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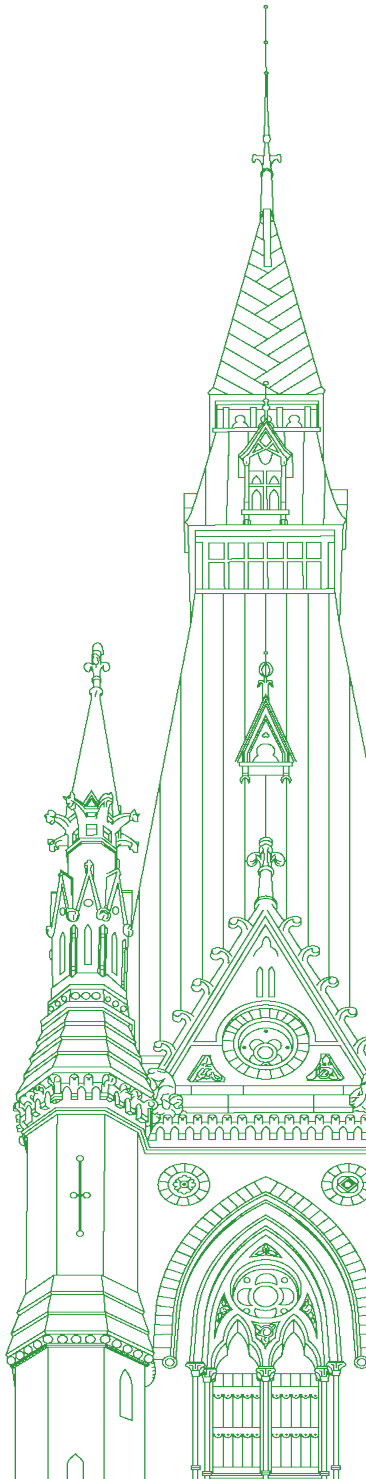

Chair: Mr. Lloyd Longfield

Standing Committee on Science and Research

Monday, October 23, 2023

● (1545)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.)): Thank you to all for joining us.

This is meeting number 59 of the Standing Committee on Science and Research.

Today's meeting is in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. We have members in the room as well as online. In either case, please wait to be recognized by the chair.

I welcome Larry Maguire and Eric Melillo from my old neck of the woods, Lake of the Woods and Manitoba.

Also, we have Darren Fisher from Dartmouth joining us.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): No.

The Chair: Well, he's at least on the screen, but now Lena is here. She just tabled a bill, I understand.

We're multi-tasking and we're all here in our places.

Thanks, Darren, for temporarily filling in.

When you're not speaking in the room or on Zoom, your microphone should be turned off or muted. For those on Zoom, for interpretation you have a choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French. In the room, you can use the earpiece and select the language of your choice.

Although this room is equipped with a wonderful audio system, we can have feedback. If you do have any earphones, please keep them away from the microphone so that our interpreters don't get that dangerous condition happening in their headphones when they get feedback.

All witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

I think we're ready to get started.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(i) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, June 6, 2023, the committee commences its study of the use of federal government research and development grants, funds and contributions by Canadian universities and research institutions in partnerships with entities connected to the People's Republic of China.

Yes, we need a shorter version of that title, but it is my pleasure to welcome our witnesses today.

We have, from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Nicole Giles, senior assistant deputy minister, policy and strategic partnerships, as well as René Ouellette, director general, academic outreach and stakeholder engagement.

From the Communications Security Establishment, we have Samantha McDonald, assistant deputy minister, innovative business strategy and research development, and Sami Khoury, head of the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security.

From the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have Sébastien Aubertin-Giguère, associate assistant deputy minister, national and cyber security, and Lesley Soper, director general, national security policy.

Each group has five minutes. We'll start off with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, please.

Dr. Nicole Giles (Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy and Strategic Partnerships, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee.

It's an honour to be here today and to contribute to this important discussion.

[*Translation*]

Foreign governments engage in espionage and foreign interference activities that target Canada and Canadians to advance their own interests at our expense, in order to gain a geopolitical, economic, military or strategic advantage.

In doing so, they covertly seek to sow discord and disrupt our economy and the ingenuity of the academic sector. In many cases, clandestine interference activities aim to support foreign political agendas or deceptively influence Canadian policies, research centres, democratic processes or representatives.

[*English*]

Unfortunately, Canada's fundamental institutions are active targets of foreign interference activities. Academia and the research sector are, sadly, no exception. On university campuses, foreign states, including the People's Republic of China, seek to exert undue influence covertly and through proxies by harassing dissidents and suppressing academic freedoms and free speech.

Foreign interference and espionage in academia can take many forms, from covertly influencing research agendas or peer-review processes to engaging in funding arrangements, where details about the source of funds are deliberately obscured or misrepresented. Common techniques can include blackmail, coercion, illicit financing, intimidation and disinformation. They also include theft of intellectual property, preventing its future monetization and thereby harming Canada's overall economic development. These activities are increasingly used by states such as the PRC to exploit Canada's innovation and commitment to research partnerships.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

The good news is that we can protect research in Canada through education and knowledge transfer to increase resilience in the face of foreign interference and thus ensure that government investments are not used to advance the research of hostile states. It also includes measures to ensure that our intelligence community's toolkit, policies and authorities remain up to date and enable us to deal with an ever-evolving threat.

[*English*]

The interests of Canada's adversaries were once limited to competition between governments. The priorities of threat actors today have widened to include Canada's advanced research in emerging technologies and big data. The result is aggressive targeting by some foreign states of institutions and individuals beyond the Government of Canada.

[*Translation*]

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, has produced thousands of intelligence reports and provided details about these threats.

[*English*]

In order to raise awareness, CSIS has reported on this and other forms of foreign interference in our annual public report—we have copies—and we have published several tailored unclassified reports, including the snappily titled “Foreign Interference and You”, which was developed for all Canadians and community groups, as well as more publications specifically for universities and the research sectors, such as “Protect Your Research”, which are available in multiple languages. These publications have been accompanied by extensive outreach and awareness-raising efforts aimed at building resilience through our stakeholder engagement program.

[*Translation*]

Foreign interference remains a recurring problem, and it has grown in scope and complexity in today's digital age. What's more, new technologies such as artificial intelligence will only exacerbate the problem. Protecting Canada's national security is a team effort and requires action from the whole of society.

[*English*]

CSIS is a committed partner in this effort, and our team of dedicated and talented professionals are working hard to keep Canadians safe, secure and prosperous.

We will be very pleased to answer your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Giles.

Now we'll go on to CSE with Sami Khoury.

Mr. Sami Khoury (Head, Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, Communications Security Establishment): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to appear today. My name is Sami Khoury and I am the head of the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, also known as the cyber centre, within the Communications Security Establishment. I’m joined by my colleague Samantha McDonald, assistant deputy minister of the innovative business strategy and research development branch at CSE.

[*Translation*]

For those who may be unfamiliar with us, the Communication Security Establishment, often referred to as CSE, is Canada's national cryptologic agency, providing the government with information assurance and foreign signals intelligence.

[*English*]

The cyber centre is part of CSE and serves as a unified source of expert advice, guidance and support on cybersecurity operational matters. The cyber centre works very closely with Samantha’s branch at CSE in the fields of cryptography, cybersecurity, vulnerability research, high-performance computing, data science and artificial intelligence.

Partnership is at the very core of what the cyber centre does, because ensuring and strengthening Canada’s online security is a responsibility shared by stakeholders across the country.

[*Translation*]

We work in collaboration with Canadian businesses, critical infrastructure, law enforcement, and external partners like researchers and academia to raise Canada’s collective cyber security bar.

[*English*]

A significant component of this collaboration involves sharing important information with Canadians and Canadian businesses about the cyber-threats Canada faces.

[*Translation*]

Informed by our classified sources, we release public reports like the National Cyber Threat Assessment, also known as the NCTA.

[*English*]

One of the most prominent of these threats is state-sponsored cyber-threat activity against Canada, which is a constant and ongoing threat. In the 2023-24 NCTA, we shared that state-sponsored threat actors engage in commercial espionage, targeting intellectual property and other valuable business information. They do so with the goal of sharing stolen information with state-owned enterprises or domestic industry in their home country.

[*Translation*]

We reported that over the next two years, Canadian organizations with information of value to foreign states will almost certainly continue to be targeted by malicious cyber threat activity from state-sponsored actors.

● (1555)

[*English*]

While we assess that the state-sponsored cyber-programs of China, Russia, Iran and North Korea continue to pose the greatest strategic cyber-threats to Canada, we also know that cyber-threats can come from anywhere at any time. Consequently, CSE takes a country-agnostic approach, focusing on combatting the cyber-threat activity Canada faces—

The Chair: Can I just pause you? We have the French on the English translation. We need to get the channels fixed.

Okay, let's give it a go. I put you on pause and now I'll start you again.

Mr. Sami Khoury: It's from where I stopped, I suppose.

The Chair: Sure, continue from where you stopped.

Mr. Sami Khoury: Consequently, CSE takes a country-agnostic approach, focusing more on combatting the cyber-threats Canada faces than on the region from which such threats originate. Canadian organizations need to be prepared to defend against all emerging cyber-threats, regardless of whether it's a state or a non-state actor.

[*Translation*]

At CSE, we see firsthand how rapidly these threats evolve, posing new challenges for cyber security and defence.

