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The Honourable Judy Sgro

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•(0910)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.)): I call to order meeting number two of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Thank you all very much for coming out this morning.

I'd like to move forward on the standard routine motions. Perhaps we could start by dealing with items one through four.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Chair, I would like to make some comments on this.

The Chair: Can you hold on one second, please? Ms. Smith, can you just hold up? We need to have a vote on each one as we're approving it, so we can start with number one.

An hon. member: So moved.

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Okay, item number two, in camera meetings. It's being moved by Ms. Neville.

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: On item number one, are you okay now, Maria? Okay, hold on.

On each one of these there are two versions. We need to know which one is being moved. On the analyst?

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Can I ask a question? I think it was indicated, when this was handed out to us, that one was the standard motion that goes to all the committees and the other one was the way it was amended by this committee last time. Is that correct? Which is which?

The Chair: The first is the standard and the one in bold is the one that the committee may have made changes to.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Is that all right?

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): I'm sorry, but I'm confused. I moved the bold one.

The Chair: The bold one. Is that enough of an indication to say the bold one, or the one in bold letters?

Ms. Mourani, is your translation working okay now?

Okay, number two, in camera meetings. Moved by Ms. Davidson, the bold print. Item number three, staff at in camera meetings, moved by Ms. Neville, bold.

Item number four, subcommittee on agenda and procedure, moved.... Did you want to hold that?

Mrs. Joy Smith: I wanted to speak to number four. Thank you.

I have a couple of questions. I wanted to ask a question before this started. I know this was handed out. None of the submissions that came from my office are on this. I wondered where they were. We submitted them yesterday and there's nothing on here.

The Chair: The submissions to the clerk were to be received by noon yesterday.

Mrs. Joy Smith: They went before noon. They're not on there.

The Chair: They weren't on the document when I saw it yesterday. When I met with the clerk yesterday, I specifically asked and they had not received anything from Mr. Cotler's office or anything from your office either.

Mrs. Joy Smith: No, we submitted three submissions before noon and we do have them on e-mail for you.

The Chair: Okay, good.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Going back to this, I would like to speak to number four. I'm hoping motion four can be amended. We talked about a subcommittee on agenda and procedure here. Yesterday, around the table, everyone was saying that it would be nice to talk about our agenda right here at committee, rather than having a subcommittee.

I think there are two things we could do. We could either agree not to have a subcommittee, because there is no precedent for this committee to have a subcommittee and there are many committees that are larger than ours that have never had a subcommittee for drawing up the agenda. As I said, everyone yesterday was very adamant, at least yesterday, about the fact that everyone wanted input into the agenda. So I would suggest, first of all, that we don't need a subcommittee. If there has to be a subcommittee, then I would make an amendment on it. But I personally don't see any need for a subcommittee. I think we can decide on our agenda here and I think that would be more effective.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on that?

Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): I think we could do some of the initial discussion of the overall agenda this morning, as we have all submitted things.

On an ongoing basis it might be helpful to have it there, and the chair can use it or not, depending. But make it an option if there are any items that ever come up in the future. I don't know that you need to get rid of it necessarily.

The Chair: My understanding from the clerk was that it was there but it wasn't utilized, either. So it's there if, for whatever reason, the committee decides it might be something they want to use or not. Leaving it in leaves the option there, but it doesn't require us to have a subcommittee on it.

Are you comfortable with that, Ms. Smith?

Mrs. Joy Smith: No.

I think in this committee it would be good to tighten it up and decide what we want to do. The issue is whether we need a subcommittee to talk about the agenda. Yesterday, in the conversation around this table everyone was saying we all want to be part of putting our issues on the agenda. I would move to not have the subcommittee on agenda and procedure and to do everything within our committee.

• (0915)

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Madam Chair, I would agree that we would do the initial agenda here in the committee, but my experience in the past on this committee has been that occasionally items come up on committees. I can't remember what the issues were, but the subcommittee did meet two or three times to finesse and bring back recommendations when the committee got stalled.

I would recommend that we keep it simply as an option should we need it; otherwise, we may have to re-strike it at a later date, which is always an option as well.

The Chair: It doesn't do any harm, but again, it's up to the desires of the committee.

We have Paule Brunelle's name in here for the Bloc, which would have to be changed to someone else if this goes forward.

So what's the consensus of the committee? Do you want to have a vote on this?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Well, I think that members should vote how they feel, but I will move my amendment and then everyone can have a vote on it. We can have a recorded vote to see who voted which way.

I'm going to move that motion four be amended by deleting the period and adding the following: "and that the quorum of the subcommittee consist of at least three members, one of which must be from the government".

I'll move that. I'll do it that way, which comes kind of halfway, instead of completely deleting it.

Or maybe I'll redo that, and just say a motion for... May I redo this?

