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Chair

Ms. Marilyn Gladu

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)): I'm going to call the meeting to order.

Welcome to everyone, and particularly to our special guests. We have quite a number of panel members today, including Nancy Cheng and Richard Domingue from the Auditor General's office. As well, from the Department of Employment and Social Development we have Gail Mitchell, who is the director. From the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development we have Nicole Kennedy.

I believe that later today we'll have a couple of witnesses from the Department of Industry and the Department of Natural Resources, and we'll introduce them at that time.

Now, because we have many participants today, we've asked each of them to stick to five minutes for their preliminary comments; then we'll begin our round of questioning.

Let's start with Gail Mitchell.

Ms. Gail Mitchell (Director General, Strategy and Intergovernmental Relations, Strategic and Service Policy Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you very much. I promise that I practised my speech and timed it, and it was just five minutes exactly. But one never knows what happens when you're live.

[Translation]

I would like to thank all the members of the committee for the opportunity to appear today.

[English]

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the implementation of gender-based analysis at Employment and Social Development Canada as well as the recent report of the Auditor General on government-wide implementation of gender-based analysis.

To set the stage, the GBA framework has been used by policy-makers at ESDC since 1995 to take into consideration gender issues, with the intention of ensuring that social, economic, and gender differences are identified and that these are addressed throughout the development and implementation of policies and programs.

ESDC is a department that delivers programs that touch Canadians directly throughout their lives. For us, gender-based analysis is an important tool in understanding the impact of our programs on people. It provides a structured approach to assess whether proposed policies and programs will further the overall

commitment to achieve fairness and equity for all Canadians, particularly with respect to gender considerations. As a department that delivers programs that touch individuals, ESDC is very much focused on issues related to gender equity.

I would like to outline a little the way ESDC conducts our GBA, give you an example of policy design that specifically responded to gender issues, and indicate how the department will be moving forward on the broad continued implementation of the framework.

[Translation]

ESDC has put in place a gender-based analysis policy, has established a community of practice and a centre of expertise to support the inclusion of adequate GBA+ in the policy development process.

[English]

The centre provides tools to conduct the analysis, including a list of key questions and checklists. We provide a training manual on GBA+ and a guide to developing the analysis. The centre organizes GBA+ awareness activities throughout the department. GBA is also considered as part of regular program evaluation and in the research that the department conducts on such issues as the Canadian labour market, skills and training, labour force participation rates across varied populations, and service delivery, just to name a few of the areas of research.

[Translation]

Program and policy areas are accountable for ensuring that GBA+ considerations have been integrated into and are fully addressed within their mandates as part of the development and implementation of their initiatives.

[English]

I would like to give you an example of how GBA was used to advance policy development on a specific program.

In 2010 the department was developing an aboriginal skills and employment training strategy. We worked closely with federal colleagues at INAC as well as with the Native Women's Association of Canada in order to focus on ensuring that the strategy could address, among other things, the economic development challenges faced by aboriginal women.

As a result of these engagements, requirements to monitor outcomes for women were integrated into the plan, and specific gender reporting was put in place. This has allowed projects to tailor specific streams to address participation rates of aboriginal women in key fields such as oil and gas, shipbuilding, and mining, fields in which participation rates for aboriginal women are much higher than they are for the general population and stand at 27%.

I think that is a demonstration of how gender-based analysis was factored into policy development.

More recently, GBA+ was used to understand how gender affects the incidence of low income in senior populations. The analysis showed that low-income seniors are disproportionately female, single, and living in large urban areas. Recently, budget 2016 announced increases to the guaranteed income supplement for single seniors. That is aimed specifically at people in low income, obviously, many of whom are women who live alone. The analysis found that more than two-thirds of those who will benefit from this increase are women.

Some barriers to full implementation remain, as we have seen from the report of the Auditor General. In the case of ESDC, tight timelines are often an issue that we grapple with as we're developing and implementing initiatives. However, we remain committed to following the guidelines, and policy-makers in the department continue to learn and develop best practices to fully implement the policy in the context of our programs, our legislation, and our service delivery processes.

• (1535)

On a go-forward basis, as part of our efforts to strengthen our function, last August we presented a plan to our corporate management committee to promote a deeper awareness of the policy, to ensure that roles and responsibilities were clear, to require mandatory GBA+ training for analysts, to update guides and manuals, and to establish a network across the department.

[Translation]

Since that time, we have made progress. The GBA+ network was established and, between October 2015 and March 2016, 23 employees completed the GBA+ training on the SWC website.

[English]

To sum up, I think the report of the Auditor General offers us an opportunity to consider how we can strengthen our processes, and it has also given us an opportunity to reconfirm areas in which we're strong in the use of the policy. We look forward to working with Status of Women Canada, the PCO, and Treasury Board to broaden the use of GBA and deepen our understanding of its impact on our programs and policies.

I'd be pleased to answer any questions.

Merci.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

That was excellent.

[English]

Nicole Kennedy, you may begin, and you have five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Kennedy (Director General, Strategic Policy, Cabinet and Parliamentary Affairs, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you, Madam Chair.

On behalf of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, thank you for the invitation to speak today and to support the committee's study on gender-based analysis.

I am delighted to give you an overview of INAC's current policy, gender-based analysis practices, and results related to the 2015 Auditor General's report.

Before this overview, I would like to say that INAC has made a commitment, as part of a government-wide approach, to make significant and measurable progress on the implementation of gender-based analysis in all federal departments.

[English]

In 1999 INAC introduced its gender-based analysis policy framework. We took a very centralized approach to it initially in developing the policy, working with such other government departments as Justice Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, Status of Women Canada, and Global Affairs.

We also, given the mandate of our department, liaised extensively with the Assembly of First Nations women's secretariat, and the Native Women's Association of Canada as we developed our initial policy.

Our policy framework at INAC actually requires that gender-based analysis be integrated into all of the department's work, which includes the development and implementation of policies, programs, communication plans, regulations, legislation, memoranda to cabinet, and Treasury Board submissions. It goes beyond, though, and extends into consultations and negotiations, including those for self-government, land claims, and treaty land entitlement. Also, it extends into our research, dispute resolution, and litigation work.

In terms of practice, the department has developed tools to support a sustainable gender-based analysis capacity, which includes online training available to all staff, which we actually developed with Status of Women several years back. We have very departmental-specific guides and tools that are available on our Internet sites. We also have a very well-established network of gender-based analysis sector representatives. At this point in time we have 37 gender-based analysis representatives, GBARs, across the department.

Within INAC, every initiative that goes forward to cabinet must have a gender-based analysis completed. The gender-based analysis assessment is approved at the assistant deputy minister level. The deputy minister has full accountability to ensure that gender-based analysis is completed on all initiatives, and it doesn't actually proceed to our departmental policy committee before the GBA is completed to the satisfaction of the deputy minister.

Since 1999 we've built up a lot of capacity and expertise, and we've repositioned our approach somewhat, moving away from a purely centralized model to one that is much more mainstream. We've actually driven accountability for GBA down into the sectors and programs to make sure that it's happening at the very beginning of policy development. This is really to ensure that gender-based analysis is part of everything we do in the department.

In terms of the Auditor General's report, the gender-based analysis policy and implementation practices have been assessed recently at INAC. We were one of the four departments, as you know. We are also one of the few departments to have actually evaluated our GBA policy, in 2002 and again in 2008.

We wanted to share with you some of the insights from GBA, in particular on the family violence prevention program, which was highlighted in the report of the Auditor General. As a result of a gender-based analysis, we actually shifted the program focus to a certain extent, recognizing that we were not hearing enough about the issues that men and boys face as victims and perpetrators of violence. We ensured that some funding was directed to ensuring that they had a voice.

Even more recently, as we've set out to do a pre-engagement on the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, we have made sure, through our GBA analysis again, that there is a way for the voices of men and boys to be heard as well, because it's very important in terms of GBA not to over-focus but to make sure that you're being equitable in your approach.

As Gail Mitchell noted, there are some challenges, which were highlighted in the Auditor General's report, concerning implementing GBA in departments. One of them, as most of us know, is the very fast timelines and fast pace we're under, trying to get things through. That said, there is significant attention given to GBA at INAC. It actually is mandatory: an MC doesn't go forward unless a GBA is completed.

In closing, I just want to say that we look forward to further collaboration with all the partners on GBA, and we're certainly here to share our experiences and to learn from others as we advance on this important file.

Merci.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to begin our round of questioning with my Liberal friends. We'll begin with Mr. Fraser.

You have seven minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Excellent. Thank you very much.

I'll begin with Ms. Mitchell. I'll focus initially on the Auditor General's report you both raised.

The Auditor General found the department did conduct GBA on at least one occasion after a policy decision had been taken. Is there a certain reason that would have happened? I think it was in respect of the apprentice loan program. Is there any reason that may have been the case?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: I think it's part of an overall and continuous evaluation of program results and how things are going. We collect a lot of data, and we do a lot of analyses, so we are constantly adjusting and perfecting our programs.

Mr. Sean Fraser: There's not a typical practice of conducting at a certain stage in the process of policy development, is there?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: There certainly is an expectation.

The GBA+ framework has a flow chart that talks about when you're doing it, but it also talks about continuous feedback. You need to be attentive to how things play out.

There is an expectation at the beginning of a policy analysis process. You undertake this analysis. I think it's flexible enough to be able to.... As you're in the midst of it, you need to be able to monitor and make adjustments for a variety of reasons. It's not just gender-based issues, but any number of things we're monitoring.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Chair, on the same issue, the Auditor General's report found in this instance it led to an incomplete analysis that failed to recognize a handful of barriers that may exist. When that may be the case, if it's ongoing, would you have since identified the barriers to the apprentice loan program, for example?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: We would, and we have undertaken additional analyses.

In the context of the apprenticeship loan program, there are many other factors that affect women's participation in apprenticeship, some of which are outside the scope of the financing part of it. The tool to increase funding to people who want to pursue apprenticeships is a limited piece. We have engaged in much more detailed analyses. We have increased funding to women, and we have put a focus on women in apprenticeship through our communications material to draw greater attention to the issue.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Shifting gears to Ms. Kennedy for a moment, the Auditor General noted that GBA is performing and has led to new projects in your department. Could you highlight what a few of those projects may have been?

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: In terms of the family violence prevention program, there was an identification of the fact that sometimes the focus was not directed often enough to the concerns of men and boys. There was funding directed specifically to programs through grants to organizations to make sure there were.... There was a workshop funded, for example. There were a couple of other events to give men and boys a voice in terms of being victims and perpetrators of violence. We wanted to make sure it was a well-balanced program.

• (1545)

Mr. Sean Fraser: As well, the Auditor General focused a bit on changes to data collection practices. Was that specific to the initiative around men and boys, or was it a broader practice change?

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: That came up in relation to the fact that we often, in the early days, didn't have a good way of breaking down data by gender. It became a recommendation that flowed from the evaluation of the family violence program, to make sure we always have gender-disaggregated data. That has been an initiative ongoing since then. We did a great deal of work on that.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Do you find having the gender-disaggregated data has led to positive policy developments?

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: It absolutely has.

As I mentioned, we are cognizant of the fact that when we look at programs that are stereotypically focused on assisting women with family violence issues, we also need to ensure we're not overlooking men and boys. Through the disaggregated data, we're able to pinpoint where the issues are.

Mr. Sean Fraser: This question is to both of you.

Is gender-disaggregated data mandated, so that you collect it within your department through policy? I don't believe it is in legislation. Is there any mandatory requirement to collect data on a gender-disaggregated basis?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: I'd have to check on that.

We do. Much of the data sources we rely on have that built in with Statistics Canada data, the census, and so forth. We're able to make those kinds of extractions, but as a broad statement, I'd have to return to you.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Would you mind providing an answer, perhaps through the clerk? Is that best?

The Chair: Through the clerk would be great.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Ms. Kennedy?

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: The same holds true for us. We generally look at gender-disaggregated data. I'm not sure there's a policy requirement to do it, but we will get back to you on that as well.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I was surprised in a positive way with your presentations, the tools you each have available, and the mindset that certain folks within your department have taken toward gender-based analysis. In light of the findings of the Auditor General's report, it seems like it's not perfect, and it's never going to be, but are there certain obstacles or items you found to be successful that you could recommend to us? If we were going to recommend to other groups, how can we make use of the tools we have? What would be your best recommendations?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: I've had the opportunity to be involved with this analytical framework for some time. What I have found to be empowering is pushing it out into the organization. It's a lens, and it's a tool that people use. In the same way we expect people to have basic math skills and writing skills, this is one more analytical tool we should be expecting and we should be training people to be able to do. Once you have that embedded throughout your organization, it becomes second nature. People are asking the questions, and it's part of how they approach an issue.

For me, what that means is that rather than centralizing a group that does it centrally, and takes care of it for everyone else, you transform your organization to have it as part of what.... Your junior analysts come in, they get the training, and it becomes part of how they frame issues. That's been a successful approach.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I'm sure I'm out of time by now.

The Chair: You are.

We'll go to my Conservative colleagues, starting with Ms. Vecchio for seven minutes.

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

I'm going to start with you, Gail, if you don't mind. You mentioned the guaranteed income supplement, which I think is important for our seniors, especially our women seniors, but we're also talking—and this is totally off what I was going to talk about, but I thought it was interesting. When we look at employment insurance, and when we look at employment insurance for women, or if we look at family benefits like the maternity and parental leave, has that gone through a GBA as well? If so, what are the results of that?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: We've done numerous evaluations on employment insurance over the years that have looked at compassionate care and the 14 best weeks. There's a long list of evaluations that have been done. In all of those evaluations, we're looking at gender issues as well, so it's very much a part of how we come to the analysis.

We have under way right now a good, hard look at EI, and we'll be proceeding with a number of changes to it based on what we hear back from stakeholders. We fully expect the research we've done, and the understanding of the challenges and issues that women face, in particular, will frame how we move forward with policy recommendations.

• (1550)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Excellent. Thank you very much.

If you don't mind, I'm going to move to the Auditor General. The report noted that the quality of GBA varied between departments, including a lack of necessary capacity for complete analysis. What constitutes unnecessary capacity and what was missing from these departments?

Ms. Nancy Cheng (Assistant Auditor General, Office of the Auditor General of Canada): What we did was look at four individual departments and then compared the way they've analyzed the initiatives. It's quite uneven from one to the next.

In terms of capacity, some of it is the underlying training, and whether people have the full awareness and have been shown the way to approach analyzing the impact between how the program might affect women from men, and that type of thing, in terms of the support infrastructure they might have, and whether they have people they can go to for support. This is within the department as opposed to going to Status of Women.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: This might seem terrible, but does GBA seem necessary in all departments, or is it sometimes irrelevant? For all departments, should it be looked at the same or are there some departments where it has to be very straightforward? I recognize with the Canadian Armed Forces we absolutely need GBA, and with Service Canada we absolutely need GBA. Is there anything that would say it's not effective in that department?

Ms. Nancy Cheng: I think our view is that it is important that if a department signs up and commits to it, they need to go through the due diligence. Until you do it, how do you know it doesn't apply?

I think it stands to reason that the member's right. In some portfolios, it's more obvious. In other ones, it's less obvious, but we don't know it does not exist. It's important you do exercises like the ones our colleagues have said. You started out with looking at shelters for women and looking at how family violence might affect women, but until you scratch the surface, and look more into it, you don't get down to the cause and say, "Well, maybe we need to look after the other gender as well". It is important to give it that due diligence.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That's why I wanted to bring it up. Some departments may think it is not necessary, but that answers the question perfectly.

To what degree does the Auditor General believe the accountability mechanisms being introduced by Status of Women strategic plan, such as their enhanced monitoring and reporting mechanism, will improve the implementation of GBA implementation in federal departments?

Ms. Nancy Cheng: Madam Chair, I'll give a bit of an answer, and I might ask Richard to help me on this one.

When we look at the strategy, we're of the view this would advance the cause. It is important to give it the rigour, but at the time of the audit Status of Women doesn't have the authority as to how departments ought to do that, and we're not necessarily arguing they should have the authority. They are a resource place, so the strategy will help them to provide even further support to the individual departments and agencies implementing the GBA framework.

I'll see if Richard has something more he wishes to add.

Mr. Richard Domingue (Principal, Office of the Auditor General of Canada): I have one more thing to add to what Nancy just said.

It's a challenge for Status of Women to gather all the information on how effective GBA has been and how implemented it is across the government. I know Status of Women sought more resources in the last budget to improve their GBA capacity, and hopefully this will help on the reporting side and help assess the effectiveness of the GBA practices across the government.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you.

On to Nicole, and I have a question. It's fantastic you've had such great results when it comes to violence against women, especially in our indigenous areas, but I'm looking to find out, what other benefits has GBA been in this portfolio in the department?

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: In the less traditional areas, such as in economic development, we took even a more vigorous approach to GBA, because we know there is a tendency to support businesses that are started by males. There was a directed focus on ensuring women have the opportunity, as well as the support, to apply and to access the different project lines of funding.

In terms of being able to embed the GBA throughout the department, it has served to inform policy development writ large. The fact that it is a mandatory requirement in all of our policy to do a GBA has been a fundamental building block of why we have a fairly strong history for GBA.

● (1555)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: You noted that 33 different people are working with GBA. Is there one champion, or is there a specific...we have a health and wellness committee. Is there a specific committee that deals with GBA for INAC?

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: We do not have a specific committee for GBA, but the deputy minister is accountable for GBA writ large in the department. That then cascades down to the senior ADM of policy and strategic direction, which ensures that across the department, and through all the initiatives, we take a GBA lens to everything we do.

We then have two levels of policy committee where a GBA analysis must be performed before it comes to that policy committee, so we do have a number of checks and balances. Throughout the programs and sectors we have gender-based assessment representatives who get regular ongoing training, and they form a network and support group, and bounce ideas off each other. We have it fairly well embedded.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Now we'll go to Ms. Malcolmson, for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): I appreciate the witnesses being available. I note your two departments were the subject of the 2009 and 2015 audits by the Auditor General, so we have the most data on you. I also note and applaud INAC, for which the reporting is mandatory. The process is mandatory. You scored the best on the AG's test, so I applaud you.

I want to focus on some of the issues around unemployment insurance. Understanding that women more often than men are likely to work part time, or what we would call precarious work, any modifications to the employment insurance scheme might particularly affect women.

The 2015 budget modified the EI regular benefits with a regional variation. I'm hoping you can tell me what GBA analysis was done on that policy decision and what it told you about the disproportionate effects on women.

Ms. Gail Mitchell: The recent changes were based on recent labour market data and impacts at those regional levels, so it was in the totality and performance of the labour market over a set period of time. Decisions around changes to it were taken in the aggregate. In the context of research and evaluation of elements of the employment insurance program, and its impact, we do look closely at gender. There's always an appetite to take a hard look at employment insurance, and how it operates, and we continue to do that. We'll be reaching out as part of GBA. A stakeholder view is a very important perspective, and we will be proceeding with that through discussions with experts. We get a lot of input on EI, some of it solicited, and some of it not.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: With respect, my time is limited, so I'm interested in knowing yes or no. Was a GBA analysis done on that policy decision?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: I'll have to get back to you on all the elements of the analysis.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Great, just a yes or no. I don't need to see other analyses. I was curious to see whether it was applied.

In the past, rejection for unemployment insurance claims was quite high. Six out of 10 Canadians could no longer qualify for benefits, and then there was a policy change under the previous government to further restrict access. It had some new requirements around Canadians having to take any job that was deemed suitable. That might have impacts on the career path, or pay cuts, or having to move. Was there a GBA analysis done on that decision?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: There were decisions taken previously?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Yes, by the previous government around policy changes that would require—

Ms. Gail Mitchell: Again, I'd have to go back and check on that. I'm not familiar with the decisions under—

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Okay, that would be helpful. Again, just a yes or no. Was it done? That would be helpful to us.

I'm curious for both of the ministry witnesses whether any of your departmental proposals, or budget submissions for consideration by cabinet, have ever been turned back because you did not do a GBA analysis, or because you did an inadequate GBA analysis?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: Off the top, I'm not aware of any.

• (1600)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: You're not aware that anything was rejected?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: If you're talking since GBA, that's the late nineties. That's a long window, so if you have a more specific time frame...

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: In recent history, can you remember any times you had a policy proposal or budget submission returned to your department because you had done an inadequate GBA analysis?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: I can't think of any, but we can undertake a quick review.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: That would be great.

How about for INAC?

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: For INAC, I can't say whether we have had things returned from an external body, but internally we have sent things back to programs and sectors asking them to strengthen their GBA. Internally we do make sure, and we push back. I can't say if... but we will get back to you on that as well.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Back to the unemployment insurance decisions, do you have gender-disaggregated data that has been generated to help guide some of those policy decisions around employment insurance?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: Yes, we do.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Great, thank you.

I also have more of a general question for the Auditor General around some of the conclusions you found in your 2015 report, which was discouraging in some ways. You identified there were some GBA steps that were ignored completely, or in some cases the test was done after the policy decisions had been made or had been submitted, and there was a catch-up. Can you describe a bit more about the results of that inadequate application of GBA?

Ms. Nancy Cheng: The audit is a follow-up to a previous audit, so we would have expected there would have been movement in terms of responding to some of the recommendations, more central support, more guidance, and that the results would be better. The report does carry a more negative tone when we do enter into analyzing some of the initiatives and find they were lacking in many cases. That's the tone of the report in terms of saying why it was not as encouraging as we would like to have seen.

For the points that were made about doing the analysis later, we would want to see that the analysis was completed before you take those policy decisions. If they haven't done that, finishing them off, or doing more after the fact, is not necessarily a negative point from my perspective. I think it still helps the program to understand whether they should change course, or whether, as they modify policy requirements as they move forward with policy renewal, they have more information to go on to align their program. That part we would not consider as a negative point.

All in all, they should be considering it before the decisions are taken.

The Chair: Excellent, and that's your time.

We'll go over to Ms. Vandenbeld for seven minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): I have a question for Ms. Kennedy. We had heard the only department where it was legislated that it was mandatory to have GBA was Immigration. You had mentioned it's mandatory. That's not a legislated requirement.

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: No, that's an internal requirement. It's not legislated.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: In terms of any penalties for not achieving it, are there repercussions built into that?

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: The repercussion is that your memorandum to cabinet doesn't leave the department until you complete your GBA.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Fantastic.

To Ms. Mitchell, the same question. Is it mandatory? Yes?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: Not in a legislated way, as a matter of policy.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: We've talked about some of the barriers, and I know the Auditor General's report pointed out some of those, the lack of data.... You can't act on something if you don't have the desegregated data. Sometimes there isn't the capacity, or the training, and with the timelines sometimes you're under pressure to turn something around quickly.

The one I'm most concerned about is that we heard from other witnesses about the need to have a culture. For instance, in the Department of Immigration, they have champions, they have functional authorities, and then beneath the champions they have other champions. It's not enough in terms of having a focal point for reporting. They also have people who will promote. They called it the carrot and the stick.

I notice you have about 38 GBARs. Are these similar to champions, and is there any discussion between departments on these kinds of best practices?

•(1605)

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: In terms of the role of the GBARs, they form a community of practice of sorts within the department. They provide advice and guidance to the sector leads in developing policies. As to whether they're champions or not, they are champions in their own right, but we do not have an overarching departmental champion at this point in time for gender-based analysis.

In the early days, while we were establishing our program, yes, we did have a champion, but we also found that by taking a centralized approach, and having one unit and one champion, it provided a disincentive toward the incorporation of it into the culture of the department. By embedding it into the programs, and driving accountability into the programs and sectors, we've built in a mechanism to ensure every initiative has a GBA lens to it.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Ms. Mitchell.

Ms. Gail Mitchell: In ESDC we have a network. We have a centre of expertise, which includes a range of tools and supports. We also have a person half time who plays an important role in pulling things together. We will be putting a champion in place for support, and some of these things we've picked up. There is a network across government of GBA experts, so we do share. I used to work at INAC and had carriage of the GBA file there. I brought some of those practices with me into ESDC.

There's a lot of sharing that happens across, and the thematic on the barriers are fairly consistent across departments. We do share ways to move through it, and I think Nicole's point about moving it into the program areas, and enabling them to own it, is a very important piece of changing the culture and ensuring that people take it on and not see it as something that a central group will do for them. That's key, but of course with that, you have to have the monitoring. You have to have the attention to the delivery of the product, and that's where the accountability is crucial.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Who in your departments is required to take the GBA training? We heard yesterday that all senior officials in CIC are required. Would it be all the senior departmental officials, or would it be the people who are specifically working in this area?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: At ESDC, it's at the analyst level. We're in a constant process of seeing how we can improve, and we're looking at whether we should broaden that out to a wider audience, but at the analyst level, it's part of the suite of mandatory training.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: This question is specifically to INAC—but if either of you wants to answer—about the plus. When we talk about GBA, we talk about GBA+. There are different segments within populations of women, particularly aboriginal women, who would be particularly affected.

Is that also part of the regular work you're doing on GBA?

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: It very much is part. For our department, the shift from GBA to GBA+ was not monumental, because we are always focusing on a very vulnerable population. We know it's a very segmented population. There are communities that are doing very, very well and those that are not.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Okay.

Ms. Mitchell.

Ms. Gail Mitchell: Certainly from ESDC's perspective, we focus a lot on vulnerable populations. Many of our program interventions are specifically targeted to vulnerable populations—new Canadians, women, etc.—so GBA+ has just been part of how we frame.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: In terms of training, one thing that was highlighted significantly was that it's not just training, as in taking the course; it's having somebody on site who can answer questions and give that kind of advice. I know that the public service school has certain courses. What kind of training do you have in your departments?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: As I mentioned, we have a centre of expertise and we have a person who is a resource to people within the department. Through our network we engage in awareness and dialogue. There are some standardized tools that are very useful and I think very powerful.

And then...we're doing it. People are engaged in this analysis on a daily basis with the program areas that we work on. It's kind of happening all over the place.

•(1610)

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

The Chair: Excellent.

We'll turn to my Conservative colleagues, starting with Ms. Harder for five minutes.

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

Ms. Mitchell, in one of your comments you referenced "gender issues". I'm wondering if you can just help me understand how you determine what is and is not a gender issue.

Ms. Gail Mitchell: In the context of a particular policy or program, let's take the example of old age security. That's a universally applied program essentially to alleviate poverty in senior populations. When we're looking at how effective that program is, we pull apart the data to understand how it touches different populations within that—singles, seniors, men, married couples, couples living apart with one in an old age home, etc.

So we pull things apart at that level. I'm not sure....

Ms. Rachael Harder: I guess I'm just wondering, then, if when you pull it apart you see that it doesn't come out in equal components, is it then an issue? If you have one that comes out at 40%, another at 20%, another at 20%, and another at 20%, is the one at 40% the issue or the three at 20%?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: If our objective is alleviating poverty—let's stick with that for a moment—and the other objective is that the programs apply in a universal way, and they apply equally to Canadians who fit the eligibility requirements, if you have that kind of a spread, and it's linked to gender such that men are doing 40% better than senior women, you have to get underneath that to understand why that is. So yes, it would signal an issue.

At the end of the day, the interventions that you use to address it may be quite varied. It may not result in “These people are getting too much, so we'll reduce it”; you'll use a whole bunch of different interventions to deal with it. But the goal remains, at the front end, that you have a universal program that applies in an equitable way to all those who are eligible. If in the results you see disparities, you have to inquire as to why that is.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I guess with that comes another question. Let's just take as an example science and the trades, because we know that these are areas where we see inequality between men and women. I guess I'm just wondering, in your department, then, would the objective be to see an equal number of men and an equal number of women in these trades, or would the objective be to see an increase in the number of women in these trades.

Ms. Gail Mitchell: Well, where is it we want to be as a society in terms of women participating in certain trades? We will all have views on that.

I think from a more modest perspective, we would pursue increasing the number of women who participate in these trades. Let's use high-skilled trades as an example. Again, we have a long way to go to get to parity, so a more modest first step is to ask what do we need to do to increase women's participation in these programs? What are the upstream interventions that might be necessary to position it so that women are more likely to apply, be interested, have the necessary pre-training to even get in the door?

A whole bunch of steps would be part of it. It becomes kind of a political discussion, as in what is it we're trying to achieve? I think at a general level, we want to see equity between men and women.

Ms. Rachael Harder: At the same time, is there an equal movement, then, to see men enter trades such as nursing or hairdressing?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: Absolutely.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Are there initiatives within your department to see that take place?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: Again, we work closely with the provinces on training. Those are all programs that provinces typically pursue and manage. Again, it is about the labour market and about supporting improved outcomes. Yes, we do support across a vast range, and we fund provinces to provide training.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I have a question for Ms. Kennedy. In the 2016 budget, there is \$23.7 million to renew the urban aboriginal strategy. I am just wondering how GBA will be applied as you allocate that funding.

• (1615)

The Chair: Hold that thought until the next round of questioning.

We are going to go over to my Liberal colleagues, starting with Mr. Fraser, who I believe is sharing his time with Ms. Dhillon.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Status of Women officials informed us on Tuesday that a meeting of departmental champions was held on Monday. Is there a GBA champion in your department? Did they attend the meeting?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: Yes, we do have GBA champions in the department. I did not attend that meeting, but I had a full debrief on the discussion at the meeting.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: You have GBA champions. The rest...?

