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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Wednesday, December 12, 2007**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi**

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## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.)):** Committee members, I am just starting off with the business.

Ms. Mathysen, we'll be starting off with your motion as the first item on the agenda. Would you like to read your motion into the microphone for recording purposes, and then we can discuss it.

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

My motion is that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women secure the finance department reports and related documents outlining the gender-based analysis done for the 2006 and 2007 federal budgets.

Basically, Madam Chair, I requested this information last June. It was indicated to me at that point in time that it was done, but we still haven't seen it. I would truly appreciate seeing it; hence the motion.

**The Chair:** Is there any discussion on this motion? Basically it's very straightforward and clear cut. We're just asking the Department of Finance to give us these documents that show us they have done some gender-based analysis.

If there is no discussion, I would like to call the motion to a vote.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1540)

**The Chair:** Thank you. We will let that stay.

The next item on the agenda is the gender budget study. We have heard quite a few witnesses—in fact, quite a lot of witnesses. I would like to get the committee's direction as to which way we want to proceed. Do we still want to get more witnesses? Do we want to focus on certain areas?

Basically what you have in front of you is the list of deductions and tax credits that CRA has. It's just there, so if you want to focus your discussion....

Ms. Minna, you have the floor.

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

I have been thinking about this quite a bit since the last meeting we had on gender budgeting, and I realized that we have heard a great deal in terms of the impact that a good gender-budgeting analysis can do to the tax structure, the tax credits side, and of course other policy. At the outset, when we started this process, we said that

we might look at taking out tranches like HRSD and places where women are most affected.

Having gone through this process, I think what we ought to do at this stage...because we have enough information now, a basis to say yes, gender budgeting is needed; yes, gender budgeting is not yet being done in our country in the way that it ought to be done. We have heard some people who have actually gone through the process in other parts of the world, and I think at this point we should recommend, as part of our process....

I'm not sure that hearing more witnesses about how it's going to be done is going to help us to come to the conclusion that we know it needs to be done. We understand the complexity of it. I would recommend that we now make a recommendation to the government that it ought to do a proper gender-budgeting analysis of the tax structure as a whole, for a start, because if we recall, the woman from South Africa said that without doing a proper base analysis to know where the inequities are at the outset, then it's hard to build from there. Then of course we should do the other gender-budgeting analysis, definitely to the tax expenditures, especially those that affect the social side.

I hadn't thought of a specific deadline. We might check with the experts, who could send it to us through the researchers, as to what they might suggest would be an appropriate time to finish.

The other recommendation that I would make is this. I liked the idea of the South African woman again. She says that she's hired by the standing committee on the status of women in South Africa to advise them once or twice a year on how gender budgeting is being done and how effective or not effective it is in her country. I think we ought to do the same thing. I imagine in this case, Madam Chair, the process of getting the finances for this committee to hire one or two consultants who would report to this committee to advise this committee on how the process is going, at least two times a year—I think that would now put the ball back where it belongs, because we're not going to do gender-budgeting analysis ourselves. We were looking at what the issue was and how we could then move on. And I think that would be a reasonable way to move on. Some continued accountability and some oversight on our part would certainly be helpful.

I would just like to add that this is not a precedent in our system. In fact, there was a precedent set by the finance committee two years ago. I was on the committee then, during the Liberal Parliament. In fact, it was the Conservative members of that committee who put forward that the standing committee hire or pay for the services of a consultant per party. I'm not suggesting that, but they actually had an economist hired by the committee. Each party would choose who they wanted, and the economists would advise the finance committee on the budgeting process, for them to be ready and able to both do the pre-budget stuff and then consult and understand how government does the budgeting. That was put forward and passed, and it's being done, and it was done. I was there when the economists came to committee as witnesses to advise the committee on what was happening with government budget preparation, and were given access to information.

So it's not a precedent. I think this committee certainly, on an issue as important as this, could do that.