I'm trying to be compromising here, but I guess I really feel we don't need the subcommittee.

The Chair: Then why don't you just move the motion that we eliminate item number four?

Mrs. Joy Smith: All right, I'll do that, then. I move that we eliminate—

The Chair: You have already moved it, so you have to—

Mrs. Joy Smith: I've already made the motion, so we have to carry it through.

The Chair: Could the clerk read the motion, then, please?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Do you want me to read it again?

The Chair: Yes, please.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I move that motion four be amended by deleting the period and adding the following: "and that the quorum of the subcommittee consist of at least three members, one of which must be from the government".

That kind of comes halfway. I have a copy of the motion, if you'd like it.

A voice: Are we talking about the subcommittee?

The Chair: We're talking about the subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

Repeat it again, please, Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith: All right. This kind of comes halfway, then. There's a copy of the motion, which my assistant is handing out to you now.

I move that motion four be amended by deleting the period and adding the following: "and that the quorum of the subcommittee consist of at least three members, one of which must be from the government".

The Chair: That would leave out any representative from the Bloc. It says at least three.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Well, there are two chairs.

The Chair: Yes, one is the NDP chair and one is the Liberal vice-chair. But what that would do is effectively leave out the Bloc from participating in that.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Excuse me. I can speak to that. No, it won't, because it comes after the period. It doesn't leave them off.

The Chair: It's pretty much the exact same thing we have here, except that the Bloc isn't going to have a seat at the table, specifically. It's their option.

Let's vote on the motion that the quorum of the subcommittee consist of at least three members, one of whom must be from the government.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Can I read the full thing? Then you'll get it, I think. I move that the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be composed of the chair, of two vice-chairs, and a member of the other opposition party... And then it continues on. So that includes the Bloc. The Bloc will not lose the seat at all. So motion four will just be amended, and what that does is ensure that one member from the government will also be on that, whether it's me or somebody else. So that does ensure that the Bloc has a seat there.

I'll read it again to make it clear: "That the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be composed of the chair, two vice-chairs, and a member of the other opposition party." And I am saying that motion four be amended by deleting the period and adding the following: "and that the quorum of the subcommittee consists of at least three members, one of whom must be from the government."

• (0920)

The Chair: Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: I would welcome a friendly amendment that was specific and that cited the Bloc Québécois, as we did in the previous motion, where we identified Madame Brunelle. So I would suggest that "the two chairs and a member of the Bloc Québécois" be accepted as a friendly amendment.

The Chair: Okay. We'll have to vote on Ms. Smith's amendment first.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Madam Chair, I've been asking to be recognized for some time now.

As I understand it, Ms. Brunelle is the former status of women critic. In my opinion, the reference should read in French "le ou la porte-parole en matière de condition féminine du Bloc québécois". We could go with that or refer to "un membre du Bloc québécois". Regardless, it's important to be accurate. If we don't specify which opposition member we're referring to, then the reference is open to different interpretations. For the sake of clarity, I would even indicate "la porte-parole ou le porte-parole du Bloc québécois."

[English]

The Chair: I suggest that we put it to a vote now.

Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith: This is precisely why I was saying that I didn't think we needed a vice-chair, as long as everyone is included and no one is left out. So basically, through this motion, we can certainly amend it to be very specific about who needs to be on there so we have the representatives. So the subcommittee consists of at least three members, one of whom must be from the government.

Could the clerk please read it out, based on what the member from the Bloc has suggested and my amendment, before we actually vote on this, to be clear?

The Chair: Let me read this out and see if we have this straight:

That the subcommittee on agenda and procedure be composed of the chair, the two vice-chairs, and a representative from the Bloc, and that the quorum of the subcommittee consist of at least three members, one of whom must be from the government.

Does everybody understand what we're voting on?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Call the question.

The Chair: All right. We'll have a recorded vote, please. Ms. Smith had asked for a recorded vote.

Hon. Maria Minna: It's a point of order, Madam Chair, but if there's agreement and consensus, why do we need a recorded vote?

The Chair: Ms. Smith has asked for a recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

• (0925)

The Chair: We move on now to item number five, "Witness travel expenses".

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: I so move.

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Number six, the 48-hour notice.

Hon. Anita Neville: I so move.

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Number seven, working meals.

Hon. Maria Minna: I so move.

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Number eight: distribution of documents in both official languages.

Hon. Anita Neville: I so move.

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Number nine: reduced quorum.

Hon. Anita Neville: I so move.

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Item number ten: time allowance for witness presentations and questioning by member rounds.

Hon. Anita Neville: Madam Chair, could you tell us what the procedure was last year? Does the clerk have the information on what this was last year?

The Chair: The one in bold is the one that was used last year, which was seven minutes for each party in the following order, which has to be changed to reverse it to....