[*English*]

Emerging technologies like quantum computing and artificial intelligence are constantly changing the landscape of how we defend ourselves against cyber-threats. These emerging digital technologies, which can be used for either good or nefarious purposes, are the valuable currency that state and non-state competitors are trying to acquire through various means.

[*Translation*]

This demonstrates why it is critical for Canada’s academic and research organizations to implement effective security controls to ensure their intellectual property is protected as securely as possible.

[*English*]

CSE is constantly working to improve Canada's defences against these evolving threats. In July 2022, CSE and other national security partners began the national security review process under the new “National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships”, which aims to safeguard Canadian scientific research from actors who pose a threat to Canadian national security.

[*Translation*]

We invest in our partnerships, working closely with our trusted partners to fulfill our mission and protect Canada, and actively collaborate with researchers and academia to solve unclassified cyber security problems.

[*English*]

At the cyber centre, we also provide tailored advice and guidance to a number of stakeholders, including Canadian research organizations, on how to protect their valuable information.

In closing, I'd like to highlight that October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month. Every October, CSE runs the Get Cyber Safe campaign in support of cyber-month. It's an internationally recognized campaign designed to promote public awareness and understanding of cybersecurity. The theme for cyber-month 2023 is “Step up your cyber fitness”. It's all about the ability to identify, react and respond to online threats by taking things one step at a time. Each week throughout the month of October, Get Cyber Safe will share simple steps to help Canadians stay safe online.

[*Translation*]

Again, I thank you all for the invitation to appear today to testify on threats to research and intellectual property. We look forward to contributing to this important conversation and sharing more about how CSE and the Cyber Centre help protect Canada and Canadians.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll go over to the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Aubertin-Giguère (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, National and Cyber Security , Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you, Chair.

[*English*]

Good afternoon, honourable members of the committee.

My name is Sébastien Aubertin-Giguère. I'm the associate assistant deputy minister for national security and cybersecurity at Public Safety. Research security is part of the portfolio that I oversee.

I'd like to thank you for inviting me here to speak on such an important issue affecting Canadian research.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank the honourable members of this committee for conducting this study, which comes at a most opportune time. I can say with certainty that Public Safety Canada will be following the work of this committee very closely over the coming months.

[*English*]

I'd like to begin my remarks by stating that Public Safety has been working on research security in one form or another since 2016, with the development and delivery of the safeguarding science workshops.

[*Translation*]

As part of these workshops, experts from Public Safety Canada, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Global Affairs Canada, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and the Public Health Agency of Canada are travelling together across the country to deliver targeted workshops on how researchers can best protect their work and intellectual property from external threats.

[*English*]

These workshops were given to universities, to private labs and even to other federal departments. Since the pandemic, the team responsible for administering them has been revamping the way it is offering them so that they can be given to a much wider audience and so that the sessions are more tailored to the specific needs of the researchers they are being presented to.

[*Translation*]

However, it seemed clear that certain foreign governments were working to steal Canadian research in order to support their own economic and political goals.

[*English*]

That is why the government released "National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships" in the summer of 2021, to further improve the government's security posture on research partnerships with private sector entities.

[*Translation*]

Where warranted, Public Safety Canada receives information from our security and intelligence partners in order to provide customized advice to granting councils as well as to individual grant applicants. This advice includes an assessment of the sensitivity of the science and threats posed by the private sector partner.

[*English*]

Public Safety's role in the implementation of the guidelines is to serve as the interface between the federal granting councils and the national security community. When the federal granting councils identify potential national security risks in some of the funding applications they receive, they will refer those applications to Public Safety to coordinate a national security review with our security and intelligence partners.

[*Translation*]

The implementation of the guidelines is a collective effort that involves the collaboration of several federal departments, such as Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, Public Safety Canada, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Communications Security Establishment and Global Affairs Canada.

[*English*]

To undertake this work, Public Safety Canada received funding in budget 2022 to establish a research security centre, and since September 2022, my team has been working hard to staff the centre. I'm pleased to report that the centre is now fully up and running.

[*Translation*]

The security and research centre is made up of two teams. We have a team of six regional advisors based across the country. They are responsible for liaising with universities and provincial governments in their respective regions.

[*English*]

We also have a team of six analysts, located in Ottawa, who are responsible for the implementation of the national security guidelines for research partnerships and for providing support to regional advisers by developing outreach products designed to inform researchers of threats to their research.

[*Translation*]

The Safety and Research Centre is responsible for three areas of activity. The first concerns the implementation of guidelines. The second is to provide expertise to advise universities and researchers on how best to protect their research. The third is to act as a liaison enabling external stakeholders to access Government of Canada services and expertise on research security issues.

[*English*]

Our regional advisers are in constant contact with universities in their regions, providing advice and guidance where necessary and relaying feedback on our programs back to the main team in Ottawa. The work they have been doing thus far by making those connections and providing that outreach has been invaluable to our productive efforts to make Canadian research more secure.

● (1605)

[*Translation*]

I want to emphasize that the federal government is not going it alone in this area. Indeed, we continue to discuss with provinces how we can better align our approaches and the overall level of security for the university sector across Canada.

[*English*]

We're also not alone internationally—

The Chair: Okay, I think I'll have to call it there. We're at the five minutes. We're a bit over time, so maybe you could work the rest into the answers to questions.

Thank you for your testimony.

We're going to start our questions for the six-minute round with Corey Tochor from the Conservatives.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Nicole Giles, your director, David Vigneault, has recently characterized his earlier attempts to communicate with the universities on this issue as “uncomfortable”. This is from a CBC story that came out in October 2017. What did he mean by “uncomfortable”?

Dr. Nicole Giles: Well, 2017 was a long time ago—

Mr. Corey Tochor: Sorry, it's not 2017. It's October 17.

Dr. Nicole Giles: It is something that reflects a change in how we can engage with universities. When our CSIS Act was set up, most of the intelligence holdings and information that were of interest to foreign states were held by the government. That is now largely held by universities and the private sector, so part of the discomfort has been explaining that they are actually targets of the actions of foreign states that are looking to steal their intellectual property and take advantage of their openness.

Mr. Corey Tochor: On the uncomfortableness.... There were earlier reports this year about U of T still working with Huawei. Would CSIS—you or David—be uncomfortable with them working with Huawei?

Dr. Nicole Giles: Thank you for the question.

Our role in this process is to ensure we can help universities understand why working with PRC-affiliated entities could go against their interests and to ensure they're aware of the potential threats associated with that. Then, of course, universities will make their own decisions about where they would like to invest in research.

Mr. Corey Tochor: He made the comment that it's a “one-way engagement”. Which way is that, then?

Dr. Nicole Giles: I'm sorry. Could you repeat the question?

Mr. Corey Tochor: He made the comment that it's a “one-way engagement”. What does David mean by that?

Dr. Nicole Giles: I'm not sure, Mr. Chair, what comment that refers to.

The way we have been trying to think about it is emphasizing that it's a two-way conversation, that it's our—

Mr. Corey Tochor: I'm sorry to interrupt, but Mr. Vigneault said that it was a one-way engagement with universities. Was he referring to his role in talking to universities or the universities talking to him? Would you know that?

Dr. Nicole Giles: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I'm not aware of the specific quote, so I'm unable to ascertain his intention behind it.

What I can say is that the approach we certainly have been aiming to take is that of a two-way conversation, where we can provide our best advice and we can hear from them on what their concerns are.

Mr. Corey Tochor: I'm sorry, but Mr. Vigneault said it was one-way, so how is it two-way?

Once again, I think Mr. Vigneault would have to be here to explain his words, such as being uncomfortable or engagement being one-way, when we have a major university such as the University of Toronto working with Huawei this year—not back in 2015, not in 2017, but this year, 2023. Would it make you uncomfortable hearing that U of T was working with Huawei as early as this year?

Dr. Nicole Giles: I think part of the discomfort comes from the realization for most Canadians that we're actually a target and a vector for foreign actors who are looking to act as our adversaries. That's inherently uncomfortable, I think, for most of us, including universities, so part of the way forward is to ensure we're able to have a two-way conversation, to listen to their concerns so we can ensure we're providing the best advice possible within the limitations of our current legislation.

Mr. Corey Tochor: In your testimony, you talked about tools and policies. Was there a funding increase for CSIS in the last budget that enabled you to have the tools to counteract Beijing's influence at our research institutes?

Dr. Nicole Giles: The work we do—

Mr. Corey Tochor: Actually, sorry, was the increase in the budget for CSIS enough?

Dr. Nicole Giles: In budget 2023, CSIS received some incremental funding related to our core work for the modernizing of some of our systems. We didn't receive any foreign interference-specific funding.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Do you think you should have?

Dr. Nicole Giles: The decisions of the government on where to allocate the funding are not something for the public service to comment on—

● (1610)

Mr. Corey Tochor: Do you know if Mr. Vigneault requested additional resources to counterbalance that?

Dr. Nicole Giles: One thing that is important to remember, Mr. Chair, is that the work we do on research security is not just linked to this NSERC alliance granting program, but it's also linked to our core activities regarding investigations and writing broader intelligence threat assessments. We are pulling all the levers that we have at our disposal in order to counter any research security threats to Canadian institutions.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Christian Leuprecht has stated in testimony that the situation has been growing worse since 2017, to a point that it's now “an existential threat” to Canada's way of life, while key allies like the U.S. and Australia have been far ahead of us in taking steps to protect themselves.

It's clear that someone has dropped the ball here. Is it CSIS, or is it the fault of the government and Trudeau that things have become worse since 2017?

Dr. Nicole Giles: Thank you again for the question.

