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Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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• (1105)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP)): I would like to begin by welcoming our witnesses, Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, Claudette Dumont-Smith, and Katharine Irmgaud.

Thank you so much for being here. We've waited a very long time to have the pleasure of your company here at the committee. We're all very grateful that we've been able to manage this and that you're able to accommodate us.

Before I begin, we have two quick pieces of business.

First, there is a letter on each member's spot indicating that the Honourable Rob Nicholson, the Honourable Vic Toews, and the Honourable Rona Ambrose will indeed be able to come to our committee. The clerk is still in discussion with their various offices, but they have promised to be here very soon with their officials. I can only conclude that persistence pays and that we will have a chance to talk with the ministers and staff in the very near future.

Second, we have unfortunately lost two valued members of our committee, but we have new members. But we've lost Ms. McLeod, so we'll need to elect a new vice-chair from the Conservative caucus. We can do that later today or we can do it on Tuesday. I'll let you think about that. We'll come back to it.

I've had a brief word with our witnesses. As I indicated at the beginning of the meeting, it has been a long time and we've looked forward with great anticipation to their coming to the committee. I've noted that only an hour has been set aside, but because officials from the ministry are not able to attend, I would suggest, with the permission of the committee, that we extend the hearing a little bit, for as long as it takes to answer all of the questions and to be able to converse fully with our witnesses.

Is that agreeable? Does the committee agree that we could extend a bit in order to make sure all questions are answered?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): I see some approval. Thank you very much.

We'll begin with whoever wishes to. This is a 10-minute round for opening statements.

Please go ahead.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell (President, Native Women's Association of Canada): *Meegwetch.*

[Witness speaks in Ojibway]

According to our traditions, I would also like to acknowledge the Algonquin Nation, on whose territory we are meeting today. I am from the Anishinabek Nation. I bring greetings from my people, who reside in northern Ontario and everywhere, and from all the members of the Native Women's Association of Canada. We are an organization of status and non-status Indians and Métis and Inuit members within our provincial and territorial organizations.

The Native Women's Association of Canada, or NWAC, works to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural, and political well-being of aboriginal women. NWAC believes that aboriginal women's human rights include the right to live free from violence.

Between 2005 and 2010, NWAC worked to research and document current and historical cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. NWAC worked closely with families who had lost loved ones to share our concern and support for their journey, document their stories, and identify gaps in justice and support systems. NWAC worked with service providers, academics, and all levels of government to improve the provision of services to women and their families, as well as influence policy decisions around violence and factors that affect vulnerability to violence, such as poverty, homelessness, education, economic opportunity, and access to justice.

In 2010, the publication of *What Their Stories Tell Us* by NWAC made public information about the nearly 600 known cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women that have occurred in every province and territory of Canada. While NWAC does not provide direct service to individuals, because of the knowledge gained through our work with families, service providers, and non-governmental organizations, we can add value as a pilot for others working through the system. Our research and policy work led to an expertise in jurisdictional issues and awareness of the programs and services that exist in communities. Where these services and programs do not exist or are not accessible to our women, we support families and communities to identify these gaps and work with us toward resolutions.

NWAC also developed tools and resources for families, those who work with families, and all Canadians, to raise awareness, support appropriate responses, and take action against the continued violence against aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

Unfortunately, NWAC has not yet been successful in securing funding to continue or maintain the work so successfully begun through the Sisters in Spirit initiative. However, we would like to continue in our working relationship with the current levels of government to ensure that we are able to continue this valuable work.

For the past 20 months we have worked diligently with senior department officials of the ministry responsible for the Status of Women and project staff to secure ongoing funding for the next phase of Sisters in Spirit. We continue to do so and look forward to some good results from this meeting.

Going back a little further, on March 3, 2010, NWAC felt energized and optimistic about the future work of Sisters in Spirit when we listened to the Speech from the Throne. The Governor General said:

Our Government will take additional action to address the disturbing number of unsolved cases of murdered and missing Aboriginal women. The Sisters in Spirit initiative has drawn particular attention to this pressing criminal justice priority.

On March 4, 2010, this hope was reaffirmed with a statement in the federal budget that said:

The Government is committed to ensuring that all women in Canada, including Aboriginal women, are safe and secure regardless of the community in which they live. Aboriginal women remain particularly vulnerable to violence and can face challenges in accessing the justice system, which should be protecting them.

Budget 2010 invests \$10 million over two years to address the disturbingly high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. Concrete actions will be taken to ensure that law enforcement and the justice system meet the needs of Aboriginal women and their families.

• (1110)

NWAC understood that the funds announced in the federal budget were not specific to our work and our organization, but we were optimistic that this indicated potential for a new partnership with the Department of Justice to share our expertise and continue our work.

NWAC is committed to working with the federal government, although we are aware that systemic change can be a slow process. While there is an ongoing and immediate need to provide resources to families and communities, our work has to help deliver the facts to decision-makers at all levels of government, policing organizations, and educators, working with police and service providers to make sure these needs are met.

NWAC understands there is a high demand for government funding and a wide variety of activities that require support, especially during times of economic uncertainty and fiscal restraint. Nevertheless, we feel that investing in prevention would be more cost effective over the long term, rather than only funding activities that respond to violence that has already occurred.

As an example, we can look to the costs of the justice system for the trial and sentencing of predatory offenders such as Robert William Pickton. NWAC notes that the cost of the Pickton case was approximately \$102 million, roughly 10 times greater than the \$10 million the government announced in the last budget to address the number of missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Although NWAC was recognized for the work of Sisters in Spirit, our tremendous accomplishments raising awareness of the issue and

the unique evidence prepared for decision-makers, we have found ourselves in an increasingly difficult position.

A contribution agreement was signed with Status of Women Canada in the amount of \$500,000, for Evidence to Action, phase one, to begin March 31, 2010. This agreement covered six months, ending September 30, 2010. Since September NWAC has worked with Status of Women to secure funding for the next phase of Evidence to Action. As of now, we haven't heard. Our latest proposal has gone to a review committee and we are awaiting the final decision.

