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## **Standing Committee on the Status of Women**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, April 17, 2007**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi**

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## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Tuesday, April 17, 2007

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.)):** I'd like to call the meeting to order.

We have before us the Deputy Minister of Finance, Mr. Robert Wright. His speaking notes have been distributed to everyone. If you haven't received them, just indicate that you haven't and you will receive them. The deputy minister is the last of the four deputy ministers we had invited to discuss GBA.

We generally have 10 minutes of presentation. We are going on until 4:30, and then we will start our committee business.

Mr. Wright, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Robert Wright (Deputy Minister, Department of Finance):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to be here.

[Translation]

I'm very pleased to be here with you as part of this discussion. It's important for your committee, but it is also important for the Department of Finance. First of all, I want to express my regrets.

[English]

I'm terribly sorry that I wasn't able to make the last meeting with four of my distinguished colleagues to talk about the government-wide approach to gender-based analysis, but I'm very pleased that you took the time for me to have a chance to come back. As I think we explained, I had an urgent pre-budget meeting with my minister on a matter of great importance, so I could not avoid that.

I've handed out my speaking notes, so I will not walk through them in detail. I'd simply note that they flag a few areas. First, they describe the overall mandate of the department and where we've focused our efforts to date on gender-based analysis. Second, they highlight again some of the progress we've made, and then end off with some of the next steps we're planning to take in the department and in collaboration with our colleagues in the rest of government.

First, I think people know that the Department of Finance has several roles. One, we act as a central agency, rather like the Privy Council Office

[Translation]

and the Treasury Board. As an

[English]

central agency, we have a view in assessing the work of other departments as they progress through the cabinet committee systems, and in fact through budget preparations.

Then secondly, we have a whole series of programs we operate ourselves, of either a macroeconomic or framework policy nature, or structural policies that the Department of Finance manages. Typically, the broad macroeconomic framework policies are gender-neutral in enhancing overall economic prospects within Canada. We have focused our effort on a gender-based analysis of the structural areas.

Particularly we started, as we suggested earlier to this committee, on our tax policy initiatives, which have lent themselves well to gender-based analysis. The department has been conducting gender-based analysis for a number of years, and we have delivered on all the commitments we made to this standing committee's report, "Building Blocks for Success".

I'm very pleased to have with me today Mireille Éthier, who is the senior chief for federal/provincial taxation within our tax policy branch. She supports the department's background of leadership and liaison on status of women issues. We've also appointed a champion amongst my executive committee, the general director for our tax policy branch, Serge Nadeau, and most recently appointed Louise Levonian, also at an ADM-level position, to champion the gender-based analysis within our organization.

Secondly, we had agreed to conduct pilot projects to train analysts in gender-based analysis, and we have done that. We had a full-day session within the tax policy branch.

Finally, there was an encouragement that the minister continue to have outreach with women's groups in pre-budget consultations, and of course the minister has done that this year.

So we think we've made some very good strides within the Department of Finance, and we see as next steps—again, in the representations made to you, Madam Chair, by the Honourable Bev Oda.... In terms of next steps, we've committed to list our best practices on our website for broader dissemination of ideas within our department and the broader government.

We've offered and we are offering training to other branches. I think we've built up a level of expertise within our tax policy branch. We're now going to be moving into other branches and we're setting up a training program to do that. We're also setting up a training program for all new staff, to sensitize them to our experience and the possible growth of gender-based analysis. That will be up and coming in our new curriculum for new staff in the department soon.

And we've committed to report progress on gender-based analysis in our annual departmental performance report.

I would just close by noting that in this last budget process we provided a gender-based assessment of over 90% of the ideas leading up to the budget that the minister considered for inclusion in the budget. The depth of that analysis is varied. I think it's very strong in particular on the personal income tax side, where we've been able to quantify results and give some good advice to our minister in making those judgments. What we're doing now is broadening that support to other branches. I think, though, we've made some very good progress in the last several years.

Again in the absence of my colleagues from other departments, we look forward to working with our colleagues in the rest of government on further progress.

Those are my opening remarks. *Merci pour votre patience, madame.*

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Wright.

We will start off with a question round. The first round will go for seven minutes, with Ms. Minna.

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for coming, Mr. Wright and Ms. Éthier.

You mentioned tax policy initiatives being put through a gender-based analysis of how taxes will impact upon people, so I need to ask you some questions.

Was the pension splitting that was in the recent budget put to a gender-based analysis before it was put forward? What did it show concerning men versus women, and specifically single women, in this country?

• (1540)

**Mr. Robert Wright:** Well, it's gender neutral. It affects families.

I have to say that, as you may recall, Ms. Minna, the commitment to pension splitting came out on October 31 as part of the minister's tax fairness plan, not as part of the budget, so there was not the same sort of analysis for budget preparation at that time. But we did do an analysis of it when it came to implementation in our budget and saw it as neutral in terms of balancing income.

The highest portion of pension income is in the men's side of that account, but the splitting certainly enhanced family income support, which was—

**Hon. Maria Minna:** I don't understand. I have to say I found that really disappointing. I do not understand how you can say that this is a neutral kind of analysis when, first of all, the private pension splitting—this is pensionable income that is being split—impacts

and benefits the higher-income more and not modest-income families. They save the largest portion.

But more importantly, it does not help any women. There are 1.7 million Canadians in this country who cannot benefit. There are single women, and widows.... If the husband dies tomorrow, as we had some witnesses say here last time, they get nothing out of this budget.

So I ask you again. This is a tax measure. Did you analyze the impact of spending this amount of money and how it would impact upon women in this country?

**Mr. Robert Wright:** As I mentioned, there were three initiatives in the tax fairness initiative when the minister dealt with the income trusts. At that time.... There was not a budget before the announcement, so that analysis was not done in detail, as it would have been in some information for the budget.

There were three initiatives. First of all, there was the dividend distribution tax on income trusts, and then there was a set of initiatives. One was the provision for pension income splitting, which again benefited families—

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Mostly men, right?

**Mr. Robert Wright:** It benefited families. It didn't benefit anyone unless there was a couple involved who had a pension.

Secondly, there was a substantial addition to the age credit, which was particularly helpful for women.

Thirdly, there was a half-point reduction in the corporate tax rate. That was for the fairness plan from October 31, which was incorporated into the budget.

I would just say that for the budget as a whole, and I think this was in budget information—in fact, it's in the budget at page 229—that over 50% of the income tax initiatives in the budget supported Canadians in the lowest income bracket, many of whom are women.

