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**Subcommittee on the Status of Persons with  
Disabilities of the Standing Committee on Human  
Resources, Skills Development, Social  
Development and the Status of Persons with  
Disabilities**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff**

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## Subcommittee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Wednesday, December 8, 2004

• (1540)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.)):** I'd like to call this meeting to order.

Welcome to our first regular meeting of the subcommittee. We will welcome our witnesses from the Department of Social Development.

Ms. Scotti, will you be leading the program?

**Mrs. Susan Scotti (Assistant Deputy Minister, Income Security Programs, Department of Social Development):** Yes, I will.

**The Chair:** Please go ahead.

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** Thank you for having invited us today. We understand that this is an opportunity to brief the committee on our Office for Disability Issues and some of the programs that it leads, and also on the Canadian Pension Plan disability benefits.

We've brought a lot of material with us, but we thought we might start with a couple of overview presentations—if that would be okay with committee members—and then we will take questions.

We're delighted that the subcommittee has been established, and we're very much looking forward to working with all of you.

Perhaps I should introduce my colleagues who are here with me today. With me are Susan Williams, director general of the Canada Pension Plan disability program; Cecilia Muir, director general of the Office for Disability Issues; Mr. Georges Grujic, a director in the Office for Disability Issues; and Nancy Lawand, director for the Canada Pension Plan disability policy.

We're going to start with an overview presentation on the Office for Disability Issues and just a general perspective on persons with disabilities and some of the challenges we're dealing with in our work.

Cecilia.

**Ms. Cecilia Muir (Director General, Office for Disability Issues, Department of Social Development):** I'm going to speak to a deck, which I understand you have and which is entitled "Canadians with Disabilities and their Families". I'll go through the deck fairly quickly, because I know you will have questions as well.

**The Chair:** Which deck would that be?

**Ms. Cecilia Muir:** It's called "Canadians with Disabilities and their Families".

[Translation]

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** Do you have a copy?

[English]

We had sent advanced copies of a lot of material to the committee. Were they not received?

**The Chair:** When?

**Ms. Cecilia Muir:** Earlier this afternoon.

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** Earlier this afternoon. Our apologies.

[Translation]

I have only one copy. Can we make additional copies?

[English]

**The Chair:** You know, actually, this is a very serious and responsible committee. Sending something this afternoon hardly gives us the time to prepare for these things.

I don't know how the rest of the committee feels.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** I would much sooner see the real deck, Mr. Chair, and it needs to be done in both languages.

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** We have one deck in two languages, but only the English version of another deck, so why don't we proceed with the one we have in both languages? We will get copies made of that. That would be on CPP disability.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Chairman, is the material in only one language?

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** The deck is available in both languages, but I have only one copy of the presentation, and it is only in one version.

**Mr. Robert Vincent:** Fine then.

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** All of the background material is in both languages.

[English]

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** I'm assuming, Ms. Scotti, that you were asked last week to come to committee today. That would have been right after our first meeting, so I'm wondering why the information didn't come to our offices before, so that we could have had the decks to look at.

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** My apologies to you, but we were just notified on Monday that we were asked to appear before this subcommittee, so we pulled together a number of documents for you that were to have been sent to you through our parliamentary affairs division earlier. I'm sorry.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Mr. Chair, I feel sorry for the officials, but I would have liked to have had the complete decks to go over while we're doing this. Maybe this is it arriving right now, but that still doesn't make me feel any better. I'm disappointed about the whole thing. I think it's very badly done.

**The Chair:** It's not the way we want to show respect for the subject material.

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** I'm sorry, but there seems to have been a little glitch in our department. I apologize again that this has happened. This is certainly not the way we would like to begin our relationship with the subcommittee, because the subcommittee is enormously important to us, and I reiterate that we do very much look forward to working with the subcommittee.

I can only suggest that time is precious for everybody. If you want materials in advance and you want to have a chance to review them, we'd be more than happy to come back to do this another time. Maybe we could just take some preliminary questions from you today.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** We don't want to waste this opportunity, but we take this job very seriously. This issue is something we feel we can make lots of progress on by working together, and we need you.

Maybe today you can do an overview and we can ask some questions, but without us being able to prepare, we'll have to do it again when we reconvene. So let's use your time as expeditiously as possible while we have all this talent before us.

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** Shall we just proceed with the two overview presentations? We'll make them very short, and I think it will give you an opportunity to ask some questions flowing out of the presentations. We will leave this material with you, and we will come back at your convenience once you've had a chance to review the material.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'm surprised you weren't notified before Monday. We made this decision on Wednesday, a week ago.

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** It might have been at the end of last week, Susan Williams is telling me. It certainly was not as of last Wednesday.

**The Chair:** I think the message has been received. Thank you.

Please carry on.

**Ms. Cecilia Muir:** I do understand that you have already received the federal disability report that was released last Friday, December

3. I hope this is the case, because we were informed that the committee clerk provided you with that.

**The Chair:** No.

**Ms. Cecilia Muir:** Okay, you're going to be getting it as well, but I'll be covering some information that includes that as well.

