



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 027

Friday, June 17, 2022

Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio



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• (1300)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): I would like to welcome everybody to the 27th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. I call this meeting to order.

Before I get started, I just want to commend everybody. We are finishing up our session today on the status of women, and today we've had the IVP report tabled. Thank you so much to Sonia for making sure that was tabled. Moreover, Bill C-28 was introduced. I just want to say congratulations to everybody and great work on collaboration.

Today we are returning to this very important study as well.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 1, the committee will resume its study of resource development and violence against indigenous women and girls.

Today's meeting is taking place in hybrid form.

Pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021, members are attending in person in the room, and remotely using the Zoom application. Per the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on March 10, 2022, all those attending the meeting in person must wear a mask except for members who are at their place during proceedings.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating via video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mike and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. On interpretation, for those on Zoom you will be the choice at the bottom of the screen of the floor, English, or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel. I remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Today I would like to welcome our witnesses.

As an individual, we have the Honourable Michèle Audette, senator and former commissioner of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. From Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec, we have Jennifer Brazeau, executive director. From the Department of Natural Resources we have Kimberley Zinck, director general, reconciliation.

From the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we have Christine Moran, the assistant deputy minister, indigenous secretariat; Mélanie Larocque, director general, program development and intergovernmental affairs, crime prevention branch; and Michelle Van De Bogart, director general, law enforcement and border strategies.

And from the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, we have Patricia Brady, vice-president, external relations and strategic policy, and Brent Parker, director general, external relations and strategic policy.

Everybody, we have a big day today. So, to all of you we will be granting you five minutes for your opening statement. I will be putting up a notice for your one-minute reminder, indicating that you have 60 seconds to go. I will give you maybe 10 seconds over that, but because we have such an extraordinary panel today, we want to make sure that everybody has the opportunity to hear from all of the witnesses and that all of the questioners get their opportunity to speak as well.

I am going to pass it over for the first five minutes to, as an individual, the Honourable Michèle Audette, senator.

[Translation]

Hon. Michèle Audette (Senator and Former Commissioner, National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, As an Individual): [Witness spoke in Innu as follows:]

Kuei! Nutim etashiek, tshipushukat Tshipushukatitunau. Niminu-eniten ute a taiian

[Innu text translated as follows:]

Hello everyone. Greetings to you all. I'm pleased to be here.

[Translation]

I thank the Anishinaabe Nation very much for welcoming me every day to their territory and for allowing me to continue every day this portage that is dear to my heart and mind.

I thank everyone here, as well as those who are participating in the meeting virtually from the indigenous territories where they are, for taking part in this very important and urgent exercise. This study on the rise of violence against indigenous women and girls in Canada in the context of resource development also reflects calls for justice 13.4 and 13.5 of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. So you can see from the outset why it was critical for me to be here.

In all sincerity, I confess my impatience and dismay at the lack of information we are receiving on the implementation of the calls for justice and all the proposals contained in the report tabled on June 3, 2019. Recently, we celebrated the third anniversary of the tabling of this report as well as the first anniversary of the National Action Plan for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2ELGBTQIA+ Persons. However, as you have all noticed, after reading the progress report on the national action plan, it is clear that very little has been implemented. This demonstrates the importance of a study such as the one undertaken by your committee.

What I feel most strongly about is the whole issue of coordination mechanisms, the establishment of a national emergency hotline, the establishment of a guaranteed minimum income, and the establishment of 24-hour support services for people who are vulnerable or at risk. There is a great lack of such services across Canada.

Let me quote The Globe and Mail:

• (1305)

[English]

Nearly two years after the federal Liberals announced a \$724.1-million fund to support Indigenous women and girls facing gender-based violence, the money sits largely untouched, according to government figures as of May 31.

More than half of the fund is allocated to the construction of at least 38 new shelters and 50 transitional homes across Canada, but none of that money has been allocated. The fund's remaining \$304.1-million is intended to support the running of the new shelters, as well as violence prevention activities. The lack of construction means no operational funding has been spent, but the government has spent \$12.6-million on prevention activities – representing less than 2 per cent of the total fund.

[Translation]

So, as I've mentioned many times, all of the calls for justice are important, but we need to push forward with call for justice 1.7, which calls for a national ombudsperson and a national indigenous and human rights tribunal, and call for justice 1.10, about the reporting that needs to be done. As we saw the day before yesterday, transparency and accountability on the status of the work is paramount. So I hope you will also heed these calls for justice.

In 2022, far too many indigenous women and girls feel unsafe and less secure. As you can see, the data speaks for itself. Last month, in the space of two weeks, three indigenous women were murdered in your territory, Ms. Gazan. Now we understand that it's more than that. For me, this is an urgent and unacceptable situation that everyone must address. Of course, every time we hear sad news like this, we think of the families and send them all the love we can, as well as our condolences.

Human rights and women's rights must also be protected. We must put in place protection mechanisms that, based on laws and regulations, provide for severe penalties. I cite as an example the \$15-million fine just imposed on ArcelorMittal, a mining company convicted of environmental violations. Imagine what it would be like if we put in place similar mechanisms to protect indigenous women. This is the most recent and striking example, and I wanted to share it with you today.

Beyond physical and sexual abuse, resource exploitation has consequences across the board for indigenous women, and for

women in general. I would suggest to you that it is important to link this issue to the spiritual, physical and mental relationship we have with water, nature, flora, animals and all that nature and the land allow us to honour. Holistic health and environmental health are also affected.

In conclusion, no matter where we are in this great land, we all have a responsibility to honour the truths of the women and girls, and, of course, the survivors and families who spoke out at the inquests.

I wish you a good study. I look forward to seeing your recommendations.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much for your time.

I'd like to pass it to Jennifer Brazeau from the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec for the next five minutes.

Ms. Jennifer Brazeau (Executive Director, Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec): [*Witness spoke in Anishinaabemowin as follows:*]

Kwe kakina.

[*Anishinaabemowin text translated as follows:*]

Hello everyone.

[English]

My name is Jennifer Brazeau. I'm the executive director of the Lanaudière Native Friendship Centre. I'm here today representing the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtone du Québec, which is a provincial association that has campaigned for more than 45 years for the defence of rights and interests of indigenous people in the urban centres, as well as supporting indigenous friendship centres in Quebec in frontline service delivery.

Across the province of Quebec, there are 10 friendship centres and one service centre. These friendship centres are there to serve indigenous people living or passing through urban centres in Chibougamau, Joliette, La Tuque, Maniwaki, Val-d'Or, Montréal, Québec, Senneterre, Sept-Îles, Trois-Rivières and its point of service in Shawinigan.

At the national level, I also represent the province of Quebec at the National Association of Friendship Centres as a board member. Just so that you know, there are over 100 friendship centres across the country that are also serving indigenous people living in urban centres. The RCAAQ and the NAFC are recognized as being the largest urban service infrastructure for indigenous people.

The friendship centre movement has been working for several decades to support indigenous people in order to improve their quality of life. We also support indigenous people navigating through various systems put in place by the government by being corridors of services between our friendship centres and the public services in each of our regions. When the system has failed our indigenous people in our urban centres, the friendship centres are there for our people. We're there to offer them support, but, above all, we're also there to offer them a space that is safe and free from judgment.

Over the past decades, the RCAAQ has been a witness and has participated in several commissions and inquiries, parliamentary commissions, reports, testimonies and the development of recommendations and calls to action. We have proposed innovative solutions to issues brought forth by the government and by the population and by our members. We have worked hard, without denying our history, without erasing the trauma that our members have been living, and, above all, without forgetting the tragedies that are happening presently, even in 2022.

We will never forget. That's why we want to break the cycle of indifference and violence by offering concrete actions and solutions for indigenous people, and also through partnerships throughout our networks. Several decades of the status quo faced by indigenous people have left a chronic existence of a cultural barrier that has devastating effects on our people. We all know there are higher rates of criminalization and higher rates of victimization. We have individual and collective rights of indigenous people that are not being respected, and indigenous women are often at the forefront living this colonial violence.

I can continue and keep talking about the statistics of the violence that indigenous women are facing. You're going to have other experts who are going to come to bring that to you. But what I want to be able to talk to you about is how this violence is rooted in the Canadian culture of genocide through the exploitation of our territories, and how that reflects on how indigenous women view themselves and how their own bodies are being exploited by the systems that are put in place through systemic racism, through the continued displacement of indigenous people from their territories, through the rupture in being able to practise our cultural activities on our own territories, through the exploitation of mining companies that are well overrepresented in Canada. We need to be able to take a moment to pause and to question why we have so many extractive companies within our country. Is it something that's rooted systemically in how Canadians exploit our territories? But then we also send those companies to other countries, where they continue that exploitation and those systems of abuse and trauma in other countries.