Similarly, other initiatives, including WITB and the child tax credit, were again particularly helpful to families and to women.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** I'm sorry, I'm getting a little frustrated only because I don't think you get my question, Mr. Wright. The pension splitting in the budget, which is about splitting pensions—not income overall, but pensions—benefits those who have high pensions. If you have a good pension, you can split—

**Mr. Robert Wright:** Those who have pensions, yes.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Yes, those who have pensions, but let's be realistic: if husband and wife had both worked, they're not going to get a great deal of benefit, but the reality still remains that the large number of women who are single or widows benefit nothing from that.

Am I right or not?

**Mr. Robert Wright:** It's true that single men or women would not benefit from that initiative.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** We had a witness here not too long ago who said that out of 2,600 clients, 75% are women; these are seniors. None of those 75% of seniors will benefit. The rest of the seniors she has—this is why they need services—do not have enough pensionable income to make a difference.

If you have a very high pensionable income, you're going to save a lot of money; if your pensionable income is very modest, you're going to save a lot less; and if you're a widow or single, from the analysis I've seen, you get nothing.

I need to go to another question, because I think on this one we're not....

Let me ask you, with respect to analysis in the department on policies that come forward, is a gender-based analysis done on every single item before it goes into a budget, and are racial/ethnic situations for women also taken into consideration?

• (1545)

**Mr. Robert Wright:** I know this is a subject you discussed with colleagues from CIC. Again, where we're starting from is focused up until this date—not exclusively, but largely—on the personal tax side, where we could make such breakouts on the gender basis. We're not equipped to make it quite as effectively on racial backgrounds, but we have a consideration section that will do an analysis of that issue.

I can't say it's done on every issue going forward on the budget. I think the major step we made this year was that there was at least a consideration section for gender-based analysis on each initiative for the budget. We're still growing in that area, to be honest with you.

By the way, I will get you some additional information on the gender impact of pensions so that it can further inform the discussion we just had. I know it's a matter of importance to you.

**The Chair:** You have half a minute.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** My final question is—and I have many others, but hopefully I'll get back—when departments put forward their ideas or their shopping list for the budget, are they obliged to come with a gender analysis before it hits the Department of Finance or not?

**Mr. Robert Wright:** No, that hasn't been the case. Again, this year was the first time we did our own gender analysis, and in that case we did engage with other departments to work with us on it. So I think we made an important step this year and we will be building on that in future years.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Wright, in response to the questions, you indicated that 50% of the measures in the current budget were geared towards low and

middle incomes. I guess we all hear a lot of talk. You know, we prepare worksheets. When the department gives us something that says, "Here is your worksheet", could you provide something of that nature so that we have a visual understanding? Everybody does not belong to the Department of Finance; everybody is not an accountant. It's very important that we have this type of information in front of us so that we can ask the legitimate questions and get the answers that satisfy us.

So if that could be done, it would be really appreciated. You can do it afterwards and send it to us, and we might use it in our study on economic security for women.

**Mr. Robert Wright:** I'd be very pleased to do that, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We will now go to Madame Deschamps.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hello once again, Mr. Wright and Ms. Éthier.

In a report that appeared in 2005, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women recommended that Status of Women Canada support the departments in their gender-based analysis. I'd like to know whether Status of Women Canada took part in those analyses and, if so, whether the \$5 million cuts will affect its ability to support the departments.

**Mr. Robert Wright:** I attended a meeting with Clare Beckton, the coordinator of Status of Women Canada.

[English]

We work very closely with Status of Women on the work we do—and Mireille, you may wish to comment on a little bit of that. They help us in our training, and actually they encourage us to share our experience with other departments.

[Translation]

So we promote a major collaborative effort between the departments and Status of Women Canada.

[English]

There was a reduction in the Status of Women budget last fall, I believe, as a Treasury Board exercise, and some money was reallocated away from administration or from unused grants. The budget actually certainly made up for that \$5 million reduction and it enhanced spending in Status of Women by an additional \$5 million. So the budget provided \$10 million.

So there are full resources necessary for them to continue the work they're doing with departments on gender-based analysis, and certainly we cooperate with Status of Women fully.

[Translation]

Mireille, you have something to add?

**Ms. Mireille Éthier (Senior Chief, Department of Finance):** Yes. A number of us at the Department of Finance, including me in particular as coordinator, have meetings with the Status of Women people to examine certain questions with them. Status of Women thus acts with other departments as well. That's being done more and more, I believe.

• (1550)

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** The committee recommended that the Privy Council Office, Treasury Board Secretariat and Department of Finance coordinate and implement accountability mechanisms. Is that currently the case?

**Mr. Robert Wright:** Not directly, as regards the Department of Finance. The Treasury Board usually has responsibility for making commitments that significant. As I just told your colleague Ms. Minna, we had the opportunity, in the context of the last budget, to work in cooperation with the other departments on our analysis

[English]

on gender balance.

So we've engaged. In terms of keeping stock of everyone's progress, including Finance's, that is Treasury Board's responsibility. But yes, we are engaged in providing some leadership and support for that analysis. We're just not in a lead role.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** On a completely different topic, is there a rebalancing of government measures in favour of women, particularly regarding housing, employment insurance, child care centres and pay equity, to ensure that the problems women are currently facing are corrected?

[English]

**Mr. Robert Wright:** I can't really speak about other government programs. Madam Beckton perhaps would be better equipped to talk about that.

I can tell you about some of the measures in our last budget. Again, our focus is on the overall economic health of the economy, the generation of jobs.

[Translation]

We have good news on the impact the economy is having on women's work.

[English]

Over the last five years, employment growth has been about 30% faster for women in terms of new job growth and job growth. Wage growth has been about 25% faster every year for the last five years, on average.

So the economy is generating great opportunities for women. We're seeing some catch-up, I'm sure. We track overall economic impact, but in terms of a broader range of policies, the minister responsible for the Status of Women is probably a better place to go to get an overall assessment.

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Thank you. I have nothing further to add, in view of the lack of time at our disposal.

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here, Mr. Wright and Ms. Éthier.

Ms. Éthier, when were you appointed?

**Ms. Mireille Éthier:** I've been working on this issue for nearly two years, since 2005.

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** We haven't yet received, in any way, any concrete results from what's been done to date. I'm sure you are working very hard, but we'd like to see concrete results. If you conducted a gender-based analysis in cooperation with Status of Women, I'm sure action was taken in certain areas, and that should appear somewhere. But it appears nowhere.

Can you explain to me why?

**Ms. Mireille Éthier:** The work we did with Status of Women was first to develop the expertise to conduct gender-based analysis. We had to train the analysts. Part of the work consisted in making the analysts understand that policy development had to include a gender-based analysis component. That was a large part of the work.