I think one of the important things to be aware of is that the threat itself has changed. It's not only about the response. For example, this summer, PRC introduced two national security laws, which have fundamentally expanded the definition of national security so that they empower PRC intelligence and law enforcement agencies to compel co-operation of firms and people. That significantly changed the nature of the threat.

The Chair: Thank you very much for the questions and the answers.

Now, we will go to Ms. Bradford for six minutes, please.

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses for coming today to answer our questions on this very important topic.

Ms. Giles, perhaps this is building on what you just referred to. Could you please tell the committee about the People's Republic of China's "Seven Sons of National Defence" and how partnerships with these institutions can pose threats to our Canadian universities?

Dr. Nicole Giles: I'd like to pass this question to my Public Safety colleagues, if that's acceptable to you, Chair. They've done quite a bit of work in this space, but I'd be happy to answer any auxiliary questions.

The Chair: By all means, go ahead if Public Safety can answer that more succinctly.

Ms. Lesley Soper (Director General, National Security Policy, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): I'm not quite sure how I might answer this. The "Seven Sons" are seven of the major research institutions that are known to have defence linkages. As a general understanding, many other jurisdictions have put in limitations around the types of research collaborations that could go on with those institutions in the context of, for example, the alliance grants program. If there was known to be a linkage, we would be scrutinizing that relationship, particularly if it's an area of sensitive technology, of dual use, or of potential military application that could be co-opted unwittingly from a Canadian researcher.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Have our Canadian universities actually been warned about partnering with those that are considered PRC's "Seven Sons of National Defence"? Have our universities been warned about this?

Ms. Lesley Soper: We might refer to the February 14 statement made by the then minister of public safety and the Minister of ISED in relation to affiliations that are known to have linkages to defence institutions. Through that statement, I think the government made it very clear that there are risks in relation to those types of linkages with foreign state military-associated institutions.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: What areas of academia are at greatest risk?

Ms. Lesley Soper: I think we're looking at what we would call "sensitive areas" of technology. Again, if you look at the February 14 statement, we haven't delineated yet fully for the public what those would be. We're talking about cutting-edge research in areas where foreign states may seek to take military advantage or seek to have a leading edge in innovation for reasons that may be entirely commercial, but they may also be contributing to a state security or military apparatus.

● (1615)

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Mr. Khoury, could you please tell the committee how the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security engages with post-secondary institutions to educate our researchers on how they can protect Canada's national security interests while collaborating with international partners?

Mr. Sami Khoury: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

We have a number of ways to engage with academic institutions. At the cyber centre, our priority is to inform and to empower those institutions to raise their cybersecurity awareness and cybersecurity resilience. We do it through advice and guidance that we issue constantly. As the threat evolves, we update our advice and guidance.

We have interactions with academic institutions to help them, in some cases, design their cybersecurity programs, if they are offering those. We also develop a number of tools that we make available through open source. We have open-source tools, and if they want to, we're more than happy if they use them or deploy them on their networks to protect those networks. We also engage with them technologically to look at the security of their network, if they invite us to spend time with them and they demonstrate it to us.

It's very much an operational collaboration in that case, but it's also through advice and guidance that we put out.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Do you also make this available to and collaborate with the technical institutes, smaller universities and community colleges? Is the same attention paid to them as well?

Mr. Sami Khoury: Yes, we communicate with them through a number of round tables. Sometimes with universities, it will be through a university round table. Sometimes it will be one-on-one, when the university invites us to have a direct conversation.

Technical colleges are also a forum in which we will communicate, often through a gathering of these technical colleges, where we will brief them on what the cyber-threat is and how they can work to protect themselves.

Ms. Valerie Bradford: Maybe this is for Ms. Giles. Is there anything we can learn from other countries, such as the U.K. and Australia? Mr. Tochor indicated that they were perhaps ahead of the game. Is there anything we can learn from them?

Dr. Nicole Giles: There are always things we can learn. Certainly, we're a learning institution. As a government, we're a learning organization and constantly seeking to improve.

They've learned from us in terms of the deep stakeholder engagement and the relations we have with universities, but we can certainly learn from them as well in terms of some of the additional partnerships and the way they're able to share information with the private sector. It has to be together—

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Giles.

If I cut you off and you don't finish your answer, you can always give it to us in writing.

We'll go to Mr. Blanchette-Joncas for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Thank you very much, Chair.

I welcome the witnesses and thank them for being with us today to participate in this important study.

I'll begin slowly, Chair, as this is an important but complex study.

Ms. Giles, can you confirm whether any Canadian universities receive funding from China?

[*English*]

Dr. Nicole Giles: In terms of the funding that Canadian universities are receiving, I want to stress that the role of CSIS is to analyze any research applications that are identified for national security review and that come to us. We then undertake a threat assessment based on our investigation and intelligence holdings, and provide that threat assessment to our Public Safety partners, who work with ISED, and ultimately to the funding agency to determine the decision on that specific funding proposal.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Ms. Giles, let me be more specific.

Does CSIS know whether China is funding any Canadian universities, yes or no?

[*English*]

Dr. Nicole Giles: I'm not able to reply to any specifics.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: That is rather disturbing.

What about you, Mr. Aubertin-Giguère, can you tell us, yes or no, whether the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness knows if China is funding Canadian universities?

Mr. Sébastien Aubertin-Giguère: From what we understand, there is no direct funding of universities, but there could be some private funding.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you very much. That's slightly clearer.

Ms. Giles, I understand you don't have the information, but your colleagues at Public Safety Canada seem to have it. I think this will lead to a good exchange between us.

Do you know if these researchers of Chinese origin who are working in our Canadian universities have links with laboratories in China? If so, do you know exactly which ones they're collaborating with?

[*English*]

Dr. Nicole Giles: I think it's safe to say that the functioning assumption we have is that there are continual efforts by PRC institutions and individuals to try to insert themselves into our universities' research and projects.

I'm certainly not able to provide information on any specifics, for reasons related to protecting our methodologies as well as for privacy reasons, but the reason we run our entire stakeholder engagement program is based on the premise that foreign actors are trying to interfere and influence our universities and the research outcomes, in addition to stealing valuable intellectual property.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you.

As a follow-up question, do you know if the researchers have links with the Chinese military?

[*English*]

Dr. Nicole Giles: Again, I'm unable to provide any specific information. I know this is a hazard of working for CSIS, but we are constantly vigilant and providing advice on how to be vigilant to our university and academic colleagues.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you very much.

With respect to the Department of Public Safety, Mr. Aubertin-Giguère, you said that, though not directly, but possibly indirectly, a university might be receiving funding from China. Can you confirm this?

Do these researchers, who have indirect or even direct links, have links with the Chinese military?

Mr. Sébastien Aubertin-Giguère: I do not have a complete inventory of all existing research partnerships with Canadian universities. I am therefore not in a position to answer that question directly.

In fact, that's not necessarily Public Safety Canada's role. Our role is really to ensure that we have the right methodology in place to determine which sensitive technologies to protect and which foreign entities represent a risk to Canada's national security. Our role is also to inform universities by maintaining contact with them to ensure that they are well informed and well advised when they need this information.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: I understand. Thank you very much.

Let's talk about methodology now. As you know, Canada's one and only national security policy came into being almost 20 years ago, in 2004, in the wake of the September 11 attacks. The words "Russia" and "China" do not even appear in the current national security policy. By way of comparison, in the United States, a new national security strategy has been introduced with every change of presidential administration since 1980. This is hardly a recent occurrence.

Mr. Aubertin-Giguère, in your opinion, what signal are we sending to Canada's enemies, as well as to its allies and the population as a whole, by failing to update our national security with a renewed policy that is in line with current events?

Mr. Sébastien Aubertin-Giguère: Thank you for the question.

Of course, the 2004 national security policy is probably in need of renewal, but that doesn't necessarily mean that national security agencies and the government aren't focusing on relevant threats.

A great deal of effort has been made over the years to change our stance and see that we have adequate funding, which allows us to defend against this threat. Certain policies are continually updated. I also think we have excellent credibility with our allies in this regard.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you.

Can you tell us if there are repercussions linked to the fact that this policy is not up to date?

Mr. Sébastien Aubertin-Giguère: Obviously, we'd like to have a unified national security policy, but that doesn't mean we don't have good guidance or…

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm afraid we're out of time.

You can continue your answer in writing, but I think we have the start of an answer there. Thank you.

We'll go over to Mr. Cannings for six minutes.

We'll be going until about 4:45 because we started 15 minutes late. We'll have a shortened round next, but we'll finish the six-minute round with Mr. Cannings.

● (1625)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Thank you all for being here today.

In previous meetings of this committee on this subject, we've heard testimony on various aspects. I think the main concern is Canadian IP going to China through various means. Some is actually stolen through cybersecurity means, and some goes there perfectly legally, we're told, because researchers have partnered with entities in China. We've heard of researchers who've been lured into financial arrangements with Chinese entities and who, once they're in deep, don't really have many options other than to co-operate.

I'm not sure who here is best positioned to answer that. Perhaps we can start with CSIS.

What is the main problem? Is it cybersecurity or is it these legal partnerships with Chinese entities, whether or not they're associated with the army, in these areas of interest? It's a fairly broad question, but what is the aspect that concerns you most?

Dr. Nicole Giles: Thank you very much for the question.

I think the answer, unfortunately, is "all of the above". We see the PRC—and I would add other countries as well, including the Russian Federation—target research through legal, illegal and other unregulated means, the cyber-threats being part of the illegal, in order to augment their science and technology sectors and their economy.