I think it's important for us to note that, as indigenous women, when we witness these companies coming in destroying our natural areas, which we have a strong cultural connection to, where they're exploiting the nature around us, it has a severe impact on indigenous women because then we ourselves, our own bodies, become exploited, too. When you have companies that come in, you have a rise in violence that's associated with fly-in and fly-out. You have indigenous women who then flee those communities to be able to try to find safer spaces in the cities, and then who, through maybe self-medication, will end up having to use their own bodies to be able to pay for their own services.

Thank you.

• (1315)

The Chair: Thank you so much. I'm sorry for being late on that. I was writing so many notes.

I'm now going to turn it over to the Department of Natural Resources, and Kimberley Zinck, director general, reconciliation, for five minutes.

Ms. Kimberley Zinck (Director General, Reconciliation, Department of Natural Resources): Thank you, and good afternoon.

I'm Kimberley Zinck, the director general of reconciliation implementation at Natural Resources Canada. I'm joining you today from the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin and Anishinabe people.

I'm pleased to contribute to the committee's study on resource development and violence against women and girls. I'd like to share with you how the department is changing the way it works by weaving indigenous perspectives and opportunities into the fabric of what we do.

In 2021, we merged the office for major projects management with the office for indigenous affairs and reconciliation, and in March of this year the resident elders we work with and who advise us gifted us with the name Nòkwewashk, an Algonquin word for sweetgrass. To our knowledge, we are among the first in the Government of Canada to embrace an indigenous name, and its meaning is impactful to the work that we do.

The imagery of braided sweetgrass reminds us of the connection among the land, resources and people.

[*Translation*]

Our work is focused on relationships with indigenous peoples, economic reconciliation, and regulatory innovation.

It is in this spirit that I am here before you today.

[*English*]

We acknowledge that the discrimination and violence experienced by indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people are a result of generations of racist, sexist and colonial laws and policies.

This is why we are working with federal partners to develop the United Nations declaration act action plan, and to implement the national action plan to end gender-based violence and the federal pathway to address missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Indigenous people are the stewards, rights holders, and in many cases title-holders to the land upon which development takes place. The calls for justice tell us that more needs to be done to understand the impacts of resource development on indigenous women and girls and to ensure that indigenous people have equitable access to economic benefits.

[*Translation*]

By working with indigenous women's organizations like Pauktuutit, we are helping ensure the safety and well-being of Inuit women in the resource extraction industry.

We are leading the way for Canada in the global Equal by 30 campaign, which is working towards equal pay, leadership and opportunities for women in the clean energy sector.

[English]

Through our programs and governance we ensure that the perspectives of indigenous people are considered, reflected and represented throughout the life cycle of projects, and that indigenous people benefit economically from resource development.

The indigenous natural resource partnerships program increases the participation of communities and organizations in major natural resource infrastructure development. Since 2019, we've provided \$18 million in funding for indigenous-led projects like management and leadership training for indigenous women in the oil and gas sectors.

We work directly with communities through the indigenous advisory and monitoring committee for the Trans Mountain expansion project to address the impacts of temporary work camps and the influx of workers.

The mining industry has deep and long-standing relationships with indigenous communities. Canada's critical minerals strategy will ensure respect for indigenous and treaty rights, and meaningful engagement, partnership and collaboration with indigenous people.

By working with industry organizations like the Mining Association of Canada, we're helping to support intercultural awareness, human rights and anti-racism training for employees.

In closing, by acknowledging the mistakes of the past and changing how we work today, we're shaping how we care for the land, resources and indigenous people.

[Translation]

Thank you. *Meegwetch. Merci.*

Thank you for your time today. I look forward to your questions.

• (1320)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I'm now going to pass it over to Christine Moran, who is with the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Christine, you have five minutes.

Ms. Christine Moran (Assistant Deputy Minister, Indigenous Secretariat, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today.

As you noted, my name is Christine Moran, and I am the assistant deputy minister of the indigenous secretariat at Public Safety Canada. I am joined by my colleagues, Michelle Van De Bogart, who is the director general of law enforcement, and Mélanie Larocque, who is the director general of program development and intergovernmental affairs. I will provide opening comments on behalf of Public Safety Canada, and we would be pleased to take your questions.

Public Safety Canada is a partner in advancing the federal pathway to address missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, a key part of the larger 2021 national ac-

tion plan that was developed with indigenous partners and provincial and territorial governments.

The federal pathway is organized in four themes, with Public Safety Canada's contributions falling mainly within the human safety and security and justice themes.

Collaboration with indigenous communities, provinces and territories, police and other organizations is crucial to developing more culturally appropriate and socially responsive approaches to community safety.

Budget 2021 announced \$861 million over five years, beginning in 2021-22, and \$145 million ongoing to support culturally responsive policing and community safety services in indigenous communities. This includes funding to support the co-development of federal first nations police service legislation. Virtual engagement sessions with first nations have just taken place to support this objective and a "what we heard" report will be made publicly available shortly.

While efforts to co-develop federal legislation for first nations police services are ongoing, Inuit and Métis groups are also being engaged to better understand and identify their unique policing and community safety priorities.

We are also enhancing RCMP services funded through the first nations and Inuit policing program, increasing access to dedicated and culturally responsive policing services in areas often impacted by natural resource development, including the territories.

In addition to our investments in indigenous policing, budget 2021 announced up to \$64.6 million over five years and \$18.1 million ongoing to enhance indigenous-led crime prevention strategies and community safety services, including through the aboriginal community safety planning initiative, the ACSPI.

The purpose of ACSPI, created in 2010, is to directly support indigenous community healing through a facilitated community-driven process that works to address multiple safety and wellness issues as determined by the community, using a community safety plan process. The plans reflect community safety challenges, community strengths, resources and goals.

In addition, ACSPI coordinates with government, provincial and territorial partners, local municipal governments and services and industry partners to address issues raised in the safety plans. For example, Public Safety, Natural Resources Canada and Trans Mountain Corporation recently worked together to support indigenous communities to mitigate risks posed by the proximity of industry work sites to their communities, including impacts on indigenous women and girls.

I know that you've previously heard testimony about transient natural resource development camps and the clear link between these camps and sexual violence against indigenous women and girls, including human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a complex and highly gendered crime, with root causes including poverty, gender, racism, wage inequality and lack of education and employment opportunities, which we know indigenous people experience disproportionately. In September 2019, the Minister of Public Safety launched the national strategy to combat human trafficking, which brings together federal efforts under one strategic framework. The national strategy is based on the internationally recognized pillars of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships and adds a new pillar of empowerment, which focuses on enhancing supports for victims affected by this crime.

Through the national strategy to combat human trafficking, the Government of Canada invested up to \$22.4 million for organizations that are working to prevent human trafficking and support at-risk populations and survivors. Half of these organizations serve indigenous people and 10 are indigenous-led. These projects have increased and will continue to increase access to services and supports for victims and survivors, raise awareness of human trafficking among youth at risk and develop innovative technological ideas to combat human trafficking.

Raising awareness of human trafficking among Canadians is critical. Public Safety launched an awareness campaign, "Human Trafficking: It's Not What It Seems", to educate the public, especially youth and parents, about human trafficking, which included indigenous-specific focus groups. We are also working to develop and support guidelines and training tools for frontline service providers, including specific guidelines to support indigenous survivors.

• (1325)

With these efforts, Public Safety Canada is working with indigenous survivors, communities, organizations and police services to strengthen the safety and security of indigenous women and girls.

Michelle, Mélanie and I would be happy to take your questions.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I will now pass it over to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

Patricia Brady, you have five minutes.

Ms. Patricia Brady (Vice-President, External Relations and Strategic Policy, Impact Assessment Agency of Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon. My name is Patricia Brady. I'm the vice-president of external relations and strategic policy at the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada. I'm joined today by my colleague Brent Parker, director general of strategic policy at the agency.

We're both grateful to be joining the committee today from Ottawa, the traditional unceded and unsurrendered territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

[*Translation*]

I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the committee's study on resource development and violence against indigenous women and girls.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls brought to the fore the devastating scope and scale of the issue, and provided direction to address it. The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, in its role leading federal assessments of major projects, is committed and actively working to address the calls to justice relevant to our work.

[*English*]

The Impact Assessment Agency is responsible for assessing major projects, such as certain large mines, oil facilities and dams, for their positive and negative environmental, economic, social and health impacts, supporting the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Governor in Council in making decisions on those projects. Assessments identify in advance the best ways to avoid or reduce a project's negative impact. They also look to find ways to enhance the positive aspects of a project on health, social or economic outcomes.

The Impact Assessment Act, which came into force in August 2019, replaced the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act of 2012. It governs our work and includes important provisions and process steps that are relevant to the committee's mandate, which I'll highlight now.

First, the Impact Assessment Act's preamble includes the Government of Canada's commitment to reconciliation, to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to ensuring that the rights of indigenous peoples are respected throughout federal impact assessments.