The reality is that as of today we still do not have the contribution agreement, and consequently we have had to lay off staff within our Sisters in Spirit program. Despite what we believed were assurances that this project would continue, NWAC does not know if evidence to action will be funded in the new year.

However, I have been advised that this is not the case and there is word coming that it will be done. This statement was prepared prior to that.

While we are committed to finding new partnerships and applying for other sources of funding, we are limited by our new capacity. Concerns about the status of funding have become a focus of attention for our supporters and partners, and that has diverted effort from our goals of reducing violence affecting aboriginal women and girls as well as improving the response of service providers and government to the victims and families of victims.

The definition of eligible activities within the women's community fund has shifted, and this disallows the continuation of our work that has already begun. Over the past 10 months, for example, NWAC has been unable to enter new cases into the database or to maintain and update the current cases; however, this work is done on a volunteer basis by unpaid individuals.

We have had 20 new cases of homicide and 10 cases of missing women that have occurred and not yet been documented. NWAC has been made aware of a further number of historic cases in British Columbia that should be investigated and potentially included in our database.

• (1115)

NWAC is also concerned that the inability to obtain funding to maintain this database we have will remove our focus on the incidence of cases. It will also make it more difficult for NWAC to assess whether actions taken to reduce violence have actually resulted in fewer cases of missing or murdered aboriginal women and girls.

I know we're getting towards the end of the time, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Yes. Perhaps you could wrap up.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: Let me conclude by stating that the Native Women's Association of Canada wants to continue to address, with various departments within government, including Status of Women, the Department of Justice, and Public Safety, the alarmingly high rates of violence against aboriginal women and girls. We look forward to ongoing working relationships with these various ministries. The foundation of knowledge developed by NWAC and Sisters in Spirit has been recognized nationally and internationally. We are looking forward to working with these various departments to ensure that we address this issue of violence against our women in Canada. We hope that with the federal government, by this new recognition that I've just been made aware of, we will be able to continue in the next little while to work together to deal with this violence and to work with our families.

In closing, all I want to say is that I am looking forward to a good working relationship with the government and with the various departments that deal with justice, with issues of safety, with security, and with the human rights of all people in Canada.

I forgot to introduce my colleagues here. I'd like to introduce Claudette Dumont-Smith, executive director of the Native Women's Association of Canada, and Katharine Inngaut, our current director of Sisters in Spirit. She's a little bit lonely in her department, but she's still there working.

Meegwetch. Thank you for listening.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): *Meegwetch*, Madam Corbiere Lavell. We appreciate your words of wisdom.

Now we'll begin a seven-minute round with Ms. Simson, please.

Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I welcome all the witnesses. We're actually honoured to have you here.

In listening to your opening remarks...this committee did some work across Canada. We travelled across Canada, and I was fortunate enough to be able to participate for a couple of days. I'm getting a bit of a disturbing trend in terms of the commentary with respect to the funding. It isn't even so much the amount of the funding; it's that specific programs are being funded, and organizations are constantly having to spend an inordinate number of hours and days and weeks applying for funding, tweaking programs, and sitting around biting their nails to see if they get it.

Now, I heard this time and time again, so I'd like to find out from you, is that the case?

• (1120)

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: Could I ask my executive director to answer this? They deal with the actual project and budget submissions.

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith (Executive Director, Native Women's Association of Canada): I would have to agree that, yes, we do. NWAC is more project-based. We get project-based funding to operate. Yes, every year we do have to, as you mentioned, tweak our proposals to meet the certain criteria put out by various government departments. Status of Women is one government department where we have to do that as well.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: How much input do you get into what has to be tweaked? What the government may ask for in terms of criteria may or may not be in the best interests of the community. So is there any kind of dialogue before they look for a change in criteria?

I do understand the "never, never, never" plan of funding, and that things change, but how much dialogue is there?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: I've been involved in the aboriginal health field for many years. I've worked with government departments other than Health Canada, the Status of Women being one. To my knowledge, and I have 30 years under my belt, I don't recall any government department coming to ask an aboriginal organization how they should set up their criteria.

I imagine they base it on research they have collected or knowledge they have on a global perspective. Then the organizations such as NWAC, or other organizations where I've worked, will send out a request for proposals, or what have you, and you have to meet specific criteria.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Again, if you're not consulted it may not be the most effective thing, and I'm not trying to put you on the spot. You may have some input into how the money could be used and maybe produce a better outcome. Really, we should be adjudicating programs on outcome and not necessarily on how much we're investing in them.

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: I'm not on that side—I'm on the other side—so I wouldn't know. I couldn't answer 100% on how those criteria that filter down to the aboriginal organizations are developed at the national level, but I think Ms. Lavell has something to say about that.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: I would like to take a step back and share with you that we aboriginal women across Canada recognize the importance of the advocacy work we have been doing with our families and compiling all this information. We were able to do this because we had that close connection and there wasn't the suspicion or fear that the information they were sharing would be misused. We were able to collect all that data and set up the database we now have in place.

When our funding came to an end in March of last year, we thought we would be able to continue this important work. Obviously we weren't able to reach all those women victims at the community level, and we felt this was ongoing important work. However, when we were working with Status of Women Canada, we understood these new criteria you're talking about were in place. The new criteria focus on public education, community awareness, and community responsiveness, which did not fit into the ongoing work we had been doing under the Sisters in Spirit program. We accepted that and said those new areas were equally important.

However, we had hoped to be able to continue that work with the families and the justice departments to gather that information. Obviously we feel it would have enhanced their work in finding unsolved murders and working for missing and murdered aboriginal women. We honestly believed we would be crucial in bringing that about. So there was that discrepancy.

• (1125)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): You have about 45 seconds.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Notwithstanding the program changes, how adversely is it going to affect the funding? There is the domino effect.

