

Good morning. My name is Anna Millest. I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to Senator McCallum for inviting me to attend this conference alongside her and honouring me with the opportunity to speak. I would also like to give thanks to the speakers and panelists for sharing their insight, to the elders for sharing their wisdom, and to the organizers for their hard work in bringing us together from across the globe.

It has been a valuable learning experience to listen to all the presentations over the past few days and engage in thought-provoking discussions. I have been very moved by the personal accounts and stories of the many, many people here who are living with the horrific effects of hydro development. Although these conversations can be difficult to have, it is so important that we are here together having them.

Yesterday afternoon, I attended the breakout session “Our Voices Together in Trauma & Resilience—Sharing Stories of Gendered Violence of Resource Development”. I was so impressed by the presenters: Louisa Constant, Martina Saunders, Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Connie Greyeyes, and Jackie Hanson. What they shared about the gendered impacts of hydro and resource development was heart-wrenching, yet they tackled it with courage, resilience, and a forward-facing outlook. I wish that this group had presented on this stage before the whole conference, as the gendered impacts of hydro development are an integral piece that is important for everyone to hear.

Although I’m sure there are others here who are better equipped to speak on this topic, I will be speaking today about gender-based analysis: what it is and how it can be applied to hydro, energy, and natural resource development projects. I have been studying and performing literature review on gender-based analysis with encouragement from Senator McCallum, as this is a topic that carries great importance and is applicable to just about every issue that comes before Parliament and through our office.

As so many of the stories we’ve heard have shown, resource development and extraction activities are having significant adverse effects on Northern and remote communities in relation to employment, housing, education and training, health, social services and infrastructure, substance use, sex work and exploitation, violence, food security, and culture and traditions.

These impacts disproportionately affect women, especially Indigenous women and those from marginalized groups.

As we have heard many times over, for people in hydro-impacted communities, employment is scarce. The few positions that are available to locals are low-skilled, short-term, lower-paying, shift-based, and are subject to boom-and-bust cycles. Work sites are usually male-dominated, and are rife with sexism, racism, and harassment.

The influx of outside workers puts a strain on housing: both availability, living conditions, and costs. The most vulnerable segments of the population—those with health issues, disabilities, mental health conditions, addictions, the elderly—are the ones who are most strongly affected by these changes, and existing health conditions are exacerbated.

When it comes to health, there are both direct and indirect effects associated with resource development. Sources of water are compromised, causing widespread health risks within the community. Biologically, women and children are more vulnerable to these effects given the cycles of pregnancy and breastfeeding. Mental health effects of resource development are significant, with high rates of stress, depression, and addiction.

Social services is another area where the sheer volume of outside workers put a strain on communities. Professional services such as health care become overburdened. Additionally, the financial lure can incentivize service providers to take higher-paying jobs in the private sector at project sites, leaving vacancies in community services. In many cases, this gives people no other option but to rely on family for support, and is particularly notable in the area of child care, where female relatives—grandmothers, aunts, sisters, etc.—are the ones to pick up the slack.

Alcohol, drugs, and addiction tend to follow development projects. Youth are especially vulnerable, and alcohol and drug use tends to increase. Substance abuse also feeds into domestic abuse, putting women at a higher risk of victimization.

Sexual exploitation and human trafficking are also a major problem in areas of resource development. Although women in general are at risk, those most likely to be exploited are

women who are homeless, struggling with mental health issues or addictions, or living in poverty.

Resource development projects are often associated with an increase in crime—particularly gender-based and domestic violence. Transient workers who are outsiders do not respect the community and its members, behaving in ways they wouldn't in their own community.

Resource development affects access to food in many ways. Projects drive up the cost of food through increased demand, making it unattainable for those with lower incomes. Since women typically earn lower wages than men, they are at a higher risk of food insecurity. Not only does development affect access to food for purchase, it affects local and traditional sources of food. Toxins are leached into land and water, making traditional sources of food and water unsafe to consume. This, in turn, impacts both the health and culture of Indigenous peoples, women, and communities.

Given the interconnectedness of Indigenous culture and land, resource development has devastating effects on culture and traditions. Projects disrupt or block access to traditional land, including hunting grounds, trap lines, sacred sites, and gathering sites. Without access to these places, the ability to engage in cultural activities and pass them along to next generations is stunted.

So, how do we move forward in a way that will diminish these adverse effects and maximize the long-term benefits?

There are several processes that currently exist as tools to identify, assess, and mitigate the impacts that resource development projects have on the lands and surrounding communities. The main processes that exist here in Canada are Environmental Assessment (EA) and Gender-based Analysis (GBA or GBA+).