Second, on an assessment and decision-making level, the act requires that a project's impacts on the rights of indigenous peoples and effects to indigenous health, social and economic conditions be considered. The act requires that indigenous knowledge be considered. It specifically requires that indigenous women's knowledge be considered in strategic and regional assessments. We must publicly report how this knowledge is considered while protecting confidential knowledge from disclosure.

The act also requires the application of gender-based analysis plus to understand the disproportionate effects that major projects have on diverse subgroups of people. To support this requirement, we draw on expertise and advice from Women and Gender Equality Canada. The application of gender-based analysis plus means that the disproportionate effects, including impacts to indigenous women's rights and their safety and security, and the mitigation measures can be identified in advance. The decision-maker must take these disproportionate effects and mitigation measures into account in decision-making.

On a process level, to facilitate meaningful participation in an assessment, we require an indigenous engagement and partnership plan to be developed at the outset in order to help guide the assessment. The agency also has an indigenous capacity support program that offers financial supports to indigenous groups so that they are prepared to engage in assessment processes in general, and a funding program to facilitate participation in specific project assessments.

For each project assessed, tailored impact statement guidelines are issued by the agency. These outline the information that proponents must provide in their assessments. To date they have included a requirement that risks to indigenous women's safety and security be considered. The agency has dedicated guidance for proponents on GBA+ in impact assessments, which includes specific reference to calls to justice 13.1 to 13.5.

The process also requires that the proponent mitigate adverse effects to the greatest extent possible. If the project moves forward, these mitigation measures are included as enforceable conditions in the decision statement issued by the minister, and the proponent must comply with them. These would include measures to help protect indigenous women's safety and security.

[Translation]

Finally, in order to improve our processes, over the last number of years, we have been actively working with partners, such as the Native Women's Association of Canada, to better understand the issues and strengthen impact assessment for indigenous women.

The agency has also funded research on gender-based analysis and impact assessment, including reports on specific impacts of major projects on indigenous women and girls.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the committee and contribute to this important work.

• (1330)

[English]

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to start off with our six-minute rounds. We're going to be starting with CPC.

Dominique, I'm going to pass the floor to you. You have six minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for their testimony.

Mrs. Brazeau, your network is well known. What kind of data do you collect? What kind of situations have you gathered information on? What do you know about violence against indigenous women and girls in the context of resource development?

Mrs. Jennifer Brazeau: Friendship centres don't collect data on these issues. However, I can tell you stories of women who have experienced violence in communities further north where there are mining development projects, for example. Of course, these are already vulnerable women. They sometimes fall into prostitution, while many men from abroad come to work for these companies for short periods of time. It certainly contributes to an increase in violence against indigenous women and the exploitation of their bodies in these areas. Often, the increase in violence in the community as a result of the arrival of these companies causes women to leave their communities to try to escape from this system, and they end up on the streets of Montreal, for example.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Clearly, you are at the heart of a network that knows what's going on. The women and the networks talk to you. You're in contact with indigenous communities. Would you say that the situation has worsened, is improving or is stable?

Mrs. Jennifer Brazeau: It's a little difficult to say. I can't say that the situation has worsened or that it's improved. I think it's fairly stable.

That said, the numbers show that indigenous women are still the most likely to be victims of violence. They are caught up in a cycle of violence that continues today, so it is obvious that the situation hasn't been resolved.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mrs. Zinck, Ms. Moran and Ms. Brady talked about initiatives, and we heard the word "millions" often in their presentations, which were also very informative. However, you're telling me that the situation hasn't changed.

Are you seeing the impact of all these investments and initiatives on the ground?

Mrs. Jennifer Brazeau: Investments are important for developing programs and services. However, it's often project-based funding. That doesn't fundamentally contribute to a social awareness and a willingness to change these effects. Action is needed on multiple fronts. For example, systemic racism is embedded in the Canadian system. Indigenous women continue to be discriminated against and exploited. So it's going to take more than a few million dollars to change the situation. It's also going to take social awareness. That's the first thing.

Furthermore, when you're in an emergency situation, you have to first try to stop the bleeding. Right now, we have to stop bleeding in our communities. Then we have to stabilize the situation. Right now, I don't see that the situation has stabilized.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you, Mrs. Brazeau.

Ms. Moran, correct me if I'm wrong, but as I understand it, you support police forces and organizations that work in the field of public safety. However, we've heard that indigenous women and girls have little faith in policing. There appears to be a lack of credibility and trust between the two groups.

How do you respond to that today? You, too, are doing some great things, I agree, but the situation seems a bit different on the ground.

• (1335)

[*English*]

Ms. Christine Moran: We discussed the issue of culturally responsive policing. You are correct when you say that there are many times when women and, I would say more broadly, indigenous people do not trust the police. For this reason, the federal government has embarked upon the co-development of federal legislation to establish first nations police forces and first nations policing as an essential service. That supports culturally responsive, community-driven policing in those communities. It is work that is under way. We are working with the Assembly of First Nations. We have just completed our round of engagement, and we will be publishing a “what we heard” report.

What I can say to add to that is that communities that have—

The Chair: I'm sorry, but we're going to switch to the next question try to ensure that everybody has an opportunity. We can expand into that with the next question.

I'm going to pass it over to Marc Serré. If he wants to continue with the thought, he could.

Carry on, Marc. You have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank everyone here very much for their testimony and their leadership in this area. I could spend a lot of time with each of the witnesses, but unfortunately I only have six minutes, and the chair would call me to order if I went over my time.

My first question is for Senator Audette.

Thank you very much for your leadership on behalf of the indigenous community and for your work as commissioner of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I'd also like to thank you for your comments on the fact that we need to do better and need to continue our calls to action.

I would like to ask you to elaborate on your thoughts. You ended your opening remarks by saying that you were eager to see our recommendations. Since you have a lot of experience in the field, I would really like to hear your recommendations on the topic before us, which is violence against indigenous women and girls in the context of resource development.

Madam Senator, can you give the committee some specific recommendations?

Our committee works very well together. We work in a non-partisan way, and we want to find solutions.

Hon. Michèle Audette: Thank you very much for your question.

The zero tolerance principle must be applied to all forms of violence, whether sexual violence, physical violence, discrimination or racism. It's up to you to develop the wording accordingly.

However, let's remember that the issue of resource exploitation and the rights of indigenous women must not be addressed in isolation. It's also important to think about the relationship with the land, the environment, and so on. All these things are interrelated.

Let's also remember that we have members of Parliament here who represent territories and regions where mining occurs, and this is an issue that involves provincial and territorial governments. The exercise must also be done with those who seem to be giving things away without necessarily listening to our voices on the land.

When it comes to safety, let's make sure that the mechanisms or spaces provided for reporting a situation of violence are known and that they are overseen by people with expertise. I will end briefly with this extremely important recommendation that the presence of an indigenous person is not enough to ensure the legitimacy of a mechanism. For their part, Canadian institutions have a wide range of experts to defend their interests. It's important to reach out to women who have experienced various situations or who have in-depth knowledge of indigenous issues.

Mr. Marc Serré: Excellent. Thank you, Madam Senator.

• (1340)

[*English*]

My next question is for Kimberley Zinck at NRCan.

As a parliamentary secretary in the last parliament, I worked closely with NRCan and was just amazed at the number of indigenous staff involved with NRCan. I want to ask you to expand, Kimberley, on what NRCan has done as a department to look at the implementation of UNDRIP, especially when you look at the original documents that include several articles on indigenous women. How is the work that you've done helping to ensure that it is expanded across the country here in the natural resources sector?

Ms. Kimberley Zinck: Thank you very much for the question.

There's so much that's being done within the organization to promote diversity and inclusion, particularly in terms of hiring and making sure that indigenous voices are represented at our own tables.

I spoke in my opening remarks about the change that we made as an organization by merging the major projects management office with indigenous affairs and reconciliation. By doing that, we are bringing that indigenous perspective to everything we do. We are organizing ourselves to work with partners across the federal family to deliver on UNDRIP and on the federal pathways.

We have an indigenous employee network, for example, and we have folks in the organization who are responsible for equity, diversity and inclusion. That's just the internal-facing work that we're doing, and it's not only within one sector of the department, but across all sectors.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you for that answer.

[*Translation*]

I'd like to ask one last question.

Mrs. Brazeau, thank you for the work you do. Indigenous friendship centres, both in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, are so important.

Could you tell us more about the phenomenon of the many fly-in, fly-out trips to work at the resource development sites?

I'd also like to hear about your experience with the agreements negotiated with the communities on impacts and benefits. Do you have any experience with that? The natural resources sector sometimes negotiates with indigenous boards, some of which are entirely male. Do you have any experience or recommendations on how to enrich the negotiations on the benefits that are given to communities?

