



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

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

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FEWO • NUMBER 022 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

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**EVIDENCE**

**Monday, May 5, 2014**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc**



## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Monday, May 5, 2014

• (1530)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP)):** Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Today, the committee is continuing its study on the economic leadership and prosperity of Canadian women.

Pursuant to an agreement made between the parties, the meeting will end at 4:45 p.m., which leaves us one hour and 15 minutes with the two groups of witnesses. The subcommittee will then meet.

I would like to welcome the witnesses we have here today. I would like to thank them for sharing their expertise with us.

I'm pleased to welcome Victoria Lennox, who I met at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology about a year ago, if I'm not mistaken. She is the co-founder and chief executive officer of Startup Canada.

We are also pleased to welcome Laura Cattari and Brenda Thompson, members of the board of directors of Canada Without Poverty.

Welcome to you all.

Ms. Lennox, you may start your presentation.

You have 10 minutes.

[English]

**Ms. Victoria Lennox (Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Startup Canada):** Good afternoon everyone. I'd like to thank the committee for inviting me to appear to discuss the prosperity of Canadian women. My comments today relate mostly to encouraging entrepreneurship amongst women and supporting women entrepreneurs.

I'd like to make a brief statement and then I look forward to any questions that you might have for me.

I am the co-founder and CEO of Startup Canada, a volunteer-run grassroots network of more than 80,000 entrepreneurs across Canada. We have 400 partners and 20 local Startup community hubs across the nation. Last Friday we celebrated our second anniversary as a start-up ourselves. Our network is made up of 40% women, and 15% of the organizations with which we partner provide focused services for women.

I am a serial entrepreneur and I am a woman. While in university, I founded a student club for women entrepreneurs, Oxford Women in

Business, and today I support a number of women-focused organizations that support and enable entrepreneurship amongst women including Robogals in Australia, which teaches girls about robotics and innovation; Astia Europe, which prepares and trains female angel investors; and here at home in Canada I support CanWIT, which matches mentors and young women in technology.

I founded Startup Canada with the goal of helping Canada to become the best place in the world to start growing a business for both men and women. As the voice of Canadian entrepreneurs, Startup Canada leads a national grassroots effort to build a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem that will fuel prosperity.

In 2012 we completed a cross-country tour where we spoke to 20,000 Canadians in 40 communities to crowdsource our mission and mandate. Since then, Startup Canada's efforts have focused on uniting and strengthening our grassroots communities across Canada, from Fredericton and Winnipeg to Smithers and Nanaimo, connecting entrepreneurs online and off, undertaking initiatives to fuel a culture of entrepreneurship through storytelling and pushing forward the conversation through mainstream media, and stepping up as the voice of Canadian entrepreneurs.

Startup Canada is Canada's platform for the collective advancement of entrepreneurship. It's an economic development tool that we can leverage.

I know that this committee has heard that 14% of women solely own small businesses. At Startup Canada we promote women's entrepreneurship through mentorship and encouraging women to join support networks, accelerators, incubators, and other available programs that promote women entrepreneurship.

We know from StatsCan that small and medium-sized businesses make up more than half the business sector GDP composition in Canada. According to Stats Canada, 47% of women are willing to take the risk to start up a business, which represents an increase of 23% over the last decade compared to a 10% increase for men.

I believe that even more women would start their own business if we could provide them with the resources, network, and culture to give them a helping hand and help them eliminate some of that risk. This is the role that Startup Canada has stepped up to play.

At Startup Canada, we've made sure to nominate a woman engagement manager to work on improving women's entrepreneurship. We also ensure that women are proactively engaged, reflected, and represented throughout our programs and within our governance structure.

For the committee today, I'd like to finish off with five recommendations. I believe there are five things we could do better today to encourage greater participation of women in entrepreneurship.

First and foremost, we need to do a better job of supporting girls in getting involved in STEM topics—science, technology, engineering and maths—and an early business education through play, networks, and learning.

Second, we need to do a better job of encouraging awareness of relatable role models for girls and women. We need to do a better job of talking about them and celebrating them as part of the entrepreneurship environment.

Third, we need to encourage mentorship by supporting women in accessing mentors to help them start and scale their ideas.

Fourth, we need to facilitate access to support and networks by supporting women in connecting with each other virtually and on the ground, so that they can start and grow their companies.

Finally, we need to provide access to child care. Child care comes at a price and can limit the ability of a woman entrepreneur to go beyond one employee to actually scale their company and create jobs for Canada.

There is no central agency or organization connecting women entrepreneurs across Canada to support resources, networks, and to really champion and celebrate women from coast to coast. As a volunteer-driven organization, we are working to fill that role, but we could do so much more.

● (1535)

In closing, we support any investments or measures that foster an entrepreneurship culture in Canada. We believe that cultivating a better entrepreneurship ecosystem will lead to better jobs for women. The Canadian accelerator and incubator program and programs targeted towards women entrepreneurs and mentorship are good examples. We support investments that are meant to encourage women—especially young women—to become successful entrepreneurs.

Finally, Startup Canada and its 300 volunteers are working hard to promote an entrepreneurial culture in Canada, and this includes women's participation.

Thank you for your time. I welcome your questions.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Lennox.

We will now hear from Laura Cattari from Canada Without Poverty.

You have 10 minutes.

[*English*]

**Ms. Laura Cattari (Member, Board, Canada Without Poverty):** Madam Chair and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to address this committee.

My name is Laura Cattari, and I am secretary of the board of directors of Canada Without Poverty.

Canada Without Poverty is a national non-partisan charity with a more than 40-year history of working to eradicate poverty. Of note is that all board members have lived experiences of poverty that guide our work.

Economic leadership and prosperity is an important conversation that must address what holds women back and looks to the future of all women. From personal experience and recent research I can say with confidence that women in poverty are not able to fully participate in economic life, nor are they able to seize opportunities available to individuals of higher income brackets. The barriers women face have not only a profoundly negative effect on themselves as well as their children, but also the broader economy where contributions are either stifled or not counted, resulting in outright exclusion.

My own story is a case in point. At the peak of my career I built digital cable networks, led research and development teams, and wrote industry white papers. I was a consultant to major cable corporations; in short, an industry leader. I was also the only female among my peers. In January of 2003 I was declared officially disabled with stress-related illnesses. Could the outright discrimination I fought over the years and other challenges of a male-dominated environment have triggered this? Or perhaps it was the accumulation of stress from persistent childhood abuse, including sexual, which 20% of Canadian women face before the age of 18? The contributing factors of stress-related illnesses are well documented and gender does play a significant part.