I think what's particularly insidious about it is that the PRC actually has a commission chaired by Xi Jinping that integrates its military and civilian technology together. Everything they're doing, whether it's with the private sector or with our universities, is going back into a system to create dual-use applications for the military.

Mr. Richard Cannings: If CSIS or the CSE or whoever comes across a scientist who is doing important research, research that might be sensitive, and you're concerned about that, what's the process for approaching that researcher? What do you say to them? What happens if they say, "I'm not going to co-operate with you. I'm enjoying my research and this is how I get funding for it. I couldn't get funding from NSERC for it, so I'm going that route"?

What's the method? Where do you take it from there? I want to know.

Ms. Lesley Soper: I think maybe that's a Public Safety question, in a way. Part of the rationale behind setting up the research security centre was to give direct linkages regionally to institutions for them to be able to come to the federal government and leverage all the expertise that's available, and also to give them good advice about the types of risks they may be confronting in specific research domains and come up with solutions.

We have a tool to stop federal funding of partnerships. Right now we're looking at expanding federal money into biomedical research areas where they hit a national security threshold, but that's a very narrow aperture. It doesn't stop any foreign enterprise from coming in, looking at the research that might be going on in any Canadian university and looking for ways to buy their way into it, co-opt their way into it or cyber-exfiltrate their way into it.

I think it really does need a whole-of-government, unified approach to get there. What I would say is that we made tremendous inroads with the universities through the Canadian research support fund, which was launched in budget 2022. Universities are now building capacity to be able to have research security offices that work with the intellectual property offices and work with faculty and researchers to understand where their problems are. Then there's a reciprocal lead inside Public Safety who can make connections for them when they have questions.

It's a very nuanced problem that requires a rather nuanced answer. That's the bottom line, I think.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Khoury, do you have a comment on that? I have other questions for you if you don't.

Go ahead.

● (1630)

Mr. Sami Khoury: Thanks for the question.

The comment I'll add is that our priority is to raise the resilience of those universities and those research labs. There is at times, in some academic circles, a bit of a conflict between "open and collaborative" and security. Our role is to be out there and to say that it's not one or the other—it's both. You can still have a collaborative and open environment for research, but security also has to be factored in.

The Chair: Thank you.

To try to get us close to being on time, we'll go with three and a half, three and a half, one and a half, and one and a half minutes. Let's keep the questions tight and the answers tight. Let's see how much we can get done.

We're starting with Mr. Soroka for three and a half minutes, please.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

Before I get to the witnesses, I would like to ask the clerk if Director Vigneault was invited to appear and what the response was.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Hilary Smyth): Mr. Vigneault was invited. There was a series of dates that were provided. He was not available on those dates. After discussion with the chair, we agreed on the witnesses that Public Safety via CSIS had provided.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Okay. Thank you for that.

I'll start off with Ms. Giles, then.

Does the Liberal government listen to CSIS intelligence and implement the information in a timely manner?

Dr. Nicole Giles: There are a variety of mechanisms through which CSIS provides intelligence and information to the federal government, including elected officials. We work very closely together with our elected officials, as well as with other government departments, to ensure that information is fed into the broader decision-making mechanisms within the government, including in the research security area.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Is that information then acted upon, though?

Dr. Nicole Giles: The information provided is included in decision-making and policy-making where appropriate, and it's very much on a case-by-case basis. It's difficult to generalize.

For example, in the study before us, the intelligence and threat assessments that CSIS provides are but one input into a broader decision-making process about what projects are funded.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: I'm curious. We allegedly have information leaked, helplessly due to the lack of action from this government. Any CSIS official would see this as a serious issue. No one would risk their career, or even possibly jail time, unless they felt they had no other choice.

The government has failed to act on CSIS intelligence. Is that a fact? How are we to respond or believe that the government would act on any CSIS intelligence if they couldn't even respond to foreign interference that poses a risk to the very core of our democracy?

Dr. Nicole Giles: I'd like to be very clear at the outset that any time classified information is provided illegally outside of the Government of Canada, that is a crime. In no way does that protect Canadian national security; it endangers Canadian national security. I think that's very important to lay out.

In terms of the specific case that you're asking about, investigations are ongoing. It would certainly be inappropriate for me to comment on ongoing investigations. However, I would flag that, as I mentioned earlier, CSIS information or intelligence is provided widely across the government and to many government departments, in order to ensure that it can inform policy-making.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Has the government been facilitating or hindering CSIS's efforts to investigate and act upon issues of foreign interference in Canadian universities?

Dr. Nicole Giles: CSIS has been working very closely with the government, as well as with our other government department colleagues, in ensuring that universities have the information they need to be aware of the threats and to be able to act upon them.

One thing we've certainly realized is that we need an approach that doesn't operate in silos but that pulls together government, private, academic and public sectors. An approach that's siloed is bound to fail. That's why we're working closely with the government to ensure that we're taking an integrated approach.

The Chair: Thank you very much for the questions and answers.

Now we will go over to Mr. Lametti, please, for three and a half minutes.

Hon. David Lametti (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate that you can't speak about methodologies because you're protecting sources of information, whether they be from Five Eyes partners, from human sources or from your own methodologies on the ground.

Can someone—whether it's Public Safety, CSIS or the CSE—give us a reassuring message that you are not only working with universities and university researchers, but also that you are prepared to intervene in order to stop anything that puts the country, the institutions or Canadians in a vulnerable situation?

● (1635)

Dr. Nicole Giles: Thank you very much for the question.

I can perhaps start on the narrow...and then pass it to my Public Safety colleagues.

One of the things we can certainly assure the committee of is that we use and will continue to use our investigative authorities when warranted and when allowed for under our act. Certainly that's an area where, when we do encounter information that's directly linked to and poses a national security threat as defined by our act, we act upon it and take very specific actions.

More broadly, we have continuous engagement with universities. We have an entire stakeholder program headed by my colleague here, who works on that in close collaboration with Public Safety.

I'll toss the baton.

Ms. Lesley Soper: I might just add that our research security advisers are in daily contact with universities, which themselves have built really significant capacity. I think they need to be lauded for the amount of investment that's been going on in our major research institutions to really understand where the risks are and how to mitigate those risks.

I think it's important, also, that one of the goals in implementing the guidelines in our outreach to Canadian universities and research facilities is to not over-securitize what is meant to be an open academic environment. People will appreciate that universities are fundamental Canadian institutions. There are specific guardrails around the types of investigations that should go on in those types of spaces. We wanted to create a relationship of confidence that would go on between the academic sector and the Government of Canada so that we could have the most fruitful discussions about the best risk decisions to be made within those institutions.

Again, a carefully calibrated approach has been our operating direction.

Hon. David Lametti: Thank you very much. I appreciate those answers.

I have another general question. A number of you have alluded to this in your comments, but in my view, the biggest resource that we are now generating, in addition to fundamental research, is the data around it. How well are we protecting that data? Is there any more precision that you can give us with respect to the protection of data and—

The Chair: I'm afraid I have to cut you off there, Mr. Lametti.

Now, for one and a half minutes, we have Mr. Blanchette-Joncas, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Chair. I'll be brief.

Mr. Aubertin-Giguère, in February 2023, the federal government said it was going to publish a list of foreign research institutions that posed a risk. The Quebec government, through the Minister of Higher Education, Pascale Déry, contacted the federal government to request the list. It's now October, eight months later, and we still don't have the list.

I'd like you to explain the purpose of this list. If we decided to create one, it must be important. Can you explain the delay in its publication and what the consequences are for universities today?

Mr. Sébastien Aubertin-Giguère: Thank you for the question.

The list of entities is one of two components of the policy statement. The first concerns sensitive research areas and the second deals with problematic entities.

As you can imagine, compiling a list of such complexity isn't straightforward. We need to make sure we talk to our security partners, as well as the universities. We need to develop a tool that is properly adapted to the problem we're trying to address. I can tell you, however, that we're making good progress.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: In your opinion, when will the list be ready?

Mr. Sébastien Aubertin-Giguère: I'm not in a position to answer that question.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you.

Mr. Khoury, in an interview with Radio-Canada on October 11, 2023, the head of CSE mentioned that there was a potential staffing crisis. Staff turnover is high at CSE.

● (1640)

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Blanchette-Joncas, but we're out of time. We're really almost at time for this session.

We're going to go to Mr. Cannings for a minute and a half.

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Richard Cannings: I'm going to turn to Mr. Khoury.

The other main intersection between research and security is research on security. I think you touched on that, but I just want to get some details. How much research does your institution carry out on cybersecurity? Does it do that with Canadian universities? What does that landscape look like?

Mr. Sami Khoury: Thank you for the question. I'll start maybe with cybersecurity and then turn to my colleagues.

At the cyber centre, our priority is to stay ahead of the threats. We are constantly doing research on the latest threats we are seeing, not just against the government but also around the world, and that is also informed through our foreign intelligence missions. We want to make sure we provide the best advice and guidance to Canadians and the best tools and indicators of compromise so that they can protect themselves from the latest threats. That also involves capability, so it's not just about the threat. We have a number of events where we are pushing the limits of the capability developments we are deploying to protect the government. We have state-of-the-art capabilities, of which we're extremely proud.

As far as research goes and the areas of research in which we are investing, I'll turn to my colleague.

Ms. Samantha McDonald (Assistant Deputy Minister, Innovative Business Strategy and Research Development, Communications Security Establishment): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

Research is certainly needed to support CSE's—

The Chair: Unfortunately, the clock is working against us. These minute-and-a-half sessions are really tight. It's pretty much one question and one answer.