Then we made sure, as Mr. Wright said, that all proposals made to the minister included an analysis. The work with Status of Women that I was referring to consisted first in training the analysts. We are also in virtually permanent contact with Status of Women. When questions arise, we discuss them. We want to move toward a model whereby we will examine more specific issues. That's really part of the development.

• (1555)

**The Chair:** Ms. Demers, your time is up.

[English]

Mr. Wright, I need a clarification on something you mentioned. To a question that Ms. Deschamps asked, I think you said that there was a \$10 million investment in 2007 to the Status of Women. I don't want to put words in your mouth; the \$5 million was to put back the 2006 money, reinvest it, and the other \$5 million was...?

**Mr. Robert Wright:** To supplement their programming for women, for the benefit of women.

**The Chair:** Okay. So you wouldn't be aware of what programs it went to.

**Mr. Robert Wright:** No. The point I had wanted to make was that they certainly have a strong interest in maintaining the leadership with us on gender-based analysis.

**The Chair:** Fair enough. Thank you.

We now go to Ms. Smith for seven minutes.

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Wright, and Ms. Éthier, and I applaud you for your work on this issue.

I'm particularly gratified to hear several things that have come up, when you talked about the training for gender-based analysis, for example. I mean, that's never been done before. To see that growth here through your initiatives is very commendable.

Also, when you talk about families, anything that benefits families of course benefits women. The tax initiatives you were talking about are good for the whole family—and certainly women are a very big part of any family. With pension splitting and things like the targeted tax cuts, the GST textbook credit and the credit for families with children involved in physical activity, we've never done those before.

So I applaud the Department of Finance for looking at things on the ground that really affect women. I know, as a mother of six children, that anything I can do for my family like that in the real world is very good.

Today when we talk about gender-based analysis, there's another thing we haven't touched on, and that is pay equity. I was very, very gratified to see that for the first time supervisors were put in places and businesses to look at pay equity, seeing how it was dealt with in different kinds of businesses, and to see the supervisors' role in doing that.

So perhaps you could talk a little bit more, first, about the training for gender-based analysis because, certainly, people should have been trained long before 2006 and 2007, and I appreciate the initiative that has been put forth on that. And, secondly, on pay equity, never before can I remember in the history of Canada a concerted effort by supervisors to actually go into businesses and take a look at pay equity and analyze exactly what's going on at all levels.

So perhaps you could address these two issues today.

**Ms. Mireille Éthier:** Thank you for your question.

Yes, we've been doing gender-based analysis, in some sense, without using the word, for a very long time. In doing the child tax benefit, for example, or changing the child care expense deduction, and things of that nature, we've always been conducting gender-based analysis. However, it wasn't called that, if you wish, and maybe it wasn't systematic in other areas, or areas that are more social in nature or more geared towards the family.

So for training, we and Status of Women did some case studies with the analysts, using some real life case studies and putting everybody together in a room and asking, if this is the kind of measure you have to analyze, how would you go about it? It was really formalizing something that people were doing in certain cases, but at least making the analysis systematic and presenting it in a systematic way in every proposal put forward.

From that perspective, we now have a vocabulary of gender-based analysis that everybody understands and can actually use, and they know what the ramifications of that are. Also, by putting it in every proposal, this raises its profile, because along with strategic environmental assessments, it's now part of the format, if you wish, or template used to present every proposal.

We plan to do some more training as well. What's interesting is that it's not training in gender-based analysis in a conceptual world; it's actually working with the analysts and asking how they do it in their day-to-day lives and add to the process.

• (1600)

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** How much time do I have, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** You have two and a half minutes.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** I had another very important thing. We did not have cuts to the Status of Women. What we did was take a look at the money and put it into on-the-ground projects for women so they could be successful, projects such as the Crossing Communities Art Project, which I had the pleasure of being at. The fact of the matter is that there was \$165,000 put into that project. This is a project for women who have been abused.

I talked to some aboriginal women at that particular announcement, and I'll never forget this one girl, Jacquie, who took all the pain she felt and put it into her art and she told her story. There were stories and stories and stories about how these women had built new lives and things like that.

This just happened last weekend. I was very gratified to see that the thrust in Status of Women into providing on-the-ground support for women and women's organizations was very, very good, and that came out of the finance department.

Would you mind elaborating a little bit more on the financial part of what has been put into programs on the ground for women all across the country? I know there was another announcement of \$5 million made by the minister—I believe it was on April 1, in Toronto—on this particular issue.

**Mr. Robert Wright:** I would just say that it's in the finance budget. It was followed on a very strong case made by the minister responsible, to Minister Flaherty and to the Prime Minister. So it was an additional \$10 million that was put out to ensure this programming can keep going, and in a number of other areas, including the \$300 million for cervical cancer, which had a huge impact.

As I mentioned, in the tax balance of things, including WITB, which is a low-income tax benefit allowance to get people off welfare, much of that goes to—

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** So there seems to be a lot of support all across the ministries, certainly in Status of Women but also all across the portfolios. Can you comment on that?

**Mr. Robert Wright:** There is. The minister has set the broad priorities. He has engaged his colleagues, and they've weighed up the approach in the budget. So the budget had obviously a focus on supporting families with children, but also there was a broader gender approach, an environmental approach, but a very strong economic approach as well. As I just mentioned, the economic drivers to grow the economy for the benefit of all Canadians have had, over the last five years, a very material impact on the livelihood and prosperity of Canadian women. That's something we also keep our mind on.

So the process is that the minister sets his broad objectives, and he engages broadly with his cabinet colleagues, with Canadians across the country. He met throughout his caucus, certainly, but in every region of the country, looking for ideas of what are the barriers to growth and what does it take to build a stronger, better, and more economically viable Canada, and on that basis he acted.

**The Chair:** Ms. Smith, your time is up.

Mr. Wright, you just made a statement about getting women off welfare. You're talking about income levels, of low income and middle income. So while you're doing that analysis and you're presenting an analysis to us, could you also explain to us how a person earning \$22,000 is too rich to get the child tax benefit and too poor to get the working income benefit, just so that we know? We need to understand those nuances of the budget. I'm an accountant by trade, so I know these things. So we have to work this out to say, how do we reasonably understand and move forward with it?

Ms. Mathysen, for seven minutes.

• (1605)

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

Thank you for being here. I have a number of questions, and some of them come from the testimony so far. You talked about the purpose of the budget being the generation of jobs, and you went on to say that employment growth among women is 30% faster than it has been in the past. I've wondered if you've looked at who these women are who are entering the workforce. Are they single women? Are you talking about women without children? Are you talking about women who have perhaps finished raising their children?

**Mr. Robert Wright:** Well, actually I was saying that it's not just 30% faster than it was in the past, it's 30% faster than the growth for men. So I was saying that more women are entering the workforce and finding employment. Not only that, the wage growth for women has been about 25% faster than the wage growth for men.

