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## **Standing Committee on the Status of Women**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, June 15, 2017**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu**



## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Thursday, June 15, 2017

• (0845)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)):** Good morning, colleagues. We're resuming our study of the economic security of women in Canada.

I hear that a couple of our witnesses who were supposed to be present are on their way, so I think we will start.

We have from Inclusion International, Connie Laurin-Bowie, the executive director, by video conference.

I invite you, Connie, to make your opening remarks to the committee. You have seven minutes.

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie (Executive Director, Inclusion International):** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the committee, and to the committee for your work on this important issue.

As you said, I am the executive director of Inclusion International. We are an organization for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

I am speaking to you from New York today. We are at a conference of states parties at the United Nations. Minister Qualtrough is here with us, talking about issues affecting people with disabilities. In particular, there has been quite a lot of conversation this week about women with disabilities. Therefore, the opportunity to speak to you about the context and the particular issues facing women with disabilities, in terms of economic security, is very well timed and certainly important both internationally and in Canada.

We are working globally and with our member in Canada to talk about the multiple forms of discrimination that impact people with disabilities, particularly women with disabilities. I want to speak to you today about two slightly different aspects of economic insecurity for women. One is for women who themselves have a disability, and in the case of our work, a particular focus on intellectual disability. The other, though, is the impact on women who have children with disabilities and are the primary caregivers of children with disabilities, very often children who grow up to remain at home and live with the family throughout their adult lives.

Starting with the first issue and category—women with disabilities themselves—Statistics Canada estimates that about 15% of women in Canada have some form of disability that limits their daily activities in some way.

What we know across the country, wherever people live, is that women with intellectual disabilities are underemployed and among the most excluded from the labour market. The reason for this very often doesn't have to do with their disability. It has much more to do with the supports they're able to access in order to go to work. Sometimes, depending on the province, it also has something to do with their relationship with the provincial supports they receive provincially for their disability. In some instances, if you go to work and you receive disability support from a province, there's a limit to how much work you're allowed to do before that gets taken back. Very often, because of the nature of the relationship with the labour market, part-time employment, insecure employment, things that produce low income, the reluctance to let go of the eligibility for disability are quite a barrier to remaining in and having a significant long-term attachment to the labour market.

From some of the other presenters, you will probably have heard more about the specific challenges to employment for women with disabilities. So I'll turn briefly to talk about the issues we see related to women who are caring for a child or adult with a disability.

What we very often see is that women's attachment to the labour market, when they have a child with a disability, becomes quite precarious. They are more likely to have to take time off work, not only for caregiving but also for various doctor appointments and their advocacy work, for lack of a better term, to make a place for their children in the community. If you're spending your time arguing with your school system about your child being able to go to school, it's very hard to maintain a strong employment relationship.

What often happens is that women who have children with disabilities end up having to leave the labour market because of the various responsibilities they have. In the long term, particularly for families who have children with intellectual disabilities, wherever they live in the world, not just in Canada, we know that most adults who have intellectual disabilities live at home with their families. That's true in low-income countries as well as higher-income countries, whether or not we have good, strong support systems.

• (0850)

I think there's a real challenge in understanding the role that families play in enabling their family member to participate in the community as adults and, particularly when they're young, with issues around inclusion, whether in child care or education. This can really have an impact on a woman's ability to continue to be in the labour market, and then obviously there's the impact related to income insecurity.

I will just mention quickly some of the areas where the federal government may be able to have a role to play in both the impact on women who have disabilities and the impact on women who are caregivers of children, or mothers of children, with disabilities.

I'll start with the one that is probably the most impactful and that is the area of child care. If we have good, inclusive child care that allows children with disabilities to go to school, the impact of their inclusion later in school and for mom to be able to go to work is enormous. This is inclusive child care, and I think this issue will have come up for children without disabilities, but certainly for mothers having the additional care and responsibilities related to children with disabilities, if they aren't able to access good-quality inclusive child care, that's the beginning of where the relationship to the labour market falls apart. So child care is huge.

I would also say that, in terms of income security, housing is a major issue for women who have disabilities themselves. We do not propose particular housing initiatives for women with disabilities. We think that the larger housing strategy has to take into account the needs of women with disabilities.

We need employment measures to support people with disabilities to have stronger relationships in the labour market.

Finally, I think there is always room within the tax system to explore ways of compensation for costs related to disability.

Without going into long recommendations, I think those are the kind of high points of things that the federal government could be thinking about to better the income security of women with disabilities and women caring for people with disabilities.

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

Joining us here in person we have, from the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society, Samantha Letourneau, the settlement manager in Nanaimo.

I assume you know Ms. Malcolmson from our committee.

As an individual we have Jaime Smith, the executive lead for the Centre for Employment Innovation at St. Francis Xavier University.

Welcome, ladies.

We're going to begin with Samantha for seven minutes.

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau (Settlement Manager, Nanaimo, Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society):** Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society. I greatly appreciate it.

Just as a quick snapshot, the multicultural society serves about 1,100 newcomers a year. As many immigrant services across Canada have experienced this year, we've had a massive influx of government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees. I will speak on behalf of the immigrants who have come here either through private sponsorship or the government-assisted refugee process, or as newcomers wanting to immigrate to Canada in different ways, and specifically around women, of course.

We know that women are at a disadvantage in the labour force simply because we're women, and even more so for immigrant and refugee women. For the economic participation of immigrant and

refugee women who are culturally and linguistically diverse, current barriers have to be removed.

One that was already addressed is the lack of available and affordable child care. Fluency in the local language is vital for newcomer integration, especially in the labour market, as such fluency is a strong predictor of employment and salary. We have seen that immigrant women often stay home to take care of their young children due to the lack of available and affordable child care, and they therefore have limited opportunities to learn English.

In terms of educational levels and work experience, the preference of employers for local qualifications and work experience obviously places immigrants at a disadvantage. Immigrant women who delay entering the labour force because of child care or taking care of elders may face greater difficulties when trying to do so in the future.

In regard to discrimination, women from culturally diverse backgrounds face discrimination on the basis of race and sex. This can be indirect or direct. In the central Vancouver Island region, we have seen cases of immigrant women facing discrimination based on their faith as well. These cases have gone to the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal.

In light of these realities, we would like to propose the following recommendations.

The first is for universal and affordable child care. This would benefit all women, especially low-income and working-poor families from immigrant and diverse backgrounds.

Second, provide financial support to immigrant centres to operate English classes for women and their young children. These specially designed English classes would include both an English teacher and an ECE educator working together to assist the mothers and children in improving language skills. This addresses both isolation and lack of child care.

Third, increase financial support by adding on to contribution agreements already in place with not-for-profit immigrant societies to develop and implement innovative women's employment programs. Currently in B.C., there is a gap in employment programs for women, and there are no employment programs specifically looking at immigrant or refugee women.

Fourth, provide educational incentives, such as bursaries and grants, for low-income immigrant women wanting to pursue careers in environmental sciences, policy development, and engineering, in order to address the gender gap.

As well, actively implement the convention on the elimination of discrimination against women. Canada is a signatory of CEDAW, the United Nations convention. The convention defines discrimination against women as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition [and] enjoyment [of women].” It continues, “By accepting the Convention, States commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including” incorporating the principle of equality of men and women, abolishing all discriminatory laws, and adopting appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women.

General recommendation 19 of CEDAW states that there is a “right to just and favourable” working conditions for women.

Canada could be a leader in putting CEDAW into action.

Finally, I'd like to mention a motion by MP Sheila Malcolmson on the importance of more beds in shelters and transition housing.

• (0855)

We see many immigrant women who have come to Nanaimo or the central Vancouver Island region fleeing abuse, and they are often isolated because they have no other family members in Canada. With limited housing, limited beds in shelters, and limited affordable housing in general, these women often choose to stay with their abuser in order to have shelter.

I know this is not a new idea, but what we need to look at is a national housing strategy to assist women, and low-income and working poor families achieve economic security.

Thank you.

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

All right, then. We'll hear from Jaime Smith for seven minutes.

**Ms. Jaime Smith (Executive Lead, Centre for Employment Innovation, St. Francis Xavier University, As an Individual):** Thank you very much for having me today. I'm certainly very honoured and humbled to be here.

I've been asked to share my story of entrepreneurship and leadership from my perspective as a rural Nova Scotian. Although I was asked to share the challenges of being an entrepreneur and a community leader as a rural Nova Scotian, to add a little colour for you I could add stories such as changing into my dress in the back of a minivan following a full day—I see some nodding around the table—and rolling in from board meetings to attend an awards gala for the inaugural Women in Business Award that I received for perceived work/life balance. Again, I remember rushing out of a provincial board meeting I was chairing as my phone was ringing off the hook, my mom spidey-senses going off and thinking I'd better answer this to learn that there was a rather significant issue at school and, luckily, my husband was able to deal with it.

I might also talk about the challenges of balancing a growing and innovative business in a rural community, where you need to grow your brand through relationship-building and networking, stepping up and saying, yes, when those leadership opportunities come along, and learning about conflicts of interest in the most interesting way. I could also talk about the challenges of finding financial support to go

back to school, to build my own capacity for community development and women's leadership. But I digress....