Thank you for that.

Thank you to all the panellists—

Mr. Corey Tochor: I have a point of order, Chair, on the witnesses.

In the study we are undertaking right now, we all agreed that the study description included that the committee hear from the director of CSIS. As much as I greatly respect the individuals and officials who are in the room from CSIS, they are not the director, and we cannot continue our study until we hear from the director.

The clerk has identified that, for whatever reason, scheduling problems have arisen. We've seen this with the government, when it hides witnesses and hides what's actually taking place.

I'm going to move a motion. I would like to move that pursuant to Standing Order—

The Chair: You can't move it on a point of order.

Mr. Corey Tochor: I will raise this at the next round.

The Chair: You can raise it, but not on a point of order and not now.

Mr. Corey Tochor: We have the witnesses here. We'll have the next witness panel that's here, and we're going to be discussing—

The Chair: Okay.

I'd like to thank our witnesses for being here. Thank you for the testimony. We got a wide range of questions and answers from our security establishments, but if there is anything we didn't get to—because I had to cut you off a bit—and you can submit the additional information in writing to the clerk, we'll make sure it's included.

Also, you mentioned a couple of presentations that were made. I checked with the analysts, and they said they could find those, but it might help us to move along if those links are also included.

We're going to suspend briefly to let our witnesses leave, and then we're going to resume with our second panel of witnesses.

If you're on Zoom, please stay connected. We're going to do our best to get back up and running so that we can finish before six o'clock, which is our cut-off time.

● (1640)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1650)

The Chair: Welcome back.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(i) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, December 5, 2022, the committee commences its study on the long-term impacts of pay gaps experienced by different genders and equity-seeking groups among faculty at Canadian universities.

It's now my pleasure to welcome, in person, Laura Neals, director of academic staff relations at Dalhousie University. From the University of Guelph, we have Indira Naidoo-Harris, associate vice-president of diversity and human rights, by video conference.

You each have five minutes for your remarks, and then we will get to our round of questions on this study.

We will start off with Ms. Neals.

Ms. Laura Neals (Director, Academic Staff Relations, Dalhousie University): Thank you very much.

Good afternoon, everyone.

I will speak quite briefly about Dalhousie's experience with pay equity. Of course, if you have specific questions, I'm happy to answer.

In 2015, Dalhousie released the “Belong” report. The report focused on how to build an inclusive university and offered a number of recommendations, including undertaking an institutional pay equity analysis.

In 2017, in advance of a new round of collective bargaining, the university began this pay equity work. The analysis focused on faculty salaries and was done in partnership with our faculty union, the Dalhousie Faculty Association. Thought was given as to how the analysis could be conducted, recognizing that salary is dictated by position but also by experience and expertise. Ultimately, the comparison was done using faculty members' ranks, y-value and full-time salary rate.

The y-value is a Dal-specific measure, enshrined in our collective agreement with the Dalhousie Faculty Association. For members of our teaching and research staff, a y-value is calculated to reflect the number of years of creditable service; other relevant experience, including traditional ways of knowing and non-traditional scholarship; and level of education. A faculty member's y-value dictates their minimum salary, and our y-value system helps to ensure that faculty members with comparable experience and education are paid comparable annual salaries.

The population included all current faculty. Faculty with post-retirement appointments, former deans, and faculty with salaries at or above maximum salary rates were removed from the population, as these salaries would skew the dataset. Pay equity variables were drawn from our self-identification records and included gender identification and expression, indigenous, racially visible, persons with a disability, and sexual orientation. Linear regression analysis was run on the data for each rank, with salary rate as the dependent variable, and y-value and gender and/or designated group status as independent variables.

We found statistically significant differences occurring in the regression comparing male and female faculty salary rates by y-value at the rank of full professor. Among our most senior faculty members, there were pay gaps for female professors. As a result, pay equity salary adjustments were calculated and awarded to 81 female full professors. Individual one-time adjustments ranged from approximately $1,500 to $12,000.

In September 2020, a second pay equity analysis was conducted on faculty to determine whether the salary adjustments provided had successfully resulted in closing the gaps between our male and female researchers. Our analysis revealed almost no difference between the regression lines for each rank, and we therefore concluded that the pay equity adjustments awarded in 2017 had the desired effect of closing the gaps. The analysis was repeated again in 2022, in advance of the bargaining on our latest collective agreement, and found no statistically significant gaps.

Dalhousie has a defined benefit pension plan based on the best three years of a faculty member's earnings. This structure helps to mitigate impact on retirement savings. If pay equity gaps are identified and remedied three years prior to retirement, the impact on pensions at Dal will be minimal.

That being said, our pay equity adjustments were made on a go-forward basis, and we can't discount the impact that this gap had on faculty members' lifetime earnings. Equity pay gaps at institutions with defined contribution pension plans and retirement savings plans will lead to a more significant impact on faculty retirement pay.

Moving forward, we have adopted the practice of conducting a faculty pay equity analysis in advance of bargaining on new collective agreements. This gives us and our union partners an opportunity to assess whether there are pay gaps that need to be addressed. Our y-value system was critical in the execution of this exercise. To that end, we have also revised our y-value system to ensure that it captures the diversity of experience and knowledge.

It's also important to note that this exercise was done in the Nova Scotia post-secondary context. Different provinces or sectors with different funding schemes or legislation would potentially have more nuanced challenges to overcome.

Thank you.

● (1655)

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to Ms. Naidoo-Harris for five minutes.

The floor is yours.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris (Associate Vice-President, Diversity & Human Rights, University of Guelph): Thank you so much.

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for having me here today to participate in this very important discussion about the long-term impacts of pay gaps experienced by differing genders and equity-seeking groups among faculty at Canadian universities.

My name is Indira Naidoo-Harris. I'm the associate vice-president of diversity and human rights at the University of Guelph. I'm also a former Ontario MPP, as well as Ontario's first-ever minister of the status of women. I was also the minister for education and for early years and child care. Therefore, for me, gender pay inequity is not a new topic or a recently discovered problem; it's a decades-long, systemic inequality that continues to have harmful impacts on our society, economy and workforce.

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge that the University of Guelph is situated on the treaty lands and territories of the Anishinabe, the Haudenosaunee and the Mississaugas of the Credit.

I'd like to start by giving you some details about my background to provide some context.

As minister of the status of women, I drove the women's economic empowerment strategy, which aimed to increase gender equity, challenge bias and eliminate barriers that women face at work and in their communities. As minister responsible for early years and child care, I worked to help remove one of the biggest barriers to gender pay equity in Ontario: accessible and affordable child care.

At the University of Guelph, I work with students, faculty, staff, and senior administration to foster a culture of inclusion by leading education, discussion and cultural change efforts in inclusivity, equity, accessibility and human rights. My work also includes ensuring fair and expeditious issue resolution within the university community. I sit on several advisory boards, including the university's gender equity advisory group.

Pay inequities at Canadian post-secondary institutions have been studied for decades. However, while the gap has, indeed, shrunk, it still rests at women earning close to 10% less than men for the same work. The Canadian Association of University Teachers says that this number is even starker for racialized faculty. This is unacceptable and has to change.

Interestingly enough, according to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, we're at a point in time now where women have made substantial gains in education. They are more likely than men to attend post-secondary institutions and to perform better academically, and they are often more engaged in campus life. However, as those women move through the academic pipeline, they wind up lagging behind and are under-represented in the senior ranks of academic faculty.

In fact, according to data released by StatsCan in January of this year, in Canada only 31.4% of women are full professors. In one study done by King's University College, it was determined that, across a decades-long career and retirement survey, there was a cumulative pay and pension gap of $454,000 at the associate level and $468,000 at the full professor level.

Now consider those numbers in tandem with the harsh impact that the pandemic has had on gender and racialized women in the workforce. For example, according to the United Nations, across every area women and girls were hit hardest by the pandemic, and McKinsey reported that women's jobs were close to 1.8 times more vulnerable during the COVID-19 crisis.

Considering that women are some of the world's most powerful consumers and also play a huge role in our communities, it's crucial for economic growth and for building sustainable and fair communities that we work out how to get this right.

In 2017, the University of Guelph underwent a faculty salary anomaly review, with a focus on gender equity. The review at the University of Guelph resulted in an across-the-board increase of $2,050 for every full-time faculty member who identified as a woman or as non-male. It affected more than 300 tenure-track and contract faculty with appointments of more than two years. This effort was part of a multi-phase gender equity initiative to bring community members together to discuss and shape gender equity at the institution. It involved research and identifying opportunities for change. The University of Guelph is currently undergoing a second salary anomaly review, and it will be interesting to see what effect COVID-19 has had on pay equity.

The pay equity gap that we are seeing today continues for a number of reasons: biases determining starting salaries and merit pay, differing rates of promotion, unconscious biases in the hiring process, and the effects of parental care and caregiving leaves.

● (1700)

When we evaluate female and racialized candidates and their experiences, we have to ask if we are looking at the biases in our metrics. Do we acknowledge that female and racialized candidates receive shorter and more vague reference letters, and aren't quoted or published as frequently as their male counterparts?

Regarding the wage gap—

The Chair: I'm afraid I have to ring the bell, but thank you very much for your presentation.

Hopefully, we can get to questions that will be able to get some of your other points out.

For now, we're going to start our six-minute round on this study.

We'll be starting off with Gerald Soroka from the Conservatives.