Mrs. Jennifer Brazeau: Since I don't work directly in the communities, I can't really speak to the impact of negotiated agreements.

However, at another time, I worked for Quebec Native Women, and I can tell you that this organization was created to give indigenous women a voice.

The scope of consultations could certainly be broadened so that they aren't limited to band councils. Other parties and community members who will be affected should also be contacted. It's also important to remember that the issue is even broader and that urban indigenous people are also affected by developments in the communities.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you.

I think my time is up, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: There we go. I'm sorry. It's like I have not used Zoom for the last while.

I'm going to now pass it over to Andréanne Larouche.

Andréanne, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Like my colleagues, I too would like to thank the witnesses who are appearing today to speak to us on this issue.

Recent events remind us that behind the statistics and numbers that show some disproportionate effects on indigenous women, there are sad faces, experiences and stories. For all of these reasons, we need to address this issue and work together to find solutions.

My first question is for Senator Audette.

You talked about the money that was promised to implement the recommendations. I would like you to tell us more about that. These are huge sums of money that are currently being withheld. What are the repercussions of withholding these amounts? Money is promised, but it still has to be put to use if we want to succeed in implementing various projects. Could you explain further why it is important for the money to be put to use?

Hon. Michèle Audette: Thank you for that important question, Ms. Larouche.

As to how to invest and spend money, Canada has long followed criteria that were rigidly complex for organizations on the ground, particularly those that were small or far from major urban centres and that, therefore, did not have access to consultants and experts who could write projects based on federal culture. COVID-19 broke all that. We were able to save lives, support people, be creative and be in action rather than in reaction.

This is a national crisis, a national tragedy. Indigenous women are disappearing or dying every week in Canada. However, we realize that the rules and ways of drafting projects remain as rigid as before. How do you tell women who are saving lives on the ground that they have to meet the criteria set by a particular federal government program?

When it comes to investing in infrastructure to build buildings and spaces, for example, or to renovate or build houses to protect women, it's understandable that not all the money is spent right away. However, I don't understand why it's difficult to receive funding for some amazing initiatives that save lives or help people. That's a question that should be answered by the government.

● (1345)

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Can you give me an example of these great initiatives? During our study, a number of witnesses showed us how important it is to take into account the indigenous experience and culture, as well as the different realities of these women. They also have a different vision of healing and reconciliation.

Hon. Michèle Audette: I was in the Yukon a few weeks ago, where people presented to us the progress of their work around the national inquiry and their respective action plans, which were developed in collaboration with grassroots women's organizations, indigenous governments and the Yukon government.

We see a difference. We see that a series of initiatives by individuals working in the territory have allowed people to reconnect with their language and culture. I first went to the Yukon when I was with the Native Women's Association of Canada, I went back as commissioner, I went again several years later, and I saw a difference every time. I saw the light in the eyes of families and survivors. It was because of what followed the national inquiry that their healing process took place. That's what helped these people.

Why not support this kind of thing across Canada? Women have the experience and expertise. One of the calls for justice is to ensure that women are always at the centre of any initiatives that are proposed, whether it's by an indigenous, provincial or federal government.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: In other words, these women must be allowed to take charge of their lives and regain their power, by underscoring the importance of their culture. This makes them less likely to be exploited by companies that come to carry out different projects in the area.

Hon. Michèle Audette: We have to trust them, because they have the necessary expertise. If they don't have our trust, they won't hesitate to go elsewhere. For example, the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society gave you a nice brief. These women live next to mining projects.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Senator Audette.

You just talked about the importance of the land. Mrs. Brazeau, from the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec, also stressed the importance of community involvement across the land, both in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

In fact, my fellow members of Parliament in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region are well aware of the number of employees who travel back and forth on resource development projects and the impact of this reality on indigenous women.

Mrs. Brazeau, you spoke briefly about what is happening in your friendship centres. How can these centres be part of the process and play an important role in preventing the exploitation of indigenous women?

Mrs. Jennifer Brazeau: As Ms. Audette has explained, the healing process and the protective factors go hand in hand with cultural revitalization, when women are allowed to live their culture and reclaim their territory. You can't take the aboriginal woman out of her territory. It is extremely important to establish the connection, but also to consult women and hear what they have to say when new projects come up.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I understand what you are saying: it is important to work in consultation with aboriginal women and to place them at the centre of the whole process.

I imagine that it is also important to re-establish their trust in certain authorities, so that they can denounce certain situations. I will come back to this in a later round of questions.

[English]

The Chair: That's awesome. Thank you so much.

We're going to pass it over to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have six minutes.

• (1350)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Thank you so much, Chair.

My first question is for Madam Zinck from the Department of Natural Resources.

You spoke about how your department is trying to integrate indigenous perspectives in revamping your department, but here's the thing. In the last Parliament, this government put into law Bill C-15 to see the full implementation and adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, so we need to go beyond perspectives to actually getting free, prior and informed consent. I want to define that for you: "free" means free of coercion and intimidation; "prior" means prior to development; and "informed" means knowing what the development is about and all of the impacts of that development. It's only when you have those three things that you actually have consent.

I'm going to give you an example. In Wet'suwet'en territory, the RCMP came in and took down the door of two unarmed women on their unceded territory with an axe, a chainsaw and an attack dog. Do you think that kind of behaviour is consistent with FPIC, going back to free of coercion and intimidation, yes or no?

Ms. Kimberley Zinck: Thank you very much for the question.

Events like that definitely sadden me. Expectations are high and—

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm sorry. I have very limited time and important questions. I would like a yes-or-no answer. Did that meet requirements in being free of intimidation and coercion? Give me a yes or no.

Ms. Kimberley Zinck: I'm sorry that the answer to that question is not a yes or no. What I can tell you is that recently, having heard from—

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm going to move on. I'm sorry to interrupt.

Ms. Kimberley Zinck: Okay.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I think it was a clear act of intimidation, so I would say, no, you did not meet the criteria for FPIC.

Moving on, I'd like to point my next question to Madam Moran.

One of the things you shared was that your department is working hard with police services to ensure the safety of indigenous women and girls. Does the RCMP fall under your department? Give me a yes or no.

Ms. Christine Moran: The RCMP is part of the Public Safety portfolio.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Perfect. Thank you.

You spoke specifically about TMX in one of your examples, and we're talking about ensuring the safety of indigenous women. I want to quote Chief Judy Wilson, who is the secretary-treasurer of the UBCIC. She said the following in regard to indigenous women on Secwepemc territory:

The Tiny House Warriors are a group of Indigenous women, families, and land defenders who are exercising their inherent right to live on their lands as their Ancestors have done since time immemorial. They are being targeted for upholding their sovereignty and opposing the construction of the TMX and associated work camps that are known for increasing the risks of violence, assault, and intimidation against Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people.

She went on to condemn it. This was a press release about the UBCIC's calls for an end to surveillance and intimidation of Tiny House Warriors and indigenous land defenders. Do you think that kind of behaviour makes indigenous women feel safe on their unceded territories, yes or no?

Ms. Christine Moran: Madam Chair, what I can say is—

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay. I'll reframe my question. If you were being intimidated and surveilled at your home, would you feel safe? Give me a yes or no.

Ms. Christine Moran: Madam Chair, is that a question for Public Safety?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Yes.

The Chair: It has become a little bit more personal. I absolutely respect—

Ms. Leah Gazan: Fair enough, Madam Chair. I withdraw the question. I'm moving on.

The Chair: Leah, I'm not going to take any time away from you. Don't worry. Rather than direct it to Ms. Moran, let's direct it more to the whole. I do understand you're coming from the heart.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I will for sure to withdraw that question.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I've given a couple of examples. I know I was very pointed in my questions, but I've heard a lot of discourse today, but when I look at the news and the behaviour on the ground, it's certainly not consistent with what's being shared today. I think it's important to point out to this committee that indigenous women are currently being targeted and surveilled. For example, police services that are supposed to be put in place to actually protect people are actually creating harm.

I want to move on to Senator Audette.

I want to lift you up for all the work you've done in this area. We both know that indigenous women are often too traumatized and afraid to press charges on the violence they experience in “man camps” or at the hands of police.

You noted in an interview with Al Jazeera that you are personally aware of at least three indigenous women who have been raped in a “man camp” in Quebec. My question to you is, what must be done to ensure that we not only address the root of violence and address violence but also ensure that there are safe, accessible, transparent and accountable processes that protect women and support them to share their experiences and heal?

• (1355)

The Chair: My dog, of course, is barking.

Leah, I really respect all of this. We won't have time for that full answer, but there will be lots of time going forward.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Sure. Thank you.

The Chair: To our last witness, I as the chair apologize for not just jumping in immediately. We usually, as I said, have more of an informal setting. I do recognize that this is a very, very sensitive issue, especially for those who have been impacted. I do apologize to our last witness for not jumping in sooner.