Hon. Anita Neville: That's my point, yes.

The Chair: So it would have to be switched. The Liberal would be the first to go, then the Bloc.

Hon. Anita Neville: "Liberal" and "Conservative" would be changed in both places.

The Chair: Yes. That's the suggestion. Right now we've agreed to switch "Conservative" to "Liberal", then the Bloc, then the Conservatives, then the New Democratic Party. Seven minutes will be allotted to a representative of each of the parties.

Is there any further discussion on that issue?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Yes. That's for round one. Looking at round two, I'd also like to address that. I have an amendment here on motion ten, if I may present it now, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Please do.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Motion ten will be amended by deleting everything after the second colon and adding the following, and this is for round two:

On the second round of questioning, five minutes per party, in the following order: Liberal, Conservative, BQ, Conservative. And on the third round and each subsequent round, at five minutes: Liberal, Conservative, BQ, and NDP.

That will be if we have that time.

The Chair: Are you suggesting that on the second round, the NDP...? Could you repeat that, Ms. Smith?

Mrs. Joy Smith: The second round would be Liberal, Conservative, BQ, and Conservative.

The Chair: The New Democratic Party would not have a second round? Why would we...?

Mrs. Joy Smith: That's what it is here, yes. This was what it was last time.

The Chair: On the second round and following rounds of questioning last time, it was Conservative, Liberal, Bloc, New Democratic Party.

Mrs. Joy Smith: We're looking at the number of representations in Parliament; there is only one NDP.

Just looking at the representation, I'm trying to look at the rationale, at how we arrived at this. There is only one NDP on this committee, so it's to be proportionate in terms of representation on the committee.

• (0930)

The Chair: Are you moving as a motion that on the second round the New Democratic Party not have a round of questioning?

Mrs. Joy Smith: They should have a round, so I will amend that. Yes, we should each have a chance to have a round on that.

The Chair: Thank you. That's good.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I'm sorry. I would amend that.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Why not leave it the way it is?

The Chair: We could reverse Liberal and Conservative. Exactly. That's all we need to do. We can reverse the way it previously was for both rounds.

Mrs. Joy Smith: The thing of it is that on the second round, the Liberal Party has two opportunities, and that is what we want to amend. We believe that being the governing party....

Pardon me?

The Chair: We're being very consistent with what it was last year simply by switching Conservative to Liberal.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Could you read out exactly what you'd like on the second round?

The Chair: One second.

At the moment it is:

On the following rounds of questioning, five minutes per party in the following order: Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, New Democratic Party.

Mrs. Joy Smith: On number ten, for the first round, we have: "Conservative, Bloc, Liberal, New Democratic Party". It's a second round, and if you reverse it, yes, I see what you mean. Everyone then has equal time. That is fine. All I'm going for is equal time.

The Chair: Okay. Exactly.

Mrs. Joy Smith: All right. That's good.

The Chair: All right. That's good then.

Do we all know the first round for seven minutes is Liberal, Bloc, Conservative, New Democratic Party? A second round of five

minutes is Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, New Democratic Party. Is everybody comfortable?

All right. Would somebody move approval?

Hon. Maria Minna: I so move.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Excuse me? Shouldn't there be another round for a Conservative on the second round?

The Chair: On the second round?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Yes, on the second round you should have one more Conservative.

The Chair: On the second round at the end?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Yes. At the end, a Conservative should be added.

Could you read that out again, please?

The Chair: It would be:

That witnesses be given ten minutes to make their opening statements. On the first round of questioning, seven minutes to a representative of each party in the following order: Liberal, Bloc, Conservative, New Democratic Party. On the following rounds of questioning, five minutes per party in the following order: Liberal, Conservative, Bloc, New Democratic Party, and Conservative.

Mrs. Joy Smith: That's right.

The Chair: All those in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now that we have that important work behind us, we can start to focus on some of the issues.

Thank you to those who have submitted suggestions on various issues that we might want to discuss.

Does the committee want to go in camera for the discussion of future business? No? That's fine. We're okay to go forward.

I received some suggestions yesterday that you all have in front of you. Unfortunately, Ms. Smith's is apparently not there, nor is Mr. Cottler's, because it came late. We have copies of Mr. Cotler's suggestion here. I have copies, but it's not translated because we did not get it in time to get it translated.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I have a point of order. We have an e-mail that shows it was sent before noon yesterday, so I don't know why it isn't here today. Whatever it is, it was sent as requested in the allotted time, and I can provide that e-mail.

When we get to it, I have motions prepared for our agenda. We put considerable time into this.

It's just to note that's what happened. Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Smith, since we don't have it translated, could I suggest that you read it out?

Before you do that, I'd like to invite the analyst, Julie Cool, to come and take her place here at the table. Julie has been with the committee for some time. She is very familiar with it and very knowledgeable.