● (1705)

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for coming today.

I'll pass my time to Corey Tochor.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Thank you.

Witnesses, I apologize. I had a motion from our last panel that wasn't resolved, and I have the floor now. A notice of motion went out last week. The motion deals with David Vigneault's attendance, which is demanded by the very motion that established the study that we just wrapped up.

I move:

> That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(i), and the motion initiating a study on Canadian research partnerships with entities connected to the People's Republic of China, the committee invites David Vigneault, Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to testify alone, as soon as possible, for one hour.

The Chair: Thank you.

My apologies to the witnesses while we do a bit of committee business here.

When we started this study, we said that we were going to balance the time between the studies. Having said that, and looking around the room, I don't see any objections to having the director of CSIS come here.

We have several hands up.

We do have witnesses—one has travelled from Dalhousie to be with us—and I would like to get to those questions.

Regarding the director of CSIS, I see nodding of heads around the room, so we can try to make that happen as soon as we can. We are delaying this study—

Mr. Corey Tochor: Can we call the question on the motion, please?

The Chair: Do you want a recorded vote on it?

We do have hands up, but it looks like this might be the fastest way for us to deal with this.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Can you please confirm what's going on here?

We have a witness. We have a study, and we have an agreement that dates back months ago that we don't interrupt the study—

The Chair: We're in the middle of a vote.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: I don't think the vote is in order.

The Chair: I'm trying to get a sense to see if we want to go ahead and get the witness in. We could have had several minutes of debate on this, but it looked to me like the committee's will was to get the witness here.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Point of order, Chair.

We're in the process of voting. There should not be any debate.

[*English*]

The Chair: Right. I'd like to get back to the vote, please.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

The Chair: As in our last meeting, when we we were talking about this topic, I made a call based on having a security panel put together for today. Given the amount of time we had to put that together, I said we would have the experts come in from CSIS who were available. Given this motion, we'll see when we can schedule in the director.

Back to questions, we're on the first round of questions.

An hon. member: Is there any time left?

The Chair: We used only about three and a half minutes there, and we have only two people on our panel, so I'm feeling generous.

Mr. Soroka, if you have some questions, we'd like to get back to you.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: That'll be fine.

I'll start off with Ms. Neals.

You spoke about your y-value, and how you've done this. You implemented this in 2017, yet in 2022 there was a strike at the university and it was said that the number one thing was low wages.

Could you comment on whether your y-value program is working or not?

Ms. Laura Neals: In 2022, we had a strike with our part-time faculty. Those are individuals who teach on a per-course basis. Our full-time faculty—the teachers and researchers who were part of this pay equity adjustment—did not strike in 2022. The issues on the table with that unit are not wages.

I would say that, yes, the program has worked as intended in addressing pay equity gaps.

● (1710)

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Are you paying the full-time faculty versus part-time the same, with the equivalence?

Ms. Laura Neals: No.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: I meant the idea that if they worked the same number of hours, they would get the same pay—or is that not the case?

Ms. Laura Neals: It's a bit different. Full-time faculty tend to work what we refer to as the 40-40-20 workload. They spend 40% of their time teaching, 40% of their time researching, and 20% of their time doing service in the universities. That would be sitting on committees, sitting on the university senate and things like that. They receive an annual salary that reflects that work.

Our part-time faculty teach on a per-course basis, so they're assigned one course and they get a stipend for teaching that course.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: These were CUPE strikers. Wouldn't they be full-time faculty?

Ms. Laura Neals: No. Our full-time faculty are represented by the Dalhousie Faculty Association. Our part-timers are represented by CUPE.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Okay. That's where I wanted clarity, because it wasn't making sense to me.

How much time do I have now, Mr. Chair? I have three minutes left. Okay. That's good to hear. I wasn't certain, because I thought you told me I had only three minutes to start with.

Ms. Neals, do you feel that if they did the y-value right across Canada, this would alleviate all the problems with the gender pay gap, or would there still be other issues that need to be focused on?

Ms. Laura Neals: Our y-value sets the salary floor, so it's an effective tool for establishing a baseline. Depending on disciplines and areas of expertise, sometimes faculty members are hired at salary rates above the y-value. The y-value gives us a metric to decide, based on someone's education level and experience, where they fall in the grid, but it's not a perfect measurement. Would it resolve all the problems? Absolutely not.

A key component of what has achieved success here at Dal is not only having that y-value measure, but also revisiting the analysis in advance of bargaining or new collective agreements to give us an opportunity to temperature-check and know whether we're meeting the mark in terms of pay equity.

I don't think there's any system you could just implement and trust that it would take care of things forever. It's something you have to keep checking back on.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: I think with any program or policy, there are always going to be loopholes or issues that never cover 100%, and that's understandable.

With your experience at Dalhousie, do you feel the federal government is providing adequate support and resources to universities to effectively address the pay equity gap?

Ms. Laura Neals: It's interesting, because most universities are unionized, and our collective agreement is quite nuanced and sophisticated. There are a lot of parts and pieces to academic salaries, and I don't know that the federal government could issue blanket practices or policies that would speak to all of the constraints and specificities of the Dalhousie Faculty Association collective agreement.

I think it's probably been for the best that, as an institution, we've been able to dictate how to do the pay equity exercise ourselves.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: I am almost done, so if you could just write in, what's the role of the federal government in this process?

Ms. Laura Neals: I think it's asking each institution to do the analysis itself and then holding it accountable to that process.

The Chair: That was a nice short question and a short answer. That was a valuable answer, as well, for our report.

Now I'm going to go over to Ms. Diab for six minutes, please.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both of our witnesses for coming in. You both have very impressive bios. Ms. Neals, thank you for your work in Nova Scotia at Dalhousie, which is my alma mater. It's my home city and province. I appreciate your travelling here from Halifax to speak to us.

To the Honourable Naidoo-Harris, congratulations and thank you for coming.

It is an important study. It's important to all of us on this committee, regardless of whether we're men or women, but obviously it's a study that we pushed forward to have as females on this committee, because we recognize there is a gender gap but we wanted to confirm whether it is indeed there and whether we're doing any better as a country.

Recognizing that education and post-secondary education are very much in the provincial realm, speaking of Dalhousie and the province of Nova Scotia, are there any policies or legislation in Nova Scotia that helped gear you to what was done in 2015 and 2017, and fast-forwarding to now, in terms of these processes?

● (1715)

Ms. Laura Neals: No, not right now.

The decision to do the pay equity review and adjustments was a result of internal discussion and a report that came through Dalhousie in 2015. There is nothing provincially to push that forward, at the moment.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Are you aware of the dimensions initiative that was developed by NSERC? It's a handbook for post-secondary institutions to increase equity. Did that guide give you any guidance in terms of what you are doing at Dalhousie?

Ms. Laura Neals: We didn't use that to guide our review, but I am aware of its existence, yes.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Would you say these types of resources are helpful or valuable to a post-secondary institution?

Ms. Laura Neals: I think it depends on the topic. As I mentioned earlier, our collective agreement has so many particular provisions that a blanket guide or policy is not necessarily going to help us address the specifics of compensation in our institution.

I think requiring institutions to be accountable in some way is helpful, but giving them freedom and flexibility so they can do it in a way that's in keeping with their collective agreements or employment contracts is probably the best way to go about this work.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Ms. Neals, thank you.

Just before I ask our second witness, I want to say that it's due time that Dalhousie has its first female president—as of August 2023—with Dr. Kim Brooks. I was excited about that, and I think it's a good thing for Nova Scotia and the country.

Ms. Naidoo-Harris, congratulations on what you're doing right now at the University of Guelph, and also on what you did formerly, which I didn't realize. I am going to ask a question based on what you've done formerly, because you alluded to it. As a mother and grandmother right now, I see the challenges my daughters have because they're having children.

What would you say—particularly because of the pandemic, and so on—is the significant impact on women in the workplace, specifically mothers of school-age children? How has your university aimed to help with the pay gap on that, since we recognize it is a challenge?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I think the answer is twofold.

Folks who are looking at how we can come to solutions have to, first, make sure we are identifying the problem. For example, at the University of Guelph, we undertook a mental health task force to get a better sense of what was happening when it came to mental health issues on campus, in our community and, of course, in the broader society. We were all aware that individuals, specifically women and equity-deserving groups, were being hit hardest by the pandemic. That was a result of carrying more of the workload and having to deal much more with unpaid labour. There was a recognition that a lot of folks were very taxed physically and mentally by this. We undertook, recently, that mental health task force to give us a more informed look at what needed to happen next and to build some supports, which I think are very important.

The other piece, I think, is a broader question we need to look at as a society. I'll go back to the child care aspect. During that time in the pandemic, a lot of women were carrying the added work of making sure they were looking after their children at home and preparing themselves, essentially, to be able to keep the household running while still showing up for work and doing what they needed to do. That has impacted our society and the ability of women to perform in a way that shows well on paper when they're applying for roles, and so on. We saw a lot of women leaving STEM research, for example, around the time of the pandemic—and we are just coming out of that now—because there were so many more responsibilities for them to carry. It was having an impact on many individuals.

We put EDI supports in place. That's part of it.

● (1720)

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Thank you very much.

I was hoping you would talk about the child care needs, so thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We're over time.

We're going to move along.

I would mention that the University of Guelph also has a female president, Dr. Charlotte Yates, so we're in good hands at both universities.

We will move to Monsieur Blanchette-Joncas for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Chair.

I welcome the witnesses and thank them for joining us for the second hour of this Committee meeting.