Environmental Assessment (EA)

The interest in environmental assessment processes for resource development processes began in the early 1970s, prompted by growing public awareness and concern about environmental issues and the need to protect the planet. Over time, the type of impacts included under the

environmental framework were expanded to include socioeconomic effects in addition to the original focus of pollution and physical degradation of the environment. Although the environmental assessment process now takes a broader view of impacts, there is still a tendency for assessments to focus on tangible, direct environmental impacts rather than social impacts, cultural impacts, and indirect impacts.

Gender-Based Analysis (GBA)

Gender-based analysis is a newer concept, having been formally introduced by the federal government in 1995, though the Government of Canada began making commitments to consider women and women's issues when making policy decisions in the 1970s. In 1995, Canada adopted the UN's Beijing Platform for Action, which required that all member states develop a concept for the implementation of "gender mainstreaming" as part of their national strategies and "seek to ensure that before policy decisions are taken, an analysis of their impact on women and men, respectively, is carried out." Following this, Canada developed the Federal Plan for Gender Equality, which committed to conducting GBA on all future legislation, policies, and programs.

In 2009, the Auditor General was asked by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to investigate the GBA practices of government departments and agencies. In the report, it was revealed that there was little or no evidence GBA frameworks in practice or in decision making. In 2011, Status of Women Canada rebranded GBA to GBA+, to include other gender diversities and intersectional identity factors. Following yet another Auditor General's report in 2015 that indicated the need to do more to fully implement GBA as a rigorous practice across government, the Federal Government developed the GBA Action Plan 2016-2020, including mandatory requirements for GBA+ in all memoranda to cabinet and in Treasury Board submissions.

According to Status of Women Canada, GBA+ is defined as an analytical tool used to assess the potential impact of policies, programs, initiatives, or services on diverse groups of women and men, girls and boys, taking into account gender and other factors, such as age, education, language, geography, culture, and income. GBA+ is a lens through which any policy, program,

initiative, service, or project may be assessed to ask the question: “Does an aspect of the proposed policy, program, initiative or service have the potential to impact women and men differently? If so, how?”

As such, GBA+ can be a valuable tool to use in ensuring that gender and diversity are taken into account through impact assessments for resource development projects.

As it stands, Canada-wide, GBA is required for all federal policies, programs, and proposals submitted to the Cabinet, but it is not consistently applied across the federal government. In other words, GBA exists in theory, but not so much in practice. Provincially and territorially, some form of GBA policies and practices exist within the governments of BC, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Ontario, PEI, and Quebec. The extent to which these policies and practices are applied varies greatly by region, department, and in what form the GBA takes. GBA is not required in Alberta, Nova Scotia, NWT, Nunavut, Saskatchewan, or Yukon. Although not officially mandated, it is worth noting that most of these provinces and territories have some policies requiring Gender and Diversity Analysis. That being said, these policies remain largely unimplemented and vary greatly from department to department.

A very interesting and promising tool involving GBA was developed 2012 by a group of women from Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador. They began work with researchers to create the Community Vitality Index: a tool to identify and monitor changes to the well-being of women within the community. This was largely prompted by concerns about the Lower Churchill Hydroelectric Dam project and its impact on the community, and on women in particular. Due to the fact that the government of Newfoundland and Labrador was not tracking potential impacts that were identified by the joint review panel—including increased substance abuse, sexual assault, family violence, and other effects on women and children—the team took on the task of identifying and tracking these impacts. The index measures well-being in five areas: mental, cultural, emotional, spiritual, and physical. The CVI was successfully piloted in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in 2013. Since its finalization in 2014, the CVI has been brought to the NunatuKavut Community Council in Labrador, and Tamitik Status of Women and the Haisla Nation in Kitimat and Haisla, BC. With each new location, local advisory groups and diverse

groups of women work to customize the index to the priorities and definitions of wellness of each individual community. This tool shows promise as a way for communities to create their own standards at the grassroots level and ensure that gendered impacts are not ignored.

The requirement to include GBA in Environmental Assessment processes (and in all government policies, programs, and initiatives) should not be optional. The absence of mandatory requirements is, arguably, the biggest barrier to GBA being implemented. All levels of government should work to weave GBA into Environmental Assessment as a key strategy to mitigate the adverse effects and maximize the long-term benefits of resource development for diverse populations. When used correctly, GBA can be an integral tool to ensure that women, Indigenous Peoples, and our communities' most vulnerable populations are given space, are heard, and can affect change to improve their own futures.

Over the past few days, we have heard a multitude of stories of sorrow and tragedy, yet I also see a wealth of strength, resilience, and a massive drive for change. Working together, I believe we can turn devastation into inspiration.

Thank you for listening.