Let's just continue getting right on track. I really respect that. We'll have time to have Ms. Audette answer that question on Leah's next turn. I'm going to pass it over to Shelby Kramp for five minutes.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think we can all, certainly, acknowledge that there's a lot of content that is disturbing but 100% very necessary to speak to.

My first question will be posed to the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. I believe it's Madam Moran.

One initiative of the national strategy to combat human trafficking from 2019 to 2024—and I'll just recap it quickly—was to develop multi-sectoral training tools that are culturally relevant and gender-responsive for frontline service providers and targeted groups from a variety of different sectors, such as hospitality and transportation, to increase awareness of the indicators and signs of human trafficking and enable employees to effectively identify victims.

The first part of my question is what progress has Public Safety made with regard to developing these tools that are spoken about in that?

Ms. Christine Moran: Thank you for the question. I'm going to ask Ms. Van De Bogart to respond.

Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart (Director General, Law Enforcement and Border Strategies, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you very much for the question.

I can tell you that this is one activity we are currently working on. A contract has been awarded and we are working on the guidelines themselves.

You mentioned it's to train people who are in industry or in business. We are focusing on four key areas. In hospitality, we're focusing on people like front-desk workers or those who are cleaning hotel rooms. In the health centres, we're focusing on nurses, because we know that many people who are victims of human trafficking enter the health care system through the ERs. From a transportation perspective, we're focusing on the aviation sector. The last area we're targeting is foreign workers. As we know, while many of the victims of human trafficking are for sexual exploitation, human trafficking does exploit those who are working as well.

What I can tell you is that work is well under way.

Just one last thing I want to add is that the materials for the tools will be informed by survivors of both sexual and labour exploitation in Canada.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Okay. Thank you for that.

Just to supplement that question, how, if at all, do or will these training tools take into account the actual unique experiences of indigenous women and girls with human trafficking? What we're really trying to find and what we need to see is some data-driven material. Where are the unique experiences coming into the report?

Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart: I'd like to take us back to before the action plan or the strategy was created. Prior to that, we did extensive stakeholder engagement, which involved engagement with indigenous individuals, those with lived experiences, a lot of NGOs, academia and FPTs.

Also, as we've been launching different parts of our action plan or the strategy, we've been continuing to reach out to engage with those with lived experiences, including indigenous peoples. Once again, as we are developing these tools, as I mentioned, they will be informed by the survivors of sexual and labour exploitation. We know that these survivors, at a disproportionate rate, tend to be indigenous people.

It's very key for us, under the empowerment pillar, that we ensure that the voices of those who have been victims and survivors of human trafficking be taken into consideration at each and every step of the implementation of our national strategy.

• (1400)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: That's excellent. Thank you.

With the Honourable Michèle Audette in the room, perhaps I'll pose the next question to her.

Thank you very much for all that you do and continue to do. Honourable Michèle Audette, the national inquiry cited several factors that contribute to violence against indigenous women and girls, such as substance abuse, addictions and economic insecurity. What can the federal government do to help increase indigenous women's economic security and to support those who are facing substance abuse problems? It seems as though there's a tremendous amount of conversation, concern and talk, and study after study, but where are we at and where are we going in terms of giving some substantive solutions to a significant problem?

The Chair: That's a very long question, so Honourable Michèle Audette, I'll give you about 20 extra seconds there.

Shelby, I'll give you some extra time there.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michèle Audette: I'm sorry, I'm not a minister. I'm happy to be a senator.

What I can say in 20 seconds is that we must remember that drug addiction is the result of intergenerational and multigenerational colonial violence. That is where it has its roots. We need to collectively address this colonial violence, and women and girls need to be at the centre of the initiatives. This is what I think is most important. We also need to give the indigenous women's organizations that are on the ground long-term, core funding rather than project-based funding.

[*English*]

The Chair: Emmanuella, I'm going to pass it over to you now for five minutes.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to begin by thanking all of the witnesses for being here for this great testimony today.

My first questions are for Ms. Moran and Ms. Zinck. We can have the answers in that order.

I've heard that a lot of different programs you mentioned are being put in place to protect indigenous women and girls. We are also hearing that on the ground it's not necessarily being shown that a difference is actually being made. What are your ways of measuring the success of the programs that are being implemented? Do you have any data in front of you that can show us that kind of a difference that's been made during the time you've been practising these activities or these practices?

Ms. Christine Moran: Thank you.

With respect to at least first nations and Inuit policing programs, we do collect data. Part of that data is correlated with external data. What I can say is that we know from our own data collection that community members who have a self-administered police force in their community feel far more secure and they more comfortable interacting with the police.

The national indigenous centre on information and governance has cited that more than 30% of community members with the self-administered police force report feeling safe, whereas fewer than 10% who do not have a self-administered force report feeling safe. That is an important factor. That's a really important figure for us.

We do know through our own tracking that we are also seeing that when we make investments in community policing in first nations communities, we're seeing better outcomes.

• (1405)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

Ms. Zinck.

Ms. Kimberley Zinck: While I don't have data to share with you today, I can absolutely get that information on the performance measures and indicators with respect to our programming dedicated towards these issues and share it with the committee.

What I can tell you, however, is that in particular the socio-economic subcommittee of the Indigenous Advisory and Monitoring Committee for TMX has been working in partnership with indigenous communities and those who are impacted by the Trans Mountain expansion project. They have identified access to traditional harvesting and hunting sites, addressing incidents of racism that occur on and off construction sites, among other things as their top priorities.

I do believe we have some metrics from the work of that committee, which we'll be able to share with you. I understand they have provided a brief to this committee for the purpose of this study.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Senator, you have already given a partial answer to the question I wanted to ask you. You said that, at present, funding was only granted when projects were submitted and that this did not necessarily work for aboriginal communities. I would like you to add some details to what you said. We're trying to get some concrete recommendations in the context of this study, so if you have a specific recommendation to make, we'd appreciate it.

Hon. Michèle Audette: Thank you very much for the question. It allows me to address one of the aspects that I was unable to explain.

Often the federal government goes through national organizations like the Assembly of Chiefs or the Native Women's Association of Canada, which may not be the ones on the ground. I would encourage us to put on moccasins and step into the shoes of the people in the communities of Pakua Shipu, Obedjiwan or Pikogan, for example, who live far from urban centres and who do not necessarily have an immediate relationship with these national organizations. It is rare to see long-term funding that is grassroots driven and contributes to wellness. The government needs to innovate and establish this kind of dialogue. Actually, I wouldn't call it innovative; it's a legal imperative. We need to go to where there are humanitarian crises, to communities far from Montreal and Quebec City, where I come from, that don't have the same means or the

same capacity to benefit from the billions of dollars that have been announced.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I have less than 30 seconds left in my time, so I will stop here.

Thank you very much for all your answers.

Hon. Michèle Audette: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I will now pass it over to Andréanne Larouche.

Andréanne, you have two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I was going to wipe my eyes. I realize that today's debate is making me particularly emotional. This is the last meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women this session. For me, this session has been marked by the birth of my first baby girl. When we talk about violence against women, I am particularly affected at this time. I'm sorry, I'm a bit emotional today.

On the subject of violence against women, I wonder how we can increase women's sense of confidence in the communities. This is a determining factor, which can lead these women to denounce certain situations. That's what I was saying at the end of my first round.

Ms. Brady, you touched on this issue quickly. I would like you to tell me what more could be done at present to increase this feeling of safety.

[English]

The Chair: Did you want to direct that to someone specifically?

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I put my question to Ms. Brady. I believe she is the one who raised this issue.

Otherwise, Ms. Moran could also answer a question about human trafficking.

I talked about numbers earlier. In fact, I had the opportunity to replace someone on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. We saw, once again, that women were much more affected in certain interventions. In Bill C-5, I spoke this week on the impact of mandatory minimum sentences on the overrepresentation of women in prison.

Ms. Brady and Ms. Moran, I'd like to hear your thoughts on this sense of safety and confidence. Can you tell me what more could be done to increase that?

• (1410)

[English]

Ms. Christine Moran: Madam Chair, I note that the question was directed to me and Ms. Brady.

I am not in a position to answer that directly. I'll take note of it and provide you with an answer on that issue.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Okay.

As I said earlier, behind the statistics, there is a reality. The bill deals with mandatory minimum sentences, but it also deals with diversion and the consequences it could have.

Senator Audette, you talked about the connection, the healing process, and the impact on communities, and you said that we need to look at this as a public health issue. We can come back to that in a future round and talk about some of the solutions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Andr anne, we absolutely will do so.

I'll now pass it over to Leah.

Leah, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you.

Again, Senator Audette, thank you so much for being here. I lift you up for the work you've done on this critical issue.