Madame Naidoo-Harris, thank you for joining us today and, of course, congratulations on your political engagement. You were Minister of Education in Ontario, so you're well aware of the responsibilities facing a provincial or federal government. Today, I'd like to focus on the federal government's responsibilities.

In your opinion, which action levers could the federal government employ to reduce the gender wage gap in universities?

[*English*]

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I apologize. I believe the question may have been for me, but unfortunately I do not have the interpretation up. I don't seem to have that activated.

Can someone help me understand what that question was about?

The Chair: I have a time of one minute on the question.

You do have an interpretation selection on your screen at the bottom. It looks like a globe. If you click on the globe, you can select English interpretation.

Maybe we could ask Mr. Blanchette-Joncas to repeat his question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Naidoo-Harris, you were Minister of Education in Ontario. In your opinion, what can the federal government do to reduce the gender wage gap in universities?

[*English*]

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you so much for that question, Monsieur, because it's a very important one.

While universities and post-secondary institutions come under provincial governments and that is where a lot of the rulings, policies and so on happen, the federal government's programs have also been very helpful. Federal programs like the federal contractors program are huge because, as I'm sure this committee has heard already, the collection of data is one of the key pieces that we need assistance with in order to know where the gaps are and how we can go ahead and fill those gaps and take care of them.

The federal contractors program is good. My advice would be that this program needs to be expanded. It needs to be expanded in a number of ways. For example, right now we're looking at four designated groups. One group that's not included in the collection of numbers is the LGBTQ2SIA+ community. That might be something we may want to add when we're taking a look at the federal contractors program.

When we reach out and collect more data, there are racialized community members in those four designated groups, but for the racialized group it's an all-encompassing number. It doesn't tell you what's happening with the Black community and what's happening with, let's say, the Asian community and so on. This became very important during the Black Lives Matter movement, when universities and large organizations were struggling with trying to work out what was happening within their communities with these particular groups.

Those are two ways, perhaps, that it could be improved.

The other piece is intersectionality. When we look at data collection, we have to understand that it's not just whether you're a woman or, like me, someone who also belongs to a racialized group. Identifying those members of our communities who fall into both of those groups gives us a much more fulsome idea of what the challenges are and a better sense, perhaps, of where some folks are being left behind in our institutions.

I would commend the federal contractors program. It has been very important for us in terms of data collection. The dimensions program is also good, and some of the work that's going on with the tri-agencies in terms of EDI and even the Canada research chairs requirements. The federal government is insisting more and more on EDI—"What are you doing in these areas?" and "What are your policies?"—and that is very helpful.

● (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Ms. Naidoo-Harris, thank you for the clarification.

You mentioned the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion, which are mandatory criteria for Canada Research Chairs. These principles aim to support underrepresented groups. However, there are no criteria dealing with pay equity per se.

What is your opinion? What should the government do? If it wants to promote pay equity, it could establish criteria, but there aren't any, currently.

[*English*]

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: These are areas we could certainly examine. The thing about pay equity is that you're dealing with confidential information at times. There has to be an examination of how we navigate some of this stuff.

The other part of the data collection piece that creates some challenges is that data collection depends on self-identifying. A lot of times, while we may have things in place to find out the numbers and know what we could do with requiring certain kinds of identification, we also have to recognize that a lot of people are not self-identifying at times. There's a hesitation and a reticence to do that.

Something quite simple that governments could do is perhaps advertise more and get more education out there about why it is important to self-identify and about how the collection of this information actually does inform, as you are pointing out, our ability to address the needs when there are gender pay gaps and pay gaps when it comes to equity-seeking groups.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Cannings for six minutes, please.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Thank you to both witnesses today. It's very interesting testimony.

I'd like to start with Ms. Neals from Dal.

I must say that the one faculty member I know at Dal is a female dean, so I know some things are working there.

You mentioned that when you did your first analysis, certainly the main difference—I'm not sure if it was the only gap or the only difference—was at the higher levels or the full professor level. I wonder if you could speculate on what causes that. We've heard that before, and I want to know what your take is.

Ms. Laura Neals: I think it probably arrises from our y-value system, which has evolved over the years to become a bit more nuanced and to recognize different kinds of experience and equivalent experience. Faculty members who came into the system earlier—20 or 30 years ago—were subject to a different system, which didn't have as broad a view on what valuable and creditable experience would be when calculating that y-value. I think that for our newer faculty, who are subject to a more nuanced system, we get their y-value right.

I think that in those earlier years we didn't get their y-value right, so their male comparators were seen as being higher and more expert, but that was probably not the case.

Mr. Richard Cannings: It's not just a case of things being compounded year by year when you have males who are able, for whatever reason, to publish more and are seen to have whatever qualities they need to move early from assistant to associate to full professor. It's not that compounding effect; it's more—

Ms. Laura Neals: No, it's more about how they entered. What salaries they were entering at seems to have a really significant impact on where they were ending up in their later career.

Mr. Richard Cannings: We've heard that in other universities without the y-value system. Maybe they have it and call it something else.

Does that have something to do with Y chromosomes, by the way?

Ms. Laura Neals: No.

Mr. Richard Cannings: You said that when you did your calculation and made a salary adjustment, there was a range of adjustments. Could you explain how you did that and how you made sure people were still being rewarded for things they deserved?

● (1730)

Ms. Laura Neals: We did our analysis on a faculty-by-faculty basis. We were comparing computer scientists with computer scientists, and folks in the faculty of management with their true peer group. The discrepancies varied faculty by faculty.

We also found that because we had made our regression line, it was very easy to say that this faculty member was far below where they should be relative to another faculty member who was close to the regression line.

We really did a deep dive into the data and were able to make tailored adjustments based on the regression line.

Mr. Richard Cannings: I'll turn to Ms. Naidoo-Harris.

I think you said that at Guelph there was a flat adjustment of $2,000. Is that what I understand? How might that compare with the Dalhousie situation?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm not comfortable talking about how that compares with the Dalhousie situation. I can tell you that our review was done in October 2017, so it was just before the pandemic hit. This gap was identified at the time. I think the total available sample was 798 faculty who were looked at, deans or AVPs and so on. We took a look at ethnicity, gender identity, and also at data that was part of our university's “Diversity Matters Census”. Of the 700—I think it was close to 780 faculty identified—we were able to work out that there was a gap. The distribution of salaries at that time showed that the average work wage for female faculty was lower than the average wage for male faculty by several thousand dollars.

It was decided that there had to be an adjustment made, and an adjustment was made. The difference between male and female faculty salaries was found to be $2,050, and that adjustment was made.

The important thing about this review was also to look at how we could start using predictors such as gender, rank, time from hire, time from Ph.D., and performance and how we could improve things for the future. We took a look at the change in salary distribution and really examined where we need to pay attention when it comes to that pipeline, if you will, which wasn't happening with people moving up. We looked at the systemic barriers in place to identify what those contributors were to the academic pipeline.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Thank you.

I have 20 seconds. I think I'll leave it there. Thanks.

The Chair: Great, thank you.

In the next round, we will start off with Mr. Maguire, for five minutes, please.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses as well.

Ms. Neals, I want to ask you a couple of questions. In your role with academic staff relations at Dalhousie, what's your assessment, quantitatively, of the pay equity gaps at your university? You indicated that in some of your opening remarks. Can you expand on that?

Ms. Laura Neals: Do you mean the overall cost?

Mr. Larry Maguire: I mean quantitatively, yes, the pay equity gaps at Dalhousie.

Ms. Laura Neals: I don't have those numbers of what they were in 2017. We did do adjustments for 81 female full professors that ranged from $1,500 to $12,000—I think it was a couple of hundred thousand dollars at the time—but then those got rolled into their base salaries and they've been incremented over the years—

Mr. Larry Maguire: I have a few more questions. Maybe you could give us some data on that and make it available to the committee.

Ms. Laura Neals: Sure.

Mr. Larry Maguire: One of the things that Dr. Tracy Smith-Carrier said to this committee was that “men's earnings rise significantly with academic productivity, whereas women's do not.” That's simply not fair.

You say that this is a problem on your campus too. If so, can you expand on what your organization is doing to fix it?

Ms. Laura Neals: Where you would see this on our campus is when male faculty members are promoted to associate professor or full professor faster than their female colleagues. There's typically a $2,000 pay increase with those promotions. So if female professors are taking longer to reach those promotion milestones, maybe due to things like parental leave, then you would see that gap.

One of the things that have been identified by us as a means to address that is research funding for female professors returning from parental leave, recognizing that time away from the workplace. Sometimes the programs of research stagnate and they need a little bit of an investment to get those going again.

● (1735)

Mr. Larry Maguire: That leads me to the next question.

We heard there is a problem collecting data; there are barriers to collecting that data. Do you agree?

Ms. Laura Neals: I guess it depends on the problem. For the pay equity problem, I would say there aren't very many barriers. Most of our faculty members' salaries are published through the provincial Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Act. So that data is readily available, I would argue.

In terms of the impact of individuals potentially taking steps back from their career for parental leave or to address caregiving responsibilities, it's very difficult to collect that data and understand the impact.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Just to expand on that, do you have any mechanisms at Dalhousie to attract that data for the gender pay gaps?

Ms. Laura Neals: Sure. For gender pay gaps, individuals have self-identified through our institutional census. Then we have their salary information readily available, so that's an easy data analysis exercise.

Mr. Larry Maguire: How do you track that, and what do you do with that data?