So I would suggest that we do the two things. One would be to send a recommendation to the government, as I said previously, to do a gender-budgeting analysis on the tax structure and tax expenditures. The other would be for this committee to have a consultant, if not two, but certainly one, to meet and advise and work for us basically, at least twice in the next year.

•(1545)

**The Chair:** Okay.

Yes, Ms. Davidson.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Those are some interesting comments that Ms. Minna has just made, and I just have a couple of questions perhaps on the one comment, the first one being on the tax evaluation.

Are you suggesting that what they are doing their evaluation on would be the list of tax credits that have been circulated to us today? That would be one question.

The other thing is that before we decide that we're going to be hiring consultants and bringing other people in, we need to bring the finance department here and talk to them. It was suggested by every single person we talked to that we needed to talk to our own finance department, that it was critical that we hear from them. We heard from the lady from South Africa that when she was doing the Commonwealth conference it was reported that gender budgeting was being done in Canada. Let's find out why they're saying it's being done. Let's see what's being done. We need to have the finance department here.

Maybe Ms. Minna could clarify the first part about the evaluation of the tax credits. I think that's what you were referring to.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** I was actually talking of more than that. Tax credits are part of the budget structure, no question, and they need to be evaluated from the point of view of their gender evaluation, but also the overall tax structure, tax system, not just that. There are other tax measures that affect women in our society. In fact, we heard from a number of witnesses, specifically Professor Lahey, who indicated the tax structure itself has certain biases built into it. I think

it is worth doing a proper analysis to see. It may not be the case; it may be that it's not as bad as we think, or maybe it actually is biased in other ways and it may benefit some men. I don't know.

But I think it is worthwhile doing. It is important to start from the base to be able to then move forward so that we know what we're dealing with.

As far as the standing committee is concerned, obviously we need to be meeting with the finance department, no question, but with all due respect, I don't think that, as the finance committee did...the finance department has told us before that they did gender-based analysis. We would have no way of judging, and the role of the consultant would be to have an expert to work with us to be able to give us advice and to be able to monitor the extent to which we are doing proper, real, transparent results-based gender budgeting analysis. Finance has hired three people. I don't think it's a difficult thing for us, especially given the complexity of the issue with which we are dealing.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen, did you have your hand up? We are a little confused.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay, thank you.

We will go to Madam Boucher.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** I quite agree with Ms. Davidson. We have certainly heard a lot of things, but some important elements are still missing. First and foremost, we have to find out from the Department of Finance what they are doing about gender budgets.

We talk about the government a lot, but what is happening elsewhere? I would like to meet people from the provinces. We met people from Manitoba, but I would also like to meet people from Quebec to find out if anything is happening there. We still have at least two or three people to meet, but we have to meet the Department of Finance first before arranging for someone to see if it is done elsewhere. If it is not done elsewhere, we will push ahead.

Right now, we have to consult with the Department of Finance.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Stanton, then Madam Demers.

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

To build on this a little further, I don't disagree with anything my colleague Ms. Minna said here. I think we're going in the right direction. I do believe there is more that we should look at as we go forward. We've had enough testimony in terms of scoping out what the potential project is, and I think we have a pretty good sense of that.

It occurred to me from the comments from our last meeting—and I think it was rather well put—that for the Department of Finance, really, by the time the various departmental recommendations get there, they're tasked to pull it all together, look at the financial viability, and weigh the consequences of revenue and expenditures to look at the big picture. Ultimately, the gender lens work needs to be done at the departmental level before it really gets there. It's not really up to Finance to be doing all this scrutiny. When a department is proposing a program, be it Revenue or be it HRSDC, that's where the gender work would generally be done and completed.

I think it would be inefficient, and you might be setting yourself up for a situation where the work would be so voluminous that it wouldn't get done. I think we would need to better understand the steps and look, not in all departments, but certainly in the departments that are key to areas of program delivery that the Government Canada gets involved in. Clearly we're not as large a program deliverer as the provinces and territories are. But in areas like HRSDC, EI, CPP, most of which are financial vehicles, it's the expenditure side of the program as it relates to transfers to Canadians.

