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Ms. Yasmin Ratansi

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• (1550)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.)): We can start. To the committee, welcome .

I had a wonderful trip to Australia. I'll give you an update. I will focus, but I want to let you know there's something relevant; that's why I'm telling you about Australia.

The APEC health meeting was there, and it was important because I had some connections to Hong Kong and Vietnam. Minister Clement and I then had some bilaterals. What was important was that the embassy allowed me to meet with women parliamentarians who had prepared their human trafficking report. The embassy had given me their human trafficking response beforehand, and their human trafficking response was far more solid than ours, so I was a little jealous thinking they were more advanced than we were.

They had a commissioner on human trafficking, and I met with her. The feedback I got was that what is on paper is on paper; in reality, there are certain things. I then came away and I met with some advocacy groups.

The commissioner of human trafficking was telling me that she came to Canada and the United States. She said that we are far more advocacy-driven than they are. She said they are laid back—yes, the report is there, and yes, we have made recommendations, but sometimes the recommendations. For example, one recommendation they made was they denied that they had a human trafficking problem; because they're an island, people who came in knew exactly what they were coming in for, but anybody who complained about it had 30 days' reprieve, got housing, and got everything paid for. In reality, when I met with the advocate group and people who were sponsored by the New South Wales government, they told me that 30 days really translates to two days. Sometimes it's two days. You come in, you report, you complain, and if the police think you are a real case, they'll let you stay for 30 days and move on; if they don't, they deport you. Their biggest problem was Thailand.

That's just to let you know that I had some interesting meetings.

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Did you bring a copy back?

The Chair: I think I did. I was looking at my stack of stuff. I think I'd love to share it with all of you. It's not bilingual. *C'est très unilingual*. I suggest that for our benefit we can have a look at it.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): I have to commend you for picking up on that and bringing that report back. I think we all would like a copy of it. It's great to know that you delved a little

deeper. Sometimes you see those reports...and yet you started asking the important questions, so thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: You're most welcome.

I met not only with the Commonwealth parliamentarians, but I was in New South Wales, so I met with the parliamentarians there.

The report on the economic security of women was presented to the House on Thursday, June 14, and we can wait for the government response. We have received a response on the human trafficking, and I think you all have a copy of it.

As a follow-up on certain things, a Chinese delegation is going to be coming. I've asked them to come here. They want to meet with me, but I told them to at least sit through, if they are early. They'll be coming by 4:30. They want to meet with me to discuss some issues around what we do and how we can help with China. Ladies and gentlemen, I think we can give them some feedback. Since they want to meet me only, I still think you guys can give me some feedback as to what I should be telling them as we move forward.

Today we are going to discuss committee business—our fall plan—and there's been a suggestion from the government side of the House that we do it today so that Thursday we don't have to have a meeting. If that's agreeable to all, we can finish our committee business today.

In preparation for the fall plan, I am open to suggestions.

Ms. Smith, you are first to go, and then Ms. Mathysen.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you very much.

I want to pick up on something that our committee had talked about. I think, Ms. Minna, this is something maybe you could speak to as well. It happened when we were discussing the kinds of things we were going to talk about. When we got into human trafficking, we talked about a work plan for migrants.

Now, we know that in May 2006, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights questioned Canada about our record on migrant rights, finding the government wanting in this area. Number two, approximately 18,000 migrant farm workers from the Caribbean and Mexico arrive in Canada to work in our fields, orchards, and greenhouses every year. Women are estimated to make up 65% of the world's migrants.

When women are able to migrate legally and independently, it has been found trafficking decreases. ... A gender audit of migration policy might be a timely intervention in order to see whether and how Canadian immigration policy limits women's ability to migrate as independent workers in whatever field.

Now, on October 19, 2006, Mr. Richard Poulin said here:

With the growing demand, I suspect, for migrant labour in Canada, particularly with the economic booms out west, there will be more migrant workers seeking to access these jobs, so it is important that they be provided with the ability to access these jobs independently and safely.

On June 6, 2006, Ms. Florence Ievers, the coordinator of the Status of Women Canada, said:

The realities of poverty and women affect Canada at the international level, drawing criticism. In Geneva in early May, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights questioned Canada about our record on poverty, homelessness, Indigenous and migrant rights, health and education, finding the government wanting in all areas.

I don't know whether it's permissible to put a motion down, Madam Chair. I thought of a motion to support this suggestion. I know I also have other committee members in on this. Ms. Guergis also has some issues that she'd like to bring forward as well. I'm sure there are other members who would like to bring their things forward.

I'm just going to leave it at that for this time. The migrant workers and immigrant...it all goes hand in hand, talking about their lot in life when they come to Canada. There are many, many stories that need to be told, so we can address a lot of the underprivileged people who do come here and don't have a place to go or no accountability in terms of when they do get into a job situation.

So that's one of the suggestions. I would also defer to Ms. Guergis, who has some ideas as well.

● (1555)

The Chair: Since Ms. Mathysen is going second, I'll get to Ms. Guergis.

No, you don't need a motion if the committee agrees. What we're doing is finding out what it is we need to study. If we could just list the things we need to study...

Yes, Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): On a point of order, Madam Chair, are we in camera right now?

The Chair: No, it's public.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Aren't we supposed to be in camera when we're doing work plans?

The Chair: It's the committee's decision.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: I know other committees choose to do it that way.

The Chair: Do you wish to do it in camera? There's nobody outside.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: You want to do it in camera.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: I'm thinking in terms of other people who might draw some conclusions based on discussions around work plan activities.

The Chair: Fair enough. The meeting is in camera and should be so noted.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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