With disability came poverty and economic exclusion. Yet despite my apparent disability, I am still articulate, intelligent, and capable of participating in my community and the economy, garnering a woman of distinction nomination from my peers. What holds me back from escaping poverty and moving forward is not my illness, but a disability of individuals and government systems. These are barriers that many women in my position face. In Canada, 75% of women with disabilities are unemployed.

To achieve success my needs are simple: adequate amounts of nutritious food, and affordable housing in a safe neighbourhood that isn't trolled by those who prey on vulnerable women. I also need the societal violence against women, which shapes language, attitudes, and behaviours, to stop psychologically affecting self-esteem and self-respect so that I no longer hear young women at leadership summits tell me they do not feel they are enough.

In terms of employment I require a system that rewards providers for supporting me to be the leader I am, and not as a part-time worker at minimum wage, where women currently fill the vast majority of positions.

I need to be able to form a life plan for my lifelong illness, with adequate income supports in times of need. I applaud current programs such as the opportunities fund for persons with disabilities, which supports part-time post-secondary education to accommodate my illness. What it does not support, though, is part-time employment. This fails to take into account part-time opportunities that also have the potential to raise me out of poverty, and my inability to state the goal of full-time employment excludes me from that program.

I am aware of various federal government programs to support vulnerable people, but not all are necessarily within reach. Inaccessible post-secondary education leaves me uncompetitive in a new field of employment. I am essentially left out of the economy and cannot reach prosperity even though I am willing and able to participate on a meaningful level.

In conclusion there are two specific recommendations I wish to make. First, adjust the qualification restrictions on the opportunities fund for persons with disabilities and other post-secondary programs so that those unable to work full-time can apply. Second, establish a portable federal rent supplement program to ensure access to adequate safe housing as well as mobility.

Imagine for a moment a national mandate in which the least privileged women are put first, strengthening the potential, prosperity, and equality of all women in Canada.

• (1540)

Thank you.

**Ms. Brenda Thompson (Member, Board, Canada Without Poverty):** Good afternoon, Madam Chair, committee members, and all others present.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences and to address this committee, and to thank you for continuing to work on the very important topic of women's leadership and prosperity in Canada.

I come to you with my credentials as the VP of Canada Without Poverty, as a non-profit worker in a women's resource centre, as a former low-income single mother, and as author of the "Single Mothers' Survival Guide" for Nova Scotia.

I grew up in a rural family that was very poor. My parents married young, and worked hard to move us into the middle class in Nova Scotia. At the age of 20, I had a high school education and was a waitress when I became pregnant with my first daughter. Her father left me in my third month of pregnancy and never participated in our lives again. He also did not pay child support, and was not made to pay child support.

When my first daughter was nine months old, I attended community college and got a two-year diploma in hospitality management. My student loan for these two years went to pay my child care. After graduating second in a class of 55, the only job I could find was as a waitress—again.

After two years of working as a waitress, with my family providing child care, two things happened. I was offered a subsidized child care spot in a local day care and I was offered a home in a CMHA-funded housing co-op. I decided to take the leap and get a better education to try to get a better job. I took a B.A. in

women's studies at Mount Saint Vincent University and an M.A. in sociology at Acadia University, graduating with a 4.3 GPA with my M.A. in sociology.

These two programs, subsidized day care and affordable social housing, helped me immensely to achieve my goals of a better education. Without the child care of \$35 a month, I could not have afforded to attend university. It also gave my working family members a much-needed break after years of filling the gap of child care.

The subsidized social housing co-op gave me an affordable, warm, safe home for my daughter and me. In addition, it gave me a sense of community with our co-op meetings and social events such as picnics. The people in the co-op were just like me, working hard to make a better place for our families and for our communities.

I graduated and went on to get decent paying employment in my field. Many years later, I found myself unemployed and a low-income single mother living in rural Nova Scotia, but this time I had an education and child support. In rural Nova Scotia, however, it is very difficult to find a decently paid job in any field. I had to stay in the area for parental access and custody issues with the other parent, which left me in a difficult position. I took whatever jobs I could find that I could do from my home while taking care of my child. For more than a year, my second daughter and I lived on \$800 a month, as the only jobs that were available outside the home would not even pay the cost of child care, which was \$500, and rent, which was another \$500 a month, plus all the other expenses related to housing and child rearing.

It was only when my daughter was four years old that subsidized child care became available in our local town day care. I snapped up the opportunity, and then could take a job that did not pay very well but enabled me to participate in the economy and go back to work full time. These two very valuable programs enabled me to move my daughters and I into full participation in the economy, our culture, and our democratic process. Without these two programs, I believe we would still be mired in poverty and struggling to make ends meet.

Based on my experiences, I would like to make the following two recommendations: one, a national child care strategy that would make child care affordable and accessible to traditional and non-traditional family units, regardless of where they live; and two, a national housing strategy that enables women to have safe, adequate, and affordable housing.

I thank the committee for taking the time to listen to me. I would like to answer any questions you may have.

• (1545)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you for your testimonies.

Ms. Truppe, you have seven minutes.

[English]

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

Welcome, and thank you for sharing your stories.

Thank you for informing us a bit on Startup Canada. I'm somewhat familiar with Startup Canada, because I've met and have been speaking to Joel Adams and Amanda Stratton from Startup London. They do a lot of great things. You're doing a great job with the 800,000 members that I think you said you have; that's really wonderful.

Ms. Lennox, I can't remember if you said this or if I had read this, but I think you said that you've facilitated the mentorship of 20,000 entrepreneurs, running activities and daily events. How do you facilitate memberships of 20,000—or any other number, for that matter? Is it online, is it by phone, is it one on one, or do they meet in the same city?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** It's all of the above.

Across Canada, there are mentors who are supporting entrepreneurs. Sometimes a mentor in Medicine Hat is exactly the right mentor for an entrepreneur in Fredericton. Sometimes it's online entrepreneurship. Other times it's supporting existing mentorship events that are already happening.

Every year, during Global Entrepreneurship Week, in November, we run something called the Canadian Mentorship Challenge. We partner with organizations across Canada—from rural Nova Scotia, in Truro, to Toronto—to encourage mentorship to happen and to encourage those connections. We also run programs online every week, through Twitter, Facebook, Google hangouts. It's any way that we can connect entrepreneurs with each other so that they can make meeting connections.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** Just so everyone is clear, someone in London who wants to connect with somebody in Nova Scotia or Calgary, or anywhere that's not London, basically, would go on your website. They would determine that they would like some form of mentorship and they determine if they want to go online, or is there....? I've seen websites where there are live people on there, for example, from a business, and they can type in their questions right away and get answers. Or do they have to send an e-mail and then they connect and work out a time?