We have submissions from Ms. Neville, Ms. Minna, Ms. Bourgeois, and Ms. Mourani.

Ms. Smith, if you'd like to read out your submission, we'll have it into the record.

• (0935)

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair.

There are copies, and there are translated copies as well. I would like to read this out, but I just want to check that they're on the table and that everyone has a copy. Does everyone have a copy of this?

The Chair: Thank you all for taking the time to submit some great suggestions for some things we could be working on.

While we're waiting for that to be distributed, I have to say that in reading some of the previous work of the committee, I've noticed that all of you who have sat on this committee have worked really well together, and I hope we can continue to work in a non-partisan manner and accomplish a fair amount in whatever time we have.

Ms. Smith, could you read your suggestions for possible consideration for the workplan?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you.

Madam Chair, I will make sure we table the e-mail for you at the next meeting, to reassure you that the request you made was fulfilled.

Also, I'm going to put forth three motions. They're in both French and English. I apologize for not reading in French; I am studying very hard and trying to learn it well, but I don't want to embarrass myself by reading it in French, so I'll just read it in English.

The one we've put at the top of the list is matrimonial property rights for aboriginal women. I must say that a lot of our members here around the table have aboriginal people in their ridings. We have all heard about this issue; it is an issue that was brought to the forefront last year in this committee, and we never had a chance to study it.

My motion is,

Whereas the equitable split of matrimonial property is guaranteed for both spouses when divorcing under Canadian law, and whereas this guarantee does not apply to status Indians living on reserves where property is split in favour of the male spouse, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), be it resolved that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women undertake a study of matrimonial property rights of aboriginal women.

This is an issue involving great disadvantage to women throughout centuries, and as I say, there are many aboriginal....

Madam Chair, could you call to order, please?

• (0940)

The Chair: Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna: I'm a little confused about procedure. I thought we were going to go over the submissions of all of the members. We've all submitted similar things—I had the one on aboriginal.... I thought we were going to look at the issues the committee would look at, and then at the appropriate time there would be motions, which we all agree with—the list here is quite similar—whereas we seem to be going into....

The Chair: I was just about to suggest it, but I hadn't asked, since we didn't have in front of us your submission of items you wanted the committee to consider.

Would you—

Mrs. Joy Smith: List them?

The Chair: —read the items you wanted and leave the issue of motions to a later time?

Mrs. Joy Smith: I will be happy to do that. You didn't have it in front of you, so I thought you wanted both.

Obviously, you know that matrimonial property rights for aboriginal women is huge on our list, and that is something we would really like to study. It's really gratifying to hear that others have it on their lists as well.

There is also poverty among aboriginal women and there is poverty among senior women. These are three things we would like to look at and address.

Thank you.

The Chair: It is good to see that there is almost a consensus of all of us thinking along the same lines, in many ways.

Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I think Ms. Minna should go first.

[*English*]

I guess it's you first, isn't it?

The Chair: Okay, Ms. Minna is first.

Hon. Maria Minna: Thank you.

Madam Chair, in my submission there are similar things. The aboriginal property rights is something I consider to be very important as well. I think we might, as a committee, discuss it, and there may not be a need for motions. It might be something that we adopt on the basis of consensus.

With respect to poverty among seniors, I had suggested “economic security of women”, namely senior women, and also of caregivers, which impacts the economic security as well.

I'd like to explain. The reason I said economic security of women is that there are a lot of women today who are in their thirties and are having children and staying at home, some of them, to look after their children, but they're missing out on pensions. Our pension structure doesn't really give them any extra, which means they're going to be the poor seniors of tomorrow whether their marriages survive or don't survive. Even if they do, it doesn't matter.

My suggestion is that since we've taken a look at women, seniors, and poverty, we might also look at the overall issue of economic security for women. That's why I have “senior women” as well.

We could also discuss what we might need to do with current pension structures to ensure we don't have poor senior women in the future, and at the same time address current senior poor women as well, because we need to deal with the short term and the long term situations of women.

That includes caregivers, because many of the caregivers who are now providing care are becoming seniors themselves and have no pensions. They're not earning very much money, and some of them aren't earning any money if they're looking after families.

Those two are rather wrapped together, but senior women really affect the whole issue of pensions for women. I call it economic security, but it's very much along the same lines.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I think our first order of business should be to review the work accomplished last year to get an idea of where we're going. I've seen several reports peppered with recommendations. I'd like to know what's been done, and what work remains to be done. I'm not familiar with procedure. Do I need to move a motion or some such thing? Perhaps the clerk can enlighten us.

I've also seen a report on pay equity that was tabled. Last time — I don't recall the exact date — I put a question to the Minister of Labour concerning pay equity. He responded that an interdepartmental committee was examining this issue. Can you tell me if pay equity legislation is currently being drafted? In my opinion, we need this kind of legislation. The time for debate and discussion is long over. Now is the time for action. It might be interesting for the committee to put forward pay equity legislation.