I spoke a little bit about women not wanting to come forward when they experience violence, whether by perpetrators in "man camps" or by police. I gave a couple of examples of ongoing police violence. I'm wondering if you could share what needs to be done to ensure that the root causes are addressed to deal with this ongoing issue of violence and to put in place processes that are safe, accessible, transparent and accountable to make sure that women and girls are protected.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mich le Audette: Thank you very much for that important question, Ms. Gazan.

We have heard initiatives from members of the government. But initiatives go hand in hand with political will or political colour. The day we have our own autonomous governments, that will be another answer.

Before we get to that point, the federal, provincial and territorial governments have responsibilities. We need to change the culture and the way things are done in government. If there are no laws that impose accountability, transparency and forms of penalties to ensure respect for human rights, particularly in the areas of public health, individual health and safety, and if these rights are only taken into account in one-off initiatives, we will unfortunately see the same thing next year and in 10 years.

We don't know the laws and we don't see them. They need to have teeth, so that there is zero tolerance for any form of violence.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

You spoke specifically of call for justice 1.7 to appoint an ombudsman to oversee...and you said that we needed it implemented "yesterday". Can you expand on that?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mich le Audette: Of course.

We can draw the same parallel. What we're talking about here is everything that's happening in the aboriginal territories in the context of resource development, but it's also important to look at all the institutions, services, or programs that indigenous women and girls are entitled to, or would be entitled to, but don't even know about. If initiatives are always used to stifle a crisis, it is—

[*English*]

The Chair: Senator, we will have to get back to you. We do have lots of time still, so we'll get back to you on that.

Hon. Mich le Audette: Sure.

The Chair: I will now pass it over to Dominique.

Dominique, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would like us to take a greater interest in the companies that exploit resources on the territory, which have all the permits to do so, and which take in employees who come from far away, for short periods at a time. These men go to work for these companies, leave and come back later, with money in their pockets, of course. We know what happens next. I would like us to look at the responsibility of these companies.

Ms. Zinck, you work for the Department of Natural Resources. Ms. Audette was talking about laws and the need to change mentalities. On the government side, but particularly in your department, what are the connections with companies? Do you have a certain clout? Are you able to follow up with businesses, to impose things on them or to ensure that they are good corporate citizens, that they adequately assume their responsibilities, that they apply zero tolerance to violence against women living in the environment where the businesses are located, that their employees are well informed and that they know the consequences they face?

Can you give me a quick answer, please?

• (1415)

Mrs. Kimberley Zinck: Thank you very much for the question.

I'll answer in English.

[*English*]

What I can tell you is that the Canada Energy Regulator does require companies like Trans Mountain Corporation to put in place things like a socio-economic effects monitoring plan, a worker accommodation strategy and community benefits programs. The Canada Energy Regulator does hold the corporation to account with respect to the requirements that are set out. That's part of the 156 binding conditions—

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: In concrete terms, what are you telling me today?

[English]

Ms. Kimberley Zinck: What I'm saying today is that there are 156 binding conditions on the Trans Mountain expansion project and, as part of that, the corporation must have in place a worker accommodation strategy, which it does. There are also provincial conditions that are layered on top of that in addition: another worker accommodation strategy at the federal and provincial levels for projects like that as well as others.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: How does that protect women?

I would ask you to answer quickly, Ms. Zinck, because I also want to talk to Ms. Audette.

[English]

Ms. Kimberley Zinck: The worker accommodation strategies are developed by the corporation in consultation with the indigenous advisory and monitoring committee, as well as communities that are on the ground, so that they are meaningful and take into account the unique circumstances of the communities in which those camps are situated.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: That's fine.

Good afternoon, Ms. Audette. I am pleased to speak to you this afternoon, although I do not have much time, as you can see.

What can we say or do? How can we bring together people from the police, from the municipal governments, from the workers' unions, from the aboriginal communities, not to mention the bosses of these companies, to make sure that mentalities change and that there is someone who is watching what is going on?

Hon. Michèle Audette: I really like your question, Ms. Vien.

That should be one of the recommendations in your report: in the various regions of Canada, a circle of organizations and people like those you have named should be involved in this kind of exercise. As it were, this is what we are doing in the context of the regional first nations economic circle, which is currently being held in Mashteuiatsh. It's a formula we like to use to talk about the economy, but we could also use a forum like this to talk about issues like the one your committee is studying. I'm sure there are companies that would say they've gone further than what's been proposed by some of the members of this committee.

There may be some good initiatives—

Mrs. Dominique Vien: This seems to me to be the beginning of something. We have to get everyone together. No matter how many great policies are developed and how many generous funding envelopes are given to them, if we don't get people from the same community together to talk about the same things in the same language in order to identify and name the issues, mentalities will not change.

Hon. Michèle Audette: That's right. Social acceptability will not be easy either. If we set up advisory committees without representa-

tion from women with a survivor's experience, we run the risk of missing the mark, despite our good intentions.

I support your comment. In fact, you should make this a recommendation.

• (1420)

Mrs. Dominique Vien: But it's so simple.

I have no further questions, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm now going to pass it over to Jenna.

Jenna, you have six minutes.

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you very much to all of the incredible witnesses for your testimony here today. It's such an important discussion.

I think I'd like to start with Ms. Brady from the Impact Assessment Agency.

In your testimony, you had started to describe the GBA+ model a bit and mentioned mitigation measures. Could you share with us what you expect and what we all should be expecting of any resource extraction company as they begin a project as far as mitigation measures are concerned?

Ms. Patricia Brady: Thanks for the question.

I did speak to mitigation measures.

First, as I mentioned, GBA+ analysis now is a required part of the impact assessment of a project. Projects that come under the federal system will be required to do a GBA+ analysis. Proponents will be required to consider and study the issue, including mitigation measures, in advance.

We haven't had a project go through the new act yet, but we expect that conditions such as physical site and security measures, employee support programs, employment policies and conditions related to harassment or anti-harassment, education awareness programs and support for community social infrastructure could be among some of the mitigation measures put in place as binding conditions. Those conditions are binding and subject to monitoring and enforcement under the act.

Ms. Jenna Sudds: Thank you very much.

If I recall correctly, the act came into place in August 2019. You're saying it hasn't been utilized yet. No company has come through this legislation yet.

Ms. Patricia Brady: I'm sorry. No.

We have 19 projects under the system now, but none have come all the way through to the point where we have binding conditions in place. We are, however, now requiring that GBA+ be done on all of those projects and that those mitigation measures be considered. Ultimately, when we have decisions under the Impact Assessment Act, we expect that they will include conditions related to the security and safety of indigenous women.

Ms. Jenna Sudds: Excellent. Thanks for that clarification.

Perhaps it's early days to ask this question, but I will, in case it's not. Are you starting to see the impact of this new legislation coming to fruition as these companies are going through the process?

Ms. Patricia Brady: It's hard to say what the impact of conditions is, because we don't have any in place yet. The consciousness and sensibility around GBA+ and the application by proponents are improving across the board.

In terms of whether concrete measures are having an impact, we don't have that kind of information yet.

Ms. Jenna Sudds: Fair enough. Thank you very much.

I'll direct my next questions to Ms. Moran with Public Safety. We've had some discussion today around whether indigenous women are feeling safe in their communities and their interactions with our various police forces.

Can you share comments on progress that's been made on the co-development of the first nations police services legislation?

Ms. Christine Moran: In fact, I can. We have embarked upon the co-development in earnest. We have completed 12 rounds of virtual engagement sessions and an additional one, which we held directly with Quebec. The others were national in scope.

We examined the issues related to what is required to establish first nations policing as an essential service. We looked at roles and responsibilities. We looked at questions such as what the definition of an essential service is. Every session that we had came to discussions of funding and the structures there. There was a lot of candour in those sessions. We are working to analyze all of the input.

We continue to work with the AFN, as well as with other partners and technical experts, such as the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association, who have a lot to provide us with respect to advice on this issue. We will continue to advise on progress.

• (1425)

Ms. Jenna Sudds: Excellent. Thank you very much.

I believe I have just a few seconds left, so I'll pass it back to the chair.

The Chair: Fantastic. Thank you so much.

I'll pass it over for the next six minutes to Andréanne Larouche.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I said I would come back to the question of funding for organizations. You said that we sometimes go through national organizations rather than granting funding directly to organizations in the

field. You also mentioned some fine names of Quebec communities.

However, we can see that many organizations that deal with victims or that work in the field with women are funded by Quebec's ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. These organizations also do important prevention work. It is therefore also important to have funding through transfers. It is crucial to support the associations that help victims.

Hon. Michèle Audette: The best example I could give you is a fresh one. The Department of Public Safety says that it held a virtual consultation across Canada. In several communities in Quebec, there are first nations police services. To what extent have the women in these communities been encouraged to express themselves in a safe manner on the pros and cons or on the things that can be improved or changed in terms of public safety?

