



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

FEWO • NUMBER 013 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, September 26, 2006

—
Chair

The Honourable Judy Sgro

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•(1110)

[English]

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Michelle Tittley): Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum. We can now proceed to the election of the chair. I am ready to receive motions to that effect.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): I nominate Judy Sgro.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Anita Neville that Judy Sgro be nominated to the position of chair.

Are there any further nominations?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and the Honourable Judy Sgro duly elected as chair of the committee.

I will now proceed to the election of the vice-chair.

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): I move that Joy Smith be vice-chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Stanton that Joy Smith be nominated as vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions for first vice-chair?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt that motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Joy Smith elected vice-chair of the committee.

I can now proceed to the election of a second vice-chair.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): I'd like to nominate Irene Mathysen.

The Clerk: It has been moved by the Honourable Judy Sgro that Irene Mathysen be nominated second vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any other motions to that effect?

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Is it closed, or can we....?

The Clerk: I am accepting other motions, if you'd like, for nomination.

It has been moved by Judy Sgro that Irene Mathysen be nominated as second vice-chair of the committee. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt that motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Irene Mathysen elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

I can now invite Judy Sgro to take the chair.

The Chair (Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.)): Thank you all very much for your support.

All our elections should be as difficult as that one for elected officials. I think we would all appreciate that kind.

Thank you very much for your support. I do appreciate it. I think we are trying to move forward on some important issues, and I appreciate the support from everyone here.

We have to adopt standard routine motions. Does everybody have the standard routine motions in front of them? I will have to read them into the record.

Number one is that the committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist it in its work.

I need someone to move that.

Pat Davidson moves that.

(Motion agreed to)

•(1115)

The Chair: Number two is on in-camera meeting transcripts: that one copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee.

That is moved by Bruce Stanton.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Number three, staff in camera meetings: that, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to have one staff person present at in camera meetings.

That's moved by Ms. Stronach.

(Motion agreed to)

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

Moved by Ms. Deschamps.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Number five, witness travel expenses: that, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses, not exceeding one representative per organization; and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be at the discretion of the chair; and that, if requested, reasonable child care expenses of witnesses be reimbursed.

That is moved by...

Hon. Anita Neville: I have a question. I noticed that the motion says "if requested". I'm always concerned that people know about the availability of these funds for them to travel. Sometimes it's assumed by organizations that they have to pay for it themselves, and they don't know to ask. So how do we communicate to witnesses that they can ask for it, or do we communicate it to witnesses?

The Chair: That's a very good point.

Madam clerk.

The Clerk: When witnesses are contacted they are sent information documents, and within those documents it explains that there are allowances for travel expenses.

Hon. Anita Neville: As long as it's clear that it's available. That's fine, thank you.

The Chair: That's moved by Ms. Neville.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Number six, 48 hour's notice: that except for amendments to bills, 48 hours' notice be given before any substantive motion is considered by the committee; and that the motion be filed with the clerk of the committee and circulated to members in both official languages. Upon receipt of the notice, the clerk shall put the motion on the agenda of the committee's next meeting.

Moved by Ms. Smith.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1120)

The Chair: On working meals: that the clerk of the committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide for working meals for the committee.

Moved by Ms. Mathysen.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: On distribution of documents in both official languages: that the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute to the members of the committee documents only when they exist in both official languages and that no document provided by a witness

be distributed without the authorization of the clerk of the committee.

Moved by Ms. Mourani.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Number nine, reduced quorum: that the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present, provided that at least three members are present, including a member of the opposition.

Moved by Ms. Grewal.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Number ten, time allowance for witness presentations and questioning by member rounds: that witnesses be given ten minutes to make their opening statement; that during the questioning of witnesses the time allocated to each questioner be as follows: on the first round of questioning, seven minutes to a representative of each party in the following order: Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois, Conservative Party, and New Democratic Party; on the following rounds of questioning, five minutes per party in the following order: Liberal Party, Conservative Party, Bloc Québécois, New Democratic Party, and Conservative Party.

Moved by Ms. Smith.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Ms. Deschamps, I want to welcome you to our committee. I hope that you enjoy the important work we do here, and we're glad to have you with us. Welcome.

We don't have any witnesses today for a couple of reasons. One is that the clerk couldn't get any here today, with the short notice that she had, and is working on getting witnesses for Thursday.

I took the liberty of preparing a budget and a bit of a work plan. If the committee would like, we could go over these issues and get them done today so that we could hopefully start on Thursday with the witnesses. Is everyone comfortable with that?

The first issue on the table then would be the operational budget request for the study on human trafficking that we're going to be doing. If everyone could take a minute and go through that, you should have it in front of you.

Ms. Stronach.

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): I have a question. Within the overall envelope allocated to this committee, is it possible to also secure funding, or at what stage do we secure funding, for the other priority that we have, the economic security of women?

The Chair: It was decided at the last meeting that we were going to focus on human trafficking this session. In February, or whenever we start that one, a budget would be put forward. If it is in excess of \$40,000, we'd go to the subcommittee on budgets. But we had already approved a budget for that study, and it will expire at the end of this year. We will then have to resubmit the budget request at that time, when we're ready to do it.

This budget here, if approved by committee, will go to the liaison committee because it's in excess of \$40,000. I am a member of that committee, so I will do my best to get it approved.

Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair. Congratulations on your election.

I'd like an explanation regarding witness expenses. I note that we are planning to hear from eight witnesses from Vancouver and that we are covering their expenses which total \$25,600. Then, we're planning on spending \$12,000 to cover the expenses of eight witnesses from Quebec. Could someone explain to me the discrepancy between the two amounts? Do distance and airfare factor into the equation?

[*English*]

The Chair: Clearly, if we are having to pay for the transportation for individual witnesses, for those who come from Toronto, Halifax, or Quebec it's probably much less expensive than flying in from Vancouver. It is also based on what Treasury Board guidelines indicate. If we have witnesses from the west, the guidelines already indicate these are the kinds of dollars we need to be looking at.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Will the witnesses be travelling first class or economy class?

[*English*]

The Chair: It's according to Treasury Board guidelines. I expect they are travelling economy. We could send off some information on the guidelines if you would like, but these things are put together in terms specific to them.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Has the witness count been finalized?

[*English*]

The Chair: No, not at all. This is just a proposal to try to cover off as many as possible of the witnesses who have been submitted by the committee who are pertinent to the kind of study we're doing, always remembering that we have to stay within the confines of this budget. When we decide which witnesses are best to provide us with the information we need, we have to keep the fact that we have a budget in mind as we go forward.

Mr. Stanton.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you, Madam Chair, and congratulations on becoming our chair for the fall session.

In respect to where we are since the first of April, we set out a budget, I recall, back in the spring session. Are we ahead or behind where we expected to be? We're just looking at this period from September 25 to the Christmas break. Do we have any information on where we stand as a committee so far?

The Chair: We could probably provide that at our next meeting, to give us an update. I'm always very concerned with those things as well. But when we're initiating a specific study, we have to allocate specific dollars just to that study.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Yes, and I don't mean to be taking away from that, but one is incidental to the other. It's just for a point of information. I don't have any objections to what I see in front of me and I presume the clerk's office has provided these estimates more or less on the basis of what has been the experience in the past and the Treasury Board guidelines.

The Chair: Very much so, and I have asked as we go forward to always be very aware what kind of dollars we're spending, so that when we have witnesses coming in from Vancouver or wherever we make sure we allocate sufficient time, so that we don't spend a lot of money for somebody to come for 10 or 15 minutes. I will be keeping that in mind and raising it to the committee, so that we make sure we allocate sufficient time as we move forward.

If we need additional funds we can always ask, if we think we're going over budget. We can go back to the committee and ask for additional dollars if necessary.

If there are no further questions, I need a mover of this motion.

Ms. Neville.

• (1125)

Hon. Anita Neville: It's just a question. I'm sorry, I've lost track. What is the motion on the budget?

The Chair: The motion would be that the proposed budget for the study on human trafficking, in the amount of \$63,000 for the period September 26 to December 29, be adopted.

Hon. Anita Neville: My question is relevant to the budget. I'm looking at the proposed schedule, and there are an awful lot of meetings scheduled on human trafficking. I am wondering whether, in planning it, all of that time is required for it when you look at the agenda, and whether there is any way of condensing it by having panels of two or three or four at a time. I was struck by the number of meetings on this and would urge the clerk to put together panels of witnesses, not only for moving the agenda along but also because it creates a different dynamic in the room when you have more people and synergy.

