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Chair

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc

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• (1635)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP)): Good afternoon and welcome to the 23rd meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Today, we are continuing our study on the economic leadership and prosperity of Canadian women.

I would like to inform committee members that one of the witnesses whose appearance was scheduled for today has kindly agreed to her testimony being put back to next Monday. That witness is Claire Beckton, from Carleton University.

Without further delay, I would like to welcome the two witnesses who are going to take part in this meeting by videoconference. They are Christine Day, Chief Executive Officer at Luvo Inc., and Heather Kennedy, Vice President, Government Relations, at Suncor Energy Inc.

Thank you very much for your patience.

We will start with Ms. Day, who has 10 minutes for her presentation.

[English]

Ms. Christine Day (Chief Executive Officer, Luvo Inc.): Good afternoon to the committee.

As you may know, my former role was as CEO of Lululemon, so I'd like to open my remarks in the context of the work I did there.

Given there was a broad range of topics we could discuss, what I felt I could add the most value to was creating a company that was family friendly and where some of the best practices that we put in place to ensure that women's prosperity, leadership, and the family came first as a company. I'd like to share some of those practices with you, and then take any questions you might have on anything else.

For Lululemon, one of the things we did was to recognize that the Gini index, which is the difference in pay between the highest-paid and the lowest-paid workers in a company, has grown to over 500 times that of a CEO for the average worker. We decided to do some unusual pay practices to change this.

Any employee working for us who made less than \$85,000 a year was entitled to up to a 16% pay increase, and we held our senior officers to a less than 3% pay increase, with the goal of putting more money in our mid-tier and entry-tier level workers so they could afford day care, houses, cars, pay off their tuition and loans, and to

consume more in their daily lives, which then drove industry and the economy. This was our belief.

We also had a minimum of \$15 an hour that we paid every employee, whether it was starting at \$12 plus commission, or starting at \$15. The goal there, as I stated, was to increase the income levels for employees at the early stages of their career and reduce the wealth that was created at the top of the company.

Another family-friendly practice that we put in place which I felt was very important to ensure the prosperity of women and families was to only allow meetings to occur between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. This allowed people to accommodate day care and to be on time to pick up their children. The number one reason parents lose day care privileges is from being late to pick up their children. We created family-friendly policies that allowed our workers to address the real needs of working parents. This was really important for single mothers, in particular.

The other thing we did when parents had to work from home, or during sick time, we used the GoToMeeting or FaceTime technology to bring them into the workplace environment to accommodate absenteeism.

We also created access to transportation, which was the other reason people were late or couldn't get to work, particularly in our store environment. Addressing as a workplace the real needs of families and keeping our women employed, we felt were critical practices.

On an executive level, the other thing we felt was very important was having a board and a management team that reflected the women, so we set a commitment and met it. My executive team was 80% women and our goal was 50%. Our board was 50% women. We felt this was really important, not only for women to have role models, but for men to have role models of women leaders as well. Those are very important statistics, I think.

As you know, women are paid 77% of what men are paid, so we created a guarantee where we paid 100% regardless. We felt that with our strategy of women forming 50% of our board, 50% of our senior team, and reducing the gap in pay, that women basically are paid 80% of what men are paid, we also became a role model company. The results of that was that we became one of the most profitable retail apparel companies in the world. I believe that our practices around equality for women and increasing the income of our mid-tier employees were critical to energizing the company.

The other thing we did was accelerate development, which is about education. We created talent pool positions that we rotated women into that were about leadership and accelerated development, particularly for women who had taken maternity leave. We would rotate women into these accelerated development programs so that they could catch up on anything that they maybe missed in that year in their professional development.

This accelerated our talent pool and allowed us to promote women at the same rate that we would promote men.

Those are just some of the starting things that I wanted to talk about. I'd be happy to answer any questions from the committee.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Day.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kennedy, you now have the floor for 10 minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather Kennedy (Vice-President, Government Relations, Suncor Energy Inc.): Thank you very much. It is really a pleasure to be here this afternoon.

Can you hear me?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Yes.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather Kennedy: Thank you.

It's a great pleasure to be here today to share some of my personal experiences as a Canadian female leader. I do need to start with a couple of caveats, however.

The first is that I personally have never been paid less for a job than any of the men who I have worked with. Second, I have never gotten a job just because I am a woman.

I have, however, experienced harassment, missed opportunities, wondered every working day what my children were up to, and learned that not everyone values diversity at the decision-making table. But those experiences have been overshadowed by great support, openness for the leadership that I've been able to bring, and pride in being part of advancing the cause of professional women in my own small way.