I'm referring to an article I read just this week and a quote by Claudette Dumont-Smith with respect to the impact programs can have on women and the inordinate percentage of aboriginal women who are incarcerated in federal penitentiaries. Obviously incarcerating them has an impact in terms of tax dollars. I'm curious with this shift, and rolling money here and there, if you see it as detrimental, or how this is going to impact—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): You're out of time, but I hope you will be able to answer that later.

Madame Demers, for seven minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. Corbiere Lavell, Ms. Dumont-Smith and Ms. Ingaug, thank you very much for being here this morning. Like my colleague, I was also on the committee's tour. I had the chance to go on most of the tour. We realized that, especially in western Canada, racism and prejudice are very prevalent in major centres, which came as quite a shock to me. We asked ourselves a lot of questions as to why this racism was so systemic. For example, why is there so much racism against aboriginals and why are they abandoned in major centres, why is there so much racism even in centres where they make up the majority, such as Prince Albert and Williams Lake?

We have heard a lot of people say that there is so much violence against women because men no longer have an identity, or recognition as aboriginal men. They have no work. There is a lot of poverty and a lot of people in close quarters in dwellings that are too small and that house too many people. If we want to heal the battered women, we must take care of the whole family. We must heal the men, the women who are victims and also the children.

How can we get to the big picture of the problem? I feel that the aboriginal population is not the only one affected by this issue. The white population also has to be educated. White people have to understand that aboriginals have a right to exist. They have a right to live, to be happy, to have jobs, just like everyone living on the territory because they were there before all of us. How can we get this message across?

[English]

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: *Meegwetch.*

I appreciate your question, because it is very broad, and we have to address it from your part as the government and from our part as members of our community.

I will start with our responsibility.

I know that right now, because of the impact of the residential schools and the abuse of drugs and alcohol, it has made this drastic change within our traditional way of living with each other and the traditional roles we had. Prior to all this, I know—and I've been advised by our elders in our community, and I've seen it myself with my grandmothers and their role within the family—that women and men had mutual respect for each other, because we all had roles, and roles for survival. Children were brought into the world as gifts from the Creator, and everyone within that community worked to ensure that these young people were brought up in a good way, according to our traditions, with that respect, with that balance and that harmony, and that ongoing caring for each other.

That was there; however, as I said, that has broken down. Consequently, we are now dealing with that loss of dignity, that loss of identity, in a lot of cases, where we're seeing a lot of this violence, and as you all know, many studies have shown that.

One of the biggest factors right now is poverty and the lack of housing, which exaggerates and brings this about within our communities. Also, when you bring that to the urban centres, the same situation exists. However, in the urban centres, in order for families, and especially for our single women, who may have children and want to provide for those children...the lack of funds necessitates that if they have no other choice, they go out onto the street, bringing about this very evident fact that they're there...they bump up against the law, so they may get put in jail. The other people who live in these communities then see them, because they're obviously so evident, and this creates more of that racism and that lack of understanding, and there's no communication available there.

However, as organizations, and especially as women's provincial and territorial member organizations across Canada, we are seeking to address this, to raise that communication with members at the community level, and this will be at the provincial level with service providers, as well as with the education system. We are working in all those areas to bring about that communication, because obviously we do not like to see this happen.

In this day and age, Canada is a good place to live. We have many people coming to Canada, wanting to be part of Canada, and we want to ensure it's a good, healthy, and safe place for all of us who live here.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: But we have seen that, in a number of provinces, social services and police forces—but social services in particular—are following the same patterns as residential schools. They are taking the children away from their families and bringing them outside for very long periods of time. The parents no longer have access to their children and the children no longer have access to their families or their extended families.

I am afraid the same thing is going to happen. If the children are not with their families, they will no longer be taught their traditions and values. In 20 years, we will again have thousands more children who will not have learned the traditions and values of their culture. They will be just as lost and will have a hard time too.

[English]

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: One of the key tools for promoting racism is the dehumanizing of people. I think the importance of the Sisters in Spirit research that's been done is to present both a quantitative and a qualitative...to bring the stories of the women and girls to life so that you can see, "Hey, they like cocoa puffs, and I also like cocoa puffs", to bring that down to a basic level where you start to relate to these women and these girls who have gone missing or have been murdered.

As we've seen in a lot of the child welfare system, poverty seems to be a crime. And it's not a lack of love; it's a lack of resources. If you bring it down through that poverty line, you can see that this type of discrimination has been present through policies since laws were written in Canada.

We're working with victim services; we're working with the police; we're working to change views and perceptions of our aboriginal people; we're working with the community to start working in conjunction with victim services instead of against. This work is ongoing, but it's definitely perceptions, and a PR campaign has to happen.

• (1135)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you.

Madam Boucher, for seven minutes, please.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good morning, ladies, and welcome. I am really happy that you came here. Thank you for the wonderful work that you do with aboriginal women. It is really appreciated. Unfortunately, I was not able to go on the tour because I had some personal problems, but I listened carefully to the members of the committee who were able to travel and see first hand your reality and were inspired by what you told them.

As white women, we often don't live your reality and we fail to understand it. We are perhaps less informed and we perhaps have a distorted idea of who you really are. Earlier, you talked at length about funding and I would like you to explain something to me.

When you entered the data and did all that work, who did you share it with? Are you partners with the RCMP, Peacekeepers or aboriginal police forces? Do you share the information with the departments you want funding from? Is this database available to us, to the departments, such as Status of Women Canada or the Department of Justice? Are these partners you share this information with?

[English]

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: The five years that we've spent working on Sisters in Spirit has not only been a journey to collect data but also to legitimize our research. Going hand in hand with Stats Canada to confirm our methodology and our research procedures has

helped to justify our own feelings that we knew we had to begin with that this work is important, that it's filling a gap in the system, that this type of information hasn't been collected in this way or hasn't been used well. We're now at the cusp where people are actually starting to come to us and want to work with us. So we are starting memorandums of understanding for information sharing with the OPP, with the Manitoba Action Group on Exploited and Vulnerable Women, and with the national RCMP database as well.