The Chair: Certainly I think we will try to do that. Depending on the information the witnesses are expected to give us, it is also important to make sure they have adequate time, so that we all have a good solid grasp of the issue as we move forward.

Hon. Anita Neville: I appreciate that.

The Chair: We will be trying to do that.

So the budget is moved.

Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith: That's a very good point, and I thank Ms. Neville for bringing it up.

Perhaps if you're looking at panels, which we have done frequently here at the status of women committee, we might look at the people.... I would suggest that people like Irene Soltys and Sylvain St-Jean from the RCMP and Irene Sushko from the Canadian Ukrainian Congress and The Future Group.... Those are people who work hands on, and I would suggest that we not put them on a panel, that we give them more time, because they will be able to put very strong current information forward to us. That's the suggestion I'd like to make.

The Chair: So the motion on the budget is moved by Ms. Smith.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: There is a proposal here on our work plan. We have been able to confirm Mr. Poulin for Thursday's meeting. So we do have one witness already confirmed.

We have basically what is in front of you. We've been able to confirm the RCMP for our October 3 meeting, and then we will have the minister here on October 5.

Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In looking at the overall plan, I notice that on October 5, meeting 16, we're meeting on the response to reports 1 and 3. I don't see any other slot for consideration of the other reports. We have reports 2, 4, and 5. I see report 7 coming up there. I guess report 6 is missing too. I know we had the motion from Ms. Minna with respect to gender-based analysis, so is it the intention, then, to cover some of that ground in the minister's meeting on the 26th?

The Chair: Yes. We had asked for the minister to come on the 26th as well, just given the fact that we need some time to get a sense from the minister as to her vision and direction, as well as to speak to, I believe, five reports in total. Then we still have main estimates at some point. We'll try to sort all of that out within two meetings, in fairness to the minister, so that she has sufficient time to be able to respond as well.

• (1130)

Mr. Bruce Stanton: But is it the intention to slot some time for those other reports, then?

The Chair: Yes. It has to happen that way.

We've also asked for meetings with Minister Finley regarding HRSDC, which I believe is pay equity as well. Minister Prentice has already agreed to come on October 24 to speak about matrimonial rights, and we are still waiting for confirmation from Ministers Toews and Blackburn.

So right now the minister is going to come and be prepared to speak to main estimates first.

A voice: No, I've requested that it be later on.

The Chair: So that we have this put in the right direction, we will have the minister speak to the reports that we have received, plus some vision, and answer some questions that have to do with funding and a variety of other things. The main estimates would come on the 26th, at that meeting.

So, as you see, we're still trying to slot in different things. We have a list of witnesses from the Department of Foreign Affairs, the

Department of Justice, and so on and so forth, on page 2. All of them have been requested and we're waiting for confirmation of a date.

Is everybody comfortable with the work plan that we are suggesting here?

Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I see listed here representatives of the Toronto and Vancouver police sex crime units. We should also plan to invite someone from Montreal. If possible, I'd also like Mr. Gauthier, from the anti-gang unit, to speak to the committee about juvenile prostitution.

[*English*]

The Chair: Certainly we will take those names down if the committee feels that they have something to contribute.

Does everybody have the work plan? There's a work plan that has been distributed to you as well, over and above the calendar. This is the suggested work plan for the study that we are about to do.

You also have in your package the report from the Library of Parliament on trafficking in persons. That should also be in your folder. It outlines the work that has been done, especially in the last few years, and the ongoing work that's being done by the joint committee that represents the justice department and others—ongoing, continued work on this issue. It's a very good report, by the way, so it needs to be applauded.

Lyne, would you like to run us through a bit of this work plan?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lyne Casavant (Committee Researcher): First of all, I'd like to respond to Ms. Mourani. Regarding juvenile prostitution in Quebec, the problem has been linked in part to human trafficking. In meeting 10, plans are to hear from Jacques Casgrain, a lawyer in charge of the Bureau de lutte contre le crime organisé in Quebec City. He has been involved in tracking down the juvenile prostitution network in that city. I don't know if that answers your question.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: It would be very interesting indeed to hear from him. Could we also invite some people from Montreal? Whether we like it or not, Quebec City is linked to Montreal. Street gangs first saw the light of day in Montreal and now they have spread to other communities in the province. Mr. Gauthier, the investigator in charge of the street gangs unit in Montreal, could also give us an overview of the situation in Quebec City and across the province in terms of juvenile prostitution and human trafficking.