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: We don't currently have a GBA champion at INAC.

Ms. Nancy Cheng: We are looking at the audit of it. We don't propose policies that affect the general public. It is not an area that we would have a representative in.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: How do you find having a champion impacts the implementation of GBA in policy development?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: We have a network of people across the department. Every initiative certainly benefits from people who can promote it and talk about it. Frankly, I think it is about the organization as a whole being comfortable talking about it. I think a champion is a focal point. In my view, it is nice to have a champion, but I think the important work is done at the program level as people undertake the development and analysis of policies and data. That is really where it happens.

Champions can ask questions, but anybody can ask questions. You don't need a champion to ask questions about these important issues.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Absolutely, but it would help to have....

Ms. Gail Mitchell: It doesn't hurt to have a profile on things. That's for sure, and we are moving forward with putting that kind of focus on it at ESDC.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: For the rest, do you feel that you have the necessary tools to understand and implement GBA?

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: As opposed to having a champion, we actually have accountabilities that are very clear. Our deputy minister and our senior ADM of policy and strategic direction both must ensure that any initiative going forward has a gender-based analysis attached to it.

In addition, in terms of our Treasury Board submissions, there is a requirement that there be a gender-based assessment done for those as well. We are doing our utmost to drive it throughout the organization, but also to make sure that everybody is accountable, not just one person as a focal point, although that is also very helpful.

The Chair: Ms. Cheng had a comment, if you are interested to hear it.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Sure, go ahead.

Ms. Nancy Cheng: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The member's question just prompted me with one of the points that we have noted in our report. Status of Women put forward the GBA+ framework. Between 2009 and 2013, 25 departments committed to implementing that, and five more entered into this commitment in the early part of 2015.

However, the government is way broader than just 30 departments. Part of that network... I don't know whether your conversation with Status of Women covered what aspect of the government has signed on to implement the GBA framework. A lot of what we talk about could be restricted to that group of 25 or 30 that have committed.

That is an area or question that the committee might be interested in.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: The Auditor General reports that there has been progress, but also that further efforts could be made. In your view, what further efforts could be made by Status of Women Canada and the central agencies in order to promote full implementation of GBA?

Ms. Nancy Cheng: We've made a number of recommendations, which are contained in the report itself. The big one probably is the one that deals with barriers. We have noted a few points as we go along the audit, and we have identified them in the report. We did not necessarily set out to do that, and these are points we observed. The recommendation was to suggest to the government, and to the central agencies, to step back, take a look, and see what some of the barriers are, and why departments and agencies are slow or having trouble implementing a GBA framework. In that way, what are the ways to overcome them? That, I think, is a significant one.

The other one is for Status of Women to look at their resourcing and how much work they are going to be able to do on that. I believe there have been changes in recent times.

• (1620)

The Chair: That's your time.

Back to Ms. Vecchio for five minutes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I would like to pass to Ms. Harder the question you had previously.

Ms. Rachael Harder: You'll give it to me. Okay.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Yes, I want to hear that answer.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'll be brief.

Just to refresh, in the 2016 budget your department was given \$23.7 million for an urban aboriginal strategy. I'm wondering how GBA will be applied to going about that.

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: As with all other policy initiatives in the department, if there is an MC required—and I know we're going back and forth as to whether an MC will be required—there will be a gender-based analysis required. It's a GBA+.

Additionally, when there's a Treasury Board submission to access those funds, there will be a requirement that a GBA+ be done, as well. It is very much part of the work that's done in terms of policy in the department.

Ms. Rachael Harder: There's one thing that would really help me. I find we're talking a lot in theory, or about ideas that are out there. I have something specific when we're talking about urban aboriginal strategy. What would be the types of questions you would ask, or the type of analysis you would do, to make sure it is gender-based when you come out with policy with regards to this?

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: We have a detailed GBA questionnaire with all sorts of questions that programs go through when they are developing an initiative. For example, if there is a negotiation process that is part of an initiative, one of the questions is whether the meetings are at such a time that they're accommodating people's work hours, as well as their child care arrangements, and if they are ensuring that they're not having a negative impact in terms of their timing of these discussions of these meetings. Another asks if they are making information available to people in a way they can manage around their daily lives. There are specific and detailed questions that are required in any GBA assessment.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Thank you.

I'll go back to Gail Mitchell. If you don't mind, I'm looking at some of your programs. Are there any programs you can say are failing and that we should be doing better on after doing all of the GBA, and that even with implementation it does not get the results you're looking for?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: That's a big question—

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: It is.

Ms. Gail Mitchell: —considering that ESDC delivers programs from the start of life to the very end.

We have a vigorous assessment and evaluation program where we take a hard look at our programs with a view to assessing where we're falling down and the types of interventions that are needed to improve that.

The current set of priorities our ministers have in front of them point to areas where improvement is going to be needed, whether it's from EI, old age security, Canada Pension Plan, or disability. There's a whole range of areas where I wouldn't say the programs are failing, but we want them to do more.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: One of the pet things I look at is the Canada Pension Plan, because many of our women did not put in. My mother, for instance, didn't work full time after she had her children. What sort of things do you do to rectify issues like that, when there's not...? We've moved on and we've put in a financial plan, but it's not really available, and we recognize we have this. My mom is still married to my father, and that means they have very little CPP from that. The old age security, of course, is stuck at a certain amount, as well. What are some things we can do to help out the CPP program for women?

Ms. Gail Mitchell: Well, there are other measures. There's the guaranteed income supplement, as well, that is targeted specifically to low-income seniors. I'm not sure if your parents are already seniors and already collecting or if they're anticipating that in the future, but there are measures.

There are also complementary programs at the provincial level to support seniors who are in a low-income category. There's work under way. The Department of Finance is taking a hard look at the Canada Pension Plan, so that's another venue for people to raise issues, so there are interventions.

In Canada we kind of look at retirement income. There's the private piece of it that individuals provide for in the context of employment and then there's government. What's the right balance across all of those? We kind of expect that there's an evenness across those three key pillars when it comes to retirement security, but we definitely target some interventions to support low-income seniors.

As I mentioned, the top-up to the guaranteed income supplement for single seniors is really an acknowledgement that single women, in particular, face fiscal challenges for the reasons that you've elaborated in terms of workforce.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We go back to my Liberal colleague Ms. Vandenberg for five minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much.

I'm going to go a little bit out on a limb here, and this is for the Auditor General's Office, for Ms. Cheng and Mr. Domingue. Has your office ever done a gender-based analysis on your own work? For instance, when you're doing a value for money audit, have you ever taken what you define as value and looked at if there is a difference in terms of gender in that?

Ms. Nancy Cheng: I think when we look at gender-based analysis, we're talking about policy initiative, how it affects different people. So you don't distinguish the value that we provide, the value is for Parliament, and we don't try to say this would be necessarily for women vis-à-vis men. It's for Canadian citizenry at large, and Parliament represents them. Our job is to serve Parliament, and we bring forward either audit assurance when things are going well and we agree and say that's good, or we bring observations forward and suggest recommendations be made.

From that perspective, it is neutral to all Canadian citizenry and is not distinguished by gender. But then, obviously, when we were embarking on this particular subject, the gender equality issue hit a

chord and that's why we've done the audit in the past and that's why we do the current audit as well.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: One of the reasons I went there—and I didn't mean to put you on the spot—is because it's very easy, and we heard this from some of the other witnesses, to look at your own programming and to say it doesn't have a gender component; it doesn't have any implications; it's not necessary. I understand there's a check box that you can check that says you looked at it and it doesn't apply here.

The training component is so vitally important because often on the surface, if somebody isn't very well versed in gender-based analysis—and this wouldn't be any implication here—you might say this doesn't have any kind of impact. Yet, when you delve into the actual results of some of the policy decisions, you realize that in fact there probably is a differential.

This is now to the departments, how would you go about looking at these hidden gender biases, where at the outset you would just think they don't apply?

Ms. Kennedy or Ms. Mitchell.

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: That's a very difficult question for me to answer because the initiatives that go through our department automatically go through a gender-based analysis. We're always looking for exactly that, so it's rare that it wouldn't actually be done, whether it's an MC or a Treasury Board submission, it is very much a part of the focus of our department and how we do policy.

Ms. Gail Mitchell: At ESDC we do reflect on it from the service side through to the policy side because our programs really very much touch people. We deliver programs to individuals. It's pretty hard to come to the conclusion that these don't have a gender dimension, an age dimension, etc., even on the service side where it's the mechanics of how you move a benefit out to individuals. Even at that level we still look at it from a gender perspective as well because all these things like access to an office, access based on office hours, have an impact as well and they play differently.

I'd say overall we're pretty intent on being aware of these issues. Of course, everybody has blind spots, but what we try to do with these check lists of questions is test the assumptions on a regular basis.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: How often would you see, for instance, an MC saying that a particular program is neutral and doesn't need a gender-based analysis?

• (1630)

Ms. Nicole Kennedy: If we see that, it would be a rare occurrence, and it would make us look a second time just to make sure that it is actually true. As Gail said, it is rare that there isn't a consequence for individuals of the types of programs we deliver.

The Chair: Excellent.

I want to thank our guests for an excellent discussion and very good answers. Certainly, you have helped us understand a little better how the implementation part of GBA works.

We are going to suspend for two minutes while we bring our next discussion panel guests.

•(1630) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1630)

The Chair: I call our meeting back to order.

I have a couple of comments, just as a preface. I wanted to remind people that the Office of the Auditor General had previously provided their comments, so those are entered into the record for your reference.

I am very pleased as well that we have lots of gender parity happening on our committee today, so that is joyous.

I want to introduce our next panel participants. We have Mitch Davies, who is an assistant deputy minister for the Department of Industry. We also have Neil Bouwer, who is an assistant deputy minister for the Department of Natural Resources. Welcome, gentlemen.