Ms. Laura Neals: What we do institutionally is that before we enter a new round of collective bargaining, we redo the whole pay equity analysis. That allows us to identify if there are any gaps, not just between our male and female faculty members but also among all equity-deserving groups. We run that analysis typically every three years, using the HR salary data we have and the self-identification.

Mr. Larry Maguire: What's the role of human resources and those who deal with academic staff relations, like you, in ensuring pay equity at our universities? There was some discussion at this committee a few weeks ago about that. I'm just wondering if you can expand on that. What's the role of your human resources and those, like yourself, who deal with this?

Ms. Laura Neals: We've taken it on as our responsibility as it's something we need to be looking at for our faculty. It's important to note that at our institution we do this exercise in partnership with our faculty union. We're all reviewing the same data and looking to see if there are issues and what we could do through the collective bargaining process to remedy them.

Mr. Larry Maguire: One aspect we've struggled with in the study that has been going on here is identifying what's clearly the jurisdiction of the federal government in this matter. I don't want to be overstepping into provincial territories or areas. Other than the Canada research chairs, do you think there is a lot of action that might be outside the scope of the federal government, or are there federal aspects that need to be adjusted that you can build upon in recommendations for us?

Ms. Laura Neals: What we notice at our institution is that what's typically required for the Canada research chairs eventually flows out to the rest of our faculty members. If we're doing it for one group, we may as well do it for all of them.

Through the federal contractors program and the CRC program, we're asking institutions to do a pay equity analysis and remedy issues, or at least have a plan. Right now, through the federal contractors program, we need to have an equity hiring plan, and institutions are accountable for providing that. I think you could do a very similar thing in terms of a pay equity analysis here, where institutions have to provide a plan.

Mr. Larry Maguire: My question was whether there is a responsibility for the universities to do that themselves.

The Chair: Thank you for all the questions. That was a great line of questioning and great answers. If we're missing some details, please do send them over. I think we caught a couple of those.

Now we're going to Mr. Lametti for five minutes.

Hon. David Lametti: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have one question, and then I will turn it over to Dr. Jaczek.

Speaking from my perch as a full professor, I have gone through these evaluation processes. I salute my former colleague Kim Brooks for her ascendancy at Dal. She was an outstanding colleague, and she was outstanding to work with. I delight at her success.

In the various exercises we had at McGill—and I salute the exercises you have at both Dalhousie and Guelph—my own anecdotal experience is that what messed up the scale was at the other end. It was recruitment and retention. When we had, for whatever reason, male professors seeking work in other places—in the United States, for example—at much higher salaries, and the university moved to try to retain them, or when we tried to recruit for chairs and that sort of thing, this seemed to skew the salary with respect to men and jacked up their salaries.

Now, does your y-model—or any other model—take that into account, or are there more ad hoc measures that you try to implement in order to redress the kinds of imbalances that the top end of the process will have all the way through the process, particularly with respect to gender but also with respect to other equity-seeking groups?

● (1740)

Ms. Laura Neals: The y-value is just used when individuals are hired into the university, so it's not helpful in addressing that particular issue. We do have something called the anomalies fund. As faculty members progress through their careers, we do an analysis of faculty salaries—again, faculty by faculty. We create a regression line, and individuals who are below the regression line can submit to the anomalies fund for an adjustment. It's not a perfect mechanism to address the trends and issues you're speaking to, but it is one we do have embedded in our collective agreement.

There are measures along the way where faculty can put their hands up for salary adjustments if they are anomalously low.

The Chair: The next questioner is Ms. Jaczek.

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Thank you so much.

My question is for Ms. Naidoo-Harris.

Indira, it seems like just yesterday that we were seatmates in the Ontario legislature. It's great to see you. Thank you for all your good work now at the University of Guelph.

We're concentrating here on the issue of what the federal government can do. We've heard about the federal contractors initiative. We've heard about some assistance that has been given in terms of guidance and so on. Are there any other federal government initiatives that could help on the pay equity issue or anything you have seen in your experience at the University of Guelph?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: There are a number of areas if the federal government wants to move into things. Something I identified in my work as being a serious challenge when it comes to the biases we are seeing and to improving and minimizing the pay gaps and the equity gaps—and we touched a little bit on it—is how folks will move up through the pipeline.

What we do at the University of Guelph is focus a lot on training and education. I think that is one of the most important ways in which you can change a culture and also ensure that the folks who are working for you, especially the women and those from equity-deserving groups, get a fair chance at roles when their hiring is occurring. There needs to be more focus on education and training.

Universities are doing that, but I would encourage the federal government to perhaps look at ways in which they could encourage that kind of thing.

On another note, the Council of the European Union, for example, recently issued a new directive on gender pay gaps that requires companies to take action if they have a pay gap, let's say, of more than 5%. That's a big step. It is something that my research shows others are doing, and it is something that could be useful. If U.K. companies have more than 250 employees, they are required to report the gender pay gap and report what that is. They've been doing that for a number of years.

There are perhaps other mechanisms that we could bring into place, but my experience is that sometimes it's just a matter of putting in supports to change the culture, and that comes with education and ensuring that when hiring committees are out there.... In my own work, we do training to make people aware that women may not be published as often, and they may not be asked to do as many keynote addresses, and gaps in their CVs do not necessarily mean that they were just unemployed but may be because of child-rearing years, so there needs to be sensitivity around that.

The Chair: That's super. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Blanchette-Joncas, you have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you very much, Chair.

Ms. Neals, in its 2021–2026 strategic plan, Dalhousie University set a goal to enrich and diversify its faculty and staff, including actively seeking out the most accomplished and promising individuals, enhancing best practices in recruitment and retention, and offering competitive conditions that attract candidates.

Can you tell us specifically about the steps the University is taking to improve equity in the representation and compensation of university professors?

● (1745)

[*English*]

Ms. Laura Neals: I'll just stress that we have the y-value mechanism, which sets the floor, but what is true at Dalhousie and so many other institutions is that when we're hiring folks from equity-deserving groups, it's a wildly competitive market and often we're paying high salaries to compete with other institutions. For those groups, we're seeing higher salaries to attract those talented scholars.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you for your answer.

I want to make sure I understand. Based on your involvement at your own university, what can the Government of Canada do to advance pay equity among faculty?

[*English*]

Ms. Laura Neals: We've been chatting about this a lot at our institution. It's important to look at hiring practices for faculty but also at what we're doing earlier on in the pipeline for graduate students in general. I think scholarships and opportunities for graduate students, to make sure that we're graduating high volumes of scholars from equity-deserving groups, will be critical and important to filling those roles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you.

My last question has a broader scope. What do you expect of the federal government?

[*English*]

Ms. Laura Neals: I don't know that I have a lot of expectations of the federal government for that particular piece. I think the pay equity requirements relating to the federal contractors program and the CRCs make a lot of sense. I think dealing with targeted initiatives to bring students into universities makes more sense at the provincial level.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Bring us home, Mr. Cannings. You have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Thank you.

I'll stay with you, Ms. Neals. In your remarks, you touched on pensions and how the adjustments might have helped there. Could you expand on that and explain how there might be some residual differences with pensions and how you could help deal with that?

Ms. Laura Neals: Typically, with pension plans you'll encounter two types. There's the defined benefit, where the plan promises a set benefit, almost regardless of contribution. That is what we have at Dalhousie. Your pension payout is based on your best three years of earnings. The second type of pension plan is the defined contribution. Your pension payments are dictated by how much you've paid into the plan over the course of your career.

Because we have a defined benefit plan, which is based on your best three years of earnings, by adjusting female full professor salaries, if we caught them in the three years before retirement, their pension payout would be based on their higher salary. The impact of that pay equity gap over the course of their career, in terms of their pension payment, would be smaller. If we had the defined contribution plan, which is based on what they've been paying in over the course of their entire career, you can appreciate how the impact would be significant.

But I don't let us off the hook entirely, because of course someone's salary.... We have a pension plan, but folks are also investing in their own retirement savings. Their career earnings will impact how much they're able to put away for that.

So a defined benefit plan doesn't save the day, but it certainly helps.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Perhaps I'll turn to Ms. Naidoo-Harris and ask her as well about how we can help women after their career ends and they're in that pension period.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I think the support that women need continues past the time of their work period. I think we need to continue that pay transparency and examine what is happening in terms of pensions and the equity involved in the system. We're doing reviews right now, as you know, just to make sure that with our faculty and salaries there is pay equity. We have a compensation department in place at the University of Guelph. We're doing a number of pieces in that way.

I think you are right to identify that perhaps more needs to be looked at when it comes to pensions. As I'm sure you know, more and more faculty are being hired these days as sessionals or contract workers. This really puts a great burden on these individuals. Many of those folks who aren't being hired as tenured individuals are women, so we need to examine that.

● (1750)

The Chair: Thank you very much. I wanted to get the completed thought, and I appreciate your getting it in to us.

Laura Neals and Indira Naidoo-Harris, thank you both for being with us, for your preparation for being here, and going through the stress of dialing in and all that stuff. It was a very good session for the committee. I'm sure I speak on everybody's behalf. If there is any additional information that will help our study, please send it to us.

Before we adjourn, I want to give you a heads-up that we'll be continuing our study on the use of federal government research and development grants, funds, and contributions relating to China. The first part of today we'll be repeating on Wednesday, and then we will look at the draft report on the study of the Government of Canada's graduate scholarship and post-doctoral fellowship programs, to consider committee business items. There'll be a bit more work on that, and more work ahead.

Thank you, everybody, for your great participation.

The meeting is adjourned.