His testimony would complement Mr. Casgrain's observations very nicely. We would thus have an overall view of the situation in Quebec.

•(1135)

Ms. Lyne Casavant: I simply wanted to point out that this work plan was only intended to facilitate the discussion. It contains all of the names suggested by committee members since last June, in addition to any suggested more recently by certain members. It includes all of the names put forward. As analysts, we have added several names of individuals who should have testified on Bill C-49, but who weren't able to appear owing to time constraints. The plan is construed in such a way as to broach the issue of human trafficking from three perspectives, namely, prevention, victim protection and prosecution of traffickers. We based ourselves on the discussions on human trafficking that the committee has had since June.

[English]

The Chair: Are there any further suggestions or comments on the work plan before you?

Ms. Mourani.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: So then, the three themes will be prevention, victim protection and prosecution. When the subject of prosecution arose, we were talking about measures put in place to counter human trafficking. Could we add an item for discussion, namely the link between prostitution and human trafficking?

Ms. Lyne Casavant: Our first three meetings will be devoted to examining human trafficking in Canada and internationally. During the first meeting, the committee will consider the position of departments heading up the interdepartmental task force on human trafficking and look at the issue overall. The second and third meetings will focus on the causes and characteristics of human trafficking in Canada and around the world. These persons could testify before the committee and explain to members the connection between organized crime, prostitution and human trafficking.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: At the same time, could we also take a look at the link between legislative measures to legalize prostitution and human trafficking?

The Acting Chair (Ms. Lyne Casavant): These individuals are certainly capable of answering questions of this nature, if put by committee members.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: I'm just reviewing it. It's a very comprehensive list and I thank you. But I see two items that are missing. It's very much a justice-based or police-based list, and I'd like to see something included in here on the social undercurrents that cause women to go into trafficking. We can provide you with some suggestions.

Secondly, I would also like to see some representation from other community organizations. I think I've spoken to it before, but there is a significant amount of trafficking from Southeast Asia, and I don't see any representation here from groups representing those women. I think that's important.

The Chair: That's a good point. As we start, and certainly after we've heard from justice and the RCMP and so on, it will probably help us to narrow it down a bit, and to make sure we have the right

people on this list to be representative of what we need. We could spend a hundred meetings on such an important topic and not be able to narrow ourselves down to be able to do something substantial on it. As we go forward, we will probably come up with some additional people over and above those we have here—or instead of them, in some cases.

Ms. Smith is next.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I believe Ms. Neville has a good point, but I feel that we do have these on the listing. People like the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and the NGOs talk about the social undercurrents. Irena Soltys is one who talks about underlying causes that are not police kinds of things, as does Victor Malarek. The International Organization for Migration is another one that talks about that benefit. There are some here, definitely. Irene Sushko and The Future Group will definitely be able to give us some knowledge about the underlying social issues that are so important and lead to human trafficking as well.

•(1140)

The Chair: The researchers will look at the names and what Ms. Neville has suggested to make sure we have a full view of all sides of this issue. It will be important as we move forward as a committee.

Ms. Lyne Casavant: If I can add something, Leslie Ann Jeffrey did a lot of her work in the Philippines, if I'm not mistaken, so she has a very good background on the causes of human trafficking and why the women are going from one country to another. She discussed that in great detail. If you have the name of a person who you think would be very good to discuss some of the issues for other parts of the country, we would certainly add it to the list.

The Chair: Are there any further comments? Is everyone comfortable with the work plan before us?

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I have one final observation to make.

The CLAP and the CIES could be possible additions to the list. I could send you more information about these organizations.

Personally, I'd be satisfied to hear from Mr. Gauthier and from the CLAP. Perhaps we could meet with the CIES if we have enough time, but it's not essential that we do. This would give us an overall picture of the situation.

[English]

The Chair: We will continue to share the list with all the members who are requesting different witnesses as we move forward, to ensure that we are going to be able to...

We had 14 meetings with all of the other things that are done, and if we want to move forward on it, we have to make sure we have an efficient list, so that we get extreme value from each of the people. I know we all do.

Do we need to adopt this work plan? If it's all agreed, the work plan is all right to move forward on.

You've had a chance to look at the calendar. Do you have any further comments on the calendar?

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I'm sorry to be asking you so many questions. What is Future Group?