Through my story, I aim to portray the strengths and the resilience, as well as the realities, of rural women who are starting to grow businesses and social organizations in rural Canada. I see entrepreneurship as a way to connect to a professional life and balancing a home life, as well as a way to address social challenges.

In the first decade of my career I worked as a professional planner in two Atlantic Canadian cities while my husband was in medical school. I often had side consulting gigs to pay the bills, and we had two small kids. Life was busy. In the summer of 2009, I decided to retire. I told my husband that I was retiring—he was working, and we had our third son—and I left my job as a community health planner in my rural community. I was seeing the coming health cuts and I was only recently in a job, and so would probably also be the first to be out. So I took and rode this sea of change that was happening.

I stayed at home and I did the things that many rural Canadian women do. I volunteered. I started a library program. I coached. I was at home with the kids, and I was in a very privileged position to be able to do so. I think that's really important to state. But at that time, as my youngest was becoming more independent and I was missing that professional capacity of my work, I decided to go back. Urban planning jobs were not really accessible in my community and community health planning jobs were long gone with the health sector cuts.

At that time, I began a consulting practice, and it started small. I thought I would take two or three contracts a year, that I could do that while Charlie was napping on the couch and that we'd all be fine. However, it quickly grew. There was a rather big need in the community for community development, community engagement, and working with non-profit organizations in the community health sector. I was able to access child care at the local YMCA, and my kids could access YMCA care after school, but it cost almost 40% of my income from the business at the time. For some reason, women always think that child care should come from their side of the pay in the family.

Through all this growth of my business, I received incredible emotional support. There were lots of tears and stress that came with running a business, and financial support from my husband. As the business grew and more contracts came in, I reinvested what I could and began bringing on a group of associates, who just happened to be some other incredibly gifted women in my local rural community.

I joined the chamber of commerce, I connected with other business owners, and I attended some sessions at the Centre for Women in Business at Mount St. Vincent, but they did not have the capacity to provide those services to rural communities. When you live two or three hours from the local city, it's quite an investment to take a full day for a one-hour seminar.

I strengthened relationships locally and I noticed that a number of local organizations for women entrepreneurs were starting to emerge in the community, and they are still growing. In 2014, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Community College, businesses, and the chamber, four local women and I began a community-based participatory leadership platform called Pictou County 2020. We began by hosting community conversations about the welfare and well-being of our local community. We were astounded when over 200 people came out to participate. Together they envisioned a community that was healthy, united, thriving, and bold and that embraced change through leadership, collaboration, mentorship, and entrepreneurship.

● (0900)

Our 2020 team of experienced and dedicated facilitators continues this work, and in 2017 we hosted another session where more than 30 local organizations and businesses came forward to talk about their stories of success and positivity. We didn't anticipate that almost all of the presenters would be women, who were coming forward with new organizations to service the local community and new businesses with a social purpose. We're starting to see an emergence of social innovation and entrepreneurship in the local community.

At the time I also decided to start my master's in adult education at St. FX University and went through another shift. I currently find myself the executive lead for the centre for employment innovation at St. FX University. We are really inspired by the principles of the Antigonish movement and the work of Reverend Moses Coady. The extension department believes in empowering communities and individuals to provide a full and abundant life for all.

The centre for employment innovation aims to facilitate a resilient, effective, and skilled workforce for Nova Scotia through research, community engagement, collaboration, leadership, and capacity building.

My journey is really about creating a full and abundant life for me, my family, and my community. What I challenge you to consider, through a rural lens, is how we can create accessible and equitable access to child care, transportation, and other services that support women as they engage in entrepreneurship and meaningful work. How do we support sectors like health and the community that primarily engage women in their workforces? How can we engage women in meaningful dialogue about the future they envision for themselves and their families? How do we celebrate the strength and resilience of women in Canada?

Thank you.

● (0905)

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

We'll begin our round of questioning with my colleague Ms. Damoff for seven minutes.

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Chair.

Thanks to all our witnesses for being here.

I'm going to start my questions, most of which will probably be directed to Connie Laurin-Bowie.

Hello, Connie. I just want to thank you for being here and your tireless work to make our society more inclusive, not just here in Canada, but around the world.

Because your organization is worldwide, I wonder if you could share with us some best practices you have seen that self-advocates or governments have worked on and that we might look at doing here in Canada.

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** Thanks, Pam. It's very nice to see you, and thanks for this opportunity.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my comments, we're here at the United Nations talking about the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. With the increasing focus on the issues of people with disabilities and particularly women with disabilities, there is an interesting conversation happening about practices in different countries. A lot of it focuses on the real barriers that women face, so there is the beginning of a conversation about what innovations might be useful that we could build on.

Following the last speaker, I think one of the really interesting and growing areas of work is around women entrepreneurs. I think that women with disabilities in low-income countries often work in non-paid volunteer roles, and they are doing an enormous amount of work in their communities both as mothers and as women with disabilities.

What I think is really interesting is how we begin to invest in those kinds of things. How do you support entrepreneurship? How do you support the role that women play in transforming communities? It's more than a workshop where you have women making beads or something. It's much more about the role that women play in their communities in helping to make those communities better, because they, themselves, know and understand the nature of that community and the relationships in that community.

I think that on a public policy level, there are some excellent examples of good, inclusive child care, and there is probably not one speaker who is going to come before your committee and not talk about child care. Whether it's formal and supported through government or it's informal and created by women in communities to support each other, it is an enormous area.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Connie, who does inclusive child care well?

• (0910)

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** There are actually some very good examples in Canada. Interestingly, one that is close to your riding is in Milton. There's an association for community living in Milton that provides support to inclusive child care initiatives. They don't provide the child care; they support the child care centres being inclusive. That's the model you would want to be encouraging. It's not that we would create particular child care for children with disabilities; we would want to make sure that there are supports in place so that child care can be inclusive.

There are good practices in inclusive child care and early childhood education in many countries. In New Zealand, for example, there's an excellent inclusive child care program. There are some specific provincial-level or state-level initiatives that I think are interesting in different jurisdictions. In most countries, it ends up being at a community level and not at a national level, but there are a few that are quite exceptional.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I don't know if you're aware that our minister signed a framework with our provincial and territorial colleagues just this week on child care and early learning. One of the four or five points was inclusion.

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** That's fantastic news. I did not know that.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** You had mentioned non-paid volunteer work, which actually happens here in Canada. I think people are often surprised that we have people such as Karina, whom you met in my riding, who was “working” in a daycare, but was volunteering. I recall this so vividly. I tell people that when you asked her why she wasn't paid, she said she wasn't capable, but you looked at her and you said, “They're just wrong.”

Right now, even within the federal government, I have an employee in my office who comes in one day a week and I'm paying him minimum wage—you know Steven. He also works as part of the provincial workshops where he's paid only \$5 a day, and it is work that's being done with the federal government. Do you think we could take a role, as the federal government, to ensure that anyone working within the federal government, regardless of what work they're doing, is paid at least minimum wage?

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** I absolutely do. I'm not completely up to date, province by province, in terms of restrictions. I think a lot of that has to do with the interaction between the provincial supports that a person might receive. The \$5-a-day employment is really not an employment; it has much more to do with the program. The way to restrict that would be to say a person should be paid minimum wage regardless of their disability or label. In order to make that happen, we have to actually work with the provinces in order for them to change their restrictions in terms of being able to give disability supports when a person is working.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Okay, thank you. That's helpful.

I have another question. We know that over half of the claims that go to the Human Rights Commission are by people living with disabilities. Do you see any ways we can improve that process here in Canada? I know you deal with it not just here but also around the world.

Oh, I see that that's my time.

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** Are we running out of time? Are we getting the signal?

**The Chair:** We can hear the answer for this one, and then we'll move on. I'll just give everybody an extra minute.

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** I'll just finish with that.

Minister Qualtrough is here in New York as part of the discussions on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. She's talking to her colleagues from other countries about the ways in which the disability act could be strengthened to protect people, and do more than just protect people, so that we don't end up with a system that is only grievance-based but one in which we are proactive in the way we support people with disabilities to be employed, to have the disability supports they need, and one in which we are looking at their income status.

There are steps that are already being undertaken by this government that could be strengthened, but I think Canada is on the right track in thinking about what we need to do to include people with disabilities in the community.

• (0915)

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Thanks, Connie.

**The Chair:** Very good.

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

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

Jaime, I want to start with you today. I'm really grateful that somebody from the rural part of Nova Scotia is here. That's fantastic, because I think rural areas definitely need to be addressed when we're looking at so many different options for addressing women's concerns and the obstacles that families face.

You mentioned child care and rural communities. Can you give me an idea of what is in your communities and what you see as the best fit for some of our rural communities when it comes to child care?

**Ms. Jaime Smith:** In towns and centres, there are always opportunities for the YMCA and other kinds of organizations to offer child care. However, the times of day that it is offered are certainly limited, so the accessibility of child care is limited for nurses, or other people who might do shift work at Michelin or other organizations. It's not accessible to them.

You do see women in small communities offering child care services in their homes so that they might be able to stay home or provide some supplemental income for themselves. However, there are certainly limitations in that regard as well. There would be many more types, but another is the older women who might go into a home and offer that service for you at your home space so that you might have access to child care.