I'll end with a very powerful example. During the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls, these women dared to speak out. Afterwards, a parallel investigation was launched and someone was dismissed, because there had been misconduct. But this is only one case, and it took courage on the part of a mother and her son.

If we could hear the voices of these women, they might give good advice on how to improve initiatives that affect us directly.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Senator and Ms. Brazeau, I also invite you to respond and give us your point of view.

I saw your reaction to Ms. Vien's proposal. Once again, it comes back to the importance of having a form of consultation. Besides, this is a characteristic that we find a lot in the community world and that comes from the aboriginal communities, which consult each other and engage in dialogue. This may be a possible solution.

On the question of firearms, we suggested setting up a joint squad to work on the problems of violence. This idea could be expanded to include violence against women, which they may even experience in the context of resource exploitation.

Senator, I know that you have already reacted to this proposal for better consultation.

Ms. Brazeau, I don't know if you have anything to add.

There is another issue I would like to address. It is for department officials, but Ms. Brazeau and Ms. Audette can also speak if they want to.

Many of the resource projects are in remote and isolated communities. Isolated communities were also discussed in a previous study by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on intimate partner violence. We also talked about it in the last Parliament, when we were doing a study on the difference in services for women in rural and urban areas. So it's already been addressed in several other studies.

I invite any of the department officials present to answer my question, which concerns access to help and support resources for women who are victims of violence and live in remote areas. The fact that these businesses are often located in areas far from major centres creates isolation, which is an aggravating factor.

Do these communities have special needs? How is the government responding to this very real problem?

• (1430)

[English]

Ms. Christine Moran: I believe that question is directed generally.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: That's right. I would like to know how each of the departments perceives its interventions in response to the fact that many of the situations we are talking about today occur in remote areas.

[English]

Ms. Christine Moran: What I can say from the perspective of Public Safety—and I would refer to our aboriginal community safety planning initiative—is that it is aimed at bringing together the community with provinces, territories, local governments and industry to look at issues affecting community safety.

You have asked about the remoteness factor and isolation, and certainly, many of the first nations communities that we're dealing with are in isolated areas, so I can say that we are directing our efforts there.

Another point I would make is that we are striving to take a trauma-informed approach and to ensure that in those perspectives, there are sensitivity and culturally responsive responses in our programming and our policies.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: I'd like to raise another question, which any department official is welcome to answer. We can talk more about it if I have another opportunity to speak.

When it comes to businesses in remote areas, we also see that it is important to improve the information gathering on cases in order to propose solutions. Unfortunately, it was noted that the gender-based analysis plus is often poorly applied and that it is difficult to obtain figures.

Could one of the department officials tell us how important it is to continue to look for this data in order to be able to propose solutions?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Larouche.

[English]

I will now turn the next six minutes over to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have the floor.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much, Chair.

I'd like to allow Senator Audette to continue responding about call to action 1.7 and the ombudsman.

[Translation]

Hon. Mich le Audette: Thank you very much, Ms. Gazan.

I do not consider the issues and topics that affect first peoples to be strictly aboriginal issues. These are cross-cutting issues that concern or affect us as they would in the case of a person from Quebec or the Northwest Territories.

We must have independent and safe spaces, bringing together a multitude of human, scientific and theoretical expertise and experience, which will ensure that the truth is always maintained. I repeat that calls for justice are legal imperatives. If there is an injustice, we will denounce it in the right place and we know that it will be treated correctly and respectfully and that it will influence policies, laws or the way things are done in Canada.

For its part, the initiative or project approach does not work, as we have seen with the passing decades.

If those spaces I mentioned, whether it's an ombudsman's office or a committee, have the ability and the right to report to Parliament, that will also help you, whether you're in the opposition or the government, to honour the changes that are long overdue. Until we have that, Ms. Gazan, I will make it my "battle caribou."

[English]

It's a French expression.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm learning French. I'm trying my best.

My next question is for Madame Brazeau.

I know that you spoke a bit about your centre and what it does, but we have heard witnesses share about the barriers and trauma that indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people face in reporting the violence they experience from "man camps". However, even when survivors come forward and report the violence, they are faced with additional harm and violence from police. I know that I keep going back to policing, because the sad part of this is that even the systems that are supposed to protect us abuse us, so where are we to go?

We also know from the national inquiry that many indigenous women in Val-d'Or have suffered extreme abuse by the S ret  du Qu bec. Certainly, because of the extreme violence being experienced by women who lived in surrounding communities, former premier Couillard put forward a complement to the inquiry. Also, that's certainly not just happened in Quebec. We saw that in the report that came out of Saskatchewan. It's across the country.

Do you have any recommendations to ensure that not only do we address the violence within the resource extraction sites and adjacent communities, but also that survivors coming forward are not further harmed by police?

• (1435)

Ms. Jennifer Brazeau: I think we have quite a few recommendations that were already also given to the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

In Quebec, we also had a commission called the “Commission Viens”, which investigated the relationship following the events that happened in Val-d’Or, the relationship between indigenous people and those public services. There were many recommendations that were given.

I think it's a huge issue that we need to be able to tackle, because there is a lack of confidence toward the police and policing services by indigenous women. I see it with members who come to our centre who do not want to approach the police to make a complaint. Oftentimes, they don't feel, one, that they are taken seriously and, two, they have a fear of being criminalized themselves when approaching police services. Also, they may have had violent experiences, as you said, with the police services previously. There are many different barriers toward indigenous women being able to approach the police.

One thing we can do is to ensure that women who are going to make a complaint with the police are accompanied. I know there are a lot of different rules, too, on the level of accompaniment that women can have when they're filing a complaint, and which I think need to be looked at. If you're a woman who is making a complaint about sexualized violence, there are often systems put in place where you can no longer be accompanied by an intervention worker for fear of nuancing the testimony, but at the same time, a woman can't testify if she doesn't feel safe and secure.

Ms. Leah Gazan: How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You have 34 seconds.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay. Very quickly, Madam Brady or Mr. Parker, what changes, if any, have been made within the IAA processes to implement call for justice 13.3?

Ms. Patricia Brady: The Impact Assessment Act includes provisions for GBA+ and for the security and safety of indigenous women and girls to be considered in all impact assessments. We also have a research program in place, which responds to call for justice 13.4. So far, we have dispensed about \$900,000 over 11 different projects and research into the issue.

I see I'm being told to wrap up.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're now going to our final round of five minutes, five minutes, two and a half minutes and two and a half minutes.

We'll start with Shelby Kramp-Neuman for five minutes.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My first question in the second round will be for Madam Brady with the Impact Assessment Agency.

The Assembly of First Nations explained that the data that was publicly available on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls was oversimplified and under-represented the scale of the issue, yet it still demonstrates a complex and pervasive pattern of violence against indigenous women and girls. In the committee's ongoing study, some witnesses have mentioned the lack of data with regard to the relationship between violence against indigenous women and girls and the resource development projects.

How does the IAA ensure that it is accurately assessing the impact of environmental projects, despite the clear lack of available data?

• (1440)

Ms. Patricia Brady: The information on specific project assessments comes directly from the communities implicated. We're not relying on national statistics or, necessarily, quantitative data. We're required to consider indigenous knowledge and community knowledge. It doesn't need to be statistical or quantitative.

We rely on lived experience of the community and its concerns, and engage throughout the process.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Perfect. Thank you.

My next question is for you again.

Are you aware of the resource extraction projects or companies that have implemented initiatives to reduce the negative impacts of the projects on indigenous women and girls? If so, could you possibly share some examples of any initiatives by those particular companies? Do you know if those initiatives have been successful or not?

Ms. Patricia Brady: My colleagues from NRCAN can speak to TMX and those conditions. They have mentioned them.

As I mentioned before, under the Impact Assessment Act, GBA+ is new, but we have some experience under the former Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, where the Mikisew Cree were partnered in doing the impact assessment. Under their regime, GBA+ was required.

In that context, there's a project called the Rose lithium mine. The proponent considered GBA+ and indigenous women's safety, and put mitigation measures in place itself. In that case, there are mitigation measures in place. It committed and undertook to provide a healthy work environment where sexual harassment would not be tolerated. It included conditions of employment prohibiting harassment, as well as mandatory harassment and awareness training, rigorous follow-up of harassment cases and a monitoring program.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Perfect. Thank you.

Was there someone else who was going to be answering the other part of that?

Ms. Kimberley Zinck: I can speak to the Trans Mountain expansion project, as well as the towards sustainable mining initiative.

With the Trans Mountain expansion project, the Trans Mountain Corporation, through its worker accommodation strategy and the socio-economic monitoring plans, has put in place rigorous initiatives that take into account the impact of the project on the security of the communities where it is operating. I know that the corporation takes security very seriously, working in partnership with local communities, local law enforcement and its own security.