[English]

The Chair: I will ask Ms. Smith, or our researcher, or whoever has that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Is it an organization as such or does this simply mean that future groups will be added to the list? I'd just like to know.

[English]

The Chair: It's an organization that's focused on the future, evidently.

Ms. Smith, would you comment?

Mrs. Joy Smith: I will give you a handout that I just gave to some of our people this morning. The Future Group is a group that has worked exclusively with the human trafficking issue and the causes. They've been part of the people who have made suggestions as to how we should deal with this. They've been very hands-on.

They have a wealth of information. They did a study called *Falling Short of the Mark: An International Study on the Treatment of Human Trafficking Victims*. It relates to what happens after a victim is rescued, what they do to make sure that they can integrate back into society, and the medical treatment and counselling that is needed there. They are right on top of the issues. The Future Group is made up of many volunteers who are working in this area. I'd be glad to give you a couple of handouts, just to give you an idea.

The Chair: It would be great to have that, but in order for it to be distributed it needs to be done in English and French. If we could get that looked after it would be good.

Possibly one of the things that might be helpful for all these witnesses is to have a bit of a description before they come before us, not two pages but a bit of a description as to what their background is and why it is they're here, so we can all zero in more effectively with our questions.

We're moving forward on that. Is everything okay with everyone? You have this trafficking report that was done by the Library of Parliament. You also have a brief on the same issue. We have asked about the video that you suggested, Ms. Smith, and it will be ready in a couple of weeks. At this point they're reluctant to release it to us individually, so I have asked for arrangements to be made to have a screen brought in here. It's about a 15-minute video and we would see it here at one of our meetings as soon as they have it ready to share with us.

The other issue we could deal with this morning is a notice of motion that Ms. Minna put on the table at our last meeting. I believe all of you should have it in your package. Would you like to read it into the record, Ms. Minna?

• (1145)

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Yes, okay.

Gender Based Analysis Update.

Whereas Gender Based Analysis (GBA) is a tool that is used to clarify the differences between women and men when developing policies, programs and legislation.

Whereas at the fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 Canada, along with 188 other nations, committed to develop a federal plan based on GBA to advance the situation of women, both within its own borders and globally.

Whereas Canada played a leading role at the Conference to secure the adoption of a strong Platform for Action that included key agreements on issues such as violence against women, unpaid work, and poverty.

Whereas in 2000 the federal government approved the Agenda for Gender Equality, a five year government-wide strategy, that accelerated the implementation of GBA to strengthen government policy capacity.

Whereas the Expert Panel on Accountability Mechanisms for Gender Equality in its final report (2005) recommends in the immediate term, taking administrative actions and key policy decisions and in the medium term, adopting legislation to mandate GBA.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women invite the Deputy Ministers from key ministries (Finance, Justice, Human Resources, Immigration and Treasury Board) to provide an update of the implementation of GBA in their areas.

The Chair: Does the committee wish to adopt this motion? Does anyone want to speak to this motion?

Hon. Maria Minna: Madam Chair, I can expand on it if you like.

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen.

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

I most certainly would like to support this motion. I want to thank the honourable member for bringing it forward, because, based on what we saw yesterday, we have some very profound concerns about what is happening to women in this country. If we take a look at the cuts, they're directed at women. Our obligation here is to protect the women of this country and advance their equality. But when I look at cuts to the Law Commission of Canada, \$5 million from Status of Women of Canada, the court challenges eliminated, I become very, very concerned about the direction we're taking as a government and I feel very strongly that these ministers need to be here.

I would like to see Minister Oda in here immediately to explain to us how she is going to protect the women of this country in light of these absolutely unspeakable cuts.

Having said that, I would like in the strongest possible terms to lend my support to this motion.

The Chair: Any further comments?

Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I have to say that at this point in time it's not the time for this motion to be put forward. I appreciate the intent of the motion, but right now I think we should be concentrating on the human trafficking issue. At some point in time, of course, we will bring in all ministers when we get on the other topic.

The Chair: When the minister does come, on either October 5 or October 26, she will be speaking to the reports on the gender based analysis. I expect that this will be discussed at that time as well.

Any further comment?

Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna: Madam Chair, thank you.

I didn't have a chance to expand on it earlier, but when I initially wrote this motion it was to have the deputy ministers, because I wanted the committee to have a chance to ask the deputy ministers about the procedures and processes in place in their respective ministries that actually make this a reality, rather than something we keep talking about all the time.