In a rural community, we also have the support of families. That is how many people can survive and be able to work, to have the support of parents and friends that really can wrap around them. It's quite varied, and the accessibility of each and every one of those depends on your own accessibility. Do you have access to transportation? Do you have all of these other supports that would allow you to have that child care option? Do you have an option of reporting payments for that child care? We know that sometimes that's not available in rural communities, sliding someone \$20 every now and again just for helping you take care of your children so that you can support their family.

It's really quite wide and vast.

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

I have great respect for Minister Duclos, but one of my concerns always when we look at child care is that the needs are very different and need to be addressed very differently when you're looking at the urban-rural split.

I came from a community of 300 people. Child care would not have ever been an option, to be honest. In many farm families both parents are working, in the first place. I think it's really important, when we're looking at child care funding, to ask how it is going to address things outside of the larger centres.

You had mentioned the YMCA and YWCA being part of that equation, but not all communities have that. In some of the rural and more remote communities, I'm very concerned how this funding would be spent. I appreciate where the minister's heart is, because I know he has a wonderful heart, but at the same time, we need to make sure that our rural families are going to be actually looked at when we are dealing with these issues. It's really interesting you said that.

Looking at that as well, I know I've read a lot of studies on working with women entrepreneurs to create licensed day care centres, where they have four or five persons.

Samantha or Jaime, has there been any discussion on that within your own communities for some of the smaller rural communities, where you can discuss making it an actual job for women? I do know some people in my own community who have a day care with five children and they're doing very well from it. Do you see that happening? Is there something we can do to also interest men or women in creating day care spaces within their own home as entrepreneurs?

**Ms. Jaime Smith:** Maybe I'll begin.

I think that is part of a broader way to come at this issue, to look at those other options. What we also see in rural communities are grassroots organizations that connect women entrepreneurs. Through those connected networks of support, there could be some way of ensuring more universal child care and adequate safety and guidelines for what's happening in those homes. We know that everyone always has the best intentions. How do you support them to do that job really well?

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

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** We're seeing something very similar in the Nanaimo and the central Vancouver Island region, where newcomer women are trying to find a means of making money while taking care of their and other children at home. Again, there is the concern about safety and making sure that—

• (0920)

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Making sure that there is the right environment, yes.

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** Yes.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Absolutely.

Thank you very much.

I just want to switch over to Connie.

Connie, we and the human resources and skills development committee are studying poverty reduction. One thing we've found is that there is a marginal tax effect on many of the disabled people who are going back to work. We have to recognize that many of the social benefits that are received are non-taxable. Things like medical and health support are also provided through many of our provincial programs. What we've found is that when people go back to work, they are actually losing money.

Because you work in this area, I would like your thoughts about moving forward, so that we can make sure that those who are disabled do not have a marginal tax rate and can get out there. We recognize that many of them have skills. They may need a little bit more training. A few things may need to be altered a little bit so that they can be more successful. What would you recommend to ensure we are enticing and giving opportunities for the best chances ever to those persons who are disabled?

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** Thank you for that question. I think that's a really important issue for women and men with disabilities.

I think the real challenge is to distinguish between the costs associated with the person's disability—some of the things you've just mentioned—and the income security piece. If you cover the costs of disability when a person is not working, there's no reason why those costs shouldn't be covered when that person is working.



I think what happens is that, between the tax system and disability supports at a provincial level, we haven't figured out that balance. There are provisions in the tax system that could be enhanced. They would compensate for the hidden costs of having a disability when working and for the more specific ones. Go through the disability tax credit and the medical expense tax credit.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** So, a refundable disability tax credit is what you are—

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** There are some ways.... Exactly.

I think one of the challenges is to get the provinces to keep their disability supports in place when people go to work. So, it's about ensuring that they not retract those, and then about making sure that, at the tax level, we're recognizing the undefined costs associated with having a disability.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Excellent.

Samantha, I just have one simple question for you. Your annual report shows that your organization, as of March 2016, had received eight Syrian families.

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** We have more than that now.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Yes, those were just the stats for March 3, 2016. If we look at the period when they came and compare it to now, what is their economic stability? Are they using food banks? Have they found employment? What are you finding from within your own community?

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** It's a total mix. We are seeing many who are still trying to work on their language skills. As I said, without fluency in English, it's very hard for them to obtain employment, so many of them are still using food banks. Many of them are on income assistance. There is a need for employment training and things like that. Some have found employment, and others are having a very hard time.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Thank you very much, Samantha.

**The Chair:** All right.

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

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

Samantha Letourneau, a great thank you from me to the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society. You're doing huge and heroic work in the community with no extra resources. It's a huge responsibility. Thank you to your whole team.

We heard on Tuesday from Immigration Canada and a couple of weeks ago from the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia some of the same things you were drawing out. They mentioned that language training is one of the most significant barriers to economic justice and economic security for new Canadian women accessing jobs. They also mentioned child care and transportation. Because you've touched on some of those, too, I'm not going to focus there so much.

However, I still feel that, for the committee, we don't really have a full picture drawn with just the words "access to language is a barrier". Can you draw us more of a picture of what the economic circumstances are for those women right now? Also, can you project

that forward to what their life will be, even into retirement, if they can't get access now to good jobs that allow them to build a bit of security and stability?

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** It's very isolating when you can't speak the language of the country where you're living. When things delay your ability to access English classes—child care, taking care of your elderly parents, a cultural background where the woman stays home to care for the children, or whatever it may be—it's very hard for a woman to find stable employment. If you can't speak the language, yes, you can find some very basic jobs. However, moving up into, let's say, management or administrative roles is incredibly challenging.

Sorry, I'm just drawing a blank. I'm a little tired from travelling here.

• (0925)

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** I imagine that if the only jobs you can access are, say, labour positions, maybe they're not safe, maybe they're seasonal. They don't give you a full-time job that allows you to access employment insurance or a pension, and so it can have—

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** There's that as well; they're temporary jobs; they're not safe. They could be farm labour jobs. We've seen stories of this happening in British Columbia, with women who have come from India working on farms in very dangerous conditions because it's the only employment they can find.

We see issues like that happening in the central Vancouver Island region as well. Being consistently poor and not being able to move forward because your language skills aren't there creates a spiral. It isn't because you do not want to have those language skills, but lack of access to be able to learn.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** In your other conversations, including with your clients, you have described very compellingly that if someone doesn't have the networks in the community, they won't find out about the jobs and won't have the personal references and won't be able to get to the job interview because they don't have child care. There are a number of spirals.

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** Many spirals happen, and I'll give you another example. We have some women who have come here as government-assisted refugees, incredibly intelligent women with masters' degrees in mechanical engineering, Ph.D.s in arabic literature, etc., but they're not going to be able to move into positions like that in Canada, without recognition of their foreign credentials first—which is a whole other thing we could open up here, as well as the language skills. It's also very dangerous if you're put into a job and you can't speak that language to be able to follow directions. This comes back to the issue of safety. If your employer isn't willing to help support you in understanding, this can bring further challenges.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Thank you for mentioning the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Consistent with your testimony, I note that the November 18 report of CEDAW expressed the committee's concern about the slow progress made by Canada in the field of employment and, more specifically, about limited access to the labour market by indigenous Afro-Canadian migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women as well as women with disabilities. Then in paragraph 39(e) they make very specific directives to this government right now.

We only get these reports every five years, and it has informed our study. Thank you for raising it.

The Inclusion International witness talked about families being the primary support for individuals with disabilities and recommended that government invest more deeply in services for people with disabilities and their families.

Can you briefly describe what greater access to the CPP disability benefits might mean for these families?

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** I think that families have long-term economic insecurity. It's what you're pointing to in their relationship to the labour market. Having access to CPP disability would be a potential longer-term income security piece. I think though that the challenges are related not just to disability supports, but also supports for families who are caring for a family member with a disability. While the individual with the disability has their own income insecurity, the measures we might take to support families could be in addition to the supports we provide to the people with disabilities themselves.

I'm not sure I'm answering your question directly, but I think there are two aspects to that income insecurity: the individual who needs the supports to be independent and live in the community—and we would love to encourage people to leave their family home when they become adults—but also those families who have been providing care, who need some compensation, either through recognition of their caregiving role or through an income support role, which could be in the form of CPP disability.

• (0930)

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Ms. Letourneau, we've heard from the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants that refugee and immigrant women are overrepresented in precarious low-income work. Can you talk a little about the impact the increased minimum wage might provide?

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** Yes. Look, for example, at a snapshot of a family that's come here as refugees and begins by living on government-assisted benefits that are very limited and equivalent to income assistance rates in the province.

That brings us to the point of affordable housing and lack of it, and then after that year they have to try to find employment, or apply for income assistance, because the benefits are no longer there. Many of them don't want income assistance, but these are the options available to them, so they take a minimum-wage job—which is quite low right now in British Columbia—and they can't afford housing, or food, or to raise their family.

What they need, then, is additional support, and those funds aren't there, so they continue to live in poverty. Increasing the minimum

wage would definitely help, especially with extremely large families. Many of the government-assisted refugees who have come are large families. We're looking at six to seven people per family.

**The Chair:** Very good.

We'll go over to Mr. Fraser for seven minutes.

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I'll begin with Ms. Smith.