• (1550)

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** We're two years old now, so right now it's quite manual and it's all entrepreneur-led. It's quite good because we're entrepreneurs connecting other entrepreneurs.

This summer we're launching a platform that we've been building for two years, called Startup Connect, and that's where the live feed will come on. You can connect with an entrepreneur immediately and you can see that they're online and that they have the time and the willingness to speak with you. It isn't just entrepreneur to entrepreneur with Startup Connect. It's also financial service providers, legal experts, the key people who need to be part of an entrepreneur's experience to create more successful companies.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** The entrepreneurs are obviously men and women. Do we have stats on how many of your, say, 800,000 members—?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** It's 80,000.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** Oh, it's 80,000.

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** Eventually it will be 800,000, just give us a few years.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** That would be nice.

I've just increased it for you.

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** It's 80,000.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** Okay.

What would be the percentage of women entrepreneurs?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** We just looked at this for our anniversary, and it's about 40% who are women. Not all of those 40% are the entrepreneurs, the sole proprietors. Many of them are the marketing co-founder or a co-founder with a male colleague. It is 14% who have wholly women-owned companies.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** What have you found has been helpful for women entrepreneurs? Is there something that sticks out in your mind?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** There's a growing community of women entrepreneurs who are helping each other. There are really cool networks now, like Ladies Learning Code, where they are learning how to code together. In B.C., there's the women's entrepreneur council, which is facilitating entrepreneurship in the province. Peer networks are meaningful in encouraging entrepreneurial behaviour. There's the Women's Enterprise Initiative that's all across western Canada, and it's been encouraging to see the results of their programs. But really it's the grassroots networks, through Ladies Learning Code, through Startup London, and how they connect to each other, that organic network, that seems to be making a difference.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** In Ontario, for example, how many start-ups would you have? You have Startup London, and then—

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** In Ontario, we have Startup London, Startup Niagara, Startup Sault Ste. Marie, Startup Ottawa, and Startup Waterloo. But we would love to have a Startup community in every community across Canada. We would love it to be like the post office or community centre, the place where people go to innovate and to try new things.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** That's great. Thank you.

In your opinion as an entrepreneur, would you say—and I think you might have even mentioned it—that women entrepreneurs face more barriers than male entrepreneurs? What would be their biggest challenge that maybe male entrepreneurs don't have?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** I think it was really interesting that Laura said they don't feel like they're enough. I think there are a lot of perceptions that they're not good enough to be an entrepreneur on their own and they need a male colleague.

I got a call this week from Startup Calgary, and they are facing harassment issues with some of the male members not treating women as they should be treated—really poor behaviour.

It's educating the start-up community and entrepreneurs in this community that tends to be male-dominated, getting that community ready to welcome entrepreneurs who are women, and embracing them and making them feel comfortable. It's everything from child care to overall welcoming of women, and understanding women's issues and making women feel comfortable. There are some serious barriers that exist. If we look at our Startup communities across Canada, the majority are male-led.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** So when you said you had that call from I think Calgary.... Did you say Calgary?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** Yes.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** What would you suggest to them that might be able to help them? Was it that they didn't know what to do?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** The grassroots communities are so new that there's no mechanism like a formal organization to facilitate the guidance. What we're doing for Startup Canada across all of our communities is developing a policy on this for how we expect our members to conduct themselves when they are at our events across the country.

But these issues do pop up, and we need to be able to respond to them. I think that's part of the community maturing, and that's part of women stepping up, not being silent, and actually saying something.

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** It's good that you have that feedback.

Is my time up already? Wow, that was fast.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mrs. Susan Truppe:** Thank you.

• (1555)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Madam Truppe.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sellah, you have seven minutes.

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

First, I would like to thank all of the witnesses for their testimonies and for sharing their points of view with us. As a woman, I care deeply about this.

My first question is for Victoria Lennox.

You know that entrepreneurship is central to job creation, economic growth and prosperity. The matching that Startup Canada does between companies just starting out and investors is extremely important. You also just mentioned that, in 2012, you travelled to 40 communities across Canada to raise funds through crowdsourcing.

It was noted that female owners of start-up companies had difficulty finding funding. Why do women have more difficulty with this compared to their male peers? Could you please explain that to us?

[English]

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** There have been studies from Barbara Orser at the University of Ottawa that really document the financing gap for women entrepreneurs, particularly as that relates to angel finance and venture capital finance, when they go beyond the banks in order to solicit equity finance.

I don't have the stats in front of me, but statistically, men will invest in other men, so having men investors who understand women entrepreneurs and who will invest in them is very important. The National Angel Capital Organization, based out of Toronto, is doing a lot more in terms of educating male investors about investing in female ventures, as well as encouraging and elevating the acumen of female investors to invest in female entrepreneurs, but there's a long way to go.

I think what's really great in terms of developments is that now you have great opportunities through crowdfunding, with Kickstarter and Indiegogo, for entrepreneurs to access alternative finance. I think that's great, but I think there's still a gap as it relates to equity-based finance for female start-ups.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Do you think the high tax rate for SMEs is an obstacle for these women?

[English]

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** No. I don't think so. I think it's culture. I don't think they are adversely affected more than men as it relates to taxation levels. I think the biggest thing to think about, though, is child care and that single woman who is trying to make a life for her family and who's thinking about starting her own company so she can stay at home with her children.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Thank you.

In 2011, the overall economic contribution of SMEs owned by women was about \$148 billion. According to a study by RBC, a 10% increase over the next 10 years in the number of companies in which women hold a majority could make that economic contribution climb to \$198 billion. However, there are very few programs aimed specifically at funding SMEs owned by women in Canada.

Do you think the government is doing enough to encourage women to start companies?

[English]

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** At the provincial level, I think the province that stands out in terms of facilitating women entrepreneurship is the Province of British Columbia. I think Quebec does some excellent work in that area as well. I think that across the Prairies there has been more consolidated effort in order to facilitate these types of things, but I think it's still fairly nascent. These programs are no more than five years old and their impact hasn't been measured, so there's still a lot of work to do.

Do I think we're doing enough? Absolutely not. You can see the gap. Do I know exactly what to do? The answer is no. I think there needs to be just a bit of further study, but I also think we need to test different things, see what works, iterate, and move forward with things that do work.

I think what you see here, especially with this next generation... We call this a start-up generation, these young people who want to start their own companies, so I think that with them it doesn't require a lot of government financial support. But what it does require is encouragement, incentives, and positioning role models, so that it can be an aspirational goal for young women.

• (1600)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** I have another question for the representative from Startup Canada.

Do any programs exist that would support aboriginal women or women who are visible minorities?

[English]

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** Aboriginal Business Canada has programs for young entrepreneurs, young aboriginal entrepreneurs, and I think that organization would likely be the best point of entry in engaging with the young aboriginal population and women entrepreneurs.

I will note that the Wilson Centre for Entrepreneurial Excellence out of the University of Saskatchewan, which is funded by former "dragon" Brett Wilson, has done a tonne of work to support female aboriginal entrepreneurs and it's definitely worth noting.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Thank you.

How much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** You have a minute and a half.

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Okay. My question will be a quick one for the representatives from Canada Without Poverty.

As you know, our current study is on the economic leadership and prosperity of Canadian women. On my travels, I have met with a lot of women who would like to start a business but who, unfortunately, cannot. In some cases, they cannot even participate in the economy. That was the situation I was in when I arrived here as an immigrant. I felt bad that I could not contribute to the economy. I faced obstacles related to my profession and the professional associations. I did not ask my husband for money; he was the only one working in our family of five. I did not have any money, but I did not dare ask him for some.

For me, poverty is the complete opposite of prosperity. Could you please give me your definition of poverty?

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Very briefly.

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** I'll be as brief as possible.

Poverty is the opposite of prosperity. It is not being able to participate in the economy, in the culture, and in the democratic

process. When women are in poverty, that is a huge barrier to them. On the continuum of prosperity, poverty is at the opposite end.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mrs. O'Neill Gordon, you have seven minutes.

[English]

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank all of the presenters here this afternoon for your information and thoughts.

As you know, our committee continues to stay focused on how we can learn what is best for women in the society and how we can help them to become participants in our local economy.

My first question is to Victoria Lennox. You mentioned the start-ups in different areas and you mentioned one area being Fredericton, New Brunswick. Coming from New Brunswick, I was interested in finding out how many start-ups we would have in New Brunswick? I would assume Fredericton is the main one, being the capital city. Do you have idea of how many would be around in New Brunswick?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** I don't have the statistics on how many start-ups are in Fredericton or New Brunswick, but in our community we have over 50 start-ups that we actively support right now. The community is one year old as of Friday so we'd like to expand support. What's been really encouraging about New Brunswick, in particular, is that through ACOA and through the province there's interest in actually getting into Saint John, and Bathurst, and Moncton and developing a province-wide strategy as it relates to grassroots communities.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon:** Some of the areas of ACOA really are helpful to young women looking at entrepreneurship and we're glad to hear you say that because we find that to be a very important program. Our government is working hard in that area to make it valuable for all of us, really, so we appreciate that. Thank you for that suggestion.

One of the aims of our current study is to identify some of the obstacles to women's prosperity that exist and where these problems are rooted. Could you identify the top two barriers that you think women face when it comes to achieving this and tell us why these problems are so prominent.

That's for Victoria, please.



**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** When we went on our national tour two years ago, when we kick-started Startup Canada, the two things that came up time and again—and I'm sure there are other things that my colleagues can bring up—was a lot about culture, relatable role models, and finding it really difficult to see yourself in the community and the ecosystem, creating companies that are high growth and really driving that forward, so it's around culture and role models, number one. Number two, I'll come back to child care, especially for young women, young families, single women who see becoming an entrepreneur as potentially their only way of achieving economic independence, so providing them with the support that they need to start their own companies from home and how to scale that over time.

• (1605)

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon:** Thank you.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Victoria, on taking the initiative at such a young age to go with it and run with it. When you look back and see all the achievements you have made, you must be very proud of the work you have done. I know all of us here today feel very proud of what you have accomplished.

I wonder if you can tell us about your grassroots approach to entrepreneurship, how this came about, and some of the ups and downs that you probably have encountered along the way.

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** There are other organizations like Startup Canada across the world. There's StartUp Britain, Start-Up Chile, and Startup America. When I was seeing what they were doing, it was very top-down government led, and I actually felt the government was doing an okay job supporting start-ups.

I came back to Canada through the recruitment of policy leaders program and I worked at Industry Canada. I felt, well, there's stuff we can do, but actually we need a culture shift, and that has to come from the bottom up, mobilizing entrepreneurs. One of the biggest challenges Canada faces is our geography, so we need to really connect the ideas and connect the different pieces. We are far too small of a population to be so siloed, so we really need to leverage resources.

I felt a lot of the work that needed to be done had to happen on the ground floor with entrepreneurs connecting with each other, so that's what we set out to do. I feel like I'm a public servant working outside of the public service, and that's what motivates me to continue to drive Startup Canada. It's really just connecting the pieces so that we can move forward faster together.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon:** How much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** Two and a half minutes....

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon:** We also know that some women really pick up the ball and go with it. In your view why are some women more likely to pursue business development than others?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** It's if you have people in your life who have been entrepreneurs. If your mom or your dad own their own business or you have a role model in your life who has influenced you, but if your parents or your role models.... If you don't know that entrepreneurship is a viable career option, you're not even going to think about it.

For me, I didn't even know about entrepreneurship as a vehicle for change until I went into my master's in my twenties and joined my student club. So I think it's finding those points of contact with people, whether it's through education or extracurricular activities. Peer-led influences matter a whole lot, so encouraging those points of contact are really important. Junior Achievement, for instance, is doing amazing work for young people across Canada. So is Shad Valley, which encourages more science-based entrepreneurship. That's what my thoughts are.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon:** Thank you.

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

[Translation]

Ms. Duncan, you have seven minutes.

[English]

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of you for your stories and for your recommendations. I'm going to try and pick up on as many of them as I can.

I'll start with Startup Canada. You talked about what the provinces are doing. You said B.C. is doing good things. Can you tell us what you would like to see the federal government doing to make a difference, please?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** I think leadership is really important, so striking an advisory council for the status of women on women's entrepreneurship is number one. Then we should work to develop some concrete recommendations that we could arrive at fairly quickly and then just execute.