I've also experienced a few firsts. Here are a couple of examples. At one company I was the first professional employee to need maternity leave. I've been the first female supervisor or manager for several staff on numerous occasions. I am a metallurgical engineer by training, having graduated 34 years ago from Queen's University. Today I am part of the 17% of the engineering workforce that is female.

I began my career in mining in northern Ontario and moved to coal mining in southern B.C., where I experienced my first management role, and from there I moved to Fort McMurray to Suncor to become part of the oil sands. I've had roles with Suncor in operations, major projects, human resources, and currently government relations.

I also had the opportunity to spend three years as an assistant deputy minister with the Government of Alberta collaborating with 16 ministries to develop oil sands policy.

Equally important to me is that I'm part of the half of Canadians who volunteer their time. I've been on the boards of seven not-for-profit associations and volunteered for countless others.

While the 17% figure that I referred to earlier may not seem like a lot, there has been a tripling of female engineers in my generation, moving from 8.5% to its current 23%. Additionally, the glass ceiling has moved up two to four levels of management hierarchy in a large company like the one I currently work for in that same generation. The fact that I use the term "glass ceiling" confirms that it still exists. Let me be clear on this point: the variety and upward nature of opportunities for women in the resource sector are increasing vastly; the systemic nature of the barriers is shrinking, but it is not gone.

I would make some observations. Few men, apparently about 5%, are told that they are too aggressive at work, while women are often told so. It's a word I may have personally heard in my 30-plus years a number of times. I recently heard an interesting way to phrase this: men are bosses and women are bossy. The good thing is that we can change this by acknowledging it. The next time you hear someone call a woman or a little girl bossy, go up to them and say that the little girl is not bossy; she has executive leadership skills.

I've personally never met a man who has been asked how he does it all, but which woman do you know that has not been asked it? The next time you have the urge to ask that question, change it up to be, "Sir, how is your ability to multi-task coming along?"

A diverse workforce increases the Canadian pool at a time when the resource sector indicates that they will be short tens of thousands of workers. Frankly, if you take the labour needs and add the female hiring opportunity to it, the data will be clear, and we will be driven to making it work. The workforce needs women, and women need the workforce. The real question is whether we can afford not to utilize every individual, and the answer is no. Why not optimize the workforce by creating opportunities for females in management? Increasing women in leadership encourages us to challenges and opportunities from a multitude of perspectives. It expands our overall expertise and it adds to shareholder value.

You don't need to take my word for it. There's plenty of research out there that shows that companies with more women in corporate officer positions and on boards of directors actually outperform those with fewer women. I would say my previous co-presenter demonstrated that more than capably. Diversity should not overshadow the need for expertise, but rather, diversity combined with expertise is relevant.

What do I personally contribute? I am a role model and I'm well aware that my actions at work, where only 25% of the employees are female, and as I volunteer, do matter to young women and they help create space for them to be considered for new opportunities. I'm a mentor. For any woman who asks, I'll find time to chat, to help, and to provide insights. I help form and lead women's initiatives internal to Suncor that look to attract and retain females. I hire and promote with diversity in mind. As a manager of people, I create a safe space for flexible work conditions within my company's policies.

What do I see as systemic opportunities? Build on the current momentum.

•(1645)

Right now, the number of applicants for technical positions in the sector can be small. It's clear that women en masse don't see big oil and gas as a first career choice. Let's create interest, though, with those who do.

Understand the constraints. There are ample research surveys and evidence about this.

Take policy action where appropriate, and provide support tools. As an example, tailoring recruiting situations is easy to do and yields positive results.

Provide a new lens to review resumé. Alter interview situations and questions so that diverse candidates feel comfortable, and this will increase their chances of being successful and getting the job.

Encourage the world to view females as leaders, not female leaders. Media reports of the first female CEO or premier are simply unacceptable.

Provide programs that give a leg up where appropriate. The ones that Suncor is most fond of are from Women Building Futures, plus some internal programs.

For the government, I would say many organizations and the education sector are already working on this matter and having success. Can the government help with funding? Can they help them create the network so that they are actually having a greater chance of success? Is the government considering diversity itself in its own appointments? In this area, leading by example, whether it's personally for someone like me or for Canada, it means everything.

I think I'll stop there and open it up for any questions that you might have.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kennedy and Ms. Day.

We now move to questions from committee members.

Mrs. Truppe, you have seven minutes.

[English]

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

Thank you both for being here today. We're honoured to have you both. I know you both are very busy, but we really appreciate your comments. You both have a wealth of experience.

I'll start with Christine Day.

Christine, I'm assuming, and I could be wrong, that there were more women employed at Lululemon than there are at Luvo. Is that correct?