In the mining industry, the towards sustainable mining initiative places expectations on member mining companies to adhere to a set of principles that are directed toward the safety and security of the communities and the women and girls who live in those communities.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: That's perfect. Thank you.

Assuming I have a little bit of time left, I'll pose my last question to Honourable Audette.

With regard to the final report of the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, I can certainly appreciate—and I respect your commenting—that there's so much generational trauma and that that's the root of the issue, but can you clarify in what ways distinct groups of indigenous women and girls might have different needs from one another?

Hon. Michèle Audette: I'm not sure I understand the question.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: For example, could you speak about the unique experiences of first nation, Inuit and/or Métis women and girls who are encountering the violence and whether there are differences in needs from one group to another?

Hon. Michèle Audette: Yes, there are.

I'm from a place where the mining industry looks like the biggest golf course in Schefferville, there are so many holes there.

If we have a healing approach or a healing process in place there, it's not something I can bring back to the native friendship centre in Joliette, because the reality is different, as are the protocols, the culture and the language. My spirituality is not the same as that of my sister in the Haida nation and so on. This is why it's very important that we do respect the people of the land and how they see their healing process.

The Chair: Wonderful. Thank you so much.

I'm just going to pass it over now to Sonia.

You have five minutes.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

For my last minute, I just want to start with Ms. Van De Bogart.

First of all, thank you to all of the witnesses.

Thank you, honourable Senator Audette, for your work and all that you do and for being with us.

My first question is for Ms. Larocque. Ms. Van De Bogart, you can also expand on this.

We all know that appropriate health and social services are much needed in indigenous communities. For increasing awareness, you said that engagement with the NGOs is very much needed too.

What kind of awareness campaign is going on? Can you expand on that?

• (1445)

Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart: My apologies. Was that directed to me?

The Chair: Sonia, who would you like to answer the question?

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Ms. Van De Bogart can give the answer.

Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart: I believe what you're asking—and please correct me if I'm wrong so that I can respond accordingly—is about the awareness of health workers to be able to identify potential victims of human trafficking and what we're doing in that respect. Would that be correct?

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Yes, it's to combat human trafficking. You can also expand on that too.

Ms. Michelle Van De Bogart: Absolutely.

I would say that under the national strategy we do have a national awareness campaign. What we heard from our stakeholders was that people need to understand what human trafficking is in order to be able to deal with it. We do have a national strategy of awareness that's aimed at young people and parents to better understand.

But we've gone one step further, and that's about the tools we're currently creating to be able to provide to industry providers. As I mentioned, one of those areas is the health sector. The tools will be given to people so that they can understand. For instance, nurses will be better able to understand some of the signs of human trafficking. If they believe that someone is a victim, they'll know what they can do, who they can inform and how they can intervene. Our approach is multi-faceted and is one of its national awareness, which we are going to be continuing through various means, but it will also involve that specific awareness.

We know that NGOs also deal with lots of individuals who are victims and survivors of human trafficking, and one of the things we heard through our stakeholder engagement as well was that one size does not fit all. We need to be able to embrace and support the communities who are dealing with these individuals.

That's where we have funded 20 community-based programs. Those programs are under two pillars of empowerment—support for victims and survivors to help them regain control and independence through a victim-centred approach and then prevention, to be able to target youth who may in fact be at risk of being trafficked. Again, there are 20 community-based programs.

I may just finish with the fact that out of those 20, 15 serve indigenous communities, and two of those are indigenous-led. I hope that responds to your question.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

My next question is for Senator Audette.

The national inquiry cited economic insecurity as a contributing factor to violence against indigenous women and girls. How can this government play a role to help increase indigenous women's economic security and empowerment?

Hon. Michèle Audette: I will repeat that the best people to give you the right answer would be the grassroots women, the women who live in the community, the women who live in Downtown Eastside Vancouver or in Montreal and so on, making sure that it's not a pan-approach but is diverse, one where we can respect what they really want to see and where they want to be involved.

The Chair: Wonderful—

Hon. Michèle Audette: I can see the chair is saying, “Okay, Michèle...”

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: [*Inaudible—Editor*] it's Friday afternoon.

Thanks so much.

I'll now pass it over to Andréanne Larouche.

Andréanne, you have two and a half minutes.

• (1450)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Senator Audette, it has been a pleasure to have you with us.

Ms. Zinck, Ms. Moran, Ms. Van De Bogart, Ms. Brady and Mr. Parker, thank you very much for being here.

Thank you to you as well, Ms. Brazeau. In the summer of 2020, I was supposed to visit an indigenous friendship centre, but then COVID-19 struck. I will have that opportunity again in the future.

As part of this study, we saw that there is money, but that it is being held back in Ottawa right now. There are calls to action, which are well known, but they have not all be implemented yet. We have gender-based analysis plus, a tool that could help measure the disproportionate effects of natural resource development projects on indigenous women and girls. Finally, we already have a number of things in place. There are solutions that are known. I am part of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Combatting Modern Slavery and Trafficking in Persons, so I know what I am talking about.

In light of everything we already know, what is missing and what could we recommend in our report to make it even more constructive?

Anyone who wishes to answer may take a few seconds.

Hon. Michèle Audette: Thank you very much for seeking to ensure that the recommendations include an important component on human rights, the rights of indigenous women, security and of course women's relationship with the environment.

With regard to economic development, there are so many projects ongoing in our territories, and indigenous women are left cleaning rooms and working in cafeterias, when they could be team leaders, engineers or in charge of environmental assessments. So we have to invest in the training of indigenous women and girls so they have a say on what is happening in our territories.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: There is less than a minute left, so I would like to give the floor to anyone who wishes to say something.

Ms. Brazeau, perhaps you would like to add something. If not, perhaps one of the departmental officials would like to.

Mrs. Jennifer Brazeau: I would like to add to what Ms. Audette said. We have to ensure that indigenous people are involved in the development of these projects and are truly consulted. Their needs have to be heard. We saw how the population mobilized to respond to the virus that attacked it. In terms of violence against women, however, there are still many barriers that seem impossible to overcome, and I wonder if there is a lack of will to do so.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Regarding the virus, Ms. Brazeau, now that the pandemic restrictions have been lifted, I hope we will be able to continue.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

The final line of questioning will go to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

Senator Audette, I think you can sense my frustration. It's hard to continue to watch indigenous women on particular experience violence, even from the very systems that are supposed to protect us. It's hard to build relationships at the end of a gun, as we continue to witness in the news.

I want to share a quote you gave to Al Jazeera, where you said, “We cannot keep doing [it] the way it has been done. If Canadians, politicians and industr[ies] want to include us, speak to us, create a safe space where we can have our say, then we can bring back that balance.”

Could you please suggest some ways to ensure that a safe and transparent place can be created to hold conversations and build relationships between indigenous women and girls, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, the government and industries?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michèle Audette: Thank you very much. I was hoping to find a way to talk about that.

Lithium, which is used to make batteries as part of the green shift, is found on Innu territory, Anishinabe territory and many other territories in Canada. Most indigenous women are visionary. If we do not start including women in the discussions on the future environmental or economic impact, I am really afraid that an important voice will once again be muzzled or forgotten. I hope you will consider this aspect.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

I want to build on that. I know that we often talk about consultation. We've heard from other testimony that it's usually done with the exclusion of indigenous women, particularly around resource extraction, when it's usually men who around the table and it's the women who are on the front lines of violence. What do you think needs to be done immediately to address that and to make sure that our voices are at the table?

• (1455)

Hon. Michèle Audette: Thank you.

In a few seconds, let me say that there are thousands of us. With the Internet, you can find us. Across Canada, there were women everywhere I went who could participate or put in something forward or stop something. We have knowledgeable women across Canada. We're side by side now—I will be at the Senate for the next 25 years—so I hope to get some emails from you.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Our time is over, but what an excellent way of ending it.

Thank you so much for that, Senator Audette.

I would like to thank all of our witnesses.

Senator Audette, Jennifer, Kimberley, Christine, Mélanie, Michelle, Patricia and Brent, thank you so much for joining us today and providing us your testimony.

I have a few notes, as today is our very last meeting of this session and we'll only be joining one another in the new session. Thank you, guys, for such a great spring term.

What notes do I have?

I have “excellent work” as number one.

I would like to thank the interpreters and translators and, of course, Clare and Dominique, and all the hospitality, and of course our clerk, who always keeps us on track and on the ball.

Thanks to everybody for such a successful session. I wish everybody an excellent summer.

If anybody wants to put their mikes on to say goodbye, that's fine.

I will adjourn the meeting if I can get approval from all.

An hon. member: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much.

We will see each other again in the fall.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thanks, everyone.

Ms. Jennifer Brazeau: Thank you very much for the invitation.

If anybody would like to visit the friendship centre, you're always welcome.

The Chair: That's excellent. Thanks for the invitation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you for the invitation, Ms. Brazeau.

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