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—
Chair

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi

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• (0955)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.)): We have committee business. We have a motion from Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Mathysen, would you like to read the motion?

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

It reads:

Whereas the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights has not met to address legislative matters since March 11, 2008, and is therefore not functioning in a meaningful manner and,

Whereas the content and subject matter of Bill C-484, an Act to amend the Criminal Code (injuring or causing the death of an unborn child while committing an offence), could be more properly addressed by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women,

Therefore be it resolved that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women request that the House of Commons refer Bill C-484 to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen, before I allow for any discussion, I have been advised by the clerk that this falls outside our mandate.

Our mandate, if you want me to read it, in terms of our powers, is that we are not empowered to do anything that deals with justice bills.

We are here to do program and policy objectives of the department and the effectiveness in implementation of the same; the immediate, medium, and long-term expenditure plans and effectiveness of implementation of the same by the department; an analysis of the relative success of the department as measured by the results obtained as compared with the stated objectives; and other matters relating to the mandate, management, organization, or operation of the department, as the committee sees fit—the department being Status of Women Canada.

We are not under the Department of Justice, so I have been advised that this is out of order in this committee.

I am at the will of the committee if the committee wishes to, but I don't think I have the power to take this recommendation.

Ms. Mathysen.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: I understand that this is a very unusual motion, and I recognize that it is unique inasmuch as it hasn't been done. I sought advice in regard to this, and that advice basically was that by virtue of the importance of Bill C-484 and its impact on women, it was incumbent that we try to look at the possibility of having the bill come to this committee, because it does impact the

lives of women in a way that I don't think many of the MPs who may have supported the bill at second reading understand, and, without changes, this bill will go back to the House of Commons.

There's only a 60-day window. It will go back without any consideration of the bits and pieces of it that will negatively impact women. So by virtue of what I see as a very disconcerting situation in regard to women and their ability to choose, I thought it important that we try.

The Chair: Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): There are a couple of options, I think, Madam Chair, with this one.

One option is that we could study it, even take it upon ourselves, for that matter, to study it, and since we just did a report on gender analysis, report to the House on the standing committee's perception or feelings about this, without being in a position, obviously, of being able to amend the specific bill, as we don't have it officially. We could do that.

The other option is that we could ask, if Ms. Mathysen agreed, to have a joint meeting with the justice committee, for them to be able to have input from our committee, and obviously for it then to be officially reported through justice, if that is the only way it can be done.

We might look at it in two ways.

• (1000)

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Neville, and then Mr. Stanton.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you.

Ms. Minna preempted some of what I was going to suggest.

What we're looking at here is the content and the subject matter of Bill C-484, and I agree completely with Ms. Mathysen's comment. This is a bill that has a profound impact on women. It should at least be subject to a gender analysis, if nothing else.

Hon. Maria Minna: Exactly, so we could do that.

Hon. Anita Neville: We could do that, but I think it's important that we look at the content and subject matter of the bill, that we put forward our comments. I understand the justice committee doesn't meet. I would agree with Ms. Minna that a joint meeting with them would be helpful. If they won't meet with us, we can report to them. But I think it's important that the status of women committee look at the content and subject matter of Bill C-484.

I can tell you, Madam Chair—and I'm sure my office is no different from many others—that many women across the country have a profound concern and anxiety about this bill, and somebody has to look at it.

The Chair: Ms. Neville, I agree with your sentiment and that of Ms. Mathysen, Ms. Minna, and all our committee members who felt violated by this bill. But the content of this bill does not come under our purview. Therefore, we can't study the bill, but we can study the intent of this bill from a gender perspective.

Since I've responded to you, I have to get Mr. Stanton to—

Hon. Anita Neville: But it's not on the bill.

The Chair: May I seek your indulgence?

Ms. Mathysen, there are certain aspects of that bill that say “mother of the child”. Maybe we could take the technicality of it and see. We still have to get some approval as to whether we can study that bill.

Give us a minute to consult.

I'm trying to find a solution to this problem. The problem is that it involves the Criminal Code, and the statute does not come under the heritage department. That's my problem here. Therefore, I'm trying to find a compromise somewhere.

Mr. Stanton, did you want to make a statement?

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

First of all, I certainly speak in support of the ruling you made on the motion. I think the consideration here is that the content of this bill has to do with the Criminal Code, so we have to consider that our respective colleagues from both sides of the table will ultimately have this in front of them.

I understand that the justice committee is on the cusp of getting back into a process. I think we need to let them do their work.