I think one of the key things we could do in Canada at a national level is to have a national mentorship program for women entrepreneurs to encourage women to support each other. Those are the two things that I think are high impact, low resource-intensive, and can get us going. Then once you have that collective of key organizations, key experts, then you just move forward from there. But I think high impact, low resource-intensive steps can happen quite quickly. I would strike an advisory council that demonstrates national leadership.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** How would you form that advisory council? Who would you like to see on it?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** There are key influences. There's a handful of people who are really driving the space in Canada, so reach out to them. There are those who are already doing it without being asked to do it. It's people like Barbara Orser at the University of Ottawa. It's the women's enterprise centre CEO, Tracy Scarlett, who's now based in Toronto. It's people like this who are really driving things forward and encouraging private sector leadership as well. RBC has demonstrated that they're playing a big role in female entrepreneurship, getting them involved and helping them to take a lead.

•(1610)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Thank you so much.

You talked about supporting girls in STEM. Can you give some specific recommendations around that broader one? What would you like to see the federal government doing to encourage girls to get involved in science, technology, engineering, and math?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** I think you could develop a roster of role models and tell their stories. That's not difficult to do—again, low resource-intensive, high impact. Then you provide that collateral to education institutions and non-profits across Canada. I think what you can do is very similar to the last budget. Not a lot of money is needed to kick-start an internship program, but rather a catalyst fund to encourage girls, projects, and STEM entrepreneurship. We need to reach the non-profit sector across Canada in rural communities and major urban centres that require this type of support. We need a catalyst fund as a kick-start, to provide incentive for these activities in order to get non-profits thinking this way.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** At what point do you think we have to get girls inspired?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** Early.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** We need to do it early on to get them interested. Is there something we could be doing in school such as providing links between school and business?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** Sure we can. We can develop a girls-only chapter of Junior Achievement. I think that would be fun. There's a start-up in the States called GoldieBlox. It's girls' reactions to Lego. It's really creating a generation of young women who understand physics and who can build really cool things. I think it's about play. I think it's about what we put on television. You can leverage TVO and public sector channels for mainstream approaches, but I think early.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Incentives, you mentioned incentives several times. What are the incentives you're looking for? What would be the recommendation to the committee?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** I think there are two key incentives that I'd love to see government provide.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** At the federal level...?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** At the federal level. I think one thing government can do is to recognize; provide recognitions and awards for outstanding achievements in advancing entrepreneurship among women. Things like this provide incentive for the ecosystem. It's a sign that this is important to government and important to Canada. That's number one.

Then a financial kick-starter matching it with private funds. For instance, saying we're going to allocate \$2 million over five years in order to kick-start STEM activities for young girls and encourage the next generation of women start-ups.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** If you would like to send to the committee the specific recommendations that you would like, the financial recommendations, we'd like to hear them.

To Canada Without Poverty, I'd like to ask a number of questions. I'll start with child care because both of you have mentioned this as well as Startup Canada. What do we need?

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** What we've been needing for decades is a national child care strategy. It lifted me out of poverty, and my daughters, and it has helped other women who have had the opportunity to have affordable subsidized child care. It's the key.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Thank you.

Ms. Lennox, do you want to add to that?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** I agree.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Ms. Cattari, thank you for what you had to say. It's very powerful.

You mentioned that you needed adequate nutritious food. What would be the recommendation to this committee?

**Ms. Laura Cattari:** There are a number of recommendations around accessing adequate food. One, it does come down to income, whether there are social transfers to provinces that are adequate for funding social programs, or something that comes through the federal government. It becomes particularly important to make sure that we keep local farming alive and well, so that fresh food is available locally that isn't at a higher cost.

Unfortunately, while relative inflation has stayed low, in 2012, the cost of fruits and vegetables went up 6% to 13%. This makes it very difficult to maintain adequate nutrition on the Canada pension or a provincial pension. I think that would be the most important part of that.

The next thing is the way people buy food, and it does lead into housing. It's a very bizarre thing. When you have low income, you end up living in the unpopular areas. They're usually what's called food deserts. You end up buying at stores that really aren't supermarkets. The food is overpriced and really malnutritious. Ensuring people can live in areas, mixed income areas, where you would have good grocery stores becomes really important, and comes down to setting regulations around planning in cities as well.

•(1615)

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

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Ambler, you have five minutes.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you, all of our guests, our witnesses, today for providing this valuable testimony.

I guess I wanted to know from you, Ms. Lennox, first of all, what a women engagement manager does. It sounds like a good title.

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** We took the Clinton Foundation approach. Rather than throwing the women's program over here, it really is about ensuring that every single thing Startup Canada does actively encourages and engages women.

If we're launching the 1,000 start-ups program, in which we're profiling 1,000 start-ups, half of them need to be women. If the women are not signing up, then we proactively go find them.

It's just making sure that women are proactively engaged in all of our programs rather than siloed off into their own thing.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** Excellent.

I recently met the Carleton University chair of women's political and policy leadership...something like that. It's part of the public affairs program at Carleton. She was very impressive. We talked about all kinds of issues related to women in leadership roles. She talked a little bit about the attitude that's been mentioned today and at some of our other meetings, with regard to women who sometimes just don't think they're qualified.

How does Startup deal with...or do you deal with people who need that extra encouragement?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** Sure, we do. We deal with them all the time.

One of our key principles is inclusivity. No one will be turned away, whether they're just starting up and they have an idea or they're an entrepreneur wanting to give back. I think it's just through living the culture of entrepreneurship, living the culture of inclusivity. It kind of breeds it. But, yes, we confront it all the time.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** When you were asked about the two main things, you mentioned the importance of role models. Do you think there's a translation? Let's say your mother was an entrepreneur. Do you think you're more likely not only to be an entrepreneur but also to possibly go into a more non-traditional field as well? I'm thinking about working in a skilled trade, let's say. Do you think it's all connected?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** I think what our parents encouraged us to do when we were kids will significantly influence our career trajectory.

I grew up in a household that had a very low income. We were in a family crisis shelter for a while. It was very challenging. So I was brought up to work in a stable job. For me to do anything other than a stable job would really make my parents anxious, and I can feel that. I feel that if I fail, I will let my family down as well.

I think those stresses definitely compound. Encouraging and making parents more aware of skilled trades, of alternative career paths.... Educating parents is just so important to the success of our young Canadians.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** That's very interesting. Thanks for sharing that.

In the future, in particular, what are the goals of your organization, other than to get more members? What kinds of things are you looking at doing in the future?

● (1620)

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** In Canada the government invests in a lot of stuff related to entrepreneurship—incubators, accelerators, and mentorship programs. The RDAs invest in lots of activities, and all of it is completely disconnected.