That's one thing.

I do believe we need to take a look at this gender budgeting topic and drill down a little further on the notions. Notwithstanding that we set up our programs to hopefully get the right gender outcomes, there were a number of witnesses who talked about the importance of measuring the actual implications of them. It's not just making sure the balance is right for a program when dollars go out the door, but more importantly, it's what actually is derived from that.

Then we get into the question of the audit side of the equation and if the department's engaging in any of that. Let's better understand what we need to do on the back side of these programs to get a sense of what the implications of the gender budgets are.

Mixed in with that are the data tools. We heard loud and clear that if you don't have the disaggregated data, then as a starting point, the departments that do the gender-based analysis won't have the requisite tools they need to even do it in the first place. So we need to look at what's involved with getting the data tools.

Those are the three main areas we should concentrate on. I do think there's a range of witnesses we could bring in to drill down into these areas.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** Madam Demers.

[*Translation*]

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

I think that basically we all want the same thing. We want to be able to move forward on this matter that we have been told is very important, to make sure that everyone has a piece of the pie.

I certainly feel that we must consult with the Department of Finance. But in order to properly consult, I like Ms. Minna's idea. I do not have the tools to understand the implications and the repercussions that different measures could have on different groups in society, men, women, children. I do not have the tools to do that, but there are experts who do. I think that we would learn a lot if each

party were to call an expert of its own choosing. It would not really be partisan, because they would be people who would help us to better understand the complexity of these matters.

When we heard the witnesses' statements on Monday, we saw that it is not easy to understand. But we have an obligation to understand as much as we can. Perhaps a lot is already being done and we do not realize it because it is not immediately obvious. But if we do not have experts to guide us, it is going to be difficult for us to see where we are and where we want to go.

I agree with Ms. Minna's recommendation. I would like the Department of Finance to show us what it has done, how it did it, and for people there to tell us, yes or no, what has been done and what has not been done.

Then we would be in a better position to know where to go and how to get there. It is not going to help us to hear from dozens of witnesses who are going to tell us the same things. We will be no further ahead in March or April. We know that it will take some years before gender-based budgeting is done at every level.

• (1555)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I think what I'm hearing is that all of us want to proceed. I'm looking at this whole chart of different deductions, tax credits, and so on, and they are appealing to the professional, the self-employed, investors, employees, and seniors. Basically, if we go to every tax deduction or tax credit, we will be in trouble.

I think Ms. Minna's idea—and all of you are saying the same thing, actually—is to look at the tax impact on social programs. There are two components you're looking at: the income tax itself, which is the revenue side, and the investment in social programs. If you're looking at both sides, you need experts who have studied budgets to guide us along.

For example, you could ask the Department of Finance about pension adjustment, but if you yourself are not aware of what angles to look at, then we won't be asking the right questions. We need the Department of Finance, but we need to be ready to ask the Department of Finance the right questions. Perhaps we need people to guide us along, people who have taken it as their life's job to look at the whole environment of revenue and social expenditures, and ask what sort of performance indicators are necessary within a department to ensure that it is meeting the agenda.

If I heard correctly from the different witnesses who came, we need a total expenditure framework to get a quantitative idea of what the government's expenditure is doing to women, and so on.

All of us seem to want to go the same route, but we're having a little problem determining whether we should have the cart first or the horse first. The cart seems to be the Department of Finance, and the horse seems to be the experts. So we have to get somebody leading us.

Madame Boucher is first, and then we'll go to Ms. Minna.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** I am not saying that Ms. Minna's idea is not a good one. But if we have to go in that direction, I would like to be assured that the people are independent of all parties and that there will be no partisanship. We will not further the cause like that.

I want no partisanship. We are working for women and for their advancement. If we meet people, I want it to be non-partisan, and I am personally going to make sure that it is. If I see partisanship, I am going to get angry.