In terms of the issues we have around the privacy about the databases, because we had consent forms from families, we'll have to go back to the families and make sure they're okay with sharing that type of information. What we do instead is every year we come out with our research report, telling of the newest trends that we have seen and the confirmation of what we can do with that data without releasing private information.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You have received some funding from the Native Women's Association of Canada for a major initiative to gather information and set up databases. What funding have you received over the past five years? What significant measures came out of this major project?

[English]

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: We've received \$1 million a year for five years through Status of Women and through government approval. That's all the money we've garnered for this work.

As for the concrete actions we've taken, the Evidence to Action from March 31, 2010, to September 30, 2010, was also through the Women's Community Fund, which was to act as bridge funding. So in total, we've had \$5.5 million to date.

The concrete actions we have taken include actually building that network of supporters and partnerships between families and between sister organizations, and bringing together people on this issue of anti-violence against aboriginal women. We've gone out in the media, and we've collected all these voices. We've had vigils every single year for the last five years. We've had 84 as of last October 4.

So it's becoming an issue that we're proud people are taking on for themselves, and that's empowering women and families themselves to start their own organizations and associations. We try to hold family gatherings every year as well, and those bring a measure of support to the families they didn't know they had. It's very hard going back to your home community if you're the only one, if you feel there's no one you can talk to.

So in even just the four years of having family gatherings, I know of two family members who have taken the issue on and who have come far enough along in their healing journey to start speaking out for others. We're very proud to help support those family members and the efforts they make in their own communities. So I think just by inspiring, we've done a lot within the community by helping and supporting families.

● (1140)

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: Could I just make one more comment on the positive results of the Sisters in Spirit funding that has taken place? We now have developed working relationships with various provincial policing organizations. For example, in its database, the OPP, the Ontario Provincial Police, had only two cases of aboriginal women who were missing or murdered, but according to our data there were 70. That's a big discrepancy. So we will be able to work together to enable the provincial policing organizations to do their work in a better way. I'm sure there will be a lot of other areas in which we will be able to assist them.

As well, the other big area is to share the information about the missing women out there on the streets, because we have models of tracking and finding from some cases in which they have been brought back. We have also been able to gather that kind of information.

So the opportunities are there to recognize this and to stop it. There are many homicide cases as well that haven't been solved, and we have been able to assist them in those.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathyssen): Thank you very much.

Unfortunately, *c'est tout*.

I will now be undertaking the questioning for the New Democratic Party, for seven minutes, and I would like to say welcome once again.

I'd like to pick up on Madam Simson's very good question regarding the article written by a member of Elizabeth Fry relating to the excessive incarceration of aboriginal, Métis, and Inuit women. According to the article, 30% of the female prison population is aboriginal, and 30% of those are experiencing issues with mental illness. I believe the article said that in terms of incarcerations, this represented an increase of 90% since about 2001.

I believe Madam's question was in regard to the cost to the women and their families and the broader community. I'd like to give you the opportunity to speak to that.

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: Yes, there was an article put out in response to a study that was carried out by Ms. Mann, I think, and it did identify what you just said, that a disproportionate number of aboriginal women are incarcerated.

Although we haven't done any work in this area for quite a few years, we do know that aboriginal women have serious mental health problems. We do know there are no specific programs—not that we're aware of anyway—to address their mental health issues. We also know and believe that general health programs do not always respond to the specific needs of aboriginal women. Many of our aboriginal women will respond to culturally appropriate healers, or what have you. Especially when it comes to mental health issues,

you can't apply the same set of tests or the same therapies when it comes to aboriginal women.

We're hoping that article will encourage the government maybe to approach us because we're always ready to work with the government to improve the health and well-being of our aboriginal women. Our arms are open on this issue to work with them to develop some programs that will really meet the needs of the incarcerated women.

I'm sure that the more we delve into this issue we'll find a lot of very bad scenarios, whereby a lot of these aboriginal women are probably in isolation. They're not connected to their families and they're not connected to the people in their communities. So I think it's an issue that has to come to the fore and has to be addressed.

And I reiterate that NWAC would be more than willing to work with the departments on this issue.

● (1145)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathyssen): Does the approach have to come from government? Would you be able to go to government and say you need support programming help in this area?

I also wonder, with regard to the impact of the loss of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, if that works into this.

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: I forgot to mention that we are delving into the issue from another angle. We've received some funds through Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to look at it from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission aspect. We are just beginning. We have hired someone to look into where aboriginal women are incarcerated, so we're going to have an exact number, although I think the Mann study will help us on that.

Once we locate these women, we're going to have interviews with them to find out if they have accessed the funds that were available to other residential school victims, because probably some of them did attend residential schools and did not apply for the funds that have been available to other residential school students.

That will be one way that will give us an opening. And I'm sure when we carry out this work over the next year that a lot of the issues that were brought up in this article will help NWAC to pursue work on the issue of incarcerated aboriginal women. I know health will be one of the concerns that will be brought forward.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: I would just like to make one final comment. It is on the lack of resources to get legal assistance. This is perpetuating that high number of our women who are incarcerated because they cannot get a lawyer. When they go to court, they obviously get the strictest sentence. If they had lawyers, they possibly would not receive this kind of sentence.

So there they are, then, within these prisons, and for a longer period of time, and where, because of lack of communication and I guess the cutbacks, they're not able to get this culturally relevant programming that should be in place to help them deal with the system while they're incarcerated. On top of all of that, their children have been taken away, and they have no resources and possibly no way of even finding out or knowing where they are.

This is all compounding for them, so no wonder they're having mental issues. I would be devastated if I had to go through something like that. You're dealing with what may be a legitimate case against you, or maybe not. That's the issue. If our women were able to get some legal resources, I don't think we'd have as many in there.

Another issue is poverty. They're there because they don't have the money and they have to provide...and I don't think that can be applied to other Canadian women like it can to our women. We have younger women with many children who are having to deal with this.