Ms. Christine Day: Currently there are more employees at Lululemon, but do you mean women specifically?

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Yes, women specifically.

Ms. Christine Day: At Luvo, I'm back to start-up days. So I have about 150 employees. Of those 150 employees, about 100 are in the manufacturing sector that we have, and of those, 80% are women, which is very unusual for—

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's very good.

Ms. Christine Day: —a manufacturing environment.

In my office, it's about 50-50 women of the remaining 50 people.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: So you've done a great job, certainly, attracting women, and perhaps it's with your family-friendly initiatives that you have. Congratulations on doing that.

We're trying to find best practices and things that are working so that we can continue them for women and girls. What do you do to encourage leadership at Luvo right now so that you can put more women into those roles? You obviously are doing a good job. How are you getting the women in there, and what are you doing to encourage them so they want to apply?

Ms. Christine Day: I think the number one thing—and I'll start with Lululemon and practices that I've conveyed over to Luvo—is we taught leadership as part of our curriculum from day one. To anybody who came to work at Lululemon, we taught three levels of leadership.

The first was self; managing yourself and your relationship with others, managing your performance. Those were all considered of self.

Then we taught leadership of others, and that wasn't just people who reported to you. That was actually your relationships with peers and how to be a leader in an organization across multiple functions and divisions, and to work on projects so that we gave exposure to women.

One of the things that we did was in our leadership course, we would take 20 high-potential women leaders, and we would put men in there as well. The point was to keep them working together. Then we would give them strategic projects or initiatives from our plan and have them work cross-functionally. That gave them visibility, which is important to women leaders. It gave them confidence. Also in those courses, they all had a mentor from the management staff and an outside leadership course when you participated in that program. We ran it for eight months of the year; somebody would be in it for the eight-month program, and then a new class would be selected.

Our final leadership level was leading organizations, where we taught strategy and function and how to lead into the future vision and capability of an organization.

Leadership development was a core competency at Lululemon, and very much those are the philosophies that I'm bringing over to Luvo as well.

I have to start at a slightly different base here. I have to teach English as a second language, for instance, reducing barriers for training in my manufacturing facility, where we have hired a lot of immigrants.

I think it's recognizing what's in your workforce, the base that you're starting with, and developing leadership programs. For instance, in the manufacturing facility, we take the most competent women we've seen working and we put them in charge of a line, and we teach them already very basic principles from the lean manufacturing philosophy. We are already having them coach and learn leadership. As soon as they demonstrate any skills at all, we put them into a training program. Then they're getting self-development, and then that gives them promotional opportunities.

• (1650)

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Great. Thank you.

I was going to ask you if you have experience in mentorship, and you've answered that by saying that you had an eight-month mentorship at Lululemon. Is that what you said before?

Ms. Christine Day: Yes. For that program in particular, we had senior mentors assigned to each one of the five project teams out of the 20 or so people going in the program. The senior leader would mentor that group of four or five.

In addition, all high potentials in the company had a mentor.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: The mentors could be male or female. Is that correct?

Ms. Christine Day: Male or female, yes, or they could be a personal coach. We hired a stable of about five or six personal coaches who worked with people individually or in small groups, so that they had an outside resource that was a safe harbour, outside of the company, to talk to, to work on their personal leadership issues or barriers that got in the way. It existed outside the company and was extra safe, which I think for women, in particular, is very important.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Great. Thank you.

Heather, I have a quick question for you, too. You have such a great resumé. How did you get to where you are? You might inspire some young girls who are looking to perhaps be where you are as well, and all the experience you've had and working in a somewhat male-dominated environment as well.

Ms. Heather Kennedy: Thank you.

I think you land a little by accident. I went to engineering school and I didn't actually realize, back in 1976, that there weren't a lot of female engineers. Frankly, when you're 17 and you're a young woman and you're in a class with three women and 50 guys, it's not all bad. I have to say I was just really lucky along the way. You get to your first job and you look around and you realize you're a talented, competent individual. You have a few moments that are a bit scary, but you just make your way and you rest on your values as an individual, and away you go.

Then, luckily for me at Suncor, much like Lululemon, we have some great training programs and we also focus on female leaders. Through our succession planning, we take time to find female leaders and give them opportunities. I was lucky that my first role as a vice-president was in stakeholder relations, which is not my field, as you can imagine, and you just take the right mentoring and coaching along the way and take advantage of every opportunity you have.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Great. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Thank you very much, Ms. Day and Ms. Kennedy, for joining us today and sharing not only your work practices but also your personal experiences. They certainly help shape the kind of work that we're doing here.