Since the cuts that took place yesterday, this motion becomes that much more important. Status of Women Canada is having cuts. How will that affect the program's ability to do the kind of lead work it has to do across the government, across all those sectors, to make sure this training takes place because it's the lead department on that?

Especially given the cuts, this is important for us to be able to see. The recommendations are clear from the gender equality task force, and it's been going on for a long time. This committee should be able to call to account the bureaucracy or the officials to ask what is happening in their respective departments, in finance, exactly. Given the cuts, how is Status of Women Canada impacted in its ability to lead on this issue across the government?

It's a very important, fundamental piece of work that we have to get done, which has been affected.

•(1150)

The Chair: Thank you.

We have a motion.... Sorry, we have some more speakers to hear.

Ms. Neville, Mr. Stanton, Ms. Smith.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased the minister is coming before the committee to speak to it. Has the report from the expert panel on accountability mechanisms for gender equality been distributed to the committee? I don't recall, but that doesn't mean anything.

The Chair: Say that report again.

Hon. Anita Neville: Ms. Minna puts in her motion a reference to the report that was produced by the expert panel on accountability mechanisms for gender equality. The panel was established by the previous minister, and it's a three-person panel. It appeared before this committee and issued a final report on gender-based equality, and it's important that all members of this committee have that report. That's my first comment.

My second comment is that I'm sorry, and I should have caught it earlier, but Ms. Minna didn't include in her notice of motion something to the effect of whereas it was a priority of all women's groups who appeared before this committee as part of the consultation process that this committee look at the issue of gender-based equality in policy-making, both for government and crown corporations. That unequivocally is what we heard when we met with women's groups across the country, that gender-based equality mechanisms be implemented in all aspects of government policy-making.

We know that Status of Women Canada had a key role in working with other departments to ensure they had the skills, the talents, the wherewithal to review all policy development for gender equity concerns, and we need to know its status. We need to know whether the department's ability to do it is now compromised, whether there

are other plans in government to look at it, or the reality of whether it is simply not going to be addressed by this government, and we at least know what the situation is.

We have many days scheduled here in this schedule of events, and I am sure we could find one day where we could bring in the representatives of the departments to speak to this issue. And I want to reiterate it again. It was unequivocally the number one choice of women's groups and individual women right across this country that gender equality be integrated into policy-making and programs in this government.

The Chair: Are you moving that as an amendment, Ms. Neville?

Hon. Anita Neville: No, I'm not. I'm not making it as an amendment; I'm simply speaking to it as something that might have been included in the motion. It's no criticism, trust me, but it is front and centre an issue. I have had many meetings with women's groups in my province, and the constant question, the constant refrain, is where is gender-based equality at right now in its implementation with the government.

•(1155)

The Chair: Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would certainly agree with Ms. Minna that the focus really needs to be on the administrative arm and the degree to which the departments are in fact incorporating this already rolled-out plan into the culture of their departments, if I can use a general term.

I note that it sort of goes back to the earlier point we talked about, which is that we did want to have a look at the reports that were tabled. Now that we have the responses from the government, it would be appropriate—I think it was report 2 that dealt specifically with this topic—that we manage to set the time aside to deal with this. I would agree with Ms. Neville that there's capacity to do that in the course of this fall session. I certainly don't see a problem with it.

We'll have the minister here, perhaps even on two occasions, to deal with other issues relating specifically to the estimates and to reports 1 and 3, which kind of speak to the cost-cutting measures that are in place. I realize there may be some interrelationship there and we'll be able to deal with that, but I think it would be good to focus on this GBA in terms of how it's being rolled out administratively... and an update, as has been mentioned, on the progress, because this is an initiative that I guess started in 2000 and should be ongoing.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair.

From the comments and with the minister being here, clearly this is a very good motion. It's something we need to support. Having ministers in and having questions answered and clearing up misinformation is extremely important.

The only caveat I would enter is that human trafficking is something we can't lose our focus on, because we are going to continue with another topic following the Christmas break.

I would absolutely vote in support of this motion, because it's a very good one. I would only be mindful of the timing and mindful of the fact that we make sure we deal with it when the minister is actually here, so we don't lose time on any of the issues.

Those are my comments.

The Chair: In the motion it's clear that the member is indicating the deputy ministers, more so than the minister on this particular issue.