Finally, as we've all observed, crime and security are key concerns of this government. As I see it, it's critically important that we do a study on the impact future changes will have on women, whether changes to the Criminal Code, the Corrections Act or the Parole Act. We should come up with recommendations to advise other committees that will be reviewing these acts. Regarding crime, we could also examine the whole issue of human smuggling, a subject that has been covered at length in several reports.

In terms of the correctional system, it's important to take into account not only female inmates, but mothers who have been incarcerated. Upon closer examination, we note that their situation is quite desperate. What steps can be taken to ensure that the corrections systems is better adapted to women? The crime rate among women is much lower than among men. Consequently, fewer programs are available specifically for women. Women are incarcerated in maximum security facilities even when they are serving a light sentence. The infrastructure and the programs are simply not there for them.

Thank you.

• (0945)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Mourani, I might just add, there were several reports done by the committee: on gender-based analysis, pay equity, parental benefits, and on the women's programs. Those reports were all

tabled in the previous House with the government. I would suggest that we'd want to re-table those in the House and get a response from the government, and this way we would have a chance to get a response by the government by September on those.

We'll wait until the end of this discussion to move a motion that we readopt those and present them. There was some great work done and it was unanimously approved by all of the committee members. So congratulations on that.

Let me go back to the list.

Mr. Cotler.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I made three recommendations for this committee. The first was on the question of pay equity because I thought the committee had made great progress in that regard and unanimously was able to recommend going forward with respect to legislation. The second was the question of violence against women, and I would include also the issue of trafficking in that context. And the third was this is the 25th anniversary of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the CEDAW convention, and the recommendation was to look at what domestic obligations do we have under that convention, what have we in fact implemented, and what remains to be done. Those are the three.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cotler.

Ms. Guergis.

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I put forward four suggestions, and further to what I think many people around the table are talking about—senior women and poverty—I included income splitting, which I think addresses poverty for seniors, women in particular, because of the traditional role that women have played and there has been no respect for or a dollar amount given to the work they have done at home.

If we were to investigate and make a recommendation maybe at some point that we could at least start with senior women, with income splitting there, perhaps it would allow them to have pensions, the government pensions, because they're not even entitled to that if they didn't have an income at some point. So I thought it would tie in nicely with the discussion on senior women.

I also support the idea of talking about violence against women—in particular, sexual assault. I know many times I've asked witnesses before the committee about statistics, if we have any, whether they've changed, because I remember when I was a volunteer that it was one out of three women at some point in their life. I believe that has not changed, and it has been ten years since I worked as a volunteer for a rape crisis centre. So I think we need to find out if we've actually made some progress in this, and if we haven't, maybe make some recommendations on how the government could address this issue.

I also thought perhaps we could talk about women and entrepreneurs, and more specifically trade, the international trade side of things. Perhaps the committee could participate in a trade mission for Canadian women and Canadian entrepreneurs and really start focusing on how small-business women can expand.

● (0950)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Mathysen.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I think all these issues are in fact very, very significant.

I do have a question, though, in regard to the motion from Ms. Smith. While it's very important to study, I wonder what purpose, what goal, there is in terms of addressing the real deficit in regard to both senior women and aboriginal women. I like Ms. Minna's objective to actually look at changes in terms of the structures that are impacting negatively on women.

I'd also like to make mention of the motions that I put forward. I think it is very, very important that we do indeed look back on the work of the previous committee, specifically report number five. There never was a government response. We've heard about concerns in regard to women who are entrepreneurs. Report number five dealt specifically with some of those challenges in regard to maternity and parental benefits and the fact that many of the people who are excluded from those benefits are self-employed and entrepreneurial women. So those things are important.

Thirdly, the last motion is a request that the minister for the status of women come to the committee, because I would very much like to hear about the status of pay equity legislation and I'd also like an explanation of the estimates. I would like to know why money was allocated and reallocated and the rationale behind that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's apparent we've got a full and ambitious agenda with all the suggestions being put forward. It strikes me as I'm listening to it that a number of different ideas can be integrated under one broad umbrella.

Ms. Guergis talks about income splitting, and to my mind it is very much part of income security—a piece of it for women. I think that's something that's important to move forward on.

I would like to make a number of points.

I concur with you, and I think it's important that we resubmit to the government all the reports that were tabled by the committee last year. They were all unanimous reports of the committee, and they all came about after consultation with women's groups from all over the country. That is work that has been done already; we don't need to reinvent, and we can ask for a government response.