Each of you will have five minutes to bring introductory comments, and then we will start our round of questioning.

Who will go first? Neil, it's over to you for five minutes.

Mr. Neil Bouwer (Assistant Deputy Minister, Science and Policy Integration, Department of Natural Resources): Thank you all for the opportunity to discuss Natural Resources Canada's efforts to implement gender-based analysis.

I am NRCan's GBA+ champion. As such, I believe GBA+ is a useful analytical tool for assessing the gender-specific impacts of initiatives on women and men, and it is integral to good policy-making.

As part of the Government of Canada's phased-in approach, NRCan committed to implementing gender-based analysis in informing policy and programs in 2012-13. Our early work focused on the development of a governance structure, a departmental statement of intent, and capacity-building.

•(1635)

[Translation]

Since 2014, we have formally included GBA+ in NRCan's strategic processes. At present, the department must conduct GBA+ for all proposals related to the federal budget and for all memos to cabinet and Treasury Board submissions.

[English]

We use a detailed assessment template, copies of which I have provided to the clerk, which asks policy authors questions such as: who are the target clients for the proposal; are all target clients able to participate equally in the proposed initiative, or are there barriers; would the proposal result in differential impacts based on gender or diversity; and if differential access or impacts have been identified, how can these be mitigated?

We undertake this assessment at the earliest possible point and carry it forward throughout the policy process. For example, if the GBA+ is undertaken for a budget proposal, and the parameters do not change, the analysis is carried forward through any subsequent memorandum to cabinet or Treasury Board submission. If there are changes in parameters, the templates are updated and re-approved.

Since April 1, 2015, NRCan has conducted GBA+ assessments on 42 proposals. Over one quarter of these proposals, that's 12, were considered exempt from further analysis, typically because they were routine, or because there had been previous GBAs completed. Almost one quarter of the proposals, that's 10, were identified likely differential gender-based or diversity-based access or impacts that required additional analysis and consideration of changes to the proposal's parameters and mitigation measures. For example, we seek to ensure the proposals do not reinforce historical gender disparities in the natural resources sector. The analysis of the remaining proposals, that's 20, found that differential gender-based or diversity-based access or impacts were not likely to occur.

[Translation]

NRCan has a responsibility centre with staff assigned to GBA+, about one full-time equivalent. This responsibility centre provides general support to the department and tracks progress on GBA+.

To support this work, NRCan has created a cadre of nine special advisors who provide directives to policy authors on how to conduct GBA+. Our sectors are responsible for conducting GBA+. The director general responsible for these matters is required to review and approve the final GBA+ evaluation templates.

[English]

We believe it is critical to raise awareness on GBA+ to build capacity in the department and to conduct GBA+ by offering tools and resources. We maintain considerable resources on our internal website for staff to access, such as case studies, information, and links to other federal resources.

My sector also maintains key facts and figures to support gender-based analysis at NRCan, specifically natural resources gender-desegregated data. We also connect our staff to data about the science community in Canada.

We support broader access to relevant data and information. Through the federal geospatial platform, Natural Resources Canada provides gender-desegregated socio-economic datasets to assist federal decision-making. This platform is available to all federal departments.

[Translation]

NRCan also contributed to funding for the production of "Women in Canada", a report directed by Status of Women Canada and Statistics Canada. This report is an essential resource for gender-based statistics.

[English]

With respect to training, staff are encouraged to take the Status of Women Canada's online GBA+ training. We conduct focused training within the department for our special advisers, and this is an important departmental resource for policy authors. We also offer targeted training for analysts who prepare budget proposals and more general training and awareness activities to employees. NRCan has also collaborated in the development and delivery of targeted training for science and economic-based staff.

In particular, in April 2014, NRCan piloted a full-day training session on GBA+ for science-based departments. It was developed in co-operation with Status of Women Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Agriculture and Agri-food Canada.

Earlier this year, NRCan worked with Status of Women Canada; Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada; the Centre for Intercultural Learning; and other departments on the development and implementation of targeted training for economic and science-based departments.

[Translation]

NRCan recently reviewed the findings of the Auditor General's office regarding the implementation of GBA.

[English]

The report indicated GBA was incomplete in certain initiatives. In NRCan's case, the OAG assessed four NRCan initiatives and concluded that only two had completed GBAs. For the first initiative, a GBA+ process had not yet been established at NRCan. NRCan committed to implementing GBA+ in 2012. When this proposal was still being developed, NRCan was still in the process of developing guidance. For the second initiative, one element of the initiative was not fully assessed, and we don't get partial marks from the Auditor General.

We continue to face some challenges, Madam Chair, and I'm happy to discuss those with the committee today, such as making GBA relevant for a science-based department like NRCan and considering GBA at the earliest phase of policy development.

[Translation]

Thank you, Madam Chair, for this opportunity to address the committee.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

That was excellent.

Now we're going to have Mitch Davies, who is with the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. That's even better. There are lots of science people here today. I love that.

Go ahead, Mitch. You have five minutes.

Mr. Mitch Davies (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Sector, Department of Industry): Thank you, Madam Chair, for the invitation to present to the committee today.

[Translation]

Gender-based analysis is important to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. Departmental staff work actively to support the application of GBA to policies and programs throughout the departmental portfolio.

[English]

I want to take the opportunity today to inform you of some of the activities we've undertaken in the department over the last 18 months to build employee awareness and training on GBA+ requirements that apply across the government and to strengthen our performance in the department. I'll also speak to some considerations for our future work on GBA.

Guided by the 2011 action plan on GBA+ developed by Status of Women Canada, the Privy Council Office, and the Treasury Board Secretariat, the deputy minister appointed a GBA champion for the department in October 2014 who's responsible for leading on the many GBA activities that I'm going to tell you about today. Our champion is also active in the GBA champions' community to share best practices and set common goals.

In order to support officials conducting effective GBA reviews in the department, our deputy minister approved the launch of a renewed GBA+ policy and GBA+ guidance tool in February of 2015. The deputy also approved the strengthening of the department's management accountability system to ensure that GBAs are completed for all memoranda to cabinet and Treasury Board submissions sent to our ministers for approval.

Since women-led businesses are important to the growth and vitality of Canada's economy, the department provided \$50,000 to Status of Women Canada to help organize the women's entrepreneurship forum in March of 2015. The Ottawa-based forum was a great success, bringing over 350 women entrepreneurs from many sectors of our economy to the city. In addition, one of our portfolio partners, the Business Development Bank of Canada, announced that the forum had earmarked \$700 million over three years to finance women-owned businesses in Canada.

As I mentioned earlier, building employee awareness and training on GBA requirements are important to strengthening our performance. With this in mind, our GBA champion has worked with the department's communications branch to promote the value of integrating GBA+ into program and policy design, including at senior management committees.

In October 2015, the department announced a new mandatory training requirement related to GBA. By March 31, 2016, all employees were required to complete the Status of Women Canada's online GBA+ training course. I'm pleased to report that close to 90% of all our employees including our executives, over 3,800 people, have taken the course and received their certificates in GBA+ training. We're working on the last 10%. In addition, we've made it mandatory for all new employees to complete the GBA training within six months of their arrival into the department.

Also, with regard to strengthening employee awareness of the value of integrating GBA considerations into program and policy development, we commissioned a GBA case study on clean technology and hosted the full GBA+ training course for economic, science, and research-based departments in February 2016. Our partners on this training were Natural Resources Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, but the event would not have happened without the active support and involvement of Status of Women Canada. The training was a major success with more than 70 officials participating from nine departments and agencies.

Finally, since gender-disaggregated data is essential to conducting effective GBAs, the department provided \$20,000 last fiscal year to support the development of a new chapter on women, education, and technology in the seventh edition of Stats Canada's seminal publication entitled, *Women in Canada*. This chapter is expected to be published this June. Our regional development partners have also provided funding for the *Women in Canada* publication.

[Translation]

I hope that gives you an idea of the work done in recent months to implement strategies and systems designed to enhance performance on GBA+ within the department.

•(1645)

[English]

Currently, we are completing an annual GBA+ self-assessment survey on our own performance and will use the assessment to identify possible opportunities for further action this year. Some of the areas we're considering exploring include deepening our expertise in conducting GBAs across the department by establishing a network of GBA focal points in the individual program sectors who help support the early policy and program consideration of gender diversity analysis in their groups.

We also hope to continue to improve access to gender-disaggregated data relating to key sectors of our economy such as clean technology, automotive, aerospace, information and communication technologies, pharmaceuticals, and tourism.

[Translation]

In closing, I would like to thank you for allowing me to address the committee today.

[English]

I would like to reaffirm that the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development recognizes the value that gender-based analysis provides in ensuring that we develop and implement effective policies and programs that meet the needs of diverse groups of men and women according to their socio-economic and demographic considerations

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

The chair has to remain impartial, so I can't ask you how your GBA+ encourages more women in engineering.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I'll pass it over to my Liberal colleague Mr. Fraser for seven minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Perhaps if there's a few minutes at the end, I'll defer to the chair.

I do think I will be splitting a little bit of my time with my colleague here, so I'll jump right into it.

One of the themes we heard from the prior witnesses, and indeed from you two, was on the issue of spreading GBA awareness through the institution. What have you found has been the most effective way to do that? Where do you think you can look next to help spread the culture of GBA awareness?

Mr. Mitch Davies: When it comes down to it, it's just a matter of having people understand what this is and is not.

I really want to commend Status of Women Canada. If you haven't taken the online course, I encourage you to.

The Chair: The whole committee has.

Mr. Mitch Davies: I found it really enlightening. Really what it told me, bringing it down to brass tacks, is that it's about doing your job properly. It's a simple matter of doing rigorous work to move beyond the superficial and to get the data you need to undertake an analysis about how programs affect individual Canadians in all walks of life in different parts of society.