• (1150)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Now we'll have a five-minute round. We're back to the Liberals.

Mr. Dosanjh.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I'm going to ask you two questions. Then you can respond.

One is a general question. Towards the end of your remarks, Ms. Lavell, you said that one is not sure whether the actions taken so far have reduced the level of violence against aboriginal women—or words to that effect. I want you to expand on that and tell me what you think.

The other issue is with respect to the British Columbia situation and the Oppal commission. You may have made a presentation to the commission. They're going around doing hearings. You might want to tell the committee what you've said if you have made representations, or you might want to tell us anyway.

I am slightly familiar with the situation because I was the Attorney General who first posted the \$100,000 reward for information on the missing women, back in 1997 or 1998—I can't remember—and we brought in the *America's Most Wanted* show to publicize that situation.

Perhaps you can respond to both of the concerns I've raised with you.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: I'll ask Katharine to deal with the first one.

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: One of the methods of evaluation that we use is our research, and if research and advocacy are not funded, then I'm not sure how we can evaluate properly. I think research is a very big umbrella. A blanket statement to say that you won't fund research or advocacy means that our methods of evaluation are very limited. I'm not sure how we can proceed to see how well our activities are doing in the community if we're not able to go back and review them.

For the Oppal commission, we did go to the hearings on January 31. We made a presentation, or our bid, basically, to stand, to make a presentation during the commission. That would be to speak to the B.C. numbers that we have collected and the trends of violence that we've seen over the course of time.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: We're hoping that at the Oppal commission we'll be able to share the knowledge and the expertise that we have in other parts of Canada, to bring that to the commission, so they can address how to deal with the violence in British Columbia.

Having said that, I'll say that we are doing this because we believe in it and it is our mandate from our membership; however, as the president, I've been advised that we do not qualify for funding to be able to work at the B.C. Oppal commission because we're a national organization. So this is putting us in somewhat of a quandary, but we do believe that—

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Who actually said to you that you're not qualified because you're a national organization?

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: It's in the criteria of the Oppal commission.

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: It has changed quite a bit. I think their parameters are open for interpretation, and I think that's where we're looking to this hearing to have those certain positions clarified.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Thank you.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): My apologies. I was caught up in another event.

I have lots of questions, but my two major questions.... I travelled in western Canada with the committee. What we saw was extraordinary, and what we heard was extraordinary, and we will be talking about it, reporting on it. And the systemic racism was something that just overwhelmed us.

One of the issues that came out in the hearings—and I'm picking up on Michelle and Irene's comments—was the number of women who were incarcerated, who were incarcerated in fact because they were victims of violence and responded in any one of a number of ways.

I've since had conversations with the Elizabeth Fry Society, and I'm hoping it will come before the committee. It has cited cases where access to legal aid, as you'd talked about, and various plea bargaining processes prevailed there.

Have you done any work on this particular area, that women who are in turn abused, respond, and then are incarcerated?

• (1155)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Very quickly, please.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: I don't believe we've done any specific work in that area.

However, we do know, just from hearing from our families in circumstances there, and from our other provincial organizations, that this definitely is what happens, because our women do not have those resources, so their voices don't get heard. Their side of the actual incident is not heard. And sometimes you get a language communication barrier and a reluctance, oftentimes, because of the shame that's involved in sharing in a court what actually happened. So our women do get incarcerated.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you.

Madam Cadman, please.

Ms. Dona Cadman (Surrey North, CPC): Thank you very much, ladies.

I have a little bit of a different question to ask. I would like to know this. Who do you think is violating your women? I would tend to think that it would be more non-white, because of the association between partners.

Do you have any men's programs to stop it—to help your men learn not to hit, not to drink, to become good men? Do you have programs like that?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: The short answer is no.

We're the Native Women's Association of Canada, and we do believe in the family and keeping the family intact. We don't have money for male-oriented programs. We barely have enough funding for female-oriented programs. So, no, we don't.

About the issue of who abuses the women, do we have any stats on that?

I know in the domestic violence situation that the rates are higher. But again, we need new data on that. The data is getting old, so there should be new studies to determine if all the actions that were done to raise the awareness of domestic violence in the eighties and the nineties have been effective. I think it's time we revisited that and did new research on that.

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: Aboriginal women and girls are more likely to be victims of stranger or acquaintance violence than non-aboriginal women. If we're talking in the realm of domestic violence, I think we'll have to look at those domestic partnerships. But if we're talking about missing and murdered aboriginal women, in terms of spontaneous violence that happens against them, or targeted violence, then I think we have to look at the entire population and the ideas in a lot of people's minds that women are disposable or aboriginal women are the lowest of the low.

I think there are definitely similarities between the two approaches, but they're very different issues, stranger or acquaintance violence versus domestic violence.

Ms. Dona Cadman: I think all of you women's groups should gather together, pick a leader, and start fighting. Join together across the nation and become one. I don't know if you can do it, but I think you'd become a very strong organization if you could do that. It would be amazing.

I'd like to give my remaining time to Mr. Armstrong, please.

• (1200)

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Thank you. I appreciate your submission today. I'm not a usual participant on this committee, but I'm very glad I'm here today.

Before I was a member of Parliament I was an elementary school principal. The elementary school where I was principal had a significant first nations population. In fact, all of the first nations elementary school children in our community came to the school where I was the administrator.

In the first year that our school opened we had a very tragic event. A mother who was a sex trade worker was murdered and her body

was thrown down a stairwell. I had her two little boys in the school—one was seven and one was nine—and we had to put a lot of effort into dealing with them.

In the \$10 million that was announced last October, there are several programs that people can tap into. I'm wondering if your organization has tapped into them. I'm just going to briefly mention some of them.

There's one for school and community-based projects, to the tune of \$1 million, through the Department of Justice. There's the victims fund that will be added to the Department of Justice victims fund. It will help the western provinces with the highest instances of this develop and adapt victims services for aboriginal people. There are community safety plans. The Department of Public Safety is providing \$1.5 million over two years for aboriginal groups to develop and carry out community safety plans to help support these women, and probably keep them out of harm's way in the first place.

There are also awareness materials that different communities can use. They are very educational in nature. There is \$850,000 for aboriginal educational groups working with aboriginal groups.

I know after reading this I'll go home to my community and my first nations band to make sure they're aware of these programs. But I'm wondering if your group has explored some of these programs and made application to them to try to provide education and support before these crimes even take place.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Again, please be very quick.

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: We are working with the Department of Justice on the victims fund. I have a meeting with them at 1:30 today, so I'm very excited about continuing that process with them for our proposals.

I know that the victims fund is up for renewal in March as a funding program. Our funding with them could be contingent on them also getting funding. We're all in this domino effect right now for those programs.

I also want to say that it's not enough just to have services available; the right kinds of services have to be accommodated. I met a family member who was struggling to make ends meet. She went to victims services to try to find help to support her kids, but it wasn't quick enough. The paperwork didn't go through quickly enough, and her children were taken away. She was then offered a program that was basically a cooking class on how to feed her kids healthy meals. It was too little too late and not appropriate for her needs. But that's what was available and what they were able to offer.

We have to be very cognizant of providing services that are culturally appropriate and relevant in a timely manner. That's the angle we're trying to move toward when we talk about the concrete actions we're hoping to take.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you.

Monsieur Desnoyers.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair. I welcome the witnesses.

First, tell me a bit about the database that you continue to maintain, the database created by Sisters In Spirit? This database serves as a major anchor for the current situation on missing women across Canada, and especially missing aboriginal women.

Just last week, another woman disappeared in Vancouver. It seems that this is an ongoing problem and will stay that way because we are not putting money in the right place. From listening to you today, it seems to me that things are straightforward. The government should just listen to you and then say what should be done and how it should be done. A number of organizations like you have already said that.

Could you first tell me about the database and its importance for the future? The second question is more specific. You raised various issues, such as prevention and protection, and you talked about the \$10 million from the Conservative government. We don't seem to know where that money went. But it doesn't look like the money was used to help aboriginal women. So could you also tell me about that?

• (1205)

[English]

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: As for the database, I agree that it's a very important piece of our work. When I first started, I was working directly on the database. That was my main priority.

The future of the database will be important for many different reasons. We would like to do other data runs on the information we have. We want to expand certain areas. We find that we have more suspects for each crime. It's not just one person acting against another. It's groups of people who might commit a crime against one person. So we need to expand the parameters of the 250 variables that we currently have.

We'd also like to run mapping for jurisdictions as well. Sometimes across jurisdictions we need to see where things are happening, where things come up, and to map out whether it's an overlap of jurisdiction or a complete lack of jurisdiction. We'd also like to start running a more extensive time series analysis on the data.

So when we talk about families' needs, it's not just eligibility for one year. Sometimes there's eligibility for victims services only if a crime has been committed. Being "missing" is not a crime, so a lot of family members are not able to access victims services. Some jurisdictions don't offer victims services unless a charge has been laid. Well, charges are often not laid in cases of aboriginal women and girls.

I'll leave the talk about the \$10 million to my colleagues here.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: In regard to the \$10 million and the criteria, it was our understanding that while we would not necessarily as an organization get actual funding from this allocation, we would be in a position of working with the various ministries, the departments of justice, public security, and status of women, to be able to work with our provincial and territorial member organizations across Canada for whom we are responsible. We work on their behalf.

Granted, although the ones in the prairies, from Manitoba to B.C., will be able to access that community relationship fund, we will not necessarily be in that position. However, I do understand that there

are other funds that, as a national organization working with our provincial groups, we will be able to explore, and develop a working relationship within that criteria. That hasn't been ironed out yet, but we are open to working with them.

It is important that we work with our community members at the community level. We have that trust and we have that experience working in this area, dealing with preventing violence especially, and dealing with missing young women.

As you just said, there were just two more missing in British Columbia. It's ongoing.

The various policing jurisdictions in the provinces across Canada, at the Council of the Federation, have made this one of their priorities. We are working with them closely on that as well. As was pointed out, Manitoba is one of the leaders within that area.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathyssen): *Pardon, mais c'est tout.*

I would like to ask a couple of questions.

Madam Lavell, you've mentioned two or three times the reality of poverty, and the poverty that aboriginal women face. In this list of funding through Justice Canada, there are numbers and there are short descriptors, but what I'm concerned about is the fact that there's no mention of the practical things. I believe you called them "tools". I'd like you to expand on that.

I'm thinking in terms of affordable housing, and more shelters for women who are suffering abuse; the education and training that can help women get out of that poverty cycle; child care, so that they can get training and they can find work; and addiction programs and prevention programs. All of these seem to experience nothing but funding constraints.

I wondered if you could comment on that.

• (1210)

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: All I can say is that you are absolutely correct. Those kinds of funds, which would be able to assist and help our women at the community level, are not available, or they're very limited. When you, as a single parent or as a young woman, want to access these funds, even at the community level within your own community, because of restrictions and everything you're not eligible for them. So it creates many problems. And of course, as you know, within our actual communities on reserves across Canada, there is a terrible lack of housing and there are many health issues, which cause all these other relationships in terms of the lack of identity, the lack of our traditional roles, and that awareness. We have our elders within our various nations who are striving and working on this and are trying to do the best they can. That is ongoing.

However, as aboriginal women, we are not able to access any of those kinds of resources. But we are doing the best we can with the limited resources. Our grandmothers and our teachers.... As a former teacher, a retired teacher, I know the importance of getting a good education so that you are able to go out and provide for your family. That is crucial, and as NWAC, we provide training programs to assist our women to get more training. If they haven't finished high school, perhaps we can help them to do that or to get a specific kind of training.