The matter of matrimonial property rights has come up, and I think many members of the committee are aware the aboriginal affairs committee did an extensive study on it last year and had a

response from the government. I am a member of that committee. I have given notice of motion to that committee that we resubmit that report and ask for a response from the government on it. To study it in this committee is to basically redo what another committee has done. Given that our agenda is so full, I don't see the purpose of it when the work is being done and there is a lot of material on it.

Last year the election was called, but we were attempting to have a joint committee with the aboriginal affairs committee to discuss the issue of matrimonial property rights. It's a far-reaching one, and we just had a presentation yesterday in the aboriginal affairs committee. When we looked at the whole issue of Bill C-31 and the implications for the demographics of aboriginal communities, matrimonial property rights is an issue that I think should be dealt with in conjunction with Bill C-31. I would urge this committee to try to do it jointly with the aboriginal affairs committee rather than reinventing it. It's a priority for everybody, and that would give it significant impact and weight.

The other comment I would like to make, Madam Chair, is that we did extensive consultations last year with community groups. Probably 50 or 60 community groups across the country appeared before this committee. We asked to hear from the communities what their priorities are. I think as we make our decisions we should keep those in mind. I'm sure all members of the committee have had an opportunity to do it, but pay equity was certainly a priority; income security or poverty against women—however you want to describe it—was certainly a priority; poverty for senior women, aboriginal women; violence against women; trafficking—we've made some moves on trafficking, but there's more to do. We heard that very much from the community groups.

Our agenda is full, and I would suggest that, after everybody has an opportunity to talk, we try in a collaborative way to prioritize by a show of hands, informally, what we would like to move forward on.

● (0955)

The Chair: Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Should we continue?

The Chair: Specific to the ideas on the work plan, are there any other suggestions of things we want to look at?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Have we exhausted the list, Madam Chair?

The Chair: No, we haven't. I still have a list here.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I'll wait until we've exhausted the list and then we'll comment.

The Chair: Ms. Neville, I have you on the list again.

Ms. Guergis.

Ms. Helena Guergis: I want to give my support to Ms. Neville's suggestion on having a joint committee meeting with the aboriginal affairs committee. I also think that perhaps Ms. Mourani, when you're talking about the criminal issues, women in jail and things like that, perhaps we could have a joint committee meeting with the justice committee, so that we're not repeating the work that's already done.

Our time is very valuable and, as Ms. Neville said, we do have a very ambitious agenda. Any time we can partner with other committees to move a little faster, I think that would make good sense.

The Chair: Okay, great suggestion.

Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna: Actually, I think this is going very well, because I think we're coming around to the same stuff. After all, we're women, so we're coming around to the same issues.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Not all.

Hon. Maria Minna: Well, sorry, I apologize.

Are you the one I have to apologize to? Okay, sorry, Irwin.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: No problem. I agree with the sensibility.

Hon. Maria Minna: Women are supporters of the sensibility. Okay.

What I seem to pick up some consensus on is the resubmitting of the reports. Because obviously there was consensus from the previous committee—and that's great—we could get that off the table, so we could get a report back.

The Chair: Are you moving that as a motion?

Hon. Maria Minna: I'm just noticing some of my thinking, and then we can get to that in a minute. But I think Madam Mourani was going to do that.

So resubmit those. Obviously there is agreement on the matrimonial rights. I agree with Anita and others that we should work in conjunction with the aboriginal committee as well, so that we're not overlapping and redoing studies that have already been done. So that seems to be a bit of a consensus here.

With respect to women, poverty for seniors, income splitting, and what I suggested with income security and seniors—it's the same thing—we're talking about income security for seniors and women. As I said, I think that could be rolled into income security and seniors poverty today, and that needs to be addressed.

Then there's violence against women. Again, I think that what we could do.... There is violence against women, which would include justice, group justice issues, the impact of the current justice legislation, and other things that need to be done, and trafficking.... It tends to come into how women are affected and violence. It doesn't have to be just one type of violence; it's a broad term. So those things can be collapsed into a study as well.

That gives us a big chunk of work, but there are three major areas, which are all very important. Then we are able to do a comprehensive, inclusive kind of study, as opposed to piecemeal bits for women.

If there's consensus, my suggestion would be to collapse those issues into those three main areas—and I think there's plenty of work we can do.

• (1000)

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Mathysen.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm really glad to see that we're reaching a positive consensus, because these are issues of profound concern.

I would like to add something into the mix. I realize that we've taken on a great deal of work, but in light of the reality of our current Parliament, the fact that there are so few women represented in the House of Commons makes electoral reform an important piece in this puzzle. We've been talking a great deal about accountability, and I think it's time that we looked at the kinds of changes that would make Parliament truly representative and truly accountable. So I would like to add electoral reform.