So what we're focusing on at Startup Canada right now and over the next five years is connecting it up, making it make sense for the entrepreneurs so they can navigate the ecosystem, access mentors more quickly, figure out where they need to go, and, entrepreneur to entrepreneur, really tell the truth about what's working and what's not working so that we can invest public funds better.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** It's like a one-stop shopping kind of thing.

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** Absolutely.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** Thank you.

Am I good for time?

**The Chair:** You have 22 seconds.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** I'm good.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Morin, you have five minutes.

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am not normally on this committee, but I am pleased to replace my colleague, Niki Ashton. I find this study very important. Thank you for the testimony you gave today.

I will build on what Mrs. Ambler said. I would like to know what influence parents can have on level of education. Actually, I would like to know whether parents who are in the entrepreneurship category can have an influence on their children. My question is for the representatives from Canada Without Poverty.

Could you provide some clarification on the links that exist between family income and the tendency for young people to obtain a higher education, to grow up in an entrepreneurship environment and have more self-confidence? Do you have figures on that?

[*English*]

**Ms. Laura Cattari:** Thank you for the question.

The link between success and opportunity is really important to understand, and I believe Ms. Lennox touched on this. Without exposure, and especially in young children's lives—exposure to opportunity, to ideas, to growth—leadership, ownership, entrepreneurship do not become options. They're not on the horizon. When you have teenagers in areas where deprivation exists, unfortunately thinking ahead to big and bright futures is not what they're thinking. They're thinking about getting enough money to eat, getting enough money to have a roof over their head, maybe adequate clothing, and a phone. They're really not thinking about the big picture and long term.

I can send into the committee some hard numbers on entrepreneurship, or at least post-secondary numbers for you.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Isabelle Morin:** I would appreciate that very much. Thank you.

I will continue along the same lines. The family model has something to do with it, but so does the community model. You spoke about mentors, which are very important on the smaller scale of the community.

Ms. Thompson, you just mentioned housing. I think that this is what's happening in many places in Canada. There is a concentration of disadvantaged people in my riding, for example. The NDP just proposed a national housing strategy to help people in that situation.

There is a food desert in the Saint-Pierre neighbourhood in my riding. A lot has been said about it. A co-operative was formed to create the Saint-Pierre market. I congratulate that co-operative for all its work. It needs to be said that people don't always have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. In our society, it is much cheaper to buy chips and Coke than milk and oranges. It's really frustrating.

Do you have any solutions to this problem? What should the federal government be doing? What role do we have to play as parliamentarians? Do you think we could help solve this kind of problem?

[*English*]

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** Well, I'm thinking of rural Nova Scotia in terms of community, as you were talking about...and I work for a women's resource centre. We have a women's group there that is doing women's entrepreneurship. But one of the problems that they are dealing with is access to pensions and health care. It's all very well to say, "Start your own business," but you have to have a number of things in place. You have to have, first of all, somebody to buy your service or your product, and in rural Nova Scotia very few people have any money, and they're getting less and less as we clear out and all head out west. But also CPP is voluntarily paid for, for the self-employed, and sometimes for people, feeding your family comes first and CPP comes way down on the list of what you're to going to pay.

I have a number of recommendations. Where do I start? One of the recommendations I would say is pensions and health care plans for people who start their own business, because it becomes an option for too many people, for too many business owners, because they're not making enough, and particularly for women, their families tend to come first. Women are very cautious with money as small business owners, and we try to help them out in the women's group.

• (1625)

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

If you want to just close and—

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** I will wrap it up.

I have a number of recommendations, but I'm not going into them right now, other than pensions and health care plans.

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

[*Translation*]

I will now give the floor to Ms. Young, or Mr. Young, rather.

[*English*]

**Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC):** You keep on calling me Madame. That's okay, because I want to be treated equally on this committee, and I appreciate it.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry.

Mr. Young, you have five minutes.

[*English*]

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

Victoria Lennox, I wanted to give you some free time to paint a picture and tell us how to create better mentorships for women, access to networks for women, and also child care access for women. Those were three, four, and five, on your list. I didn't write down the first two, sorry, but I have the other three.

Take some time, please, and tell us how to do this because this report will be a guide for provinces, women, all kinds of people and groups across Canada, on how to help women become entrepreneurs.

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** I'm happy as well to submit something to the committee that's more substantive, that's backed up with stats and things like that.

We're not starting from scratch. There are organizations across Canada that service women entrepreneurs, but there are only so many mentors, experienced women, who've succeeded, been there and done that. They have a scarcity of time because they're still growing their companies. We need to make the most of their time as they give back to support the next generation of entrepreneurs. A national women's mentorship network would bring together the top women entrepreneurs in Canada and leverage their time properly through conferences, through online digital mentorship, and make them accessible to entrepreneurs across Canada.

Conferences across Canada have a hard time finding women entrepreneurs to sit on panels because they're so busy either taking care of their children or building their businesses that they don't have time to do something superfluous like a panel. If we could leverage their time appropriately and make it make sense so they're engaging lots of people all at once that would be great. I think bringing together all the support that's already available into one national initiative where everybody has a national stamp and grabbing the women entrepreneurs and developing some sort of advisory council and then employing a digital platform to execute the mentorship would help a lot.

**Mr. Terence Young:** Can I just interrupt for one second?

I agree that it's best coming from women because they've been there. But what about male mentors?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** Yes, please.

Some of my best mentors—my chairman is a man. It's also so refreshing to work with men who understand how to work with women. It wouldn't be exclusively for women or men. I think we still need more women role models. I think they still are behind the desk building their companies so we need to help to encourage them to get out.

In terms of access to child care I might turn to my colleagues because they probably know more than I do. I think we can look to Nordic countries, and we can see how that's facilitated an influx of female entrepreneurs. This is all backed up with statistics. Looking at some sort of national health care strategy—and I'm someone who wants less government—I think when it comes to female participation and entrepreneurship child care is a major factor. So far organizations like Startup Canada can step in from the private sector. There's only so much we can do.

• (1630)

**Mr. Terence Young:** In Oakville we have a very active chamber of commerce. At least every month they have a number of events. One is Business After Hours. When you go there a room like this would be full of people networking and roughly half of them are women. They are tremendous entrepreneurs, and then they hire other women as well. It's growing. If it weren't for entrepreneurship the percentage of women who are unemployed would be much higher than it is. That's a good networking opportunity.