Ms. Davidson.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be brief, because I am really only reiterating what has already been said.

I think the motion has a lot of merit. I think we do need to know where we're going and what's happening. It was announced yesterday that there are cost savings being put in place, and those cost savings need to be found in areas, hopefully, that are administrative rather than program-based. I think it behoves this committee to know what is happening and where those cost savings will come from. So I'm going to be supporting this motion.

The Chair: Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna: I wanted to follow up on Ms. Smith's comment about the minister, and I appreciate that the minister is coming, obviously. But quite often ministers and governments make policy and then the bureaucracy has tons of time to implement or not implement, or delay or slow things down, depending on the culture of that place.

I think it's very important for us to read the report as soon as we get it, but also to meet with the bureaucrats who are responsible for the implementation of the program to ensure that in fact it is happening and is not something that is sitting on a shelf somewhere. Also, as was just mentioned, we need to hear back from all of them about what the current cuts mean in terms of the impact on Status of Women Canada, specifically, to be able to represent the issues across the board, because of course that's its job. It's the lead agency when it comes to women's issues across the government.

I hope we can support it today, because if we don't know what's going on, we can't pressure or talk to the government. It might also put a little bit of onus on the bureaucracy, knowing that they have to come to account for results, to implement the policies a little more rigorously than they might otherwise have done.

• (1200)

The Chair: Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Madam Chair, this motion is very much in order and I will be supporting it. However, when will we be meeting with these individuals?

The motion would “[...] invite the Deputy Ministers [...] (Finance, Justice, Human Resource, Immigration and Treasury Board)[...] That means five people in total. I think it's essential that we meet with these individuals to see what their ministries are doing in terms of gender-based analysis.

According to our meeting schedule, on October 5, Ms. Oda will be here to discuss reports 1 through 3. We could also put the question to Ms. Oda at that time.

As I understand the motion, we've extended an invitation to the deputy ministers. Given our agenda, I would have amended the motion, adding the following: “immediately at the start of the 2007 winter session.”

Unless you have a solution, I'm open to everything and anything.

[*English*]

The Chair: When you indicate the winter session, are you referring to “not until February”?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Yes, during the next session, at the end of January, February, March and April. I don't have a problem with that, but when exactly?

[*English*]

The Chair: If we ask, all they can do is come back and say they don't have time, and so forth. It's not as if they're sitting there waiting to come tomorrow. We can ask, and it may not happen until then; we just don't know. We have to see where we can slot their schedules or, in a meeting where we only have two witnesses and have sufficient time, we could maybe slot in someone who would be willing to come; that's a possibility. We're going to try to be as flexible as possible to get everything we need done, maximizing all of our time.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Madam Chair, if we endorse this motion, we're undertaking to hear from five deputy ministers. You say that maybe two will agree to come. That's not what the motion says. It's a blank cheque of sorts. Maybe two will agree to come, or maybe all five will. What we will do if all five accept our invitation? Are we going to set aside several days to examine human trafficking and meet with five deputy ministers? Perhaps we'd have time to hear from two of them in two hours. If we plan to have all five give testimony, we'd have to set aside a minimum of two and a half days. So then, you're saying that we're going to set aside two and a half days to examine this issue. Correct? I'm merely employing some logic.

Are we going to hear from them at the same time as we hear from the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs? Are we going to cancel our meeting on human trafficking scheduled for October 24? It's all a little too vague. We agree in principle that we need to hear from these individuals. You're asking us to vote on a motion, when in fact we're not really clear on our work plan.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Mourani, the motion is asking that the deputies from the various departments come before us. For one thing, they have to come before us; I mean, their schedule has to count as well as our schedules. If the motion is adopted, we will have to do our best to try to accommodate our needs to have them come as against what we're also trying to deal with. It will be a question of trying to work our schedules out to the best of our ability.

If we could have had some of our ministers in today, or some of our deputies, we would have had some people today. But we can only put in the request; then we have to try doing the scheduling.

If the motion is adopted, we'll do our best to try to find the time, where we have a slot. It may be one deputy one week on it, and another deputy the week after. We will look at this as we try to do the work plan, in order to get the information back from them. Or we could have an additional meeting if necessary to do it. There are other possibilities to accommodate this, once they agree to come.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Madam Chair, you can initiate this process without our having to vote on a motion. Correct?