So there are some important things going on in the workforce, but I'm afraid I don't have the detailed analysis to follow up on the observations you've just made.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Okay.

We heard from Stats Canada, and they discussed this in relation to the increases women had seen, and basically it was women in the under-25 age group who were experiencing these increases. That led me to wonder if you had done any research or analysis on the impact on women who are at that child-bearing age who may find themselves unable to remain in the workforce, or to have the same number of hours as their male counterparts, because either they're looking after children or they're caught in that sandwich generation where there are elderly parents who are dependent on them.

The reason I ask is that there was an additional study presented to us, and it indicated that women, even women with higher education, professional women, were still only at about 48% of their male counterparts because they were very often unable to secure child care. And certainly for poorer women, finding affordable child care impacts on their ability to enter the workforce.

So these are all important bits and pieces, I think, of the statistics, then. I wonder if you could clarify any of those.

**Mr. Robert Wright:** They're all very important questions.

The results I was giving were very high level, for the overall employment in the Canadian economy. I don't have any light to add

on those important questions, but I will take them back to the department and see if there is some additional information.

And I would say, if you've had Statistics Canada here on the results they've had, you've probably got some pretty good idea of how to drill down to those details. But I'll be happy to go back and talk to my analysts about anything they could have that might shed light on it.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Okay. I'd appreciate that, because certainly there is a concern about the availability of child care.

Another question: have you looked at the gender impact of the recent tax reforms? I'm wondering specifically about the general or the targeted tax reductions.

And perhaps you could also talk about how the non-refundable tax credits impact women specifically, because I have some concerns in regard to the fact that they are tax credits, and that obviously impacts on lower-income women who don't have a taxable income.

**Mr. Robert Wright:** Well, the tax credit actually makes it a more progressive initiative. It's more targeted to those folks who need the support. So actually the more targeted it is in terms of a fixed pool of money, the more it helps low-income women and low-income families.

I think there are also some initiatives...the tax credit is not offset against other credits from the GST credit and the child tax benefit. So there have been a number of initiatives, again, to help the targeting.

But typically, even though we've had some good news in terms of the relative growth of wages and employment for women, if you do a gender-based analysis of the tax system, you will find that indeed women have lower income than men. So if you have a progressive tax initiative, it's going to impact on women more.

So to the extent that this was a credit, that's going to help women more than men. To the extent, particularly, that we've made some steps in offsetting its impact on other credits, that again helps it towards the bottom end of the income scale, which helps lower-income women.

• (1610)

**Ms. Mireille Éthier:** A lot of the non-refundable tax credits are also credits that can be transferred to the spouse; they're based on family income, such as the credit for medical expenses, for example. Some can be transferred between the parents and the children, as in the case of tuition fees. Then again, some others can be carried forward. You can think of the charitable donations credit. So a lot of the credits that are not related, like the base credit or the spouse credit, the other credits, have features that allow either another person to use them if possible or the person to use them later when she or he has income to use them. That's one characteristic of the non-refundable credits.



The other thing that may be interesting to note also is on the working income tax benefit. One of the interesting features of the working income tax benefit is that it's not only a federal initiative. We're working with provinces to make sure this is better integrated not only with the provincial working income equivalent tax benefits, but also with the social programs to ensure that the barriers to entering the workforce.... And they are not necessarily tax barriers, but they can be that a person loses a dollar of welfare, for example, by working. Or it could be that they lose some other access to some free benefits.

So we are working with provinces to make sure there is an integration of the federal working income tax benefit with the social programs and with the child tax benefit as well. So this whole set of programs should hang together much better, and we should see a lot fewer impediments to entering the labour market with initiatives such as that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Mathyssen.

We're now into a five-minute round, with Ms. Neville.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair,

Thank you both for coming today.

I'm having a lot of difficulty following what you're telling us here today. I've just reviewed the notes that you've presented to us, Mr. Wright, and you indicate that you have a central agency role and that departments that sponsor policies are responsible for the gender-based analysis. And then you talk about structural policies, and then you also say further on that it's also the department's view that it's ultimately up to the elected representatives to decide which factors in the end get most importance in the policy decisions. So I'm having a hard time actually determining what advice you give, what your role is, and how you present it.

Let me give you a couple of examples. The Status of Women budget we know was cut. Moneys were subsequently put back in. Did you give advice on the impact this would have as it relates to the ability of women across the country, particularly in rural and northern areas, to access programs? The court challenges program was cut. Did you give advice in terms of the impact this would have in terms of the ability of women—and there are other groups affected by it, but I'm speaking specifically to women—to access their charter rights?

We've had a whole host of them. Literacy programs have been cut. Did you give advice on the impact of it? Your colleague just mentioned the tax credits. We look at the sports tax credit, and that's fine if you have the initial \$500 to put out to get the \$72 or \$77 credit. Do you give advice on the impact of that and what it will mean for families, for women, for single-parent women, and do you also break it down or just aggregate it as it relates to aboriginal women and immigrant women?

I'm just giving you some examples here. Many more could be brought forward.

As I said at the outset, I'm having difficulty understanding what you do as it relates to gender-based analysis.

**Mr. Robert Wright:** Thanks for the question.

The import of what we do as public servants is provide advice to the government. My job description is to support the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance, when he's putting together a budget, wants to make decisions on an informed basis. He talks to a lot of people in the country, but when he's looking at proposals or some options to put into a budget, he wants his department to do an analysis of it. So we do that analysis. The minister decides what he wants to put into his budget. We don't, but he does it on the basis of our analysis.

This gender-based analysis is a fairly recent initiative in governance, and we are accelerating our application of it. I would say that if you talk to people in Status of Women and elsewhere in government, you'll find we're doing a pretty good job of that. I'm proud of the work we're doing, but we have a long way to go yet.

I'm actually not aware of what happened in the 2006 budget vis-à-vis some of the credits you're talking about, but I can say that on this budget, where it's quantifiable, in particular on the tax side, we did give the minister advice about the impact of tax initiatives and initiatives for the budget on women. It was a gender-based assessment and in some cases a detailed analysis about the overall impact on women. That fed into his choices and his decision of what to put into his budget. And so it was an informed basis.

We also give a broader base of advice on the broader impact on the Canadian community, so obviously in terms of some of the training initiatives and the priorities for aboriginal training, that was flagged.

You referred to the Status of Women. Certainly we gave the minister our assessment that it was very positive. Based on gender-based assessment, you don't have to be a deep thinker to know that's going to help women in terms of the type of programming that's being supported—

• (1615)

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Cutting back offices will?