Insofar as members of this committee go, Ms. Mathysen has made some points here about the potential implications for women. That presumes, of course, that this bill will ultimately pass by the House in its current form. We really don't know that. I think it would be premature, until our colleagues on the justice committee have had an opportunity to look at this bill, to consider that.

That said, on the second point, you suggested that our committee might be able to undertake a look at the issues around the introduction of this bill. The only question I would have on that, Madam Chair, is if this committee undertook a study on that topic related to the bill, would it be possible that that report to the House wouldn't be accepted because it's not consistent with our mandate? It's a question more than anything. I understand, with regard to the rules, if we table a report in the House that's not consistent with our mandate, that it in fact couldn't be put on the list of reports by committees.

• (1005)

The Chair: We could study the subject matter. Because the subject matter deals with the mother and the child—because it's gender-related—we could study it.

The flip side of the coin is that because we're dealing with the Criminal Code, the way this motion is worded, we can't do much about it. If we study the impact, then perhaps we have a way around it.

Ms. Mathysen, you received some advice, and perhaps you can give us in writing what that advice was. Perhaps the clerk can then take that and see where she can go with it. We really have to work within the technical parameters of our statutes. Our statute, which relates to the department and which is the statute governing the status of women, is a statute of the Department of Canadian Heritage, not the Department of Justice.

Madame Demers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Madam Chair, I listened carefully to what you said. I agree with you and Mr. Stanton that this falls under the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. We know that it is not sitting, as the chair doesn't like to talk about the topics on the agenda. However, Madam Chair, your proposal to do an analysis of the kinds of repercussions of such a bill on all women seems quite appropriate. If we cannot make amendments to the bill, as you said, we could make recommendations to the House on the possible consequences that we will have discovered in committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: We can study the subject matter and make recommendations, as long as we don't study the bill. We don't have the bill. That's not part of our purview.

Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I've been on this committee now for about six minutes, but I am a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Perhaps I can just add a little bit from that perspective.

I know we have an impasse, and I'm not here to get into the blame game about that impasse. I can tell you, though, that the committee is working very hard to try to get around the impasse we have right now. I do believe that discussions are going on, and those discussions should bear some fruit here in the near while.

Given the fact that Bill C-484 is going to approach the 60-day time limit in the near future, it does need to appear before a committee. I do believe, because it is a Criminal Code matter, and it makes minor amendments to the Criminal Code—some people think they're significant and others think that...and I'm not here to debate the opinion of that.

If I can add some assurance to this committee, I'm very confident that the justice committee will work very hard to try to meet so that we can discuss the substantive issues pertaining to Bill C-484 before the 60-day expiry date, before it gets reported back to the House unamended.

• (1010)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: When is the 60-day expiry?

The Chair: Mr. Calkins, do you know?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: It would be hard for me to say right now because it's 60 days when the House is sitting. If we go right until June 20, it will happen some time in September. If we don't sit until June 20, it all depends on the number of sitting days in the House, Madam Chair. From that perspective, if we sat right until the very end, I think it would be the first three or four days when we resume in the fall. But if we don't sit until June 20, then of course it would go beyond that.

So we still have a couple of weeks left in this particular sitting, and I know that would be a matter of precedent if the justice committee could agree to meet and discuss those issues, rather than some of the other issues that are stonewalling the committee.

The Chair: Ms. Neville, and then Ms. Mathysen.

Hon. Anita Neville: I think it's increasingly important, Madam Chair, that we have an opportunity to look at the discussion of the issue raised in it, and that you request a joint meeting with the justice committee at the same time to express the concerns and opinions of committee members on this bill.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Mathysen.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Madam Chair, my concern is that the promises of the justice committee meeting and getting on with the job of looking at the legislation seem rather elusive. I want to know if Bill C-484 is the first piece of legislation they'll be looking at, because it's my understanding that a number of pieces of legislation are backlogged, and Bill C-484 may not necessarily come before them. If that's the case, I think it is even more important that we move on this motion.

I'm quite prepared to make whatever changes, whatever amendments, are necessary, and I certainly accept that "Therefore be it resolved" could most certainly indicate that we will study the subject matter of Bill C-484 with regard to examining it from a gender budget analysis perspective. It needs to be worded better than that.

At this point, I have very grave concerns about the justice committee sitting and that this will go by the wayside.

The Chair: I agree with you.

Mr. Calkins, how many bills does the justice committee have in priority? Do you know?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: The committee has not had a formal meeting since March 11 where any legislation has been discussed. We have Bill C-27, Bill C-25, Bill C-26, not to mention the number of private members' bills. Before March 11 the committee had been meeting extra hours just to get through the legislative backlog.