[*English*]

The Chair: There is a motion on the floor. It was tabled appropriately. It's been spoken to, and it needs to be voted on, one way or the other.

Next are Ms. Minna and Ms. Smith, and then we're going to vote on the motion.

Hon. Maria Minna: Madam Chair, could I answer some of the concerns that were raised? I want to address the issue raised by Madame Mourani, because of course I understand her concern. I was thinking of putting a time limit on this motion, but I didn't, for that very purpose.

When I was on the finance committee and we did hearings prior to a budget process, we used to sit all day long. This committee isn't obliged to sit only the two hours from eleven to one and that's it. We could have extra meetings in the afternoons, especially when we're doing the report on trafficking and what have you. While there are a number of ministers, they could all be given one hour at the end of one particular day, or half a day at the end of another.

Between now and Christmas there is a lot of meeting time, and we're not meeting for full days. We're meeting only for our allotted time of eleven to one. We can certainly extend the meeting. At the finance committee we used to meet all day; I'm not suggesting that here, but we could choose to have two or three extra meetings, just to focus on a particular extra issue that really matters and is important, so that we can get it out of the way, rather than allowing it to fester and to drag.

That would allow us to be able to report to women out there that we are being vigilant. In addition to doing new research, we're being vigilant on existing directions.

The Chair: Ms. Smith is next.

Mrs. Joy Smith: It's very true. We don't have to meet just from eleven to one. We can extend it. My one concern is that we do not detract from the human trafficking issue, because it was very difficult to get the human trafficking issue on a study for status of women, where it should have been probably two years ago.

This indeed is a very good motion. It's another very important topic, but there are different ways we can get off track, and one way is to put a motion down so that we do get off track. For what we deal with in this important motion, we should have extra time specifically allotted, so that we can deal with it right away and get it done

without detracting from the work plan that we have discussed, voted on, and put forward. I think that's very important.

Maybe that would address both issues.

The Chair: If everyone is in agreement, we would propose to organize the ministers to respond to this motion and the GBA issues. We would have a separate meeting to deal with that as soon as we can, so that we could get a better handle on this and the government's position. Then, if we were able to line up all our deputies to come, we would propose a separate meeting.

Is it agreeable to everyone that we would have a separate meeting? We would have a separate meeting to get the deputy ministers in; it would be an additional meeting that the clerk and researchers would organize, so it would not take us off from what we're trying to do with our current plan. That will be organized as soon as possible—as soon as we can get a response.

All right. Is that okay with everyone?

Ms. Mourani, you had suggested an amendment. Are you withdrawing that amendment? Okay.

Is everyone in agreement with adopting this motion and requesting the deputies to come out, or do we need a vote on it?

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

The Chair: All right.

On Thursday we have only one witness coming right now.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lyne Casavant: Mr. Richard Poulin is a sociologist at the University of Ottawa. Recently, he wrote a book on human trafficking. He is one of number of people who believe that prostitution and the sex trade in certain countries are linked. I imagine that in his testimony, he will explore the relationship between prostitution and human trafficking.

• (1210)

[*English*]

The Chair: That's been very helpful.

Can I make a suggestion? Mr. Stanton triggered this. We have only Mr. Poulin. Would it be possible to ask the department for the status of women if we could schedule them on Thursday, to give us some feedback on the cuts they are going to deal with and where our budget is and so on? I don't know that they'll be able to come on short notice, but we could ask and see what will happen.

All right. Is everybody in agreement?

Is there any other business we need to discuss?

Ms. Smith, do you have a comment?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Do you want to take a vote on that? There is another RCMP officer I was talking to this morning who might be available to come on Friday as well.

The Chair: We're not here on Friday.

Mrs. Joy Smith: I'm sorry, Thursday. But we have to do both, so either way.

I would just point out that when we get this information, it's "cost savings" within, not "cost cuts", because "cost cuts" infers that people are going to be cut off from things. So I think our terminology should be "cost savings" until we get our information.

The Chair: We need someone to come in and give us an update on the status of women's budget. If you want to suggest to the researchers or to the clerk the name of the RCMP officer who might also be available—

Hon. Maria Minna: RCMP officials are coming on October 3, aren't they?

An hon. member: How many RCMP do we need?

The Chair: All right. We will move forward on that and see how we can move forward.

Is there anything else? I know everybody's time is precious, so I'll move adjournment if there are no further issues.

We'll adjourn the meeting.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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