Really, I think it's about doing your homework. Number one, having all of our employees do this and take this course is a major step forward. Second is getting them into the practice. I think that's where our next work plan will take us, to actually have the experts who are in my team closer to the people doing the day-to-day work on policies and programs. We're a big organization. We have to embed this in the groups that are actually doing it. It can't be done after; it has to be done while they do program and policy development.

The last step, and I also suggested this, is that there is still a need to get better information. We're trying to do that by supplementing the work that Stats Canada can do on their publication. We designed what we asked them to do for a very specific reason: women, education, and technology. We're trying to get at....

I won't answer directly the question that wasn't asked, but what about the pipeline? What about people's choices? What about women taking the path into STEM fields? When is it they're leaving that path? What are the issues involved in that? We have actually commissioned a lot of work over time on that, because these are what I would call intractable issues.

Getting more and more information, and more and more awareness and profile on those sorts of issues, is really key, I think, in terms of improving our performance.

Mr. Neil Bouwer: I won't repeat what my colleague said. I agree with it all. But if you're looking for something tangible, I would add that having people with expertise who are embedded in different policy centres makes a big difference. I think it's important to have people who have dedicated time to spend on GBA+. I think that's a real recipe for success, as is a leadership statement to make sure that people in the organization understand that this is important to the leadership of the organization and that there is an expectation that GBA+ is an integral part of a good policy-making process.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Just following up, do you find the mandatory nature of the training has really helped promote the awareness? Particularly I am interested in the new employees, as part of the first six months. Do you find there's more uptake with people who do it early on in their career rather than those who've been at it for quite a while?

Mr. Mitch Davies: I just think it quite simply tells everyone what's important in that what you measure is what becomes important in an organization. The fact that senior management, our deputy ministers, indicated that this is something all employees should do, must do, as part of becoming an employee in our department, right away sends a signal as to what's expected in the standard of work and the kind of rigour expected in the work.

What that does is it sets them up to actually then ask the question when they're working on a proposal, to talk to the experts in my group, to get involved early, to ask if there is data available that can help them. Often they wish to, but they need the resources, and that's where we can help. It really puts it front and centre.

We do a lot of other things that are mandatory. We make sure we do a security check. We make sure they have the language profile. We do a lot of other musts, and this has now also become a must.

• (1650)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Perfect.

I think there are almost three minutes left, if my colleague would like to pick it up here.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Thanks.

I'm new to the committee. As I was going through the material in preparation for today, a couple of things jumped out at me. All of the witnesses we heard from today mentioned the importance of data, having good knowledge and data to draw from.

Given that we had the cancellation of the long-form census under the previous government, and then with DRAP 2012 as well—I can speak to that as somebody who worked in the federal public service—do your departments actually have access to the kind of data you need? Do you have any in-house capability for generating your own data that you can't get through StatsCan? Do you have the capacity within your departments to do this kind of analysis?

Just some thoughts on that would be useful.

Mr. Neil Bouwer: Perhaps I'll start.

We work very closely with Statistics Canada, which is world class as a statistical data provider, and we have a great relationship with them. If you ask an economist or a statistician whether they have all the data they need, you will always get the answer that more is better. That is true; more is better. We would like to invest more in data, to

be sure. Some areas are easier than others. Internal data about our own workforce, of course, is readily available to us. When it comes to policy issues, depending on the policy issue, we may have better or poorer data quality.

Mr. Mitch Davies: I will take the opportunity to plug some good work that I think is part of the answer in getting better information and data, and it gets to the point of what resources the department uses to draw on.

The Council of Canadian Academies, if you are familiar with it, is a foundation that does impeccable work to collect evidence on questions of which the government, and in fact our department, has been a heavy user. We are also the host for the funding arrangement with them. In 2012, we commissioned a report called "Strengthening Canada's Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension". This arose as a consequence of recommendations that we commissioned in terms of enhancing the profile and the ultimate success of women in higher research.

We had the Canada Excellence Research Chairs inaugural competition, and those who were selected, those who were given awards—and these are big awards, \$10-million awards over seven years—were all men. I am sure they were all meritorious. These were fantastic researchers around the world. However, we immediately turned to an ad hoc group to ask them to look at recommendations about where we could improve the performance. One of the things we commissioned was this report, and I can report that the next round of Canada Excellence Research Chairs had women among the awardees.

The Chair: That is your time.

We are over to my Conservative colleague Ms. Vecchio, for seven minutes.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mitch, this is to you. You were talking about the practice, that you will put it into practice. What does the practice look like, first of all? Previous witnesses mentioned that, instead of just having a champion, they have people embedded within their organization. What are your next steps with the GBA?

Mr. Mitch Davies: In terms of what the practice looks like, I wouldn't say that we are in any way different or divergent from the other departments. We have a very rigorous questionnaire, and there is a checklist. It takes you through a series of questions that you have to look at, the fundamental matter: whether or not there could be differential outcomes in terms of gender, and whether there are measures you can take to mitigate that. In all cases now, when this work is done and the matters go up for decision, we have to show that we have done the work. Either we end up doing a review at that level to indicate that we didn't find anything—and we can actually scrutinize that; in my group we look at it—and the director general in the program area has to sign off on it, or they have to complete the full analysis. This happens about 50 times a year, as we look at memoranda to cabinet or Treasury Board submissions in the department.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: When we talk about the questions, what are some of those questions? Can you identify and give us a couple of examples, so we know? We talk about these questions, but what are they? Put those into context for us, please.

Mr. Neil Bouwer: While Mitch is looking for his reference, I just want to mention that I did provide the clerk of the committee with the GBA questionnaire that NRCan does, and I know that other departments use a similar one. If you are looking for a tangible example, I would refer to that as well.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That's wonderful.

Mr. Mitch Davies: He is going to show me the specific...because I want to quote to you from our actual policy document.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That's awesome.

Mr. Mitch Davies: I will answer the second question you posed, which is about what we will be doing next. I don't think this is something we can declare "work complete". That was where I was talking about the two measures we are studying right now. Getting people like this fine lady here who is pointing out the questionnaire through my notes, people who are trained to her level of skill about this in the sectors, in the work areas, spreading the focal points.... I think my colleague from NRCan also mentioned that.

I can quote to you some of the questions: "What sources of information or evidence did you review in your assessment of possible gender considerations?"—and then you have to check gender-disaggregated data, academic sources, government reports, or non-academic work. Another question is, "Does the initiative improve the situation for all, or does it impact diverse groups of men or women differently, positively or negatively?" Yes or no, and if so, explain.

It is with this sort of diving into the question that this questionnaire makes you do the homework. Coming back and saying, "Well, we didn't do it" is now not an option. It has been shown that we have done that homework in the department on all the measures that come forward.

• (1655)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Fantastic.

It is off to you, Neil. I really appreciate the information you have provided to us here. It's great. It is very handy to use. I see that some of the numbers are quite high, and I applaud you for that, but what were the increases? If we are comparing this data, what are we comparing it to? It is wonderful to see that we have 40.2% in management for occupations in the resource sector in 2015. What kind of data would we be comparing that to? Let's say, how much did that increase from 2010? Do we have figures to compare it to?

Mr. Neil Bouwer: I think the answer to that is yes, but I don't have those with me. I'd be happy to provide data.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: That would be wonderful, just so we can see how things have increased. Give it to the clerk, if you don't mind.

There might be an obvious answer, but in some of the management we see much higher levels when we come to female versus male on some levels and when it comes to business finance and administration. Mining, oil and gas are sitting at 81% male versus 19% female. Why? I think it's obvious, but why would we say that is the right answer?

Mr. Neil Bouwer: I don't know how definitive I should be in my remarks here, so let me say that it has been a long-standing challenge in terms of the labour market availability for both the geographical locations and for the types of occupations we see in the natural resource sectors. The 80-20 rule of thumb in natural resource sectors is a pernicious and historical imbalance.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Have we seen an increase though, at all? Would you say that with where we are, sitting at around 20% right now, was it 10% five to 10 years ago? Have we seen a gradual increase in change? Where would you see that?

Mr. Neil Bouwer: I will get back through the clerk with that trend analysis, though I should say that rule of thumb has been cited to me in the past as well. I will try to provide what I can in terms of a trend analysis.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Just because we have such an awesome chair who's an engineer, how has the GBA impacted engineering and these sorts of things? I don't know if she wants that question answered or not, but if you wouldn't mind.

Mr. Mitch Davies: I'll cite a couple of examples. Take a look at the Canada research chairs, which is a program offered by the granting council and part of our portfolio. In terms of trend, and you're looking for where we were and where we are now, I can share with you that the CRCs in 2001, 14% were women, and in 2012, it was 26%. That's a trend, and it's in the right direction.

I can still say we're starting from a low base, so I'll switch data sources. The Science, Technology, and Innovation Council in 2015 put out their report, "State of the Nation on Science", which is an excellent report, and they talked about women's share of Canada's science and engineering Ph.D. graduates at 32% being significantly lower than other countries. The United Kingdom is 49%, and the United States is 46%.

What's happening though is the share of female Ph.D.s in the fields grew between 2006 and 2012. The trend is right, but we're starting from a lower point. We have some catch-up to do, and I would reference in terms of programming that NSERC, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, has chairs for women in a science and engineering program they launched in 1996, which has a goal of directing chairs across the country on a regional basis as women who can then be examples of those in the field. We had also funded—and it was something we did as a consequence of gender-based analysis—our science technology innovation strategy refresh in 2014. We went on to create a priority on attracting young women and diverse groups into STEM fields, which led to funding of Let's Talk Science, which is a non-profit that promotes science to youth in Canada with a specific purpose to get at those under-represented groups. We provided \$12.5 million to them for that purpose.

We're trying to get at it, use the data, and then follow on with the funding and programming to move the needles.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you.

Over to Ms. Malcolmson for seven minutes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you, Chair. Thanks to the witnesses.

I was pleased to hear the NRCan representative describe the mandatory requirement for GBA submission to federal budget proposals, memos to cabinet, and Treasury Board submissions. Is there an equivalent requirement for, I'm going to call you Industry Canada because I can't remember the new name?