Thank you so much for bringing a rural perspective to this conversation. As somebody who lives in a rural community, as you know, it's very important to me.

You mentioned a couple of times the importance of transportation for families, to access child care and whatever other support services there might be. In the last budget we announced funding dedicated for rural infrastructure, including, hopefully, public transit.

In communities that are small, sometimes we don't have municipally funded transit services. Do you think it would be helpful if federal money was made available to support community transit organizations and help the rural communities?

**Ms. Jaime Smith:** Absolutely.

Local organizations such as CHAD transit in the Antigonish, and the transit organization they have in that community as well, Mr. Fraser, offer very innovative solutions for local communities, and they provide access. They're working very hard with their partners locally to provide more opportunities for transportation in those communities.

As we've gone out into communities and engaged in different work and conversations about health in the last 7 to ten years, transportation was always the number one challenge that people in local communities felt was hindering their opportunities to improve their health.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Sure.

You brought back some memories for me, from when I was a kid and you could sort of slip \$20 to somebody to help with child care in the home. In rural communities, this is a very big deal. We don't always have access to stand-alone child care facilities. When I was growing up, there were six kids in my family; Barb was a part of the family and she watched over us for my entire upbringing.

Aside from investing in child care facilities, can you comment on how programs like the Canada child benefit, for example—which put money directly in the pockets of families to help with things like that—would assist in rural communities to help offset the cost of care in the home.

**Ms. Jaime Smith:** Absolutely.

We have to be very innovative in our approaches to child care. We must understand the different challenges that we have in rural communities, and that accessibility to such centres is not really an option.

We also need to find ways to support women in rural communities who want to provide that service to families. I'm not sure what we can do about that, but it means really looking and having conversations in local communities about what child care can look like and where the accessibility options are, and then supporting those women so they can step into that employment.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** I'd like to move away from the supports you talked about and delve a little more into your experiences as a rural entrepreneur. Are there programs out there now or that could be out there that would have made it easier for you to get a business off the ground in a rural community?

• (0935)

**Ms. Jaime Smith:** Absolutely, the Centre for Women in Business at Mount St. Vincent University offers some wonderful services to local women. We've accessed them through a group of associates that I have as well, to come in and do some work with us around growing our local businesses.

That was something we had to invest in ourselves—to bring them out into the rural communities—so if we could have greater support for those kinds of organizations, which have two decades of experience in supporting women in business in rural and urban environments in Nova Scotia, that would be wonderful.

Other options we have are CBDCs and Northern Opportunities for Business Limited, as well as growing opportunities through local chambers of commerce to fill the gap in economic and entrepreneurial development in rural communities.

At universities in Nova Scotia, for example, we have entrepreneurship and innovation centres at St. Francis Xavier University and, I believe, at Acadia University that provide those supports. Ensuring that they have that additional support to go out and provide that in the rural communities would be very beneficial.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** We heard during a previous study on ending gender-based violence that supporting community organizations directly on the ground was an effective strategy. We haven't, to my recollection, heard something similar.

Are you suggesting that direct federal government support for community-based organizations that help women entrepreneurs get off the ground is a simple and effective strategy?

**Ms. Jaime Smith:** I think that's a simple and effective strategy.

As I mentioned when I came in, I really wanted to focus on the strengths of rural Canada and rural women, and those already exist. If they were further supported, we could be very much augmenting the role that women can play in entrepreneurship in rural environments.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Excellent. Thank you very much.

I'd like to shift gears and talk to Ms. Laurin-Bowie a little bit about individuals living with disabilities. We're on the verge of spending a lot of money on infrastructure, including for things like child care, and you mentioned the need for inclusive care.

How can we design the program to ensure that the investments we're making as part of a national approach do consider the need for inclusive care? What pitfalls are out there that we should be avoiding so we don't spend money and waste?

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** I think that the best place to begin inclusion is in early childhood, so that the child with the disability is included with their peers at a very early age when they're beginning to learn. It is incredibly beneficial, both in terms of learning and their long-term prospects of inclusion in life.

It's also important, I think, to families. Inclusive child care makes a difference in the lives of families, and women in particular, being able to continue to be in the labour market. So I think a model must make it very clear that however child care is going to be funded, there must be some recognition of the need for inclusive child care, available equally to all children.

Then there needs to be some investment in resources to support those child care centres so that they have the means and the knowledge to support children with very different kinds of disabilities. They could also, for example, address issues of English as a second language—

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** I'd like to jump in because I've only got about 30 seconds left, so I'll ask this very quickly. Should we be investing in training to make sure we have the work force to deliver inclusive child care services in addition to the inclusive space?

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** I think we have that in Canada. It's a question of how we deploy it. Those resources exist. It may require that we figure out how best to deploy them in a child care environment.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to Ms. Vecchio for the last five minutes.

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

Connie, I want to stick with you because one thing that we've also looked at in the anti-poverty committee is the issue of episodic disabilities, such as MS and cancer—well, cancer doesn't fit in there really. It may be a disease that fluctuates. Somebody is not feeling well for a couple of months, and then for a couple of years they may be okay.

What sort of solutions would you recommend so that employers...? And when we're looking at economic prosperity for those people, what are the things we can assist them with? Do you have some ideas on the opportunities here?

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** Yes, and I would include in that category people with mental health issues. One of the growing issues for women caregivers, women with disabilities, and women in general, is the episodic nature of mental health issues and reasons for leaving the workplace. I think that's a critically important issue.

Again, it has to do with creating provisions that allow for short-term unemployment, potentially disability related leave and sick leave that are flexible and family-friendly. At a federal level, I think there are some provisions that could be made on the employment insurance side of things for anything that's longer than a month or a couple of months. With the shorter mechanisms, there must be some discussion with the private sector, and at least with federal employers, about how to treat episodic leaves from the labour market.

Some of it is very informal. Some of it requires the private sector to have family-friendly business practices.

● (0940)

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Yes, I fully agree with you.

I was a small business owner for a while as well, and I had seven employees. Two of them did suffer from mental illness and mental wellness concerns. You try to do everything possible, but as a small business owner, you also have the challenges. If there's a larger pool of employees, having someone pick up a shift is much easier, but when things are on a smaller scale, it's difficult.

What suggestions would you have for these smaller businesses that may only have three or four employees, yet they have a situation like that? We want to see the well-being of the employee who is suffering, and we want to make sure that the business is surviving as well. We recognize it's a challenge, so what are the solutions to that?

**Ms. Connie Laurin-Bowie:** I run a very small operational organization. One of my staff has just taken leave because she needs to care for her children with disabilities. It puts us in a very difficult situation because we don't have the resources to replace her when she's one leave.

I think there is just a cultural shift. How do we work?

I think, though, that there could be some provisions that would help small business to have some human resource support. If you are hiring a person with a recognized disability, then there may be some provisions allowable to employers that would compensate them or support them as they are employing people.

There are different models in different parts of the world for that. That might be interesting. I could put something together for the committee in writing on that.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** I would like to see something like that. That would be great.

And Samantha, I just want to turn back to you. You've talked a lot about people coming over here and trying to get back into the workforce. What are some of the concerns you're having with credential recognition? What are some of these obstacles, as well?

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** I can only speak a bit to that.

I would say that one of the biggest barriers is the cost. Having your credentials recognized is a quite expensive and lengthy process. If you're living on a very fixed income, you don't have the resources for that.

Now, within some employment programs and immigrant services they can help with the costs of foreign credentials recognition, but it doesn't cover it all.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Yes.

I know when I was in Medicine Hat doing a study, we had talked about looking at credentials.

Do you have a lot of uptake of that assistance program that's available within your own community? Do you know?

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** Through the Province of British Columbia and its employment programs, we receive a bit of funding to help new immigrants getting those foreign credentials.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** There are the federal programs as well, though. Is anyone using the federal programs?

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** Within our agency, not that I have seen.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Is that something maybe at the federal level we can do better, making sure that people are aware of the services?

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** Yes.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** I think a lot of times we talk about what's there. As government officials we assume people are going to know, but when you're struggling there are so many other things to be looking at and so many other challenges. You're trying to find that time.

We are talking about balance in life. When you're trying to balance your family, your work, and your children, and money and everything else that goes on, taking even that five minutes can sometimes be very difficult.

At a federal level we could probably be doing a better job of making sure people are aware of those programs.

**Ms. Samantha Letourneau:** I think so. With our clients as well, that information needs to be passed onto them, so that they know how the costs of obtaining foreign credential recognition can be covered. That one of the barriers, but it's also a very lengthy process.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Okay.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Very good.

That's the end of the time we have for our first panel.

We will suspend while we change panels.

● (0940)

(Pause)

● (0945)

**The Chair:** All right. We're back with panel two on our study of the economic security of women in Canada.

As witnesses today, we have from the Comox Valley Transition Society, Anne Davis, the program coordinator. We also have, from the Alberni Community and Women's Services, Ellen Froot, who's the executive director. By video conference we have from the Haven Society, Anne Taylor, the executive director.

Welcome ladies, we're going to give each of you seven minutes for your comments.

We'll begin with Anne Davis.

**Ms. Anne Davis (Program Coordinator, Comox Valley Transition Society):** Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

The organization that I work for, Comox Valley Transition Society, is located on north central Vancouver Island on the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation.