**Mr. Robert Wright:** The \$10 million that we added to their budget in this budget.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** You took out \$5 million in operating dollars.

**Mr. Robert Wright:** Their budget was reduced in the fall. It wasn't a budget decision on that. There was a process to weigh up how to go, and I believe my colleague from the Treasury Board mentioned the process that was managed by her ministry to do that. It wasn't a budget initiative, so I have to say no, we didn't provide the analysis leading up to all of those decisions. But in the budget we did.

So our role is to support our minister to make informed choices. We give him advice, and what I'm reporting to this committee, based on what we've been asked on the motion that Ms. Minna put forward, is that we're taking it very seriously. We're making progress and we've got a lot more work to do, but I hope we're getting across that we're taking it very seriously and we feel we can show further leadership in the public service on that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll now go to Mr. Stanton for five minutes.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our two guests this afternoon.

Before I put my question, it occurred to me during Ms. Minna's previous questions that there was some discussion with regard to the pension splitting initiative brought forward last fall and then incorporated into the budget implementation in 2007.

But there were a couple of other measures that, apart from pension splitting, go directly to pensioners and seniors, if I could. One was the increase in the pension amount credit from \$1,000 to \$2,000, which affects everybody who has a pension income. And also the age amount tax credit, which was completely universal for any taxpayer 65 years of age or over, which is an additional \$1,000. Those were two measures that, apart from pension splitting at least, speak to that issue of seniors and pensioners in particular.

So to my question. I should say the backdrop for this was our previous meeting on gender-based analysis. The witnesses we had at that time described the progress that had been made with respect to gender-based analysis and how it had begun to become more a part of the culture of decision-making. I wonder if you could, from your experience, speak to how this has progressed and perhaps how it has become part of the cultural best practices within a department, even to the point of becoming in other ways other lenses that we need to look through—that being ethnic diversity and other diversity issues—and how that progress has been made.

If you can each comment on that, or one, I'll leave it to you.

**Mr. Robert Wright:** I'll lead off.

I would just say that yes, indeed, the age credit is differentially more helpful to senior women, because there are more of them in that category. There are also other elements of it that are assessed, but stepping back from that, I think what we were asked to come here to report on is a pretty good story.

I checked the transcript of your last meeting. I went through it, and other departments like CIC and Justice have all reported that their best approach to this is making it integral to their overall processes. I agree very much with that.

The big step we took this year was to ensure that virtually every initiative that was even considered for the budget had advice based on a gender-based assessment, with most of it a detailed analysis. That's a big step for us as a department.

We had started on tax. Our colleagues in tax—Mireille and others—have done a great job. It's particularly more detailed and useful, I think, on the personal tax initiatives. It's harder on the business side

or more general on the business side, but the fact that we had an assessment for virtually every initiative that was even considered for the budget was a very big step forward. Many of those initiatives, as I think Ms. Minna pointed out, involved other departments, so we've talked to them about that assessment and have worked with them. That is another important step.

We have a lot more work to do. The depth of analysis in other branches is not as strong as it is in our tax policy branch, so I think getting into the budget process with colleagues in other departments is going to help to reinforce the value of this sort of assessment, so that ministers can make the right choices based on an analysis that we share within the government.

● (1620)

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Madame Éthier, do you have anything to add to that?

**Ms. Mireille Éthier:** What was also important in the exercise on gender-based analysis was raising the profile of it in the department. By having this training, by naming a champion, and by forcing people to think about it, they started to realize that it adds value. In some cases, the reaction was, "Oh, my God, I found this. This is great." It does raise the awareness, and then people start to talk about it and start to exchange ideas. That is also important, because then the dynamic changes.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Very briefly, you mentioned the champion. In practical terms, could you briefly tell me how the decision-making body that actually undertakes this process is composed? Would the head of GBA for the department be part of that decision-making group? How does that look?

**Mr. Robert Wright:** It was decided by the department several years ago to create a champion—in fact, it was before I arrived—and to engage in this process. To generate change in a large organization, you do need a champion. In practical terms, I have an executive committee of nine ADMs and eight general directors who are all senior officials at an EX-4 or EX-5 level. Each one of them is a champion of something, such as a change initiative.

Given that our greatest capacity to make a difference was in the tax policy branch, the general director of the tax policy branch was asked to lead on this. The current champion, who has just joined us, is also actively working in the tax policy branch. Their job is to make sure we broaden that message.

In the coming year, I will probably shuffle my champions and put some enthusiasm and accountability outside of that branch, in order to take further steps. The driver is the whole organization, but someone senior enough to make a difference.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Demers, you have five minutes.

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Wright, knowing that only 33% of women have access to employment insurance, how do you think the head of a single-parent family of six children, as is the case of our colleague on the other side—but here I'm talking about children over six years of age—who is unemployed and has no affordable housing, can benefit from a cut to the goods and services tax? You apparently advised the minister to implement those measures because you thought that was a good idea, but how could those women benefit from that? In Canada, one million children are living in total misery, which means that at least 750,000 parents are also living in total misery. How do you think those people could benefit from the measures you suggest?

Ms. Éthier, parents in Quebec are preparing their income tax returns right now. At least the tradition is to do it before April 30. This year, since the \$1,200 amount granted for each child under six years of age is granted on a monthly basis, it won't be too apparent: parents will only have received \$600 since July. Their income tax returns shouldn't suffer too much as a result, but next year, once they've received \$1,200 per child under six years of age, it won't be the same thing.

Contrary to what you say, this measure isn't harmonized with the Province of Quebec. In Quebec, the income these people report will increase and they will be taxed twice. Why wouldn't we opt for a refundable tax credit, which would really go into the pockets of the parents, among others of those who don't have any money, rather than for an amount that is taxable twice? If your role is to advise the minister on the best measures to take, I'd really like you to explain that to me.

• (1625)

**Mr. Robert Wright:** All right. I'll start by answering the first two questions. As regards the GST, the fact that this measure has an impact on all Canadians was important. It's also important in the case you described.

[English]

The allowance for GST credit was not reduced at the same time, so support for the lower-income contributor was maintained, which normally would have decreased. That was helpful and it would have shown up.

The other issue, which was an important initiative in this budget, was the introduction of WITB, the working income tax benefit. This is an incentive for those on welfare who wish to go back to work. This chairperson raised this important question earlier: what do you do to provide greater support for people who are choosing those options?

I have to agree that perhaps a single mother with six children would have a very challenging time doing this. But this year we started spending money to give a credit to people who are leaving welfare to get a job, in order to ensure that they're not worse off and to enhance the capacity of the current system.

You talked about our cooperation

[Translation]

with our provincial colleagues. We agreed with them, with a view to improving the situation, that we would examine what we call the WITB together.