According to statistics, our women have a higher number of successes within those areas. It's not that they don't want to. It's the lack of resources, as you said, to deal with special needs, such as child care. If you have two or three children at home, how can you be expected to pursue a college program? Those kinds of things are important. And we need to deal with them to stop all those other areas, such as violence, and I guess discrimination as well—this is where that comes in—and the racism that goes along with it.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathyssen): In our travels, the committee heard from a number of organizations and NGOs that are working on the ground trying to make a difference in the lives of women and children in the community. Over and over again we heard that the funding was piecemeal. They may be given a little bit of money over a very short period of time to deliver a program. That program would just be up and running and may have achieved a real level of success, but the funding isn't continued. Once the program ends, it is done, and they are left scrambling to find something else. And the something else may not necessarily fit with the needs of the community.

Now, you've mentioned that you're still waiting to hear about NWAC funding.

Also, I believe, Ms. Irngaut, that you are meeting today with the Department of Justice to determine how the fund will evolve or continue. It seems to me that all of this is up in the air. This is February, and these things come to fruition at the end of March. How do you cope? How do you manage? How will you keep your database up and running? Is that a concern?

Could you expand on that?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: That is always an issue with many departments. We do get funding at the tail end, at the near end, of the fiscal year, and we have to scramble and carry out the work as best we can. I'm sure that if there were something else in place whereby funding would be assured in April, May, or June, we could have a better-quality product at the end. You know, we're hurrying and scurrying to do work in three months that should have been carried out over a year. As far as I know, that's the way things have happened.

You asked another question.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathyssen): I'll come back to it in my next round. I'm out of time. I'm assuming that core funding would be a....

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: Oh, you were talking about....

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathyssen): I'll come back.

We'll go to Ms. Grewal, please.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for their time. All of us appreciate it. I'm really very thankful that you are sharing your insights with us.

Violence against women is a very serious issue. All of us know that it's a very serious problem. But we could just as easily be dealing with violence against immigrant communities as well. Unfortunately, it's a very complicated problem, with no easy solution at all.

My question is very simple. Could you offer some solutions, some questions, if you have any, so that the government can deal with this problem?

• (1215)

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: What I find, and this is not new, is that the governments operate in silos. You have one government department addressing one part of the issue and another part of the government addressing another issue, and they don't all come together in unison to address an issue.

As long as that exists, I think we're going to have this silo approach. We won't have this comprehensive solution where you can look at all aspects—at housing, at education, at poverty.

Everything is piecemeal and everything is done on a project basis. It's not ongoing. I think therein lies the solution: the different departments have to come together when they're addressing an issue to a particular group and they have to address it in a holistic, comprehensive manner. I've always held to that belief, and I think until that happens, the status quo will remain, for not only violence but for all issues.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Do you have any thoughts on how the government can solve—

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: Well, I think when you have a Department of Indian and Northern Affairs...maybe they can take the lead. They can have the Status of Women at the table, they can have Health Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing, Education, and they can address it as a whole. I think oftentimes one department doesn't seem to know what the other department is doing.

As well, there's the whole interjurisdictional issue. Education is provincial, and first nations education falls under federal...so there are a lot of hurdles.

Everybody talks about these hurdles at meeting after meeting. As I said, I have 30 years' experience, and we're always sitting at the table talking about the hurdles. But the hurdles are not being addressed—in my mind, anyway.

We're looking at issues piecemeal. Everybody is trying to do the correct thing, but will we advance? Maybe we are advancing, but it's at a very, very slow pace.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Since I think 2007, through Status of Women Canada, about 150 projects, totalling about \$28.7 million, have been given to eliminate violence against women. We are supporting prevention, providing shelters on reserves, and funding victims' services.

We also want to ensure the justice system meets the needs of aboriginal women and their families. Are there any legal reforms or legislative changes you can suggest?

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: I'm not a lawyer, but I know there are things that are being addressed with Bill C-3. There was a lot of inter-family conflict, and I think that was addressed and it's moving forward.

I don't know if that's what you're referring to. Maybe Kat can add to this.

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: One example we have worked towards within the legal system is the idea of next of kin. A lot of the issues we deal with through Sisters in Spirit are the intergenerational impacts. When a woman or a girl is killed, what happens to her children? They are often taken care of by their grandparents, but the grandparents sometimes aren't considered next of kin; sometimes it is the suspect who is currently in the system and only they are able to access victim services.

The idea of who is eligible to take care of the children has to be more flexible and more reflective of the ways families are structured in aboriginal communities, especially if aboriginal women and families are among the highest wanting to access victim services.

So it's to change the view of the family, depending on the family.
● (1220)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you very much.

Now a three-minute round. I will ask folks to be concise and succinct.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: I don't know that I can be precise and succinct.

I want to go back to the issue of data. In the government's announcement, \$4 million is going to the RCMP to collect data. What will happen to the data you have collected? Will it be incorporated into it? Will they be collecting it all over again? Who will house it?

I guess my question, which is an overriding question for me, is how are you keeping Sisters in Spirit alive?

I know that everywhere I go—and I've been out a fair bit in the country—whether it's police forces, women's organizations, women working on the ground, Sisters in Spirit is that vision and pinnacle to which they direct their concerns and efforts.

So it's the data and how you are keeping Sisters in Spirit alive—in a minute.

I will stop there.

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: For the database we are working—oh, sorry.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: I would just like to make a few comments.

I appreciate your question because it brings exactly the dilemma that we are in. Because of the five years of work that we did through our organization, Sisters in Spirit stands for an initiative that our

women right across Canada recognize, and not only our women but other community organizations, and also the various policing forces. They recognize it for work that was needed, relevant, and well done, and work they would not have been able to do. I think that's one of the key things. The information that we were able to gather...the individual RCMP or police forces would not have been able to get that cooperation from the families or from our communities.

Having said that, I don't believe we have been approached yet by the RCMP—I could be corrected—on how to work on the information that we have. We're still open to that. Obviously we want to ensure that there are good and positive initiatives in place to stop this violence that is taking place, and also to recognize that this movement right now, Sisters in Spirit, is not going to go away. It's not going to disappear. It's national and it's even going international. Having said that, right now we have our women who are volunteering to work on this initiative because they believe in it so strongly, and we believe in it, too.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you.