**The Chair:** We don't feel we are a stealth committee that has snuck up on everybody. I would hope people knew we were here and that we were going to be here.

**Ms. Cecilia Muir:** Yes. Again, I reiterate the apology. We were informed that you already had a few documents, but that's being looked after. This won't happen again when we return, I promise you, because you're very important to us.

I'm going to review this deck called "Canadians with Disabilities and their Families".

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Vincent:** I have a question. If the witnesses make a presentation and we read the background material later, we may have to call them back to provide additional explanations. They might have to appear twice. The first time, they'll make their presentation. After members read the material provided, we may have a number of questions for them. If they have to make a return appearance, that means twice the travel expenses. Furthermore, will their statements today jibe with what we'll have read? We won't be able to ask them any truly relevant questions about their presentation because we won't have read the material.

Perhaps it would be wiser for us to hear from them after we've read the documents. Then, we'd be able to ask them relevant questions and gauge the true value of what these witnesses have to say.

[English]

**The Chair:** What is the wish of the committee?

Mr. Julian, would you care to proceed, or do you want to do this thoroughly?

[Translation]

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** I have to say that I'm somewhat torn. I understand my colleague's viewpoint, but perhaps it would be a good idea to take a few moments today to discuss our expectations as far as hearing from the Office for Disability Issues is concerned. We'll certainly have some questions. If we take a few minutes at this time to discuss this matter, we'll be better prepared for the next time. Then, we can focus on the background material.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Skelton.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Mr. Chair, we have no members of the government here besides yourself. I think we have just received this information. I have some very important questions to ask the department from constituents of mine that I want to bring forward, about programs and problems we're having. But there are no Liberals here, and we are just getting this material. I don't think we can do it justice. I would like to read it over.

•(1550)

**The Chair:** Ms. Dhalla just got called to a vote in her health committee.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** There are only five members for the committee, isn't that right, and that will be the full extent of the committee?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Okay, so it will be a very intimate committee.

**The Chair:** And yet progressive.

We seem to be somewhat divided and not representative of anything at the House of Commons, but I will ask for a straw vote in terms of whether we should entertain the deputation before us or postpone it to our first meeting in February.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** We're not planning a meeting next week, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** I thought we weren't going to have one next week.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** On that point, perhaps if we were available to meet next week it would give us the time to review the material without putting it off to February. I'd feel uncomfortable putting it off, because there's work that would need to start at the end of January.

**The Chair:** This was essentially to get the program rolling. I still have it booked, so I'm fine.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** I'm fine.

**The Chair:** Is it the wish of the committee that we adjourn the presentation for one week so that we have a chance to review the material and can convene? I think everybody understands the nature of the review process. We will then discuss our own priorities after this. Is that okay?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, then. We'll see you in seven days less 15 minutes.

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** Our apologies one more time.

**The Chair:** Ms. Scotti, is the document I have the summary of the report you were giving to the clerk?

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** There are two presentations that are overview presentations. There's one called "Canadians With Disabilities and Their Families". There's another one on the Canada Pension Plan disability program.

**The Chair:** Right.

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** Then we have a copy of the document *In Unison 2000*, the year 2000 report of the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for social services. It's a foundation document, essentially. There are copies. They are still being distributed.

[*Translation*]

The blue document is the main one. It focuses on the policy directions that we have taken over the past two years.

[*English*]

You should have a copy of a document called "Frequently Asked Questions on Disability". You should also have a copy of the government response to the report of the last subcommittee on persons with disabilities that is dated November 2003.

**The Chair:** Unless the committee wants five or ten minutes to read all this....

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** Mr. Chair, if you want brief summaries of these reports, I think we can provide them to the committee clerk to aid the reading.

**The Chair:** You know what, I think that would be very helpful. We're also expecting—

**Ms. Chantal Collin (Committee Researcher):** Have you brought copies with you of your executive summary of events and conclusions, the report that came out last Friday? Do you have copies of it here?

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** We have copies of the report—at least we should.

If the executive summary is not here, we can provide it to you.

•(1555)

**The Chair:** Members of committee, this is the document we are awaiting an executive summary of. So I think we'll be okay for next week.

Mr. Vincent.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent:** When can we expect to receive the executive summary? We'll need to have it before the actual meeting, not merely get it at the last minute.

**The Chair:** I hope that's the case.

[*English*]

Ms. Scotti, did you hear the request?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** I'm sorry, but I didn't hear the request.

**Mr. Robert Vincent:** I was asking if we would be receiving the executive summary before next Wednesday.

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** Yes, you most certainly will be.

**Mr. Robert Vincent:** Could we possibly get it by Friday?

**Mrs. Susan Scotti:** We'll get it to you by tomorrow, if possible.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Members of committee, the next order of business is to go in camera to discuss the work plan for the coming season.

Is there anything we can still discuss while we're in a public forum that anyone needs to discuss? If there is, then we can resume the public part after our in camera session.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]





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