[English]

**The Chair:** Madam Boucher, I agree with you that we can't have partisan issues when we are all here working for women's issues. If you look at the economists who came, they did an analysis over 10 years and it didn't matter which government it was, they were attacking the government. If an economist comes and it's true to their economic framework, they have to be independent.

Ms. Minna.

• (1600)

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

I understand the hesitation about the amount of work that would be need to done with my two recommendations. One of the reasons I suggested we do what the finance committee did...the finance committee is doing a lot more than I'm suggesting. We may choose to agree about one, but they agreed to have each party choose a consultant, which would be paid for, to appear in front of the finance committee two or three times every time there's a budget, and do all the work. They will advise the committee on how the budgeting process is actually happening at Finance and give them their forecasts, what they think ought to be happening, and so on.

The issue we're dealing with is very complex. We can continue with more hearings, as Madam Demers and others said, but we need to focus, and to some degree I think Mr. Stanton will say the same thing. But we don't have the expertise ourselves to focus in and start doing our analysis. This is where the consultant would come in to work with us and advise us on how it's coming along and the areas to focus on.

One of their recommendations, in addition to the text expenditures, might be to look at one department within a department as a model to start off with. But I think it would be helpful and useful to have someone work with our committee.

The other recommendation I made earlier was to have the Department of Finance at the outset. They say they're doing gender-based analysis. Some of the witnesses have said that this government and previous governments have not actually done it properly. They've done it, but without any real consequences or results. So there's no point in finger-pointing at anybody. There's a problem.

At the same time, why don't we ask the Department of Finance to actually do gender budgeting analysis? They can bring in experts to help them develop a structure, as the representative from South Africa said, with proper results management. We already have a results management structure in our system. They can come forward with an analysis on the tax expenditures and some parts of the tax structure, which would help us have some base from which to work.

I think the two parts—that, and the person working with us as we look at other things—would help us to really move ahead more quickly, instead of having constant hearings. We're a bit in the dark, in a way, because we can hear a lot more people, but where do we go from there?

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** I quite like the idea of having a consultant with the expertise we need to bring to any report we're going to make. But do we have a budget date announced? Has the ministers round table consultations concluded? Is the finance committee finished? It might be a very good thing to have a report, even if it's an interim report, to advise them on the deliberations they need to make for that budget.

I know it's a very tight timeframe, but the work of this committee is so important. We've heard from witnesses about the need to be expeditious in this regard. That compels me to want to make sure we have something in hand to guide the minister.

**The Chair:** Did you have your hand up, Mr. Pearson?

**Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.):** I did. I don't want to interrupt the flow.

**The Chair:** Go ahead. You're next.

**Mr. Glen Pearson:** I understand what Mr. Stanton is saying. I work in human rights and I was a firefighter, so my knowledge of finance is fairly limited. I really agreed with Madam Minna, Madam Demers, and Ms. Mathysen about having somebody to guide us through the process, because I think it voluminous.

I wonder if you can explain a bit more why you thought that was not the best way to start. I'm trying to understand what you meant.

• (1605)

**The Chair:** Mr. Stanton, sure.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Thank you, through you, to my colleague.

I'm not sure it's not such a bad way to start. I'm just looking at the overall work that we potentially have in front of us. And I'm not disagreeing out of hand that we have some additional help to guide us through. I think that's potentially a good idea. I'm still not sure why we need a consultant for each party, if we've agreed that it's without a partisan approach. I'm not so sure we need that. I don't disagree. I would be interested to see what the mandate of that would be. I'm still having a hard time just visualizing how we're going to take some steps ahead here. We all know generally what lies in front of us.

The other point is, Mr. Pearson, that I wouldn't suggest for a minute that we would want to leave Finance out of the equation. I just think there are other departments that actually work these things up before it gets to Finance. Especially in those key departments, I would still want to have a sense of what steps they're going through...to not only consider the gender implications of the programs, but also to see what they have on the back end of it to measure it.

If we wrote up the mandate or the terms of reference for that consultant and put it on paper, I think it might be easier to understand what we're looking at.

So I'm not in disagreement. I just think there's a compendium of work here, and the better we can scope it down and get some focus to it, the better.

**The Chair:** I think what Ms. Mathysen was starting to say was, has the budget consultation process begun? And we have no idea, because that would be a primer for us to figure this out. If the government is interested in consulting, then who is it consulting? And what is its trend going to be? Is it going to give a tax credit? Is it going to give a tax deduction? Perhaps we don't know. Everything is up in the air. Perhaps a consultant could say, a reduction in tax—for example, a 1% reduction in revenue from an income tax perspective—would benefit women in this group or that group.

In my mind, I think that's something we should be able to give the consultant. What happens if? It's a "what if" scenario. There are tax cuts, tax credits, and impacts on social programs. But we can ask the analysts to help us devise a mandate for consultants.

Here is what the analysts are telling me. We have had a lot of evidence given. We don't have a summary in front of us, so our memories might be relapsing into what it was that was said. In January, if we have the evidence before us, then we say, here is an area in which we would like a consultant to guide us. And perhaps then we won't be putting the cart before the horse, and perhaps we can logically say what it is we will move forward on with the consultant, and then how the consultant will help us ask the Department of Finance. How can we determine that a pension credit is beneficial, that they have done a gender lens? We don't even know how to ask the question. We have no idea. We're not experts on pensions. We're not experts on anything.

So we are here to help understand, and that person, hopefully the economist, will help us say, here are the types of questions you will ask the Department of Finance; here are the types of questions on which you will know that you are not being told the truth, or yes; here are the performance indicators you need to look at; and here are the performance measurements you must have. And perhaps that will help us achieve what we are trying to achieve.

Yes, Ms. Minna.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** I would just like to clarify a little.

What you're saying is absolutely true. Also, to be exact, let's say we're coming into a spring budget, as an example, or a new piece of legislation, I don't know. Given the way the finance committee uses them, the consultant would be able to look at that, and they should have access to information from Finance and be able to advise this committee that gender budgeting was done properly and here's where it succeeded, or gender budgeting was done, okay, but it missed, and this is where it missed. This is to advise us, to give us information, so that we know how to some degree to monitor and also work with...and be able to make sure we can do certain things.

That's how, to some degree, the other one at Finance also works. Yes, it's specific to that, but it's also, in a way, to be able to work with this committee for maybe a year or so, as we get into gender budgeting and as the government starts to do it more seriously, to

work with us so that we can monitor and see how it's going. It's a back and forth situation. This committee then is in a position to be able to put in questions and so on. Otherwise we can say that this is what we want to get done, and the government will say...and I'm not saying this government or the others. We've been at it for 10 years now. We're going to do this. But we don't have the mechanism or the ability to then meet with them and ask, is it working? How do we know that it's working or not until such time as a third party does an analysis and tells us, as we just heard in the last couple of weeks? Well, actually they were doing it, but it was not really done in the appropriate manner. So I think it's good for us to have.

And to Mr. Stanton, as I said, I was only using the finance committee as an example. They had more than one consultant. It doesn't have to be that. I don't see the need for us to waste the money. It can certainly be one individual we all agree on who can do the work for us. It doesn't have to be more than one, or it may be two we agree on. I'm not interested in spending a whole lot of money unnecessarily, but I do think it's helpful for this committee to have at least one or two people who work with us, as we move forward on this in the next several months or close to a year, because I think we'll be on this issue for a while, back and forth. It's not something we're going to do once and then forget. That's my sense.