[English]

So provincial governments have agreed to maintain their level of support on welfare issues, as we provide federal support to incent people to leave.

This is just the start of a process, but in the last 10 years, there has been tremendous support in dramatically reducing poverty among families with children. Now we can focus on enhancing the capacity of people to enter the workforce.

We had a very good start, which was unanimously supported by all provincial governments. We've had letters from Quebec and Ontario saying jointly, let's work on WITB together.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** I'm sorry to say it, Mr. Wright, but you haven't managed to reduce child poverty. I'm willing to believe you're in good faith, but we nevertheless shouldn't delude ourselves: there are one million poor children in Canada.

Instead, we should adopt measures that would enable women to receive employment insurance. We know that only 33% of them are eligible for it. You're not talking about measures that will help people get out of misery, sir. We need real measures such as affordable housing and employment insurance for people who are eligible for it. We pay for employment insurance out of our pockets, but we aren't entitled to it; that's not normal.

**The Chair:** Ms. Demers, your time is up.

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Pardon me, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** You may speak.

[English]

**Mr. Robert Wright:** May I say something? You have been very patient with me, but these are really important issues.

I would like to provide the committee with an assessment of the progress over the last 10 years, where governments have worked on child poverty and made a difference. It still exists; it's still a challenge. The last 10 years have been a great success story, and it's because governments in Canada

[Translation]

have had the opportunity to make a difference together. We have the opportunity to do that now with a new program.

[English]

I will provide some assessment as a background, because the issues raised are very important.

**The Chair:** Mr. Wright, please provide us with that analysis, because we all hear a lot but have nothing tangible to look at. Perhaps you could also do that with the question I asked, as to how we are helping the poor.

Ms. Mathysen, you will be the last one, for five minutes.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to ask a question in regard to the benefits for low-income women who want to get off welfare and go into the workforce. I wondered if there was ever any discussion about the importance of a national child care system—an affordable, regulated system—as opposed to \$100 per month and the fact that this doesn't create a single child care space.

Was a discussion ever held within the ministry? Also, was there a discussion about how you would move forward to create those spaces?

• (1630)

**Mr. Robert Wright:** I wasn't here for the 2006 budget, but I know there were some important decisions as part of that budget. There were also some important discussions here. I know that Minister Flaherty met with his counterpart, including Judy Wasylcyia-Leis. In terms of child care, she emphasized the importance of working through the provincial governments. So the \$500 million transfer to provincial governments for child care was a factor in that decision.

As I said in my previous intervention, the focus of discussions with our provincial colleagues on women entering the workforce was on creating a new system—the working income tax benefit—that governments can support. This makes a difference in people getting off welfare and getting into the workplace.

The examples we used would show that currently for a single mother in Nova Scotia, going to work costs money. If she has a minimum-wage job, the effective wage rate is about \$1 an hour. The working income tax benefit can enhance this, not dramatically up front, but it will almost double the return to \$2 an hour.

But we can start working with provincial governments to make a difference by helping people who wish to work. It's a great economic initiative for the country. It helps people enhance their income without being dependent on welfare, which again is the principal focus of our collaboration right now with the provincial governments.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** So \$2 an hour would be about \$80 a week for a full-time job.

**Mr. Robert Wright:** That's right. Again, it's a first step. What we're looking at is an annual stock-taking.

Also, my comment regarding Madame Demers' point was that the progress we've made—which is meaningful, and there are still challenges—has been over a 10-year period.

We need a mechanism in place, a common commitment to make a difference in this area, and we will make a difference over a number of years. So that's a priority for this department over the next several years.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Okay.

I have a more technical question.

The Commonwealth Secretariat developed six tools for engendering national budgets: sex-disaggregated beneficiary assessment; sex-disaggregated public expenditure incidence analysis; a gender-aware policy evaluation of public expenditure; a gender-aware budget statement; sex-disaggregated analysis of the impact of the budget

over time; and a gender-aware, medium-term economic policy framework. I wondered if you had used any of these tools in terms of Canada's recent budget. If so, could you explain how it worked and evolved?

**Mr. Robert Wright:** To get to that point, you have to do gender-based analysis, and that's what we're starting to do. We're making some important progress, but we're not there yet.

Also, the point we made in terms of the comments of one of your colleagues is that what we do is provide advice to the minister. He would have to consider options in terms of how he packaged his budget, around considerations with his Commonwealth colleagues. So I can't speak for him on that matter at this time. But before we can consider such a thing, we have to make sure we've enhanced our capacity for gender-based analysis. We have to stay on the track for a considerable period of time yet, broaden the application within our department beyond tax policy, and continue to make that sort of progress, before we could seriously consider some of those options.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Does your department need more resources in order to do that?

**The Chair:** Ms. Mathysen, we are done.

Thank you very much for being here. You can see how very interested we are in ensuring that the GBA that was developed two years ago, when we started working with Finance to ensure that they would roll it out to all the programs, etc., is critical. We're happy to see that you're working with it, that you're training people to understand what GBA means. We have a long way to go, and we're hoping that ministers listen to your advice when you give them the GBA analysis. We look forward to receiving your analysis on how we can help with the economic enhancement of women, as well.

Thank you so much for being here. Some of the questions... You're a deputy minister; you know how to handle those things.

Thank you.

We will have a short break. I'll suspend the meeting and we'll go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

• (1635)

(Pause)

• (1700)

[*Public proceedings resume*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Smith, please could you read your motion.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Thank you.

I put this motion forward, Madam Chair, simply because this is the kind of thing we had talked about in this committee. I wanted to underline the kind of direction that we were going in:

Pursuant to the Standing Order 108(2), that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women recommend that the government orient its 2007 spending for Status of Women Canada and the various other Canadian government agencies to address the crucial and pressing issue of violence towards women and girls; support the full participation of women in Canadian society; address the challenges women face by promoting projects that improve the situation of women in key areas such as women's economic status; and that the adoption of this motion be reported to the House forthwith.

I ask for the support of all members in this motion. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Discussion?

Madame Demers.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Madam Chair, I'd like to move an amendment to Ms. Smith's motion.

First of all, I'd like to add a few words after the second sentence in the motion. It would read as follows:

Address the crucial and pressing issue of violence toward women and girls;  
Support the full participation and promote the equality of women in Canadian society;

I'd also like to add a few words at the end of the other paragraph, which would read as follows:

Address the challenges women face by promoting projects that improve the situation of women in key areas such as women's economic status and support groups working to that end, and human rights groups in particular;  
And that the adoption of this motion be reported to the House forthwith.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Smith.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

That is not my motion. The motion has been completely altered. My motion talks about the full participation of women in Canadian society. This is a discussion, Madam Chair, we've had around this committee. We believe, and I believe very strongly, that under the Canadian Constitution all people who are Canadian citizens are equal in Canada. It's to put down the barriers. This is a discussion we've had around....