Our organization provides a range of trauma-informed services for women and their children who have experienced intimate partner violence and sexual assault. These include a transition house, an addiction recovery house, women's counselling, counselling for children who witness abuse, an employment program, homelessness prevention, Aboriginal outreach, drop-in services for women who are homeless or living in deep poverty, girls groups, and a variety of education, awareness, and prevention programs, including a program for men. I have worked in our organization for 25 years in a variety of roles, including as manager of our transition house. Before our organization was up and running, I volunteered to shelter women and children in my own home when they were fleeing violence.

I am aware that your committee has heard from many organizations on a wide range of topics related to women's economic security. What I would like to talk about today is the view from the front line—what we see every day in our services. As I'm sure you are aware, half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of sexual assault or physical violence since the age of 16. Intimate partner violence and sexual assault are the only violent crimes whose incidence is rising. It's important to remember that most of these crimes happen within the context of women's daily lives. The perpetrators are most often known to the survivors. They are intimate partners, co-workers, employers, and fellow students. Eighty-two per cent of employed women who have experienced domestic violence report that it negatively affected their work performance. It has been our experience that these crimes leave women traumatized and often unable to remain in their jobs or continue their studies. They often have to flee from the community in which they have been working or studying.

How can we move forward in our lives if we are not safe in our homes, our workplaces, and our schools? Women wait three to four months to access our counselling program. I'm aware of other counselling programs in B.C. where the wait is two years. The faster the response to an assault of any kind, the more likely it is that a woman will be able to move on in her life. Human resources experts tell us that if anyone is off on a long-term leave for more than six months, the likelihood that she will be able to return to work is less than 50%. This has obvious implications for women who have experienced traumatic events and are on leave from work or have had to quit their jobs while they wait, sometimes for years, for counselling support.

Women's shelters are much more than just a refuge from violence. We provide support around the clock, advocacy, and practical help that assists women in rebuilding their lives. In BC, we haven't received any meaningful increases in funding for our shelters in years. Our own shelter in the Comox Valley is funded to provide a stay that will not typically exceed 30 days. In fact, we have women living in our shelter, often with children, for up to six months because there is no affordable housing. That causes us a lot of sleepless nights. We can't turn women out on the street with nowhere

to go. But what if we can't accommodate the next woman who is unsafe? Women who are in our shelter often have to give up their employment because they are in hiding and their workplace is the most obvious place for their partner to look for them. Women in that situation need to be able to move on quickly in order to rebuild their lives and maintain or regain employment. Affordable housing is very much a piece of the puzzle when we think about women's economic security.

We operate a trauma-informed detox and supportive recovery facility because, in our experience, a high percentage of female addicts are victims of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. We have seen so many women who were leading productive lives, even working as colleagues in our community, who were not able to get over what happened to them. They turned to drugs and alcohol as a way to cope. For most of those, paid employment is a distant memory.

● (0950)

We can't look at women's economic security without looking at the context of women's lives. We can't change women's lives if we don't change men's perceptions of women. We need funding for programs for men and boys. It's vital that those programs be carried out by women's anti-violence organizations, or at least in partnership with our organizations, so they are informed by a feminist gender equality lens. Our organization hosts a men's group where men can explore the relationships in their lives in a supportive environment. We fund this critically important prevention program through our thrift shop and through grants when we can get them.

I haven't even touched on the justice system. It has greatly improved in the response to women over the years I've been working. It still has some way to go, but that is too complex a discussion for today.

We need a national action plan on violence against women that addresses the full context of women's lives: affordable housing, income security, affordable child care, pay equity, access to legal representation, and men's prevention programs. Our organizations, which provide support services, need stable, core, ongoing funding that is adequate to address the actual needs.

We need senior government to be relentless in keeping the issue of violence against women—intimate partner violence and sexual assault—front and centre. We can't deal with women's economic security in a meaningful way if we don't deal with violence against women.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I will be happy to take questions.

● (0955)

**The Chair:** Very good.

Now we will go to Ellen for seven minutes.

**Ms. Ellen Froid (Executive Director, Alberni Community and Women's Services):** Thank you very much. I'm very honoured to be here today.

In 1972, my mother was appointed to the first National Action Committee on the Status of Women. I grew up knowing what equality meant or didn't mean, and 45 years ago one of the major things they spoke about was lack of pay equity, and here we are still talking about lack of pay equity. So somewhere along the line we need to do some work on that.

I'm Ellen Froid. I'm with the Alberni Community and Women's Services Society, otherwise known as ACAWS, and we have a cause. Our programs are exactly what Anne is talking about, so I'm not going to repeat them, but I will tell you a little about Port Alberni. We're located on Vancouver Island. We have a population of just under 18,000. Perhaps most notable is that Port Alberni was the site of one of the largest residential schools in Canada. The echoes of this school still resonate throughout the community. Generations of women and children have suffered and continue to suffer as a result of the school. We see these women daily through our programs. We see people who don't understand that abuse, violence, yelling, and hitting are not the norm. That's the norm in their families. So working to break those generational cycles is a key piece that we have to work on.

Educational opportunities in our community through North Island College are typically in human services and community care. So for the STEM or the science, technology, engineering, and mathematical programs, you have to travel outside the community. For many women and low-income earners, that's a barrier—leaving family, finding care for kids is not easy.

The "Clayoquot Sound Vital Signs Report 2015" says, among other things, that our region's living wage is \$19.27. While that sounds like a dream for a lot of people, the reality is that 67% of people in our region earns less than our living wage. The "2015 BC Child Poverty Report Card" showed that in Port Alberni 31% of all children under the age of 18 live in low-income families, and of that number, 37% are under the age of five. Sadly we are in the top three communities in B.C. with the highest child poverty rate and 37.5% of Port Alberni families are lone parent families.

Anne spoke very eloquently about the programs and the needs and all of those things, so I'm going to tell you a story. It can be any woman's story anywhere in Canada, but this is a little more specific.

A woman aged 42 was referred to our stop the violence program. Her husband of 10 years had been verbally and physically abusing and threatening her. They had been separated for one year, and even though they'd been separated for a year, those threats continued. He was charged with assault and then awaited a court date; that took place in June of this year. There was a no contact order; however, because the threats continued, there was a breach of that no contact

order. Again, Anne referred to the justice system and how complicated it is, so this makes it really hard for a woman.

They have three children; she's a stay-at-home mum, and he is the biological father. During the year they were separated the husband put the family home up for sale; it was in his name. She continued to live in the home; however, it was sold in May of this year, and by July 5 she has to find herself a place to live. She has no references because she's never had to. She doesn't have any income, so she's not really sure where the money is going to come from to take care of all of this. She applied for income assistance and did receive minimal allowances, but again, because of her husband's assets and the perception that there's wealth in the family or the ability to pay, the assistance was minimal. She struggled to pay the household bills, but finally secured herself a job full-time, five days a week, seven hours a day, at minimum wage. In addition to that she now has child care to pay for, and no subsidies are available. I've heard the conversations of the past speakers about the ability or not to access child care.

Finally, the court day came and on the way to court she was rear-ended in a car accident and was taken hospital and unable to attend the court. Unfortunately, it went ahead without her. He was charged and given 18 months probation and an 18-month no contact order with her, but contact with the kids was permitted. There was no jail time, and he carried on back to work without any impact on his income or security. The car is in his name, and he refuses to fix it. She can't access any of the assets from the sale of the home because there's no official separation. He refuses to sign an order. A very lengthy court process will have to take place.

● (1000)

You can see how this story rolls out; there's disadvantage after disadvantage. She doesn't have time, and she doesn't know what to do to take care of herself and her kids. Both her kids are in counselling, one for sexual abuse intervention and the other for children who witness abuse. Those kids are going to be impacted for the rest of their lives by this.

Fortunately, we have programs that will help them and we work with women to do that. We also have wait lists in our community, thankfully not quite as long.

I hear stories such as this every day. I hear a story of a woman who was chased by her partner. Because he was going to kill the dog, she grabbed the dog, put the dog in her car, and tried to drive away. He threw a leash at the windshield. He threw it so hard that the clip on the leash cracked the windshield. Do you know what? She returned to the relationship because she had nowhere else safe to go.

The economic security of women is impacted in many ways, and in Canada, domestic violence is one of the largest. Oftentimes, it is one that we don't see and don't know about. Women are afraid to speak or afraid to leave. The story I recited demonstrates so many factors about intimate partner violence and abuse against women and kids and the impact it has on the economic security of women in Canada. I'll tell you again that many women are stay-at-home mums. They provide supporting and nurturing care in the home and of the family. They don't have independent income.

When faced with the need to work to support a family, unskilled minimum-wage jobs are often the only option. STEM educational opportunities, again, are not widely available in our particular region. Travel is necessary.

So what can you do? Our funding basically remains static. It's not increasing. That means we've had deficits over the last two or three years. If this trend continues and we can't raise the money, we will have to cut programs. I don't think that's the answer.

Social assistance is low; that needs to be looked at. Creating safe, affordable housing opportunities for women who are leaving relationships due to intimate partner relationship is critical.

Lastly, I want to introduce a notion. I want to say this because I feel it so strongly. I want to use the word "refugee" when I speak about the women we work with. We have economic refugees here in Canada. The Canadian government defines female refugees as women who are fleeing a country who are in danger of assault, "to a risk to their life or to a risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment". Well, guess what? That's what happens to women in domestic violence.