There's a lot of talk of leadership and fostering leadership, which is obviously critical in having women move up in organizations, and women aspire to do jobs that traditionally aren't seen as "women's jobs". Beyond that, it's pretty clear that some structural barriers that women face prevent them from either getting into certain work or, frankly, getting out of the house to work.

Ms. Day, you alluded to some of the things that your company does to accommodate families and women with children.

I'd like to ask this question of both of you: how important is access to affordable child care to the economic prosperity and security of women in Canada?

Perhaps we could start with you, Ms. Day.

• (1655)

Ms. Christine Day: I think it's one of the biggest topics. Not only is it access to quality care for families and particularly for single mothers to have a career or go back to school, I think the investment by the government in quality child care options or encouraging those in the private sector is absolutely critical. I think anything an employer can do to help fund those....

We had a couple of programs at Lululemon where we funded and helped support the child care programs and guaranteed spaces for sick children, things that are particularly challenging for young mothers and young parents.

I think that is really the number one barrier, in particular for women.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you.

Ms. Kennedy, go ahead.

Ms. Heather Kennedy: I would absolutely support what Ms. Day says.

At Suncor, we follow two models. The first is at our head office in Calgary, where we provide a day care called the Pumpkin Patch, and so for employees located there, it's physically available to them. We've taken a different approach, as you can imagine, in many of our remote sites in Fort McMurray or farther away. We've chosen to provide funding and support to private sector providers of child care, but we do recognize the importance of that kind of security.

The other thing we've done in our 24-hour, seven-day-a-week operation in Fort McMurray is we've created a lot of options for shift workers. For example, if you're a shift worker and so is your spouse, we'll allow you to choose whether you'd like to be on the same shift, a completely opposite shift, or something in between so that you can best accommodate your child care preferences. That's been extremely helpful up at our oil sands operation.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you.

Ms. Kennedy, you mentioned the challenges to people who work in northern and remote areas. In fact, I represent northern Manitoba where there are many people who work in the resource-based sector, mining, in particular, and where child care is a huge issue. Of course, it has a disproportionate impact on women and in many cases takes them out of the job market entirely.

I want to share one piece that relates entirely to women in the trades and the connection to child care. In 2010 the status of women committee conducted a study on women in non-traditional employment. Sadly, almost none of the recommendations that were given in the report were followed by the government, including this one:

The Committee recommends that in consultation with the provinces and territories the federal government fund an affordable nationally coordinated early learning and child care program in provinces and territories where one does not already exist and ensure equal federal funding for early learning and child care programs already administered by a province or territory.

Given the needs in northern and remote areas and the fact that there aren't corporations everywhere that are willing to make these kinds of commitments or the kind of economic development that would allow for these kinds of commitments, do you see—and perhaps this is for both of you, it's not just something that affects the northern regions—the federal government playing a role? Is there a role for the public sector in creating a national child care program that would increase the number of women in business, in the trades, and frankly, in all kinds of employment no matter where they live in our country?

Ms. Heather Kennedy: I could go first.

I'm not qualified to answer the question on the merits of a national child care program. As my own personal experience, I actually was in a mining town that did not have child care and I had to sort of be on my own when my children were very young. It's very important, though, that we have a federal look at child care and the best choices. I couldn't say whether it's a public sector program or support for the private sector or done through the school systems, which you see such a great deal of these days.

I'm sorry I can't assist you on the question, but I can be absolutely supportive that a look that says equal opportunity is better for Canada and better for the economy and one of the best ways to deliver that in terms of child care is very important.

• (1700)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you.

Ms. Day.

Ms. Christine Day: I would definitely agree that we have to provide options however it's funded. I believe that it's in the best interests of business to participate in solving these problems that do affect our employment base and how long people can stay in the employment base.

We had one worker who was married to somebody who moved to a remote area in B.C. We literally just let her work at home, and we carried her around on an iPad and put her in meetings. She was able to continue to work. She worked from home in a remote location. I think there are far more creative solutions if we think outside the box as business and in the federal government. There are so many technology solutions now that make it easy for workers to work remotely from home.

In the child care situations, I think there are so many different options for us. I think the schools are a good option, if we can fund more before and after school care, and I think that also addresses the opportunity to feed children who might not get fed otherwise.

I think our participation as companies in helping fund those programs, whether it's through taxes or other things, is a critical piece in solving the family crisis that I think is coming in front of us.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Ambler, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to both of our witnesses today for your very interesting testimony and for contributing to our study in this substantial way.

Ms. Day, I want to say that personally, I and my daughter are two of the reasons that Lululemon was so profitable under your watch and continues to be, so I thank you for that.