● (1610)

**The Chair:** Mr. Stanton.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** There was one part of the question that came up from Mrs. Mathysen with respect to the budget cycle that we're in right now. Obviously, as all members know, there's no set date, or if there is, we certainly aren't party to it. It'll be some time in the spring. We all know that, but my thinking is here, in terms of timing.... We're back the end of January. I'm sure the department is going to be well into preparations for the budget. What we're working on here is more on the culture and system of developing budgets, so it's beyond budget 2008, certainly. I don't see that our recommendations are going to specifically impact on this particular budget cycle. If we get work and we have something that comes up in February that we can forward along, then that's great. But we all know that budgets typically come out in late March, early April, and my gosh, by the time we get back into committee and are taking evidence here, things will be well along, I would suspect. I don't like to speculate about these things, but our impact in terms of budget 2008, I think, will be minimal.

But certainly our recommendations are going to be based around improving the way the Government of Canada conducts its budget work. That's the goal here. It's not about getting a specific measure into next year's budget. At least that's the way I understood it.

**The Chair:** I think it's a sustainability of getting the gender links into budgeting. That's what we want. It's a systemic issue.

Madame Demers.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Madam Chair, I was listening to Mr. Stanton, and I said to myself that we could be in for surprises. I do not think that we will have a significant effect on the 2008 budget, which must be already prepared in large part. But I am sure that the Department of Finance knows that we have begun to study gender-based budgeting. I feel that we are perhaps in for surprises and that the budget will likely contain some of the things that concern us.

So it is even more important to know how the various subjects and the various areas will be addressed. In that way, we could also get an idea of what has already been done, and be able to tell ourselves that we are making progress. That could be quite satisfying. Sometimes, we get the feeling that we are working in a vacuum.

Like Ms. Minna, I am sure that all successive governments have tried to start to do it but have not necessarily succeeded. Now that it is known that people are interested—I am convinced that the Department of Finance knows of our interest—perhaps a greater effort will be made as the budget is being prepared and we will be pleasantly surprised.

An expert would help us for sure.

• (1615)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Neville.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** I was checking my remarks before I made them.

I was listening to Mr. Stanton comment about this budget cycle and the fact that what we're doing may be too late for it. But what I've learned in other things I've been involved in is that often the process of doing something alerts those responsible for making the decisions and doing it sensitive to the issues.

So while they may not be formally integrating a gender bias or a gender lens, I guess is the word, into the budget development process, the fact that this committee is studying it, talking about it, that it's becoming part of the discussion, will give them a sensitivity—or I would hope it would—to what they're doing.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I am mindful that the minister should be here in 15 minutes, and we have another item on the agenda, which is the court challenges program—

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Madam Chair, we're getting notices of votes coming through.

**The Chair:** Yes.

I am summarizing what I have heard here and what I'm hearing is yes, we want to have a consultant. We will first get the summation of all the findings or all the witnesses telling us, then we will determine the parameters we would want to provide the consultant, so the consultant can guide us in the right way. Our main aim is to ensure that the culture of gender lens is sustained within any government.

Then we will choose a consultant, whether it's from the Library of Parliament or whatever. After we've done that job, as Ms. Neville says, it might trigger people to do their work, because they will know somebody is trying to push that agenda now.

Have I got the right process in order?

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Excuse me, Madam Chair, do we need a vote on the consultant or not?

**The Chair:** At the moment we have said to ourselves that this is the process we're going to follow. The analysts are going to give us a summation of findings when we come back in January. From the summation we will determine what we need the consultant to do for us, so we will give the analyst a template of what our...because before we hire the consultant we have to prepare a mandate for the consultant.

We, the committee, will determine the parameters for the consultant, and at that meeting we will also determine who we should choose. So bring in a few names, and that should be fine.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** All I'm asking is if this concept of having a consultant needed a motion. But if there's agreement, there's no need.

**The Chair:** There's a consensus that we have to have a consultant.

Yes, Ms. Davidson.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Madam Chair, is it a budget issue? Is there enough budget?