There's a critical need to ensure that our systems don't re-victimize these women and their families. We all have a role to play. We need a commitment from the federal government to make sure that funding is flowing, not just to the provinces and then through, but directly to organizations in the community to build programs.

**The Chair:** That's very good. Thank you, Ellen.

Now we'll go to Anne Taylor at the Haven Society, for seven minutes.

**Ms. Anne Taylor (Executive Director, Haven Society):** Thank you for the eloquent presentations of both of my colleagues here on Vancouver Island.

I'd like you to imagine that you are standing by a river and you see a drowning woman floating downstream. You rush in, pull her to shore, and give her mouth-to-mouth. You then look up and see another woman drowning. You rush in again, pull her back to shore, and call for help because now you see another woman floating down the river. You and your community organize yourselves because there's now a continuous flow of women and also children coming down the river, all in dire need of assistance.

At some point, someone suggests going upstream to find out what is happening, but even as your team heads up the river, you see more and more women and children in the river. You know what? It's not just one river in Vancouver Island that I'm talking about. It's rivers across B.C., Canada, and the world.

The World Health Organization declared violence against women to be a global health problem of epidemic proportions. Their study highlights the need for all sectors to engage in eliminating tolerance for violence against women and in better supporting women who experience it. The World Health Organization also reports that countries that invest in women and girls see overall improvements in their economies. When women are unable to participate fully in an economy that is inherently gender biased, it benefits no one.

I start with these findings to make the essential link between violence against women and our economic security. My community colleague Deborah Hollins, executive director of Nanaimo Family Life Association, submitted a brief that outlines the key influencing factors related to women's poverty, as well as recommendations.

We strongly support her brief and will focus here on the main point, that gender-based violence and women's economic security are intricately linked. We are constantly asked in my work, "why doesn't she just leave?" This question suggests a lack of understanding of gender-based violence. We know that women facing domestic violence are from all socio-economic, educational, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. There is an implicit assumption that the solution in this question is simply for her to leave. I would even go further to suggest that it represents the inherent and pervasive victim blaming women face each and every day in our country.

When a woman is forced to make the choice to leave her home because of violence, she is really being forced to make the choice to step into poverty and to bring her children along with her. Wage inequity, lack of accessible child care, and safe affordable housing are a few of the barriers she will have to navigate. This is on top of her safety concerns, the trauma she has experienced, and the high likelihood that she may not be believed or taken seriously or she may even be blamed.

This is an untenable and agonizing choice for her to make, often alone and while terrified for her safety and that of her children. She is having to choose to stay on the shore where she is being abused or to jump into the river where poverty, uncertainty, and isolation await her. What kind of choice is this?

I have worked with women in and around the river for over 30 years. Haven Society has been doing the same for almost 40 years. We have a solid history of responding to the crisis of violence in our communities with all of its complexities and challenges. The reality is critical. It is an epidemic and it is not getting better. According to Statistics Canada, a woman dies every six days at the hands of her intimate partner. This is the sombre reality of intimate partner violence in our country. If she survives and chooses to leave, she will face untold challenges to secure what should be a basic right for us all: to be safe and secure in our homes and communities.

Decades of research point to the sexist attitudes and beliefs about gender, family, marriage, sexuality, and intimacy as a causal factor supporting the tolerance for violence which the World Health Organization references. These attitudes and beliefs enable gender-based violence to occur, to remain hidden, and to be rationalized, justified, and supported as an individual problem of the victim.

These same attitudes and beliefs are foundational to women having to go into the river. Efforts to address this are desperately underfunded, and services responding to everyone already in the river are overwhelmed by the demand.

• (1005)

We know that prevention, education, and addressing the paradigm that tolerates sexist attitudes and beliefs are key, but these kinds of initiatives of ours have not been adequately funded in any sustainable way. For example, we have an excellent Violence is Preventable program that schools in our community are lining up for, but we don't have the resources to fulfill the demand. Our efforts are constantly being disrupted, as we have to work to secure funding and rely on limited and dwindling grant opportunities. It's very uncommon to find and secure multi-year funding. Transition houses in B.C. have not received a funding increase since 2008, even though the demand for our services continues to grow.

This paradigm of tolerance for sexist attitudes and beliefs forms the foundation of, and is the perfect breeding ground for, violence to flourish. While serious crimes in Canada are decreasing overall, gender-based serious crimes are not. This paradigm has been in place for decades. It will not be quickly resolved. It will take a comprehensive multi-faceted strategy. It will take communities being well resourced to respond to women already in the river, so that communities have the resources to go upstream.

Our government must be bold and courageous and demonstrate leadership now. It's time to choose. Go upstream and address the sexist paradigm that is showing up in our homes, in our streets, in our schools, and in our communities. It is time to create a culture of safety.

To achieve this will require multi-year funding, even multi-decade funding, for social educational programs focused on shifting the current sexist paradigm. It will require safe, affordable housing for families. The housing crisis is not just in big cities like Vancouver and Toronto but here in Nanaimo as well. Our vacancy rates are alarming.

Moreover, we need adequate and sustainable resources for community-based, non-profit organizations addressing gender violence, affordable and accessible child care, and resources for communities to collaborate, create partnerships, and generate solutions together, creating a coordinated social response that builds on the wealth, expertise, and knowledge that already exists in every community.

We also need a guaranteed livable wage for all Canadians.

I thank you for your time and attention.

• (1010)

**The Chair:** Very good.

We'll begin our round of questioning with my colleague Ms. Vandenbeld for seven minutes.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much. I'll be sharing my time with Ms. Ludwig.

Thank you, all of you, for the incredible work you're doing. Know that one reason we're doing this study is that we know that many of the women you're working with have been made invisible. Our purpose is to make sure that they become visible and that we are able to find solutions. We know that there is an intersection between violence and economic security and that it becomes a cycle in terms of child care, discrimination, and the judicial system.

One thing that our government announced a few months ago was an additional \$90 million in infrastructure funding for building and refurbishing transitional shelters for domestic violence survivors. Just this week we signed a multilateral framework with the provinces on child care, with \$7.5 billion to be provided over the next 11 years.

In fact, in addition to Bill C-51 that was just tabled by the government, this committee is going to reduce barriers to the judicial process for women who have faced violence, including by redefining consent. Also, just this week Minister Monsef announced \$18 million for a call for proposals—the largest ever call for proposals—for locally based organizations that are finding solutions.

I would like each of you to comment on how that will make an impact and if there are priority areas that we should also be focusing on.

**Ms. Anne Davis:** Yes, those contributions have been noticed and, of course, really appreciated. We need much more. I know that the government hears this on every level from everything that it talks about. It's always that we need more, but we truly do need more.

There are so many women and children out there whose lives are being derailed by violence. While more access to shelters will help, the shelters are overflowing. Why is that? One of the things that government could very usefully do would be to invest quite a bit more in prevention with men and boys. The project that started in B. C., the Be More Than a Bystander project with the BC Lions, has spread to the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, and I believe the whole CFL has signed on to it now. They will be doing it with all the teams, I believe. That's a huge opportunity for men who are admired by other men and boys to stand up and speak out against violence.



The people who contributed to that project with the BC Lions, the players who were trained originally, found it a little uncomfortable to go back into the locker room because the sexist jokes were still being made, etc. What they said is that, because of the training they had received, they now felt compelled to say something when that happened. What was so powerful for me is they said that over time the conversation changed in the locker room. They don't hear those comments anymore. That is a really beautiful example of men making change for other men and boys.

There's a place for the federal government to take a lead on this. We really can't change women's situations without changing men's perceptions.

•(1015)

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

Go ahead, Ms. Frood.

**Ms. Ellen Frood:** I don't disagree.

One of the main points I always make is that, as a small grassroots organization in the community receiving funding from a number of different areas, we're constantly underfunded across all programs. If the federal government does go forward with this initiative and releases additional funding, it would be so helpful to receive unrestricted dollars.

Anne Taylor mentioned the grants and the constant need to renew the funding, and not necessarily getting it. We need long-term sustainability. We need to be able to know that long-term sustainability is there. It's never going to happen through a grant application process.

If you were to look at my financial statements for the last 10 years, you would see where I have funding shortfalls. For the last 10 years, we've tried to raise money—not every year successfully. We have a very small reserve, and it's now depleting so that we can maintain our programs at the current level.

The bottom line for me is that those dollars not be restricted. Don't tell me I have to complete a grant application. Ask me to show you where our shortfalls are and that we've been fiscally responsible. I accept that. Let us make the decisions on where the priority needs of our organization lie. Flow directly from the feds to the organizations, and don't ask us to go through another layer.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Okay.

Did you wish to add something?

**Ms. Anne Taylor:** I certainly want to support everything that my esteemed colleagues have said. The whole point of my presentation was to say that we need to make a really concentrated effort, first, at naming the paradigm that exists, of [*Inaudible—Editor*] sexist misogynists at work. All sectors need to be involved together to be able to address that.