Mr. Mitch Davies: It's Industry, Science, and Economic Development, and we're calling it ISED. If we say it enough it will become the acronym, and then no one will know what we're talking about.

Yes, we have similar requirements in our department to have that work done on a mandatory basis.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: This question is for either of the witnesses. Are there times when you have had submissions to those bodies turned back by virtue of an incomplete or inadequate analysis to those bodies?

Mr. Neil Bower: Yes, in the case of NRCan, we do find our capacity to be uneven, and so we play a support as well as a challenge function to those submissions. We work iteratively—that's a polite way to put it—with some of our organizations, and that includes both within the department and within our portfolio organizations. It does happen that we play a challenge function and have to iterate the GBA template.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Well, is sometimes a proposal returned to you by Treasury Board and they ask you to redo some of the work?

Mr. Neil Bower: Sorry, I misunderstood the question. I was speaking about our internal process. Within the department we play a challenge function and we return proposals. I'm not aware of any cases where a central agency has asked us to redo or reconsider our GBA.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: That's good to know.

And how about you?

Mr. Mitch Davies: It's within the department. It's incumbent upon us to do this work within our organizations. Our deputies operate under the policy and should make sure it's done. There are certainly circumstances where proposals will come forward, and the first assessment of whether a full GBA analysis needs to be done might well be no, and we, in my group, may well have a different view and send it back to be done.

I actually saw one three weeks ago when I asked for exactly that to be done. I can't say what the proposal is because it's something in the midst of policy development, but, yes, it happens. In other words, is it serious? Is it taken seriously? Are we acting on it? The answer is yes.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Is there that accountability at the Treasury Board cabinet and budget-making proposals that if your departments don't do their work, then you get your proposals returned to you to perfect the application?

Mr. Mitch Davies: Well, I would say more importantly it's actually happening before it ever gets to go to the cabinet table or the Treasury Board committee, because it's incumbent upon departments to see that it's done. Then we're essentially giving accounting to the central agencies that it's been taken care of, but it's really our job to do it and to do it properly.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Have you got examples of times when your department did not complete a GBA test internally and you then found that your program did not actually reach the people that you hoped or had unintended consequences?

Mr. Neil Bower: I can start and just say that I'm not aware of any cases where we sort of regretted not having done a GBA and sort of caught ourselves. I certainly can't recall that being the case. What I can tell you is there have been cases where we have done a GBA and have found it very enlightening. There's one case in particular where it did impact the program design of an initiative that was going forward in a very tangible way.

Mr. Mitch Davies: I would reference an example, and it was one that the Auditor General's work highlighted for us. It was related to the computers for schools program. We operate it with sort of two programs. One provides the actual technology, and the other provides work experience for youth in the computer refurbishing centres.

While there could be a technicality about where the GBA had to be done, when, and so on, let's leave it aside. There's definitely an opportunity, particularly in terms of the recruitment of those centres of the youth they bring in, to play close attention to the gender balance in the workforce.

The Auditor General brought this to our attention in terms of the work we had done, and we've taken subsequent steps to do a study with the non-profits that run these centres. I wouldn't say we've completely got the trend arrested, but we've gone from 17% to 19% over two years, and we're trying to get it going in the right direction to bring more women in to do those youth work experiences in those technology centres, because, again, that's another opportunity that could be missed if we don't use it. We have to work even through third parties to sort of bring these policy objectives to them, too, because they're being funded by us, and they can pursue what they're doing and also advance gender equity.

● (1705)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: We're looking for inspiration here. Can you think of particular programs that you're really proud of where the outcome was changed by virtue of running this assessment, something that anybody outside of government might be able to relate to or understand?

Mr. Mitch Davies: Repetition is the art of pedagogy, so I would restate that I think the best example for us was the science and technology innovation strategy renewal where the gender-based analysis that supported it actually identified and provided the evidence in terms of participation of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

We made it a goal and then we actually went on to fund programming to try to work on closing that gap in terms of the participation of women in those high-tech fields, the economy of the future type fields. For us, that is very important, and one of our core policy directives is this kind of initiative.

Mr. Neil Bouwer: I would answer more generally, Madam Chair, just to say that in areas where our department engages with indigenous groups and some remote communities, we find a gender lens to be very helpful in making sure that we have a broad spectrum of engagement opportunities to make sure that we hear from all parts of different communities. While I don't have a specific that I can share with you, I would say that in general that is one helpful area in which to consider GBA+ lens.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Finally, for the Auditor General, any observations?

The description from these departments sounds very robust, yet the assessment really was a failing grade with both your 2009 and 2015 studies.

Any observations, generally, on where we are and what we might recommend that would improve outcomes?

Ms. Nancy Cheng: A couple of thoughts come to mind.

First of all, we're talking about the Government of Canada as a whole. At this point in time, the adoption rate is not 100%, and I think I signalled that.

There is one area we didn't talk about too much, and it's not specific to one department or another. There's very little information, external reporting, on how we're doing in this whole area of looking at the gender aspect of it before policy decisions are taken.

Status of Women doesn't always have all the information. Whatever information they have, they haven't quite made it public.

If we can pursue that avenue more—what gets measured gets done, what gets reported gets scrutinized—you would be in a better position to ask, “Where are we now, and are we progressing in the right direction?” The witnesses to my left seem to be saying that we're seeing a positive trend line and that's positive. We want to encourage that.

The other thing I seem to be hearing a little bit has to do with the time frame. We heard from a couple of witnesses that the time frame, the tight turnaround, was a real challenge. I guess we haven't heard too much about how we can address that. I don't know if the witnesses with us now actually have some suggestions in terms of looking at that, as well.

Those are some thoughts that we need to look at.

Other than that, when you start to look at individual departments and agencies, it's a matter of looking at the GBA+ framework, which underscores a lot of the activities. We're hearing that departmental witnesses are now saying, “Instill that culture”. This is really important and not something to be taken for granted.

Having the ways and means, so that people know how to do it, what to do, having somebody to go to, having a support structure, and then needing to identify the kind of data they need, access to that data, taking the time and the due diligence to analyze that data to say how it affects my programming in inviting participation by equal gender, these are all things that need to be looked at a little closer.

We looked at whether they implemented a framework. We also looked at a number of initiatives. There were some variations in terms of the quality of that.

The Chair: We're going to go to Anita Vandenbeld, who is sharing her time with Mr. Sheehan.

Let's start with Mr. Sheehan.

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Thank you very much. It's good to be here.

I'm new to the committee, but I am on pay equity and we've had a great discussion. I recognize a lot of my friends around this table who are also on that very important committee.

The other day we did have a discussion about GBA. We had the minister in along with some other ministers. It was a great discussion on how important it is and some of the steps that are currently under way that need to continue and be accelerated, such as gender parity in this government for cabinet ministers, and to be exported and encouraged at other board tables, banks, government, etc. That becomes so important in the essence of thinking and promoting that culture we've talking been about around this table to continue and to encourage not only pay equity but other very important things dealing with the gender issues.

My background is in business and economic development, and I've dealt a lot with entrepreneurship and I worked in the trades area, as well. There was some discussion from my friends across the way about trades and entrepreneurship.

One of the things we have in one of the trades deals with ICT, information and communications technology. I saw that the Auditor General's report—and I highlighted it here—found that the ISED computers for schools program did not undergo a complete GBA. The report indicated two problems. The GBA was out of date. From the 2014 initiative, the department used the GBA that it performed in 2013 when it reviewed the terms and conditions for the program.

The second part was that the GBA was incomplete and conclusions were not supported by evidence. The 2013 analysis led the department to conclude that there were no important gender quality implications of the program. The 2015 Auditor General's report stated that:

We reviewed data sources relevant to the program, such as academic research papers, stakeholders' publications, and data on youth interns employed through TWEP. We found that these sources pointed to gender considerations, such as a shortage of women in ICT fields and a low proportion (less than 20 percent) of female interns working at the refurbishment centres.

Just reading that out—and I think it's important to get it out on record, as well—what in terms of the ISED is the senior management, in reviewing the quality and completeness for GBA...? You touched on it a little bit, but I think it bears further explanation and delving into what it is you're doing going forward and perhaps why that happened. Was it just an oversight or inconsideration?

Not only that, but what steps are being taken now to improve the outcomes of ICT? It's important not only for apprenticeship but because a lot of entrepreneurs are getting in. I met yesterday with a start-up group, and there are a lot of female entrepreneurs in this field. I think that's an important area for us to really focus on.

• (1710)

Mr. Mitch Davies: In quickly coming back, I think the audit—as audits do—looks back. I would say that what it identified in terms of the quality of the work that was done around the computers for schools was an opportunity missed. I think I said that before, and I'm perfectly comfortable to describe it as such.

This is prior to us having very significantly revamped how we're doing this in the department in the 18 months I described in my opening statement. This is prior to anyone having to be trained on what this is. This is prior to us implementing the mandatory policy that it be done, the check at my focal point to make sure it's done with high quality.

I would even say, on that program, that we went and actually commissioned a specific study on the opportunities to enhance women's participation in those refurbishment centres and the youth opportunities. We're trying to work on the trend line now to get more of them participating in the local level in that work through that program.

I completely acknowledge that this is an area where we need to do better. As an economy we need to recognize and acknowledge this.

Secondly, we have instruments. We have programming where we can actually give it a nudge. We should be doing all that.

I would say we're embarked on the right path and the audit identified where we could do a better job. While the audit was going

on we were getting on with improving our practices in the department, which is all the things I described in my opening statement in terms of the policy statement, the mandatory training, and just raising our game across the board on this. For me that's what we need to do.

• (1715)

Mr. Terry Sheehan: Thank you very much.

I represent an area that's called Sault Ste. Marie. It's up in northern Ontario, and we do have a lot of indigenous residents throughout that area. Through the pay equity committee we've been talking about how that group and other groups, such as newcomers, are even more under-represented. They make even 30% less than most folks, and stuff like that.