I really appreciated the philosophy that surrounded the company. In fact, when I speak to some groups, I often will quote one of the sayings that was on the bag: Do something every day that scares you a little bit. Sometimes, I think, as women maybe we're not told that you just have to jump in, even if it's not something you're immediately comfortable with. I think you both have indicated that sometimes you just have to do it even if you're not 100% sure you'll be successful or even if it's difficult.

I want to ask you about the kinds of things that do scare women and how they can overcome those obstacles.

Ms. Christine Day: I'd be happy to start with that.

I think number one is still public speaking for most people. Very early on in our leadership courses we teach public speaking. We did at Lululemon, and I'm actually arranging my first one here for my teams at Luvo. I think that's a very important skill, and part of leadership: learning to present, to sell yourself, and to sell ideas.

The second that I found in careers for women is the confidence to take on line roles, not staff roles. By line roles, that would be the head of operations, or running the sales or the business unit side, rather than just a staff role side; so, early on in the career, getting people, particularly in a retail environment, running a store, and valuing the leadership and the things that it takes to run people, run your guest experience, develop teams, do your marketing, that general management experience.

To be a CEO, the biggest barrier for most people is that you have to have 15 years of operations experience, and women often get rotated into staff positions. It's more comfortable. You're an adviser. You're not on the front line. You're not the one responsible for making the decisions.

The earlier we can intervene and get line experience, particularly for women, and the training and the confidence building around making those decisions—being the actual leader—is so critical. That is very scary and intimidating for a lot of women.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thank you so much.

I'm not sure if you wanted to comment on that as well, on the scary question.

Ms. Heather Kennedy: I would just add that I use an expression—it's a Tony Robbins expression—that talks about “dancing with fear”. I think one of the barriers for women is to actually be bold enough to dance with fear. To move from where you are today to being an empowered senior leader in the resource sector, there's going to be some very scary moments for you. It's having the support to do that. At Suncor, we run some training called “taking the stage”, which really helps women empower themselves and be assertive, or public speaking and that sort of thing. It's really, how do you find the strength to actually be brave enough to take that first step?

One of the barriers that I would add to the ones that Ms. Day mentioned was family. It continues to be for young women entering the workforce or older women: Is this the right thing? What does my husband think? What does my other spouse think? What are my children going to think? My mother is still saying certain things. So a barrier, and a thing to be afraid of, is to actually step away from your family's values to do something that's important to you as an individual as well.

• (1705)

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thank you for mentioning that.

We're all judged in some way. It brings to mind the Google CFO—Ms. Kennedy, you mentioned maternity leave—being the first executive to take maternity leave. I think it was Google. She took such a short maternity leave and she was just lambasted in the media for what should have been a very personal choice, I think. These are the kinds of considerations women have to take into account that men don't.

Thank you for mentioning the obstacle of public speaking. I think for most leadership roles, for men and women, some form of public speaking or giving presentations is always involved. Certainly, as elected politicians, obviously, it's part of our everyday lives as well.

The other thing I think that women need, and sometimes need help with, is developing and expanding their networks. I know that, because I got started at such a young age in politics as a volunteer. I was able to develop networks of friends, supporters and volunteers, and that turned into campaign volunteers and donors.

How do women in other fields, like business, develop their own personal networks?

Ms. Christine Day: That's an excellent point. It's something that in coaching I received great advice on, and that I would pass on to the committee. I valued getting the work done and thought that I would be judged on the quality of my work very early on in my career. The reality is you're judged on the quality of your relationships and ultimately, your ability to lead others through relationships. It isn't just about the work of the work and getting things done; it is about creating those networks. When you start to be promoted inside an organization, it's very rarely your boss that has a say solely by themselves when you get to a certain level; it's an executive committee, through succession planning. You have to build relationships throughout a whole organization.

I think the whole ability to build networks and relationships is critical to your career. Women can sometimes see that, strangely enough, as brown-nosing or politics, and they can be afraid of that, as opposed to that it's actually respect—respect for yourself and respect for your peers. Coaching around how to build a network, the why to build a network, and the value that it brings to you in your professional career is, I think, a very critical part of leadership development that needs some thought.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Hopefully, we will have a chance to come back to that question.

Madam Fry, you have seven minutes.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to say that, after listening to Heather Kennedy speak, I actually followed an easy path to where I am today. I never had to face any of those barriers because I was a woman.

I want to ask you, for women who go into non-traditional professions like yours, engineering, what are the barriers they face? I didn't face barriers, because I don't think women in medicine face many barriers, either in university or elsewhere. In response to what the other witness said, I found, in fact, that the quality of the work is what they judge you on in medicine. In terms of women in non-traditional occupations, and not just professions, but occupations, what challenges are you hearing from them that they face.