There are all kinds of models that are available. A great deal of work has already been done, and I think it's important to move that work forward with this committee, keeping in mind that better representation in our Parliament will indeed address, or help to address, the issues that concern us in the committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: It's important for us to have these reports, to get an idea of the government's position. We need to know what the previous government has done over the past year, so that we don't cover the same ground again.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Yes, it's really good to hear the synergy around the table in terms of all the issues we're talking about. It truly is a full plate. The business of aboriginal women is something that all of us hold near and dear to our hearts. It's something that a lot of us have been very concerned about. There's also the poverty among senior women. I know in my riding there are a lot of women who can't make ends meet at the end of the month.

These are useful things, and to have a knowledge of what went on before is very important as well. So I would suggest that we carefully move forward as quickly as we can on these issues.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you all very much. I think we can have a very interesting time as we move forward. These have all emerged, the economic security of women tied in with....

Ms. Bourgeois.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): I has asked to be recognized.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, please go ahead. We hadn't noticed. My apologies.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: As I see it, not only should we review the work done by the previous committee, we should also revisit the recommendations made.

A total of four reports were tabled, two of which dealt with the funding of the Women's Program. Both of these reports called for an increase in funding levels. Status of Women Canada was scheduled to begin consultations on this very subject last fall. It would be good to get an update on the status of these talks.

The second committee report focused on an extremely important subject, namely a comparative analysis of the sexes. In my opinion, we cannot draft or amend legislation without taking this analysis into account. A three-member panel of experts was struck to devise the best possible strategies to promote and report on the advancement of women. It's important that we review the report prepared by this panel.

Moving along, the committee should propose draft pay equity legislation. We need to find out what this government intends to do on this front. I'm delighted with the prospect of having aboriginal women's issues on our agenda, especially the question of matrimonial property and rights. Aboriginal women, least we forget, have been fighting to have their rights recognized since 1974. A Quebec organization has been actively promoting the recognition of aboriginal rights.

•(1005)

[English]

The Chair: Any further discussion?

Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna: Madam Chair, this is not so much a discussion as maybe....

There seems to some consensus, if I might suggest, that we could start off with a tabling of reports, including a request to the three-person panel of experts. I understand that a report was given to the government, and I'm not sure this committee ever saw that report. Maybe what we want is to get a copy of that.

I would suggest that, as Madam Mourani and others said earlier, we retable the reports and ask for a copy of the one we've not seen. That puts it in motion, and the government could then take whatever time it needs. If we could do that first, then we could go to the suggestion of items to work on. There seems to be consensus around those as well. All we need to do, really, is discuss how we word each one and the pieces we want to discuss in each of those major areas.

It seems to me that would be the best way to proceed. Then we could just wrap our heads around each one fairly quickly.

Perhaps Madam Mourani could....

Do you need a motion?

The Chair: Yes, I think Ms. Mourani needs to put it in the form of a motion, that we would readopt and reintroduce to the government the previous reports and the work done by the committee.

It would read as follows: that this committee report to the House that it agrees with the conclusions of all of the committee's reports from the previous Parliament and that it request a government response to these reports.

A voice: It needs to retable them.

The Chair: Retable them.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I do have a motion, first of all, that's on the table about aboriginal marriage rights. Could we deal with that one first and then go to the second motion, since it goes along with what Ms. Minna is suggesting? So could we do that and get a consensus on both of those?

The Chair: I don't know that it matters which one goes first. It has been moved, and I don't know what difference it makes which one goes first. We have several motions here, as well. Does the committee want to deal with these additional motions at this point?

Hon. Maria Minna: I don't think I have a problem dealing with them, Madam Chair. My difficulty is that we went through a discussion and we all put in pieces. Rather than a specific motion, could we not adopt, on a consensus basis, the different pieces of each? The matrimonial one was changed to say "let's have a meeting with". The other one.... There are different motions on poverty with seniors. I have a similar one, but mine is not a motion, it's a recommendation, and Madam Guergis has one to do with income splitting. If we come to a consensus, we'll pull these pieces together and then we'll just agree—because there doesn't seem to be any disagreement—rather than go through the formalities. There seems to be consensus. If there were no agreement, I wouldn't I'm just suggesting.

•(1010)

The Chair: I think there is very consistent agreement with what we have before us and what we've all talked about as far as trying to pull together a meeting with the aboriginal committee on matrimonial property rights. Do you want it with the aboriginal committee as well as with the justice committee, or strictly with the aboriginal committee?

Ms. Helena Guergis: Separate discussions with them, focusing on Ms. Mourani's idea and talking about when they're in jail, if that's what she wants to talk about, and accountability and cracking down on crime and—

The Chair: So we would put a request in, then, to the aboriginal committee for a joint committee meeting with us and the aboriginal committee and the justice committee. That would take care of a couple of our meetings at that point.

I wonder if I could make a suggestion. Statistics Canada put out a report in March on women in Canada, an update on previous work they had done. Would it be the wish of the committee to have Statistics Canada come in and give us an update so we know what successes we've had and where we are as of today?