Can you think of any others that are working?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** As I said, Ladies Learning Code. I think the chamber and a lot of places are really strong. Organizations like Startup Canada can help them refresh their image for the next generation of start-ups to be part of the chamber network, which is really exciting.

In a lot of places where start-ups reside there are not a lot of places for women only. A lot of times women entrepreneurs don't want to go to women-only events. They want to go to events with everybody, but also that encourage...and they want to see themselves on panels and in the program.

**Mr. Terence Young:** What were your first two points? I want to make a note of them.

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** The first one was supporting girls and getting them interested in topics on business earlier on. Also, relatable role models, encouraging mentorship, and facilitating access to support. You can go to the BDC but does the BDC know how to deal with a female-owned enterprise? Can we encourage and help the BDC to develop the capacity to deal with women entrepreneurs? How can we make the current ecosystem more entrepreneurial and women-friendly and have access to child care?

**Mr. Terence Young:** Do I have any more time?

**The Chair:** Just enough to say thank you very much.

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

**The Chair:** Mr. Young, thank you very much.

Ms. Crockatt, you have five minutes.

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

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today. I think we're starting to get a nice picture emerging here of some things that will work. I want to thank you all for taking a positive attitude, a “glass half full” attitude, because I think that is one of the successes that we as women bring to the table that we may not even recognize.

In that regard, Victoria, I want to just walk through your Startup model and what you think its success is. I mean, 80,000 members...?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** In two years.

**Ms. Joan Crockatt:** In only two years; that's amazing.

What do you actually think brought women to the table? As an executive in the newspaper business, one of my goals was to increase the numbers of women. We could do it, but it was hard. We looked at a whole range of initiatives that would actually bring women to the table.

I'm wondering what you think was your key that brought women to the table for you.

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** I think it was the grassroots. I think if I had sat in my cubicle at Industry Canada and said, “I want a women's initiative, and I'm going to do it from here”, it wouldn't have worked.

It's community-based. At Startup London the co-leader is a woman. She's engaging other women. They're engaging each other. In Toronto we have a woman of colour taking the lead. That community is full of women of colour because she's bringing in all of her friends. The peer-led engagement is just really powerful. In Charlottetown we have entrepreneurs in the biotech industry, so now we have a big biotech cluster for Startup Canada there.

It's peer-led grassroots. The way we work is that it really is bottom-up insofar as we encourage local development. You'll never see Startup Canada develop a national policy and impose it on our communities. It really is kind of bottom-up. When government gives us the opportunity, as they have today, to sit at the table—thank you so much for having me—we engage our communities and say, “What do you want us to say? We have this really cool opportunity.” We also put the ask out on Twitter.

It really is bottom-up. What's worked for us—this is how we've engaged aboriginal entrepreneurs—is just that peer-led, making sure they're part of our network and are bringing their networks in. Then they see it as a platform for them.

**Ms. Joan Crockatt:** I have to ask this, and not because I take the view that this isn't the direction. You said that you'd never see top-down, that everything's all bottom-up, and that you'd never develop a national policy. But one of the things you've called for is a national day care policy.

How does that fit with the rest of your strategy?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** I think anything you do, and I think this happens already, needs to engage those who are operating the programs on the ground. Having their buy-in, their influence, will make it work. If they're not engaged in it, it won't work.

They're not contradictory. I think it's more in terms of the methodology of how you execute it and how you partner with those on the ground driving that change.

• (1635)

**Ms. Joan Crockatt:** Maybe I can just explore this a bit more, because I think we're now drilling into how we actually make this function.

One thing that I noticed, too, moving through the ranks as a businesswoman, was that I always said I wish I'd known at 25 what I knew when I was 35—namely, that I had all the skills at 25 to do the same thing—and that I wish I'd known at 35 what I knew when I was 45.

I think one of the things that can help us there is mentorship, but then again, women tend to be—perhaps you'll disagree—somewhat wary, I guess, of authority and joining something that they perceive to be kind of a big monolithic organization. They like small organizations.

We were just musing about whether some kind of a national mentorship registry might be a way to go, and I think we've heard a similar thing suggested here. Do you think that is a way to go, or is it more facilitating some kind of crowdsourcing local thing that will actually pair women, one on one, with somebody else who's successful, and they can go for coffee at, you know, the little art gallery or entrepreneur café thing?

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** It's all of the above. I think it has to be both. I think if you have some sort of national registry where you have all of your mentors catalogued so that it can be leveraged by an organization like Startup Canada to help facilitate that...but all of those mentors will be the same mentors who go to that coffee shop.

So I think it's just how you execute it. I think some sort of registry is valuable, but I think it's all of the above. It's mentorship however it happens.

[Translation]

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

[English]

**Ms. Joan Crockatt:** I'm not finished.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** The time is passing quickly, isn't it? Thank you very much, Ms. Crockatt.

Ms. Duncan, you have five minutes.

[English]

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Ms. Thompson, you talked about raising your children and how child care helped. In my own riding one of the challenges is that when the parents go off to work, there's no one to feed the children. The other challenge, which comes back to Ms. Cattari, is the choice between a \$5 litre of orange juice or a \$2

double litre of orange pop, and the choice is clear when you're trying to stretch that dollar.

What could we do better to make sure that children have safe, adequate, and nutritious food?

**Ms. Laura Cattari:** Provincially, we started a push for student nutrition programs through schools and through day cares, and after-school programs that do provide nutrition. That is the first step.

It not only provides nutritious food but it does it in a way that allows dignity, so that students are not pointed out for their lack of prosperity. It is very important to not stigmatize children at an early age into believing that they are different somehow. It helps with success later on and it also helps their educational efforts to be well fed. That has been proven time and time again.

If there were a strategy that came from the federal level, making sure that it was available across Canada, that would be fantastic with regard to food.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** I'd like to pick up on that, if I could. About 169 other countries feed their children. The U.S. has had a national breakfast or lunch program since the 1940s. Canada doesn't. It is unconscionable that any child goes to school hungry. It impacts behaviour. It impacts education. It impacts health. It impacts health in the long-term.

What do you think, you and Ms. Thompson, about the need for a national breakfast or lunch program in this country to go with a national child care program? If we want to ensure we have healthy adults going forward, we have to do both. I'd like your thoughts.

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** That's an excellent idea. Food security is a big topic across Canada. Too many of the breakfast programs that do exist right now are community-funded. It's organizations fighting for the same \$5.

They all need to be funded. I absolutely agree that we need a national breakfast program, not just in the schools but also in day cares. I believe it could even extend into the home through programs because a lot of people are home schooling their kids as well.