If you are a strong and confident women, you can push open the door, walk in and say, "I'm here." For other women, this is a difficult thing to do because they lack the confidence. They don't know how to do it. Now if you're in a company like Luvo, you're obviously getting that kind of coaching and training. But before you get there, how do women in non-traditional occupations and professions find their way to pushing that door open and having the confidence?

What are their challenges, that you found?

• (1710)

Ms. Heather Kennedy: One of the earliest barriers actually comes when you want to apply for a job. Right away, you look at a resumé. In the case of the resource sector, certainly in the earlier days it would be a man reading the resumé and he would look for experience that was very clear to him, very mine-focused, that type of thing.

One of the biggest barriers is actually having your resumé read and then going into an interview. It might be a panel interview, as in my case, with seven gentlemen, who are all well-intentioned, grilling me on my capability and my skills. That can be very intimidating. It can be a barrier. You can see why you might not even want to apply.

The other barrier for the resource sector is that it's perceived to be long hours, hard work, and remote locations. Often, women will say to themselves, "Why do I want to bother?" The industry needs to demonstrate the opportunities and how rewarding it can be, and how flexible it can be.

I would say the last barrier has probably gone away. My experiences now are that if you come and you bring competent work and you're highly skilled, you're valued. That has really changed in the generation in the engineering sector. It's very nice to see.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Because this is a parliamentary committee, my other question is whether there is anything that you see Parliament, parliamentarians, or government doing in terms of public policy and public programs that might assist women in non-traditional occupations and non-traditional professions to move forward and to be able to take those first steps to overcome the barriers that you know they face.

Ms. Heather Kennedy: I think so. I think the policy around understanding the importance of child care, I think is a critical one that we have spoken of already. I think there are tools that can be provided at Canada job centres and other places that really assist in making resumés that are, perhaps, more well-rounded, that really assist in terms of the interview process to put them through their paces in a relatively safe environment, so they have a much better chance of success.

I think there's public policy in terms of encouraging and creating focus for women in trades, in particular to ask, "Have you created

the spaces at this institution for females?" It's that type of thing. Those policies...I'm not a supporter of targets, but I am a supporter of Parliament and government being able to create focus for women to have the space created for them to get into those non-traditional roles.

I guarantee that when they're in those roles, you'll be able to sit back and smile, because they will succeed and they will make the resource sector a better workplace.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Those are excellent points. Thank you so much. You're very focused.

See what happens when you ask a woman how to do something? She tells you the real answer.

I want to ask one final question. Looking at the fact that we have so many women who want to do flex work at home, how does a woman focus at home? Again, one would say if you're working at home, you don't need child care. But how does a woman focus at home for x hours a day, if she has a very small child who's demanding her attention? Do you see some sort of way that a woman who is working at home could have the ability to hire someone and get that as a tax deduction in some way, as an employee, for instance?

Do you think that's an important thing to do?

Ms. Heather Kennedy: Maybe Ms. Day would be better to answer that. I personally never worked from home because I could never do it. I could never focus. Maybe your suggestion is a very good one.

Ms. Christine Day: I don't know if having an employee is tax deductible, but I think maybe continuing to have a day care tax credit, regardless of how you use that, would be a good practice, as would allowing that to be used for home care, and not just for day care at a centre or something. It would be something to explore. It's a good idea.

I have actually worked from home. I do have three children, and I did participate at one time, when my daughter was young, working three days from home and two days at the office. I had to get work done. It is hard when you're trying to balance that, but I found that by working in the evenings and just being flexible in my hours to deliver my work, as opposed to having to do it within set times, I was able to accommodate the workload at home by working with my husband.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Young, the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Witnesses, thank you very much for your time today.

I want to start with Christine Day.

I think you have great ideas, and I'm sure you've proven to be successful with regard to public speaking skills for young employees, young women learning how to sell their ideas and sell themselves, and serving in line roles instead of staff roles.

I want to give you a couple of minutes to talk about anything you might not have had a chance to say yet about how we can encourage young women to consider entrepreneurship as a career choice starting early on. I'm thinking even as early as in elementary school. I don't know if they teach young women about entrepreneurship, and plant the seed that they could run their own business one day, or they could run their organization. Do you have any thoughts on that in the early stages, at elementary and secondary schools?

Ms. Christine Day: I do, actually, and I've written some notes on that.