One other suggestion, and we only have about three weeks, maybe four....

Hon. Anita Neville: We might be here in July.

The Chair: That's good.

We're getting some work done. Maybe we can just hold our meetings outside, though, and we'll leave the clerk's department to figure that one out.

As well, I think it would be very nice to have the minister come and address the committee, if we could fit all of that in, depending on her schedule. It would be nice to hear what her priorities and concerns are.

One other thing was to hear from the department. Ms. Mourani raised it, but for those of us who are new to the committee, I'd like to hear from the department itself—what the priorities are, what the budget lines are, and various things that I think would be helpful to all of us.

I think we have a fair amount of work that we've decided in front of us. Is everybody comfortable...?

Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna: I would like to suggest, Madam Chair, that when we meet with the department and officials, they should be instructed that when they come in front of the committee we may ask questions of them on matrimonial rights, but also on income security, seniors, and poverty, as well as on violence against women and other things. While the three major areas we seem to have consensus around will be studied separately as three pieces, the officials should know that we may be asking questions in all three areas while they are here so we don't have to recall them every time.

The Chair: Good point. Thank you.

Hon. Maria Minna: It's a way to start us off.

The Chair: Ms. Davidson.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Yes, I just have a couple of questions.

Am I understanding correctly that somebody has made a motion that we are going to accept all of the former reports and forward them to the government? Is that correct? I haven't even seen them. Today I got three. Maybe I'm the only new member here, but....

Hon. Maria Minna: We're trusting our former colleagues.

The Chair: There was a report—

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: I would still like the opportunity to at least look at them and see what they say before I....

The Chair: I got them off the website yesterday, from the Status of Women's website.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: So these are three of them, I'm guessing.

The Chair: Yes, there's gender-based analysis, and women's employment, as well as the parental benefits—

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: There is the pay equity one.

The Chair: —and the pay equity one. We had not received a response back from the previous government on the parental benefits one because it was tabled very close to the time that the government fell, but it would be very interesting and helpful to us as we move

forward for the fall if we could get a response from the government on all of those.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Would it be too onerous on this committee if we waited until Tuesday so I had a chance to read them?

The Chair: No, that's fine. I think it's a good idea.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Thank you. Will the clerk circulate them?

The Chair: The clerk will circulate proper copies rather than what's coming off the website and we'll deal with that as the first order of business on Tuesday so that we can be moving along. We'll try to see what we can outline for next week.

Are there any other issues? Sorry, my list keeps growing here.

Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Budgetary appropriations are currently being examined. In one of the reports on funding, mention was made of increasing the budget for the Women's Program by 25 per cent. I would appreciate it if my government colleagues could put in a good word when the estimates are reviewed. It's important that these groups have the funding they need to provide the services women deserve. As you know, when we talk about women, we also include children and men.

No one has yet to explain to me clearly how budgetary appropriations are reviewed. Nor do I know how much money will be allocated to these programs. However, — and experienced members will correct me if I'm wrong - it was my understanding that a 25 per cent increase had been proposed. Since the estimates are now being examined, shouldn't we press the government on this matter without further delay?

• (1015)

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen, I had you on the speakers list again.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: I believe I'd already made my point, but I would like to reiterate that electoral reform is an important part of what I'd like to see this committee look at as well, since I didn't hear it in the list.

The Chair: When we come back on Tuesday we'll have this down in some sort of a structure and we'll look and see how we can find an opportunity to be brought up to date on what's happening on electoral reform as well. We'll put that into a bit of a work plan that we'll present to the committee on Tuesday and see if it meets with the desires of the committee.

Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I just want to ask, could you distribute the routine motions, as adopted today, prior to the next meeting so we can look them over as well, just so we come prepared?

The Chair: No problem.

Is there any further business?

One of your motions, Ms. Smith, did you want to withdraw it?

Mrs. Joy Smith: No, I would like to have it stand; I did table it already. It's the one we've all agreed on, which is the one on aboriginal marriage, and I want to have it formally down as a motion. I presented it and I would like to have a vote on it as one of the things we consider. There seems to be a consensus around the table.

The Chair: The consensus is that we all agreed with those issues, so is it necessary to vote on individual items? We've pretty much wrapped up a consensus among all of us that these are the directions the committee wants to go in and that we should move forward on them as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I can ask the chair to withdraw the motion then.

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Joy Smith: We either have to deal with it or withdraw it, one or the other.

The Chair: Exactly. The same would be for any of the other motions that were here. We've got a consensus as to where we're going, so the motions would be withdrawn. There's a consensus there.

We've got a lot work done in only an hour.

I say to all of you, thank you very much. I think we're going to have an exciting time on behalf of the women in Canada and I thank you for your contribution.

The meeting is adjourned.

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