You talk about making things visible. That's part of what we need to start making visible. Sexism is alive and well in our country. It's represented in the fact that we still do have pay inequity. When I was in university 30 years ago, I remember being upset that women were earning 80¢ on the dollar. Now we're earning less than that. It's discouraging, but at the same time what it points to is that we haven't

been putting our attention and resources in places where they are desperately required if we're going to really shift that paradigm.

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

**Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.):** The very first time I came before the committee, my question was why that women have to leave their homes in the case of violence. They and their children are the ultimate victims.

How can we make that cultural shift so that the perpetrators are actually the ones who leave and feel more of the pain?

Thank you.

**Ms. Anne Davis:** I know that in my community the reason that would be given is that there isn't really anywhere for the man to go. There is a transition house that the woman can go to; therefore she goes.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** But couldn't we have shelters for men who are in that—

**Ms. Anne Davis:** Absolutely.

I'm a mother and a grandmother, and I've been doing this for a long time and it really bothers me. It really hurts sometimes to see the impact on the children when they're taken out of their homes, when their lives are disrupted. They see what's happening to their moms. They see what's happening with their dads. There has to be a better way to do this.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Very good, that's your time.

We'll go to Ms. Vecchio, for seven minutes.

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

To all three of the witnesses today, you all deal with people who have been victims of violence and recognize that there needs to be a lot of rebuilding for these individuals, a lot of soul-searching, a lot of building of their courage and their self-image. That's one of the first stages, to be able to get them back into employment. Once you've reached some of that, what sort of opportunities are your organizations creating to bridge from that horrific past that they've had to their employment and their own economic stability?

**Ms. Ellen Frood:** First of all, our mandate is to work with women from a trauma-informed basis, to understand the trauma they've experienced.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Okay.

Because it's part of our economic study, the reason I'm asking is just to get them on the road of economic independence or economic stability. I recognize that for some, like you said, it takes up to six months if they're out of the workforce. There are key issues there as well. But just with the study, a lot of it has to do with one's economic security. From the review that we've done before, and from my personal experience, I recognize the importance of creating that whole being once again. I'm sure all three of you have worked on those, but getting them out and allowing them to transition back into society, what sort of measure are you taking?

•(1020)

**Ms. Ellen Frood:** Transitioning, in our world, means about 30 days in a shelter, and counselling means working with women to help them address the trauma they're experiencing in their lives. In that process we provide referral services to other organizations that will help them with the employment side of things. Again, I refer back to it, but our mandate is to work from a trauma-informed basis, not employment, but we see the other side and the impact economically.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Absolutely.

Anne, what do you guys do within your organization, then, when it comes to...?

**Ms. Anne Davis:** It's similar. We have an employment program. It's very entry-level. As Ellen has said, our role, really, is to provide the counselling, the practical support services for a woman who's trying to transition into or back to employment. Through our employment program, we help her with things like writing resumés, finding appropriate clothing for job interviews, those kinds of thing, and kind of walk beside her as she goes through the process. But we are not funded for the kind of long-term employment programs that exist in our community, so we work closely with those.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Anne, perhaps there is something within your own organization that you do?

**Ms. Anne Taylor:** Well, I think we do a lot of the same things, but the point I'd like to make is that when she leaves her home for an independent life, that's going to be a very long process and—

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Please understand, I fully recognize that. I'm looking at next steps. I'm not trying to be rude by any means. I understand the incredible work that you do in dealing with a broken person. I get that. I think many women who come into those situations are dealing with so many internal issues, and many times physical as well. But I'm looking at that transition to making a healthy start back into society, so perhaps you could go with that.

**Ms. Anne Taylor:** All I wanted to highlight is that for her to step into, say, an educational program or a work transition program, she has to be safe. It's not only about what's going on internally. She actually has to be safe. What we know is that even after they leave the transition house, women are often still unsafe in their homes and their communities.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Our study is not about this, but I appreciate all of the work you do and, trust me, because when it comes to violence against women, I work very strongly in my own community. It's something that I will continue to fight against.

Part of this study is the economic prosperity of women. That's why I'm trying to get the information from the three witnesses today, to find out where this transition is, because I recognize that it's going to take time. For some people, they may heal in six months. For some it may take 20 years, and I fully recognize that, but as we're transitioning to get them back into society, safety, of course, is a key issue, as is mental health.

However, we're looking at trying to make individuals and families prosper. I'm wondering if we can come back to the organizations you refer these persons to. What can we be doing to help those organizations deal with these people? Is there a lack of education?

Are there opportunities for them to go back to finishing the post-secondary education, or even their GED? What programs do we have for training? What are you doing when you are referring people out to these employment centres?

**Ms. Ellen Frood:** We work with the employment centre directly and refer people directly to it. Once a client leaves our doors and goes to the employment centre, we have little contact with them, but what we have heard is that the programs there are restrictive, that there are only so many hours that somebody can access before they are told they can't come back anymore. I think there's a miscommunication there in terms of how people are working.

Secondly, I want to speak about the justice system because I think we need the justice system to act more quickly on behalf of women to enable them to remain economically safe, like the story I told of the woman whose house was sold and she had nowhere to go. The justice system needs to be an advocate as well to make things happen more quickly for women in the courts, so they are not in a position of not living and having to leave.

I know we're not getting to your question, because, again, recognize that it's not our mandate. We see the impact of economic insecurity on the women we deal with.

•(1025)

**Ms. Anne Davis:** May I add that I would say your question actually speaks to a gap?

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** I would actually prefer to address the gap.

I work with the London Abused Women's Centre. I work with our violence against women group in Elgin County and different associations. I've done that for many years, so I do understand all of those....

I'm just trying to see where that gap is and how we can address it. That's what we need to look at.

I hear everything you're saying and I appreciate it. I that believe the work that we did in our violence against women study was very impactful. It's just that, to me, this is step two, not about restarting what we've already done. Trust me. I get it. I don't want to belittle the work you do. I'm looking at how we can further women's prosperity. I don't want to mix up study one with study two because we're on study two now, so how do we continue forward?

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

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

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Thanks, Chair.

Thank you to all three witnesses. We're going to quote verbatim a great deal of your introductory comments. The link you have made between domestic violence and economic insecurity is extremely strong. You have painted an extremely powerful picture that we're not going to get economic security and economic justice for women without ending violence against women. I hear you loud and clear.

I also hear all three of you say, extremely firmly, that provincial and federal governments have delegated the safety of women from intimate partner violence to NGO movements. We have a responsibility to fund your operations, not to make you jump through one funding application after the next. That's something the New Democrats are advocating for. I feel confident that the committee members here will hear that call loud and clear that this is a path to economic stability to provide that support in the community.

I have a question for Anne Taylor from Haven Society in Nanaimo. We heard from another women's shelter on Tuesday, the Island Crisis Care Society, who said that they've had a colossal change in the makeup of the clientele coming to their shelters, particularly elderly women who have fallen into poverty. The latter do not have stable housing, have become unsafe, and have never used a shelter in their life. Some of them are in their 80s.

I think you might have seen those same kind of changes in the makeup of people coming to you. I would like to know a bit more about what those changes mean for your staff and your budget. What's the personal impact on your staff of having an increased demand for your services?

**Ms. Anne Taylor:** I think the analogy I used in my presentation, in a very crass way, is that we spend a lot of time pulling bodies out of the water quite literally. Yes, we are seeing increases across the board in the numbers.

We've always seen a huge range. When you talk about elderly women, we've always seen women over the age of 55, but we're now seeing more of them, particularly on Vancouver Island. It's not unusual for couples to come here under the auspices of retiring. What we're beginning to see is that sometimes it's also a strategy to isolate that woman a little bit further, to remove her from her family and her connections in her community, and for her to then be on the island where she knows nobody.

Imagine a woman who is in her 60s or 70s, has been married for decades, and who begins to face the reality of increasing violence and abuse. She's then forced into the position of reaching out to services that she never imagined she would connect with.

For our staff, the reality of what we have to offer her is disillusioning at times. I think both of my colleagues mentioned that the social housing crisis is dire here in Nanaimo. Women are not able to find safe, affordable housing. Not only are they staying in shelters longer—which means that we can't provide space for other women who are looking for that emergency shelter—but often they also have to make choices to go to places that really are less than adequate. This will often result in their going back.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Thank you so much.

I'm going to turn to the Comox Valley Transition Society and the Alberni Community and Women's Services Society.

Your MP, Gord Johns, recommended that we invite you. It was good advice. Thank you.

Ellen Froot, I was struck by your linking of residential schools and intergenerational trauma to the clients you see. Last night I saw on a CBC online story a quote from Cree Grand Chief Matthew

Coon Come. After 40 years of service, he said that the absence of women's shelters and social programs often forces Cree people to head toward urban centres, where they risk homelessness and abuse.

Is that starving of services in the rural areas something that you're seeing effects from?

• (1030)

**Ms. Ellen Froot:** I can't speak completely to all of the services in rural areas; however, what I will say is that in the case of many first nations people, they're often hesitant to accept services on reserve because, for a lot of reasons, the abusers may stay on reserve.

They seek these services outside their own community—the aunts, the uncles, the gossips—and they leave. What that does is force them into poverty off reserve, without access to services. Our youngest client is a baby two months in the womb, and we have a 98-year-old. That was a four-generation family that came to our transition house. It's forcing generations of women or families to live together, often in very inadequate circumstances, without sufficient funding.