What an entrepreneur does is solve problems. They see an insight in a market. There can be teaching at a very early age on problem solving and ideas, and on how you create a market out of those ideas. There are some really great business models that are starting to be formed, whether it's eBay or Etsy, or other things, where people who make crafts can sell them. Even young girls are making crafts like bracelets and weavings.

There could be class projects and workshops, either in school or after school, to teach people how to make and market even very simple craft items through an Etsy-type platform. They could be taught by maybe a local business person who could coordinate with them on selling and making a market so that at a very early age they would start to understand how economics work, how you sell, how you reach customers, and how you create business models. That would be really important skills training.

I also think sports programs, as funny as that sounds to be tied to entrepreneurship, are really important because they teach leadership and self-confidence in your physical ability. I think girls' participation and young girls' participation in sports and in programs where they're seen as the idea creator and the leader of themselves are very important to creating that entrepreneurial mindset. I think that is different from a lot of home situations, particularly in different cultures, where they are taught to be of service as opposed to being a leader.

The more opportunities we can create for them to be a leader and to take care of themselves and to get their own ideas into a marketplace, I think, the more entrepreneurial women we will create for future generations.

Mr. Terence Young: That is very helpful. Thank you.

I want to ask Heather Kennedy a similar question, but with regard to the trades.

We have a shortage of skilled tradespeople in every province. In Ontario, we have the highest percentage of students who graduate with B.A.s and then can't find work. These are well-paying jobs that many women, if they took them, would enjoy, and they would have very interesting and lucrative careers. How can we encourage young girls to think about non-traditional fields of study, such as trades?

Ms. Heather Kennedy: It's a very good point about women in the trades, and it's really a missed opportunity to date.

I do think that one of the best ways is actually to get into the high school system. Around junior high school age is the age where the research shows that young women start to differentiate themselves from the sciences and also some of the more practical nature of work. Programs and policies that allow for education of diversity, particularly around the trades, at that time is very important. I think of introducing courses for young women that might include a week in a welding shop, a week in an automotive shop; those types of things are unbelievably valuable.

Bring your kids to school day is a program that can be very positive, but it has not had a lot of traction at the moment, and it's unfortunate because allowing a young woman to see how much fun it is to be a welder or a pipefitter or some other electrical trade is really quite critical.

I think as you move along through that, keeping the opportunity for them to be exposed to role models through high school is very critical. Who are the tradeswomen who can come into the school and be with them and take them to their shops? It's very important.

• (1720)

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

The Chair: Very good.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Young. That was very interesting.

Mrs. Sellah, you have the floor. You have five minutes.

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

Ms. Kennedy, as I listened to you talking about your resumé, I was really impressed. I think a colleague of mine mentioned that already. You said that you had never started a job earning less than a man.

How did that come about? In the course of our study, we have heard testimony from a number of women who said that they began their careers earning salaries that were 70% those of the men. One of them said that perhaps it was because women do not know how to properly sell the skills they have. I would like to know what your impression is.

[English]

Ms. Heather Kennedy: I'm absolutely aware of any number of circumstances on the data around salaries for women being significantly less than those for men, but I would say that when you're working in a resource sector, which is a heavily unionized environment and a very structured salary environment, there's no room for that. You arrive and you're in a particular salary band for your experience, and you're paid on your merits. That's always been my experience.

I think that structure is very helpful. What I will say is very true is that when it comes to seeking credit for accomplishments or for the kind of pay that is variable based on performance, you do see a gap because, as you've just said, female employees tend to be less inclined to blow their own horn and talk about the great work that they have done. They're much more inclined to say, "Look what the team has produced", and not feel inclined to go ask. I would say there is some variability there that's quite culturally ingrained, even at Suncor.

[Translation]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: I have another question about your career that piqued my curiosity.

You said that you were a metallurgical engineer and then you moved to the oil and gas sector. I ask the question because, before I came here as an immigrant, I was a doctor in a major oil company in my country of birth. So I know the sector very well.

If I go by what is written here, my impression is, and correct me if I am wrong, that you have held more administrative positions than positions that required you to be in the field. Is that the case?

[English]

Ms. Heather Kennedy: It's actually quite half and half. The first half of my career were all line roles. They were all either foreman roles or very much in the field in the operations and the plant roles. The second half of my career has been more administrative.

I actually have considered it to be development. I have no problem being very direct and running an organization and being very accountable for short-term results. I actually now find it much more fun to be able to take a company like Suncor and, without any authority, actually influence decisions. For me it's been part of my personal career development to move from being part of the line and in the operating roles, into the roles that are much more strategic, require much more finesse, and require you to give advice that people take.

• (1725)

[Translation]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: My observation is that women do not go directly into leadership roles without some prior experience, whereas men can go directly into decision-making roles, such as the ones you have held.

