

## Testimony before Senate Standing Committee on National Finance

Sarah Kaplan  
Professor of Strategic Management  
Distinguished Professor of Gender and the Economy  
Director, Institute for Gender and the Economy  
Rotman School of Management  
University of Toronto  
[sarah.kaplan@rotman.utoronto.ca](mailto:sarah.kaplan@rotman.utoronto.ca)

December 5, 2018

Good evening. It is an honor to appear before this Committee to comment on Bill C-86, as it relates to the creation of the Department for Women and Gender Equality.

I am a Professor and Director of the Institute for Gender and the Economy at the University of Toronto. In this role, I promote the use of rigorous academic research to inform policy and practice, with a specific goal of supporting innovative new solutions to achieving gender equality.

There are a number of reasons that the creation of this Department will yield progress on equality in Canadian society.

First, it announces and anchors equality as a central value for Canadians. Its name signals its focus on women and also people of diverse genders, including two-spirit, gender nonbinary and trans people. It further signals attention to men and masculinities. As we have learned from recent efforts to improve parental leave policies, it is vital to pay attention to facilitating new norms of masculinity that can transform caregiving and paid work for men, women, and people of diverse genders.

Relatedly, I would also like to call to your attention the importance of the section under “powers and duties” which includes understanding “the intersection of sex and gender with other identity factors that include race, national and ethnic origin, Indigenous origin or identify, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic conditions, place of residence and disability.” That the department would have this mandate to put intersectionality front and centre is essential for the pursuit of equality because we know that most barriers to full participation in all spheres of peoples’ lives come precisely at these points of intersection.

Second, appropriately funded and resourced, the department can serve as a centre of excellence for capabilities in gender analysis and policy-making. While some form of gender analysis has been mandated since 1995 at the Federal level, we still lack essential capabilities for conducting and using these analyses — and this is at the Federal,

Provincial and local levels of government as well as in the corporate and non-profit spheres. Gender analysis at its best should be used for three interrelated sets of activities: (1) qualitative and quantitative need finding, (2) policy design and implementation, and (3) policy evaluation. To date, most of the efforts have been placed on the third step: we formulate a policy and then see what the gender effects might be, perhaps implementing remedial steps to try to fix any adverse impacts. And, I worry that even this third step may not be conducted at a sufficient level of depth, with the right level of research and analysis, especially including the intersections I mentioned above.

Take for example, the Innovation Superclusters Initiative which, in its own program guide, admitted that it will be investing in industries that “attract more skilled workers who are men compared to women.” It indicated that, to address this problem, applicants must “articulate how they will endeavor to increase female representation concerning both employment and leadership.”<sup>1</sup> However, if we were to have started with a gender analysis, we might have designed a supercluster initiative that had inclusive innovation at its base rather than as an additional consideration. We don’t even know what kinds of models we might be able to invent if we used gender analysis for innovative policy design rather than for remediation.

Thus, using gender analysis from the outset might have the potential to change and improve policy design. For example, in infrastructure investment, we know that investments in local-stop public transportation differentially benefit women and children while investments in highways differentially benefit men who tend to drive and commute longer distances. Or, a true analysis of the impacts of maternity leave would have shown that extension of such leaves to 18 months is a poor substitute for more accessible childcare and can do serious damage to women’s attachment to the labour force. Such information should shape choices about how policies, budgets and taxes are decided.

The Department has the opportunity to develop gender analysis capabilities and support other departments and agencies in meeting their mandate to do true gender budgeting. This will strengthen the national capacity to advance gender equality in all of its intersections. But, capability development takes time. It requires sustained investment and an accumulation of data, research and experience over years. It requires support for an ecosystem of government bodies, grassroots organizations and business. Creating a department assures that this accumulation process cannot be interrupted or set back—as it has been in the past—without the significant public debate that comes with the legislative process.

Third, again with adequate funding and resources, the Department can also be a source of policy innovation based on the gender analysis it will conduct and support. Gender analysis, as I mentioned before, will be least effective if it is only used as a policy

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/093.nsf/eng/00003.html#toc-06.07>

evaluation tool. Its true power will come when the insights generated lead to innovative policies that overcome many of the impasses faced by efforts to achieve gender equality to date. For example, today we worry that not enough women enter into entrepreneurship, so we layer on special pools of funds to the Business Development Bank for female entrepreneurs. But, what if we used research and analysis to develop new, inclusive models for promoting entrepreneurship that might help the BDC reinvent entirely how it works? We cannot know without the careful work of a Department dedicated to making the most of research and analysis on current inequalities and also on key mechanisms for overcoming them.

In conclusion, on a personal note, and speaking as an immigrant to Canada, I can say that Canada today has the opportunity to be a global beacon of light when it comes to gender equality. The creation of a Department of Women and Gender Equality can be a powerful symbol of Canada's commitment to these issues and a source of innovation and insight for Canada and the world as we continue to work towards equality.

I am at your disposal to answer any questions.

Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup.