Canada that in 2012 about 30% of Canadians were unionized. The wage gap between union men and women is smaller than it is between men and women who are non-unionized. I'm wondering if you can tell us why this gap still exists and to what you attribute the difference.

Dr. Kate McInturff: Sure. At the risk of repeating what Alex has said, I think one of the things that unions, and indeed any employer, can do to close the wage gap is to actually track what's happening rather than relying on anecdotal evidence. This happens to be something that unions and public sector employers do well, because they have pay equity policies in place. They actually track rates of pay. They track the way they're categorizing work and the way they're then valuing that work and compensating it. The result is that compared to the private sector you do see an 8% smaller gap in the public sector. You also see higher than average incomes for women in the public sector than in the private sector.

But there's no reason that the private sector can't do the same thing. I suspect there are particular instances of particular private sector employers who do this. We just don't have, across the board, private sector policies that are working to ensure that they are paying their employees equitably. That's one of the big differences.

I think the other difference is that obviously pay is related to rates of promotion and the extent to which women or men are able to move into those higher-paid positions. Again here, as in Alex's examples, if you keep track of how people are being promoted, then you're in a position to make proactive decisions about making sure that you are in fact promoting people who are performing equally well and who bring equal kinds of training and assets to the table. If you don't keep track, you're just not in a position to do anything about it. So there again, where the public sector has those policies in place and they're tracking that information, they're able to do a better job of providing a remedy for the gaps that are there. It's not perfect; otherwise, we would have no gap. I think that "sticky floor" is still an issue. I think the work-life balance is still an issue.

I would also say that we've seen some shifts in the last couple of years with the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act and the changes to the legislation concerning federal contractors, which either have made it subject to market forces rates of pay or have made the implementation of pay equity policies a matter of discretion. There again, I don't think it's that anyone sets out to be a bad person. I think it's just that when we leave things up to people's discretion, as with the seat belts, sometimes we forget; whereas, if we have rules that say you have to think about this, you have to keep track, and you have to tell me what you did about it, then we see a more equitable workforce.

• (1710)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you.

Ms. Phillips, can you let us know what you attribute this gap to and perhaps what the reality is on the ground in Alberta?

Ms. Shannon Phillips: What we see from a lot of data we've examined recently is that women do better in the public service in a handful of occupations, particularly in Alberta. Women do better in low-skilled work. For example, people who work in front-line customer service or as clerks, people who work in hospital cafeterias or in government warehouses, earn better wages—the majority of whom are women—when they are public sector workers compared to their private-sector comparators. Where we see, in particular in Alberta, the opposite being the case, where you earn more in the private sector, is as an engineer or something like that.

Where many people will argue that the public sector is so much better paid than the private sector, we see that's not true in Alberta. In many occupations, the public sector is actually paid less than the private, but what people are criticizing when they say some occupations are paid better in the public sector are women's equality gains through collective bargaining at the lower-skilled occupations. Therefore, we see women being able to earn something approaching a living wage for things like working in a hospital cafeteria or working in a warehouse or working in various kinds of administration and clerical jobs.

I think we need to be really careful about comparing private to public sector wages and union to non-union work. However, overall, where women do better, particularly at the lower ends of the job market, is in places where they are able to avail themselves of some form of collective bargaining, of pay equity.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Great. Thank you. How long do I have?

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you very much.

Ms. McInturff, I would quickly like to turn our focus to women entrepreneurs for a moment. In budget 2014, \$150,000 is earmarked for women entrepreneurs. I know you have done some analysis on the federal budget for 2014. What have you learned regarding this particular promise?

Dr. Kate McInturff: Well, partly it's an open question. I was interested to see that, and of course I welcome any investment in women's economic well-being, and this is certainly a welcome initiative.

If we look at the financial statements of Status of Women Canada, it appears that their financial forecast for this coming fiscal year—the one that this most recent budget was concerned with—their budget is actually decreased by, I believe, \$303,000. It's unclear to me if that \$150,000 will be added to the budget that's forecast or if it's simply an allocation of existing funding.

Again, I would make the plea for better investments, and indeed leadership on these issues, through other government departments but also through Status of Women Canada, which is mandated with this task.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you. That's something for us to take forward. I do want to—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton: Yes, I do want to thank you very much. Thank you for joining us.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. McInturff, Ms. Johnston, Ms. Phillips, thank you very much for your patience. I was so excited by what I was hearing that I occasionally forgot about the time.

You gave us an overview of the situation. You also included in your testimony some very important points we will take into consideration when we draft our report. I think all the committee members were very interested in what you had to say.

Thank you very much.

I will suspend the meeting for few minutes, so that the committee can continue in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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