We're going to have a question from Madame Boucher.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I was listening to you just now and I think what you are telling us is very interesting. Unfortunately, as I said earlier, we are not often called upon to see the reality of aboriginal women. We are familiar with it because we are parliamentarians. But many people don't know how isolated you are.

Does the Native Women's Association of Canada work with other aboriginal organizations? Earlier, I was wondering about the missing and murdered aboriginal women. I am not necessarily talking about the police forces, but do you work with other aboriginal organizations that help you to collect these data and information?

● (1225)

[English]

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: We're the voices of families and we've come from the grassroots level. We recognize all the grassroots organizations that have come together to help us with the Sisters in Spirit movement in general. Specifically, one that instantly comes to mind is Walk4Justice out in Vancouver. Working with these organizations to bring this approach has been invaluable to the work that we've done. What we know that's isolating about our communities is the rural aspect and the infrastructure that's not there to connect us.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: I was just going to say that within a very recent time I have been able to speak to the grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations. We have agreed to work on dealing with stopping violence against aboriginal women and dealing with the missing and murdered women. So we have developed that collaborative approach on this, and it's just beginning, but we look forward to broadening that and making it work. I believe they also have a specific chief who has been assigned to work with the RCMP. That perhaps will also assist us.

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: I'll also just throw in that social networking sites have been invaluable to us as well. It's free. It's cheap. News travels fast in communities, so we hear pretty quickly when events are happening in the communities that we would need to add to our database.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): We're at three minutes. I'm so sorry.

Madam Demers, please, you have three minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: During the time Sisters In Spirit compiled information for your database, from 2005 to 2010 that is, you provided us with an outstanding report on over 500 missing and murdered women.

The Vancouver RCMP did a similar study and created a database on the aboriginal women that disappeared along the highway of tears. That's just 18 cases. And it was done with resources far more substantial than those of Sisters In Spirit and with amounts of money much larger than what Sisters In Spirit had.

How do you explain the fact that now you no longer receive the support to keep your database going, that you cannot continue to update and maintain it if you don't have the money to do so? And this database is so crucial to shedding light on the truth and finding out what is going on.

[English]

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: Yes, I think it's the fact that we're not considered direct service delivery providers, and we're not actually conducting investigations into these cases. We're only cataloguing in a kind of survey the cases that have happened. We do talk with family members and potentially talk with the police officer who is assigned to the case, but we have no power to influence how investigations get started in that method.

I am happy to say that when we did work with the Manitoba action group, we were in touch with one of the key starters of the Highway of Tears. He is also very passionate about data and is encouraging of our database, because we want to do this sharing of information.

I think the simplest explanation I can give is this. One, we're not funded for research, and that is out of our control; two, we're not direct service delivery providers, although I think some experts in victim services could counteract that and say that we are, through the work we've done with families in bringing them together. That is a service in a way, but we're not collecting money in the sense of direct services to families.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: I would like to add that we have provincial and territorial member organizations in every province,

which would have that opportunity and the mandate to work with the various police forces. We would be the conduit to get to these organizations.

Talking about the Highway of Tears, we have women's organizations in British Columbia; if they were working with the RCMP and were provided the resources and funding, obviously they would work much better, and you could take that right across Canada.

In Ontario, the Ontario Native Women's Association has been working on stopping violence for about five years now. They've been doing excellent work in education, awareness, and dealing at the community level, to work with the men in our communities.

There is a program with another of their collaborators through the Indian friendship centres called "Being a Good Man"—someone was asking if there were any programs. So there are programs available. They're at the provincial level and not at the federal level, but it is happening.

Thank you very much.

• (1230)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): I appreciate that.

It's very clear that NWAC has an important role to play, but the criteria seem to exclude you. Would core funding be important in terms of the work you do and the resolution you seek?

Ms. Katharine Irngaut: For sure. I think the project money doesn't allow for the gap between when projects are sealed and a contribution agreement. Core funding is important to help organizations be able to support each project during those overlap phases. I think a perfect storm could be every three years when people are having to reapply or renew funding in that sense.

The core funding that we have is a holistic look at how we want to do our work. I'm a person, I need a computer, I need to work in an office, and that's how I conduct the work that's needed to have the outcomes of the project fulfilled.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: If we had core funding to continue to work specifically on this, it would enable us to recreate our communications department. Right now we don't have any communications people. And that is so crucial to reaching out not only to our own women in our communities but also to all the other service providers. Our website is very minimal right now because we just don't have the personnel to deal with it in terms of communication. And even to work with government departments, we're very sparsely funded. In fact, we don't have any funds to provide this right now. But even on the basis of getting our other programs to provide it, it's fairly limited. We would really like to see that expand.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Madame Dumont-Smith.

Ms. Claudette Dumont-Smith: I was just going to say that core funding allows you to plan for a longer term and to put things in place. You're better able to manage programs. You do your long-range planning. You're able to evaluate.

One thing about the evidence to action is that it is a three-year funding program. So that's good. But the core funding is a very necessary component of our organization, and we do need more. If we really want to reach and have the impact we want to have, then that is very necessary.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you very much. I want to say thank you on behalf of the committee.

Madame Corbiere Lavell, the committee had the pleasure of meeting your daughter in Thunder Bay. She is a dynamic and quite capable young woman. I see leadership there. It must be a family trait.

Thank you to members of the committee for allowing this extension of time. I think it has been very beneficial in terms of our study.

Again, thank you for being here.

Ms. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell: Again, we'd like to thank you for the opportunity.

I just want to say that it's too bad you didn't have the opportunity to meet my mother and grandmother, because it's our role within our community, I guess. It's a responsibility.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): It would have been our privilege and our honour. Thank you.

I believe the Conservatives have indicated they want to elect their chair on Tuesday. So we're good.

The meeting is adjourned.

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