**The Chair:** We'll find out how much a consultant would cost us. I've been a consultant, so I cannot tell you I will charge you \$10,000 when I don't even know what your parameters are. So we need to give the consultant parameters.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Then we'll have to do a budget request?

**The Chair:** Exactly.

Agreed?

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** But not to hire anybody yet.

**The Chair:** It does not require a motion.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Danielle Bélisle):** And there's nothing in the minutes.

**The Chair:** It is minuted that this was a consensus, and we agreed to follow the process.

**The Clerk:** If it is minuted, I need to know exactly what I'm minuting.

**The Chair:** You're minuting that the committee agreed that for the process of hiring a consultant, a gender budget expert, the committee will be receiving from the analysts a summation of the findings from all witnesses who have come before us for gender budgeting. After we receive the summation, we will determine the parameters for the consultant and then we will choose the gender budget expert.

So I have not misrepresented anyone, right?

Is that a vote?

• (1620)

**The Clerk:** You know that when there are bells, you need unanimous consent to keep on till when you want.



**The Chair:** Yes, we know. We are quite a friendly committee here. It's a half-hour bell, then we'll be fine.

The next item on the agenda is the court challenges program. I would like the committee's direction as to what you want us to do now. What do you want the analysts to do—prepare a report?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** That's it. That was easy.

**The Clerk:** Yes, that's an easy one, and we'll look at it when we come back at the beginning of January.

**The Chair:** Basically, all the witnesses we've heard from have given us recommendations, so we have to do that. A report without a recommendation.... It will be a very short report.

Members of the committee, in 28 minutes we have to go for a vote to adjourn a debate on something—who knows what? So I need consent that we can continue on. We will leave at 4:30, because we'll have enough time to vote.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Good.

So we've agreed that the report on the court challenges program will be a short with recommendations in it.

The last one is that we had asked ministers to come. We have one minister coming today, hopefully—not with the voting, etc. We have four more ministers who....

Have you had any responses from any of the four?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** We will have four after January.

**The Chair:** Is that for after January? They've agreed?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** The four ministers have agreed to appear. I got confirmation of that earlier. After Christmas, of course.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Go ahead, tell us. What was the confirmation?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** I am talking about the invitations that we sent to four ministers. They were Hon. Diane Finley, Hon. Monte Solberg, Hon. Stockwell Day and Hon. Rob Nicholson.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Did they all say yes?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Yes, they will tell us the exact date after Christmas.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** I believe that an e-mail was sent to the clerk indicating when they could come after the new year.

**The Chair:** Have you received any?

**The Clerk:** No, I haven't received an e-mail telling me. They've all called me and told me that they would like it to be in the following year. One asked if they could send officials in their place, and I said that's not the motion by the committee. I said that as soon as we know exactly when we'll be sitting and when you have time available, I'm going to slot them. I'm taking them as soon as they say yes.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Right, but my person did let you know they couldn't come today, and that they'd be coming in the new year.

**The Clerk:** They're coming in the new year, yes, but with no specific date or anything.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Right, I don't think you had a date.

**The Chair:** In the new year we might see....

The meeting is suspended till the votes, and then we are coming back. There is also a vote at 5:30.

**The Clerk:** There's also a vote at 5:30, so do you listen to the minister for half an hour?

**The Chair:** No, the votes are at quarter to six, correct? The voting takes place at quarter to five with the minister.

Committee members, I want to find out what it is that you want. The minister will only be here for 15 minutes, then. I guess we'll have to put off the minister until the new year?

• (1625)

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Can I suggest, Madam Chair, that we check with the minister when we go over to see what her availability will be, and then we can come back after the vote, perhaps?

**The Chair:** No, we cannot after the vote. By the time we're finished, whatever the vote is, it'll be about five o'clock, and then we go back. We will have, at maximum, half an hour with the minister. We won't even get the first round.

Thank you.

**The Clerk:** So are we asking her to come back in the new year?

**The Chair:** Yes.

At the request of the committee, I'm adjourning the meeting.





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