We have a right. We're equal. The barriers have to go down. This is where there's some disagreement in terms of the words that we use.

I think in some respects we're very close, but I would not want to have my motion altered in this way because I think it has a political agenda behind it. What I'm more interested in is seeing that women on the ground get exactly what they need in terms of support. Put down the barriers.

There is nothing in my motion that goes against women, but supports women. So I'm asking maybe, Madam Demers, if you'd be so kind as to put forth another motion with that intent, I would consider the support of that. I do need support for the motion and what I'm putting in right now.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Smith.

Ms. Mathysen, are you responding to Ms. Smith's motion?

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Yes, Madam Chair.

I'm having some difficulty understanding inasmuch as this motion talks about bringing down barriers, but it seems to me that the ability to do just that has been removed from the Status of Women Canada department because 12 regional offices have been closed. There's no more research. There's no more advocacy. So unless there is a mechanism whereby this can happen, I don't see the point of it.

• (1705)

**The Chair:** Ms. Smith.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Well, Madam Chair—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, I'll come back.

Madame Demers.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm very sorry, but I'm not defending a political agenda. My sole purpose is to advance the cause of women, period. My colleague and I have been travelling around Quebec during the last two two-week adjournment periods. We've met with women's groups, more than during our meetings here. When you've received 36% of the vote, you can't claim that 100% of people think like you do. I'm sorry, but that's not the actual situation. The actual situation is that women everywhere, in all regions of Quebec, in all towns, in rural and urban areas, express the same complaints, have the same demands. They aren't happy that these cuts have been imposed and they don't believe that the word "equality" should disappear from Status of Women Canada or from Status of Women Canada's documents. They don't believe they can demand their rights if we gag and muzzle them.

This motion constitutes false help for women, false help with regard to their freedom and their freedom of expression. It's not true, Madam Chair. I'm going to vote against this motion.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Demers.

Ms. Smith.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

With all due respect, I put this motion together because for the past two weeks I have been travelling in different parts of Canada, in my riding, and I dare say in Montreal, and I talked about my motion to several women's groups in Montreal. I was talking on human trafficking, and then we went aside and talked about this particular motion.

I believe women are equal. I believe the barriers need to be taken down. I think maybe there's a difference in semantics, but I have presented this today because I will not vote against something that says "address the crucial and pressing issue of violence toward women and girls; support the full participation"—the full participation—"of women in Canadian society; address the challenges women face by promoting projects that improve the situation of women in key areas such as women's economic status", and that the adoption of this, of course, be brought to the House.

Now, this second motion of amendment is not an amendment, with all due respect. It's another motion, and I would welcome the member to put it on the order paper as her individual motion.

I have four daughters, I have worked with women's groups for years, and I am a woman myself who has worked in mathematics and science for 22 years, and I have to tell you I know what it's like to fight for what you're doing. I think this is a very strong motion, and I would ask the members opposite to lay aside political agendas and support the motion. Today we can do that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** The only party that has a political agenda here is you, madam.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Order, order!

Ms. Minna.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have to say I'm having trouble. I can't support the motion, but I'll have to explain and go beyond that.

Madam Smith talks about her support and her passion for women and about breaking down the barriers, and she says that women are equal. Do you know what? I speak to a lot of immigrant women and a lot of women in my riding too. Yes, they're equal; it says so in a piece of paper. But they're not equal in everyday life. The only way to change that is to allow for the research that has been eliminated and cut, to allow for advocacy, which is not allowed—and we'll get into that report later, and here it says nothing about restating any of that—and yes, projects.

But I'll tell you, Ms. Smith, I've been working on projects with immigrant women for 35 to 40 years. Projects will help the individual woman who happens to be lucky enough to have a project in her community that she can assist. It does not change the conditions under which she lives, or the core problems that are causing the condition, at all. It does not break down barriers. Barriers don't break down for all women. They may break down for one woman who happens to be in that program.

When I was dealing with women and English as a second language, it didn't break for all of those women. We had to go to court to break the barrier for all those women.

I'll put this on the record; this is important for people to understand, since we're on this discussion today.

When I went to the Status of Women Canada, as an immigrant woman with a group of visible minority women, to ask them to please fund programs for immigrant women as well as mainstream women.... There are still systemic problems in our systems that happen today. When organizations like mine, which was an ethnic organization, applied for money, we were told to go to Multiculturalism and were ghettoized in that section. I met with the minister, who agreed about and understood our problems, and after I left that minister's office, the director of the women's program came up to me in a very angry tone and said, "How dare you ask for this money? You have no business demanding that money. That money was fought for by mainstream Canadian women."

I'm telling you that was a major barrier. There are many other barriers that cannot be broken down by providing single projects to single programs.

Programs and projects for violence against women are necessary. What you said earlier about the women you talked about—fantastic, no trouble at all. But the condition that causes that and the core issues have to be addressed. The societal thinking has to be addressed.

The police in Toronto were ordered to charge when they went into a situation of violence in a home, regardless of whether the wife was charging or not. That wasn't the case before. That had to be lobbied, had to be worked, had to be researched.

So with respect, all this does is reinforce what the government has already done, which I obviously do not support. Thank you.

• (1710)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Minna.

Ms. Neville is next, and then you, Ms. Smith.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm having a lot of difficulty with this motion. I read it in my office and had much difficulty understanding where it was coming from and where it was going. There's no question that the issue of violence against women and young girls has to be addressed. But the piece that I'm having the most difficulty with—and I don't understand its meaning or what the implementation would be—is when we talk about supporting the full participation of women in Canadian society.

When we encourage Status of Women and various other government agencies to do this, are we talking about implementing national child care programs, so that women can go to work, so that women can go to school? Are we talking about reintroducing the court challenges program, so that women can argue for their full participation in society? I'm not sure. Are we talking about reopening the Status of Women offices that were closed, so that women across the country can have appropriate access to Status of Women programs?

To me, this is somewhat meaningless. I don't understand what it means or how it would be implemented. It's words without substance. As I said at the outset, I'll do anything to support the reduction of violence against women. But we have to put forward motions and resolutions that have meaning, that have teeth, and that have some relevance and substance to what's going on or not going on in government.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Neville.

Ms. Smith.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's shocking to think that Status of Women cannot get together to pass a motion that supports women, because the political differences are so different. In terms of the word "equality", as a Canadian citizen and as a daughter of a veteran, I personally find it embarrassing that people would come into our country, and as soon as it's a woman, be told that they're not equal, when in fact our Constitution says that all citizens are equal under the law.