The Chair: So it's quite conceivable that Bill C-484 may just pass its 60-day deadline and be assumed to have been adopted and sent to the House again if you do not address the bill. Is that true?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Chair, I can't presume to speak on behalf of the committee. I can just speak for myself. From my perspective, I would guess—and this is all it would be—that given the fact that Bill C-484 is approaching the 60-day limit, the justice committee, should it agree to go over this legislation, would do

everything it could to at least have a few hearings on Bill C-484. This is what we've normally done. We've used the regular sittings to discuss government legislation and we've had extra sittings to discuss private members' legislation.

The Chair: Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's great to have our colleague from the justice committee here today. It's rather timely, I must say. It's really helpful.

I know Ms. Mathysen has made some suggestions around what might be changed. I think it would be good for our committee to consider some different wording and to try to look at this as not referring to this particular bill, or as little as possible. The subject matter is a concern. Again, I think it would be difficult, but not impossible, to talk about the implications of something that has yet to be put in play.

The bill has been tabled in a certain form. Our colleagues at the justice committee will have their deliberations on this bill, but if Ms. Mathysen were to come back, perhaps with another wording on the motion, I think it's something the committee could take a look at and decide from there. I don't know whether we have time to do that today, but certainly it would be welcome to look at some kind of an adjustment to this that would clearly not put this subject matter in the form of taking away the responsibility of the justice committee to deal with this issue.

• (1015)

The Chair: Ms. Neville, and then we have some suggestions we might want to present to Ms. Mathysen.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

I appreciate Mr. Calkins being here today and giving us a picture of what's going on in the justice committee. However, it's not a very reassuring picture to hear the load it has, both in terms of private members' bills and regular business. To me it underlines even more the urgency of this committee's dealing with the subject matter and making the concerns of members known to the justice committee. There's lots going on here, I know. But it just underlines to me the urgency of dealing with the subject matter of this bill and that we provide that information to the justice committee and to the House should this bill come back to the House without any discussion by the justice committee.

The Chair: We have two proposals.

Yes, Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I don't mean to speak out of order, but the reality of the justice committee before March 11 was that no piece of legislation was reported back to the House—in the time that I spent on the justice committee—without appearing before the justice committee. The justice committee has made every effort it can, which are the extra hours and the extra sitting.... I understand the concern of this committee in having this legislation reported back to the House without the scrutiny of the committee.

I guess I would implore my colleagues at the table here from the Liberal Party and the Bloc Québécois to talk to their colleagues on the justice committee. If it's the will of this committee to have that piece of legislation discussed, I'm sure we could find all-party agreement to at least have a meeting where we could sit down and discuss the merits of Bill C-484, outside the other issues the justice committee is currently facing. I would make that request of my colleagues here at the table in the hope that that might satisfy some of the concerns this committee has with Bill C-484.

The Chair: There are two suggestions. The committee has suggested we have a meeting with the justice committee, failing their response to us in terms of meeting with us. We also have simultaneously a motion that, Ms. Mathysen, we are going to read and see if you are in agreement with it:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee study the subject matter of injuring or causing the death of an unborn child while committing an offence and its impact on women.

Then we'd take out everything else. That way it allows us to study it and it allows us to report it. If the justice committee pulls a stunt on us, we at least have something on paper.

Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Would you read it again, Madam Chair, please?

The Chair: Okay. We remove paragraph 1 totally and we say:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee study the subject matter of injuring or causing the death of an unborn child while committing an offence and its impact on women.

Yes, Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: I appreciate the attempt to put this, and I think it's the right approach given that the first motion is not in order. I would have some concerns around taking one section of that bill and putting that in the frame. Really what's at issue here is the content of the bill. To sort of single out one—I mean, there are a host of issues that are raised in here particularly as they relate to injury to women, which is ultimately what the bill deals with. It really is ultimately about more strict penalties for those who perpetrate such crimes.

I think I would be more comfortable with seeing a general statement there as opposed to taking a specific phrase out of the language, because the bill is certainly more encompassing than just the injury to the unborn.

• (1020)

The Chair: Can we talk about the attempted murder of a fetus and its impact on women? It says that too. We have to decide what we want to study.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Madam Chair, with the greatest of respect, the bill encompasses the crimes against women and the unborn. It needs to be dealt with in that context.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Demers, you have the floor. After which it will be Ms. Boucher's turn.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Epp, the sponsor of the bill, said himself that it was not to prevent violence against women. He admitted that this changes nothing in this regard. So I don't want to hear now that

this is part of the bill; it's not part of the bill. The only thing in the bill is exactly what is in the bill's title: "(injuring or causing the death of an unborn child while committing an offence)". That is what the bill is about. It's not about violence against women. That is not what violence against women is.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Boucher, then Monsieur Calkins, and then Ms. Mathysen.