The United Nations has even said that Canada needs a food security program—

• (1640)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** In 1992....

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** In 1992, and here we are in 2014 and nothing has been done about it.

I particularly would like to see that. As a former researcher on a food security program in Nova Scotia, I would like to see that nationally as well. Let's start with the kids, and let's take it out to a broader base.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Do we want both a national child care program and a national breakfast program as recommendations in this report?

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** Yes, absolutely, that's an excellent recommendation.

I would like to add that when my children, both of my daughters, were in subsidized child care, they both did get healthy breakfasts and lunches, which I counted on as a low-income, single mother.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** I'd like to add that, in fact, we do have immunization programs. They are done through the schools because that's where children gather. It's the same thing for food.

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** Yes.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Thank you. I have no more questions.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Young—and it is Ms. Young this time—you have the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

**Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC):** I'm so sorry I only have five minutes because this is such an important and great subject matter. I want to thank each of you for coming out and sharing your personal experiences with us, which is deeply personal obviously.

For myself, I am also an entrepreneur. I owned my own consultancy business for 18 years. I also developed and established Canada's longest-running breakfast program. It's in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, which is where I'm from, in British Columbia.

I'm also a sociologist. That's my background. I've spent 25 to 30 years doing social policy at all the different levels of government, from municipalities to the provinces to the federal government as well, prior to being elected an MP. I just wanted to say that child care, as you all know, is a provincial responsibility.

So what has been interesting in this discussion here, having been a mother, an advocate, a community person who has developed grassroots programs in the Downtown Eastside from the ground up, having fostered seven children—and I'm a foster grandmother as well in the Downtown Eastside. I've also done macropolicy at a sociological level with \$5-billion programs across Canada.

There seems to be this sort of interesting play from where, Victoria—if you don't mind me calling you that, Ms. Lennox—is saying that we need to be grassroots, we need to come from the ground up because that is where people are going to become engaged. That has certainly been my experience in developing not just breakfast programs but youth at risk programs, all kinds of programs for local community across Canada.

Secondly, though, I am hearing you that the federal government obviously has a role. We do have a very strong women's network that the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Status of Women is putting together and has led. We are doing international things in terms of child and maternal health as well as through the United Nations International Day of the Girl, and even with this study.

What I'm trying to ask is, where is the middle ground? Where is the low-hanging fruit? We do want to move forward with this. We're very thrilled that there's so much activity, obviously, in the women's sector regarding business development, etc. You're right, Victoria. We're a very large country geographically with a very small population spread across it. Where's the low-hanging fruit?

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** I believe the low-hanging fruit is the national government. It's a provincial responsibility, child care, but I

believe the national government can engage the grassroots and provincial governments in child care recommendations and setting them up.

**Ms. Wai Young:** So is that like setting a standard for the different provinces to meet? For example, if we used a Quebec model. All the other provinces should be—

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** No, I would say that each province has its own characteristics that they need to address.

**Ms. Wai Young:** So it should be something that's developed and implemented provincially then? Is that what you're saying?

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** Yes, but there should be some federal transfer of funds to child care—

**Ms. Wai Young:** Well, there are federal transfer funds. We transferred funds to the provinces—

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** But I'd like to see it increased because I'd like to see more child care—

**Ms. Wai Young:** But what the provinces spend that on and their priorities is a provincial regional jurisdiction.

**Ms. Brenda Thompson:** Yes, that came down to the CHST.

• (1645)

**Ms. Wai Young:** Anyway, next to Laura, please, because I know I'm running out of time.

**Ms. Laura Cattari:** Thank you for that. I will echo that.

National strategies tend to coordinate provincial ones. We're here about leadership, and I think the federal government could be a leader in setting the tone in what the expectations are, and if their provinces are given money, what it should be spent on—

**Ms. Wai Young:** Hang on. The provinces are given money. You cannot say “if” the provinces—

**Ms. Laura Cattari:** Oh, no. Absolutely.

**Ms. Wai Young:** The provinces get their transfer payments every year. Certainly through the Department of Health, we've increased funding for the last number of years, and it's at its highest level. In the Status of Women programs, again it's at its highest level. As a federal government, we have funded these things. My question is: where's the lowest-hanging fruit?

Maybe you need to think about that a bit and we'll move to Victoria because I'm running out of time.

**The Chair:** There's just one minute for the answer, so please Ms. Cattari, continue if you could with what you were saying.

**Ms. Laura Cattari:** Absolutely. Thank you. What I—

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Wait a moment.

Mrs. Sellah, do you want to say something?

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** I would like to remind my colleague that she should focus her question more on the prosperity of women than on transfer payments. The purpose of this meeting is to learn about the challenges that women entrepreneurs are facing.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*English*]

**Ms. Wai Young:** I think the witness made a statement that I just wanted to clear up. I have asked her a very specific question, so please answer—

**The Chair:** Ms. Young, there's a minute left to be able to answer. I think what you were mentioning is what maybe the witness would like to say is that some fund could be earmarked and maybe—

**Ms. Wai Young:** Let's let her answer the question, please.

**The Chair:** One minute, please....

Madame Cattari.

**Ms. Laura Cattari:** I will agree with earmarking. Low-hanging fruit is equal opportunity and expanding educational access. In my case, I do run a small business, but I do need a post-secondary degree in what I'm currently pursuing to actually make a consulting fee that can get me out of poverty.

**Ms. Wai Young:** So it's more support for skills training, and obviously education, right?

**Ms. Laura Cattari:** Without the barrier of full-time employment... I will always be ill, for the rest of my life, so to have a part-time business would be helpful if I could access programs like that.

**Ms. Wai Young:** Jim Flaherty's disability fund, all of that sort of thing, would be very helpful.

**Ms. Laura Cattari:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Wai Young:** Thank you so much.

Victoria, I don't know if we're out of time.

**Ms. Victoria Lennox:** Really quickly, I'll go back to the women's entrepreneurship mentorship program, which can be coordinated through an organization like Startup Canada. It's low-hanging fruit—low cost, high impact, high visibility, good for everybody. That's number one.

As it relates to health care, given the context you just provided us with—it's nice to be reminded of that—I think even looking at each of the provinces and a one-pager on how they're each dealing with health care would empower us with that information and would allow us to then mobilize at the provincial level.

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to thank Ms. Thompson, Ms. Cattari and Ms. Lennox for being here.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 7.

The subcommittee will now meet.

The meeting is adjourned.

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