[English]

Ms. Heather Kennedy: I think you're quite right. I think our natural inclination is, as Ms. Day also mentioned, to want to be advisers, to want to support. I think it's a bit of who we are.

I will say that for companies that do make a point of putting females in leadership roles, it's extraordinary what happens, really.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

Ms. Crockatt has the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Thank you very much.

It's a pleasure to have you both here.

Ms. Day, I don't know you yet, but thanks for being here.

Ms. Kennedy, thank you so much for coming. I know you from Calgary and I know that you have a great amount of expertise to offer.

I want to pick up on one of the things you said earlier, that women have made the resource sector a better workplace. I think that statement might come as a surprise to people. This is partly about confidence, too, because one of the things that might keep women back, I'm hearing, is that they may not have the confidence that they can do the job and be successful. Not only that, you're sort of saying that they can make the workplace better. Can you elaborate on that? How can women actually make the workplace better in an industry that's considered to be male dominated, like the resource sector?

Ms. Heather Kennedy: I think in several ways. First I would say that any group that has diversity will make better decisions because they bring different perspectives. Certainly any group that I've been part of with different cultures and different genders has always made better decisions. I think the research supports that, so I think there is that piece.

I think when you bring women to the workforce, particularly in the resource sector, if you take the oil sands as an example, they tend to look at the environmental issues and the social issues quite differently than men do. They tend to create companies that I think are far more aware of some of the social currents going on in a community. As with many northern mining communities, the mine is the community and vice versa, so they create a very strong linkage between the community and the company. That's another area that they do.

Also, it's an interesting bit of information, but we've experienced this at Suncor. Our statistics confirm that on our heavy haulage trucks, the ones operated by women actually tend to be less damaged than those operated by men. I think we just bring that touch along to the equipment and the work that we do.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: I heard somewhere that there are more women, or that women are preferred drivers of those huge monster trucks that everybody likes to have their pictures taken next to. Is that correct?

Ms. Heather Kennedy: That is correct.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Okay.

I think this might be my last question. I know our time is drawing short here.

If I am taking what both of you have said here today, I'm kind of struck by the fact that both of you seem very pragmatic leaders. I'm sure you are competitive, but you don't wear your competitiveness as the first thing that we see. You both come across as very direct and straightforward problem solvers.

I wonder how we can teach our girls from a young age how to do that. We've heard, "Get them a tool kit; get them into public speaking." But if each of you had one thing.... Perhaps I'll start with Ms. Day because we've already heard from Ms. Kennedy a bit.

Ms. Day, I don't know if you're a mom and have a daughter or not, but what advice would you give?

Ms. Christine Day: I am a mother of three, and my daughter is now 25 and starting her own family. The advice I gave her was, "Don't be a satellite to anyone else." It means having your own life and being your own person with your own dreams, your own goals, and your own ambition. Live that goal and then you're more interesting, more self-confident, more self-assured. Choose to serve others, whether it's your family, your boyfriend, or whoever, but young women in particular need to see themselves as their own person in their own right with the same rights and entitlements as anybody else to happiness, to a career, and to choice in their life.

• (1730)

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Ms. Kennedy.

Ms. Heather Kennedy: I, too, am the mother of a daughter, who is 28. She's a manager of a bank branch. It's quite fun when she phones me for some management advice these days. So I'm getting a bit smarter as it goes.

My advice to her was what I talked about earlier, which is that—and I think, Ms. Day, you also mentioned it—in this day and age she has choices, and she shouldn't go for equality. She should go for equal opportunity, and she should do what she wants with those opportunities.

My other piece of advice is around.... She's very familiar with the phrase "dancing with fear", just being brave enough to be out there taking challenges and to fail. Frankly, if you don't fail, you're not trying. That would be my most motherly advice to my daughter.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Day—

[*English*]

Ms. Christine Day: I have to laugh. I call it—

The Chair: Ms. Day, could you repeat what you just said? I think I jumped in.

Ms. Christine Day: It's all right. It was my fault.

I also call it living on the edge of myself. Very similar to Ms. Kennedy, I have my own phrase about fear, which is making sure that you're living on the edge of what you're comfortable with. I think it works.

My daughter also runs her own business. I think that passing on this confidence, the leadership message, does make a difference for the next generation.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

You made my job a little bit difficult. I was so interested in the testimony that it was difficult for me to cut the time on our meeting.

Thank you, members, for very interesting questions and a very interesting exchange.

Our next meeting is on Monday, same time, same place, with four guests.

[*Translation*]

Meeting adjourned.

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