What is ISED doing to really work particularly with those two groups, with indigenous groups, identifying them and trying to help them as well with GBA, and also with newcomers?

Mr. Mitch Davies: I would point out here, on the ground, that a really significant tool is the regional development agencies. In the case of northern Ontario it's FedNor, which has been a part of our department, but they operate like a regional development agency. They have a funding budget.

They've provided funding over the years to many projects. I know there is the Paro women's centre in northern Ontario that works with women entrepreneurs. They have had long-standing funding support through FedNor.

We provide funding support for skills and trade development. We provided funding through the aboriginal CFDC in northern Ontario to prepare people for trades in mining work and to get them ready for that. We've also provided funding to an organization in Kenora on food and beverages, working in the service sector, working in culinary and so on. They're very important industries in the Kenora region where a lot of tourists come in over the summer.

There is a lot. I'd be happy to table more information on the funding and the kinds of projects that we've done, for example, in northern Ontario, that are specifically targeted on aboriginal...and on women, and their participation; and in fact, on newcomers, new Canadians, and integrating them into the local economy. Because they need people, and they need people who want to come to work in those regions, there are local organizations that are funded by us to support doing that.

The Chair: Excellent, and that's your time.

We're over to Ms. Harder for five minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Studying GBA is certainly interesting to me. I support doing GBA.

I think perhaps, Mr. Bower, you are someone who could answer this for me, given the department you represent. It's one of the fundamental questions that I have in all of this. I'm wondering, is it always a bad thing to have gender inequality within a workforce?

Mr. Neil Bower: That's an interesting question.

I mentioned labour market availability to begin with, and certainly one benchmark that we look at is labour market availability. So when we look at our own workforce or consider issues you have to be realistic about the starting point and about the realities of the labour markets that you're dealing with. Certainly, as I said, there are long-standing differences in the participation of men and women in natural resource sectors.

I think from an analytical point of view those are the facts, and we look to improve the gender equity as a matter of public policy, and in that sense it's a good thing to have greater parity.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Interesting.

I'll go to Mr. Davies now. I just want a point of clarification here.

Earlier you made reference to some awards that were given out, and you said there was one round where they were all given out to men, so this caused some further thought and consideration, and then in the next round there were some women included. I'm just wondering, then, was that because the criteria changed, or was that because there were women who now met that original criteria?

Mr. Mitch Davies: The reference was to the Canada Excellence Research Chairs program of the tri-councils. It was its inaugural round of selection—all men.

There was an ad hoc group commissioned by the minister to look at the situation and develop recommendations essentially for the universities, because they would do the recruitment, they're the ones going out and doing the head-hunting. It asked them what we could do to change the way the program functions, not to change the bar of excellence, but to change the way we actually do the intake in terms of just how long you have to be up in the process before you know whether you're going to actually be taken forward. The uncertainty about that, from a family and planning and obligation point of view, is something that not everybody is equally prepared to accept. So what we were trying to do was redesign the process to give more certainty in the front end to applicants that their application would be pursued further at a later stage.

I don't do the adjudication. This was still done by peer review. This is still done by an international panel of the best experts. We were choosing the best to come to Canada.

But it's really an excuse to say, "Well, the people we chose to meet a certain bar all end up being men", and then be indifferent. The question is, what could you do to encourage and facilitate, in different circumstances, diverse groups of people to be able to come forward and to participate in the process? When you take those measures, you intentionally take steps to do that, lo and behold the outcome changes, not the quality of the people, but the outcome, which I think is really what we were getting at.

• (1720)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you. I think that's a really helpful distinction, so thank you very much for that.

My next question would be for Mr. Bouwer again.

I'm wondering if you can tell me how the specific sex-disaggregated data that you have access to has affected your policy-making within the department? As well, I'd like you to draw on a specific example for me.

Mr. Neil Bouwer: The level of data and the quality of data varies by policy area. We seek to use the best data available depending on the area.

In terms of a specific example for you, I'm not equipped to be specific about the data on any one given example today. I recognize that it might make it more tangible for you, but I'm not equipped to do that today.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'm not asking for specific figures or data, just a policy. Can you actually spell out a policy that got changed because of data collection that took place with regard to sex disaggregation?

Mr. Neil Bouwer: Yes, I can give you the example of the aboriginal forestry initiative, and I think that was in 2011 or 2012, so it predates the conversation we're having about mandatory GBA+ in NRCan, but that's a tangible example where running a gender-based lens and doing a gender-based analysis with data helped inform the program design in a way that was more sensitive. I think, at the end of the day, it led to a better program as a result, to the point that thinking about data and looking at diversity and different perspectives is part of doing good public policy.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you.

We go over to Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you very much.

I'd like to toss a question to the Auditor General's office here. We've heard from four different departments today, all of whom indicated the internal mandatory nature of GBA analysis. One of the chief barriers that you identified in the last Auditor General's report on GBA was the lack of a mandatory nature like, say, Immigration has.

Do you think that it being mandatory, externally through legislation, for example, would still be a positive development to influence the use of GBA?

Ms. Nancy Cheng: The point that we're trying to make is that, if there's extra pressure being put to bear on the requirement to do GBA, that might be positive movement. It's not necessarily to say that we absolutely have to have the law changed and have some legislative requirements. We never really pushed to have it at that limit and we were careful of how we couched the recommendation in terms of saying that is an issue that needs to be looked at. We left it to management to decide the best way forward.

You could do it internally. You could do it at the level of government policy, having an explicit policy of the Government of Canada asking for that, or you could elevate it further. Ultimately, there is that internal challenge, which is probably the better place to have it.

Then you still have the opportunity of the central agencies' challenge, whether it's through Treasury Board Secretariat or PCO looking at the MCs as well as the TB submissions, to have that rigour there as well so you do indeed have the iterative process to make sure that the issue is sufficiently explored before we say it doesn't apply or that it comes to fruition, and you actually change your programming as a result of that.

There isn't a magic formula in terms of saying that it absolutely needs to be that way, and if we truly had that stronger view, we would probably have used stronger language in the report as well. But we identified it, saying it's necessary to see why things aren't moving as quickly, because we are looking at 20 years after making that international commitment. Even with the 2009 government position saying we will now have a government-wide departmental audit plan to implement GBA, we're still finding it's not quite there yet, so what does it take? That really is the point.

What we seem to be hearing from some of the witnesses today, at least the first two, is that the time frame seems to be fairly important for them, and I'm not quite sure whether there's been more dialogue in terms of looking at the best way to look at that. Maybe Status of Women can also help to look at that to see what better can be done there.

• (1725)

Mr. Sean Fraser: If we were to consider a recommendation that GBA becomes mandatory across the Government of Canada, what would be the handful of key elements to it? Would it be that we conduct the GBA loosely or would there be reporting regular assessment? What are the key pieces to a mandatory directive by the government?

Ms. Nancy Cheng: Good question. I don't think I have a specific answer for you. If you are going to go the route of saying that there should be a government policy, then the policy parameters need to be fleshed out. Usually you would have some principles that you want observe. In essence, you would probably support the fundamental position that Status of Women put forward. This would require a demonstration that you have looked at whether your policy might affect the two genders differently, whether you have looked at how it might affect people participating in those programs, and whether you would be able to take into account data as well as the perspective of different groups that might be affected. You would have to demonstrate how you analyzed this. It might call for a more documented analysis, as opposed to more intuitive thinking. In any policy instrument, you would have the basic principles that you need to observe, and you may need to lay out the roles and responsibilities of who's going to do what. If all the organizations have a robust challenge function, then at the external level you might need less, but everybody might not be at the same place.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Excellent.

To the two representatives from the departments, is there regular reporting now, and has it helped?

Mr. Neil Bouwer: I can say that at Natural Resources Canada we keep track of where things progress through GBAs, and internal reporting comes to me, as champion. I've shared some of that data with you today.

Mr. Mitch Davies: We are initiating this as part of the management framework that the deputy put in place a year or so ago. We'll do a complete self-assessment—my group will guide this—on our performance. Part of it is tracking the implementation,

training, and performance required for completing the GBAs and assessing their quality. Then we'll go back to our senior management table and present recommendations on what we can do. I think it's really continuous improvement. It's like anything—you can legislate good practice, but you have to be doing the hard work and maintaining a level of urgency and priority in your management. That's what our self-assessment is intended to achieve.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thank you, and thank you, Madam Chair, for the courtesy of extending us a few seconds.

The Chair: No worries.

My thanks to the witnesses for doing a wonderful job of preparing and responding.

For those items that you've agreed to send to the clerk, we need to have that information by May 12. We're going to be starting to draft our report.

Ms. Cheng.

Ms. Nancy Cheng: The PAC also called a hearing on this same report. That just happened recently. They might also try to craft a report. Maybe the two clerks should get together to make sure that your messages are coordinated.

The Chair: This is an excellent recommendation. We were aware that there was work going on, and we're waiting to see what the scope of the report will be.

My thanks to the committee for your participation. I look forward to seeing you again Tuesday at 5:30.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Chair, could I say one thing before we adjourn?

The Chair: Sure.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: I expressed at the meeting on Tuesday my disappointment that the timing of the press release did not give our constituents much time to respond. My colleague had asked that the press release not contain quotations with no attribution. That's why we were trying to do that editing. We checked the transcript, and my colleague did not say she wanted to have the quotation marks removed and then bring the press release back to the committee a month later. That was not her request.

I hope that next time, especially when we're making very small changes, the committee can agree to leave it in the hands of staff. That means we could get press releases out early, and this gives Canadians a chance to chew on our invitations longer.

• (1730)

The Chair: Certainly.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you.

The Chair: You will notice that as soon as we made that agreement in the committee—I believe it was about three minutes later during the committee—that the press release went out. So we were right on it. We will do that in the go-forward.

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