We have agreed there are huge barriers, and I would agree those barriers need to be addressed. There are many challenges. Today, when I listened to the Honourable Ms. Minna and Ms. Neville....

With all due respect, your government had 13 years to address these problems, and with all due respect, now you're putting barriers in front of us. There's nothing in this motion that should offend you in any way. I'm asking for your support.

With all due respect, I think this motion sends a message that is loud and clear. We should be doing this as a committee and saying yes.

If you feel very strongly, as Ms. Demers does, introduce another motion, and we can have a discussion, But this is my motion, I think it's very strong, and I ask for your support.

• (1715)

**The Chair:** Yes, Ms. Minna.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** I'm sorry, but I need to clarify, because there was misinformation here.

Our government established the Status of Women. The equality provisions were there. All of the things that have been removed were there. So with respect, that's what we're discussing: the total stripping of the advocacy research and equality provisions that were there.

What Madam Smith just suggested is that these were not there.

**The Chair:** As the chair, I'd like to bring the temperature down.

You have proposed a motion. Questions were asked about the mechanism, the how's and where's, and you have not responded to their questions. I'm trying to bring the temperature down, because I need to understand—

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** It doesn't bring the temperature down. I have responded very clearly, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Ms. Smith, it's my turn to speak, so I will speak, and you will get an opportunity to speak.

You have not responded.... I'm listening to both sides. There is a question. In my mind, you haven't responded. If you can respond to the questions, perhaps there will be a meeting of the minds—perhaps. From a technical perspective, I want to see something tangible.

Yes, you say address the crucial, pressing issues of violence towards women and girls. Yes, money was given to the RCMP. So what is it that you're trying to tell the government to do? If you could just explain that, clarify something that we don't know, it would help.

But if that is not going to happen, I will let Mr. Stanton speak, then Ms. Neville, and then I'll let you wrap up.

Mr. Stanton.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I actually had a question of procedure here, more than anything.

Madame Demers has put an amendment, so in fact should we be having discussion on the amendment? Does that not take precedence?

**The Chair:** We can.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Okay, good. I have a question for Madame Demers.

Madame, in the second change on your amendment, where we've added the words, “and support groups working to that end, and human rights groups in particular”, when we just use a general term like “groups” and we put that in a motion, are specific groups

contemplated here? What would they be, specific advocacy groups? Some examples perhaps would be a help.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** There are definitely women's rights advocacy groups.

I think this amendment was moved because I didn't believe this motion was objective. I don't believe that's the case. I find it unfortunate, because it's toying with people; it's manipulative. I find it unfortunate that we have come to this point on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We should be working together.

We've made recommendations, this motion for example, in various reports. In the report on human trafficking, we talk about violence against women and children. There were very specific recommendations on these points in various reports.

The motion introduced today must be amended to give women more equality. I am the daughter of a veteran who is now dead. However, that doesn't mean that we have more equality today; that's not true. Yes, it's written in the Charter, but pay equity hasn't yet been achieved. So equality and parity haven't yet been achieved. It's false to claim the contrary. Those visiting Canada aren't tricked because the word “equality” has been removed from the documents presented. I'm sorry, but they aren't tricked by that.

• (1720)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Do you have your response, Mr. Stanton?

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Yes, because I just asked the question, and I appreciate that.

To follow up on that, I don't know about the appropriateness of going in a different direction. I think Madame Demers has given some backdrop as to why she wants human rights groups to be part of that, but with all respect to the various speakers on this question, I think there aren't agendas here; it's just that there are differences of opinion in terms of how one would perceive the changes, for example, in the terms and conditions, how that plays out, what are the practical implications of that. There are differing views on that, and I think we should be able to have a civil discussion about those issues without having to elevate it into discussions about who has a political agenda and who doesn't.

I think what we have here in the committee is a presentation in front of us, and Madame Demers has added some different context to the motion. From a practical point of view, I assume this type of amendment is in order.

**The Chair:** Yes, it is in order. Once you present a motion, the motion does not belong to you, it belongs to the committee.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Correct.

**The Chair:** And when an amendment comes, it belongs to the committee. First, therefore, we deal with the amendment or any subamendment, and then whatever gets carried or defeated, or whatever happens.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Okay. So to clarify, we have the amendment that is currently on the floor and we should be discussing the amendment.

**The Chair:** It is on the floor, and it should be discussed.

Madame Demers was saying that there is a problem with translation, so I'd like her to speak first. Perhaps what we got was not properly translated.

Thank you, madame.

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** It is not human rights groups in particular; it's advocacy.

[*Translation*]

In French, it's clearly written: “[...] notamment les groupes de défense des droits”. The translation of “défense des droits” is “advocacy groups”.

[*English*]

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Advocacy?

**The Chair:** It says “and support groups working to that end and advocacy groups in particular”.

What I'd like to do is this. We've had a long discussion on one motion and one amendment, so I'd like to call a vote on the amendment only.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** As long as we understand it's advocacy groups.

**The Chair:** Yes, it is advocacy groups. It says so in French: *défense des droits*.

Those opposed to the amendment, please raise your hands.

The amendment is carried.

Now we go to the motion.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Can we have a recorded vote?

**The Chair:** Sure, you can have a recorded vote. The clerk will take a recorded vote on the amendment? She wants the amendment and the motion. Yes, we already did a vote on the amendment.

We can do it.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** That is an amended motion now. We have passed the amendments to this motion, so what we're voting on now is the complete motion with the amendments in, correct?

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** No, but I want a recorded—

**The Chair:** On the amended motion, right. So now the motion as amended reads what Madam Demers has proposed.

Yes, Ms. Smith.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Can you just clarify something for me? I was trying to get your attention. What I wanted was a recorded vote on the amendment to indicate that no, we did not agree with this amendment.

Now we're doing the motion with the amendment in it, and you're going to force us to vote against the motion because we can't agree. The motion is changed then, if that amendment goes into here. So could we please have a recorded vote on the amendment and then have a recorded vote on the motion? At least we can indicate where we stand. Because I can't support the motion with that amendment in it.

**The Chair:** Can we be flexible and go back? Yes? Thank you.

Okay, we'll go to the amendment and take a recorded vote.

(Amendment agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

● (1725)

**The Chair:** And now procedurally we vote on the amended motion, a recorded vote.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

**The Chair:** You have all received the Status of Women Canada estimates. We have requested the minister to appear. We've given her two dates, May 1 and May 3, so we will keep you apprised.

Next week we continue with the economic study of women, and we will be going through the report as well.

Thank you very much. The meeting is adjourned.









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