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

Anne Davis, your picture of the economic impacts of leaving a relationship was extremely strong. We've had a lot of testimony at this committee about some of the labour unions in a number of provinces—such as Manitoba—that have negotiated leave for domestic violence within their collective agreements. Also, B.C. has a private member's bill, which we hope will be turned into a government bill. Can you talk about how that might affect women for the better, especially if it were to be taken in as part of the federal labour code, which is something we're encouraging?

**Ms. Anne Davis:** I think it would be extremely helpful. It would help some women maintain their jobs, which is really important. In a way, I think it would help to—this is kind of an awful word to use in the context—normalize the fact that these situations do happen and that women need to get time off from employment to deal with them.

I've worked with a lot of women over the years who have lost their employment when their relationship ended. They worked for a small business or a small store, and the ex-partners kept coming in and harassing them or phoning constantly. The employers weren't willing to deal with that, so they had to go.

Anything we can do to help women maintain employment is really important. That is a very key piece of the puzzle.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Thank you so much to all the witnesses.

**The Chair:** Very good. Now we'll go to Ms. Nassif.

[Translation]

You have seven minutes.

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

Ms. Davis, Ms. Froot and Ms. Taylor, thank you for your testimonies and all the good work you are doing in your respective organizations to help women.

I wanted to ask you a question about the challenges of substance use and abuse. I'm not just referring to the opioid crisis that has wreaked havoc recently, but in general. Do you have any resources to help the people affected to overcome this kind of crisis? These might be rehabilitation resources or even counselling for women who have been mistreated or have experienced spousal abuse, and who are referred to your organization.

[English]

**Ms. Ellen Froid:** May I answer in English?

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Yes, of course.

[Translation]

**Ms. Ellen Froid:** I understood the question, but I'm not comfortable answering in French.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** No problem.

[English]

**Ms. Ellen Froid:** We have a drop-in centre. In the drop-in centre, we distribute substance use materials and also do training for naloxone and treatment with it. We have staff trained in that area.

Oftentimes, we'll have young people. Most recently, I heard of a 13-year-old young woman who came in looking for harm reduction supplies. We had the opportunity at that time to counsel and to refer her to somebody who might help her with addictions.

All of our staff are aware of it and do refer and help families in terms of offering the services and referring. Aside from our drop-in centre, we don't have any resources directly connected to substance use and addictions.

•(1035)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Ms. Davis, does your organization provide services like this?

[English]

I'm just wondering if your organization has any resources to help women with drug addiction, especially with the recent opioid crisis that's going on.

**Ms. Anne Davis:** Many years ago we looked around, and on Vancouver Island, Nanaimo to the north of Vancouver Island, there were 45 beds for men for recovery from addiction. There were none for women. We opened one or two addiction recovery beds in our transition house, which was a bit challenging. Two or three years ago we opened a separate, free-standing, 12-bed house for addiction recovery.

As my colleagues have referenced, we come from a trauma-informed perspective. We recognize that very often the root cause of addiction for women is trauma. Very often it is violence and sexual assault. We have detox and we have a recovery program for women who have completed detox so that they can stay for a while. We have a couple of suites—we would like to have many, many more—for women who are transitioning from the recovery program and just really getting their feet back under them, looking at employment and looking at moving on in their lives.

Yes, all of the program is delivered from a feminist perspective that understands the history.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Thank you.

Ms. Taylor, do you have anything to add?

**Ms. Anne Taylor:** I think what Anne Davis spoke about is something that we'd like to see in Nanaimo. Even though we are a bigger centre, we actually have very limited resources available. We also understand that addiction issues in the women we're working with are really part of the complexities that exist when someone has experienced violence in their home over maybe decades. It certainly is a gap, yes.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** My next question is for you three. Which strategies would you recommend to our government to prevent women who have been mistreated or have experienced spousal abuse from returning to the same life, and instead to encourage them to fight these situations so that they can leave that misery?

[English]

**Ms. Ellen Froid:** The wait time for people going into rehabilitation is very long. It's a very, very long list. I would suggest that we need greater resources directed to rehabilitation resources to help people who are dealing with substance abuse issues.

From a staffing perspective, again, it's a funding deficiency. The drop-in centre I referred to had over 7,000 individual people come through the centre. I should say individual "approaches", because it could be the same person more than once in a day. When you consider that there's only person in the drop-in centre, we're seriously underfunded and understaffed to accommodate the need to work with substance issues. It's a funding issue yet again. There's a gap.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** My next question is again for you three. It concerns women who have a disability or who have a disabled child, which accentuates their status as victims of spousal abuse. Do you think that there's a correlation between these women and regular women who are victims of spousal abuse?

**Ms. Ellen Froid:** Yes.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Could you give us some numbers about the women who use your organization?

[English]

**Ms. Ellen Froid:** No, sorry.

Families with those who have with handicaps and disabilities in their families can be tied completely to the home without the resources and the ability to get out and access services. If there's domestic violence added on top of that, you basically have a shut-in. You have somebody who is staying, keeping their life in danger.

Increasing services for families is required for respite, or however you want to talk about it, in terms of increases for individuals with disabilities, or older children with disabilities, to enable them to be out in the workforce rather than stay at home and depend on social services.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** I don't know if I have much time left, but perhaps you can provide a brief answer to my question. It's about the justice system.

We all know that few women turn to your organizations to report that they are victims of spousal abuse. Do you think the justice system needs to be reformed to include stricter penalties, and training for men and boys? Could you tell us what our government should focus on, besides all the subsidies we give to help women? You see the cases on the ground. What can you suggest?

• (1040)

[English]

**Ms. Ellen Froid:** I think we have to speed up the process. There are too many wait times. Women are being revictimized by wait times in the judicial system to get their family status changed, support, and custody. Our system is too slow and it hurts people.

**The Chair:** Good.

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

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

First of all, I just want to congratulate the entire committee. This being only my third meeting here, I can see the weight and the complexity of the issues you're dealing with. I'm reminded of that with every passing meeting. So, congratulations to the committee.

Of course, as a Conservative the role of the family is very important to me, but I also recognize that the family, perhaps historically, but certainly in the present day, is broken in many regards. I have a son. Listening to the testimony today, as a mother I would like to ask both Ms. Davis and Ms. Taylor the following. What is the one piece of advice you would give me in regard to raising my son so that he is not a part of this pattern that we've seen in society, and in humanity for what seems forever?

Ms. Davis, please.

**Ms. Anne Davis:** Well, I suspect you're off to a good start. You're a woman with a leadership role.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** That's kind; that's generous.

**Ms. Anne Davis:** I think it's very important for boys to see women taking roles in leadership and exercising power in a fair and just way.

I would say that it's important to have a conversation about women and violence whenever you can, and when there are opportunities for male mentors, I think that's important, too. But I just think it's important for it to be something that we all talk about with our youth.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you for that.

I loved your example of the CFL. I'm a huge Stampeders fan, coming from Calgary, and I'm very inspired by that example, so thank you for providing that today.

Ms. Taylor, what is your recommendation, please, to me as the mother of a son?

**Ms. Anne Taylor:** I would build on what Anne is saying. I think it's about opening the conversation and opening it sooner than later.

I think the fact that you're asking the question is already.... I'd be optimistic with your son.

But I think it's really having those sometimes difficult conversations, because I've heard from a lot of moms that they don't want to talk to their sons about violence, about consent, about these things that they don't really want their sons to have anything to do with. What we would say is that we need to have those conversations, because he is seeing it, he's picking up on all kinds of things. If it's not in his school or in the neighbourhood, it's online. What young boys are seeing online is really.... I can't even find the right word for how alarming it is. How boys see women and girls, how they see relationships, how they see marriage and family are the kinds of conversations you want to open up so that they will talk to you about their questions and their confusion. When they say, "I see you doing this at home, mom, but then I see something else happening in my school", that's the kind of conversation you want to open up.

I can't underline how much we need to talk about consent. We need to talk to our young boys about consent, not just our young girls.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you very much for that. I genuinely appreciate that.

In regard to your comments as to what they see online, I think that's another study entirely, Madam Chair.

Ms. Froid, you strike me as an incredibly profound person. I was very moved by your remarks at the beginning that 45 years ago your mother was a member of NAC. In your opinion, at the fundamental root of it all, why is it that we are still here after what appears to me as an investment of millions and millions of dollars over decades? Here I note that there was a further announcement of funding this week by the present government, as recognized by my colleague Ms. Vandenbeld. Why have these issues not gone away?

What is at the root of that, please, in your opinion? I know that's deep. I know that's profound.

**Ms. Ellen Froid:** Do you want me to be polite?

• (1045)

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** No.

**Ms. Ellen Froid:** Well, the men aren't listening. They're still letting it happen. We are letting this glass ceiling, this difference, this gender inequality, continue to happen.

We talk about it a lot, we spend a lot of money trying to figure out what to do, and nothing happens.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Thank you very much.

Thank you to our witnesses, and thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Very good.

I also want to thank our witnesses. It was an excellent discussion today. Thank you for the work you're doing, particularly for saving all of these women.

We look forward to incorporating your testimony in our recommendations in our report.

For the rest of you, potentially we will see you on Tuesday.

The meeting is adjourned.





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