In the meantime, Mr. Stanton, can you come up with something we can discuss?

Madame Boucher.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC): I want to put one extremely important thing into perspective, in my opinion.

I won't deny it, everyone knows that I voted against this bill for personal reasons. It is a free vote and I want it to be clear. It's not a government bill, it is a private member's bill. In my mind, this makes all the difference.

I spoke with lawyers about the bill before the meeting. I was told that since it is a private member's bill, the bill's sponsor chose to submit it to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. That is why it is not in order here. Mr. Epp chose to submit the bill to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Once the bill has been presented to that committee, it cannot be brought back to our committee. That is all I wanted to say.

[English]

The Chair: Madame Boucher, we're not bringing the bill here. We're changing the content and we're studying a subject matter. The subject matter has an impact on women, and that's what we're discussing at the moment.

Mr. Calkins, Ms. Mathysen, Madame Deschamps, *et après*, Monsieur Goldring.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It sounds like Ms. Demers is concerned about the motivations behind the bill, and I want to give her some assurances about what happened.

I commend this committee for wanting to study this. The bill was actually brought about by.... I remember it well. It was my first election campaign. It happened in Edmonton. I don't remember the name of the individual, but there was a lady that came to one of the rallies, and her daughter was murdered. She was murdered while she was pregnant. It was very clear that she was experiencing the pain and suffering of not only the loss of her daughter, but the loss of a grandchild she was never going to see. That left a void in her heart as well. So that was the motivation. The motivation for this bill actually came from a woman who made her case, very poignantly, at a rally we had during the 2005-06 election campaign.

I do believe that given the right wording.... And I will defer to the expertise that's on this committee. I wouldn't propose to come here and tell you how you should or shouldn't study this.

I certainly commend this committee for at least looking into the impact that some of these things have on women, because the precipitating event for this was indeed brought up by a woman. If the right wording is found for this, I think it's an absolutely valid thing for this committee to study.

• (1025)

The Chair: I have some wording that the clerks and the analysts have been working on.

But I'll let Ms. Mathysen speak, then Madame Deschamps, and then Mr. Goldring.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Madam Chair, I appreciate the support from around the table, from Madame Demers and Mr. Calkins, and that there is an understanding that it is absolutely essential that this committee study the subject matter of the bill. I'm very grateful for the wording that was chosen.

In response to the notion that it's a private member's bill, whether it's private or not, it has profound implications for women—profound implications. Our job is to look at all that impacts on the women of this country.

Finally, I would very much like to have a joint meeting with the justice committee and our committee. I think that would be a very fruitful undertaking.

The Chair: That is something the clerk will work on.

Madame Deschamps.

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Chair, I want to speak along the same lines as Ms. Mathysen did. I simply want to clarify something Ms. Boucher said.

I understand the principle under which you decided to vote; it is a free vote. Be it a private member's bill or a government bill, once it is passed by the House of Commons, the impact will be as terrible, in my mind. This bill has an impact on who I am and on my soul.

Ms. Boucher, the members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women have worked so hard. I think that we have developed solidarity with regard to our concerns about the status of women and women's equality. The work that remains to be done—and it must be done—concerns culture. We must change this culture. In my opinion, we can't do this by regressing. A private member's bill or a government bill has the same impact once it is passed. The members of this committee have the duty to take it into consideration.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): I will defer to Mr. Stanton, please.

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Mr. Goldring.

I just wonder if the committee would consider, in light of trying to take this forward, just keeping it so general as to simply say, "That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee study the subject matter of Bill C-484."

You can't put that in there?

The Chair: No. Can I give you another suggestion, if you don't mind?

Mr. Bruce Stanton: I was just going to say, whatever that is in the middle, "and its potential implications for Canadian women".

What were you going to say?

The Chair: That's not our bill. We can't touch it.

I'd like to make a suggestion: "That the committee study the impact on women of criminalizing actions that cause death or injury to an unborn child in the context of committing an offence against the mother."

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Okay, fine. No problem.

He has the floor, and then I'll give it to you, Ms. Bennett.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: If we were to take a step from that, as opposed to "criminalizing actions" and say "to study the impacts of stricter penalties", because that's really what it is—"stricter penalties for crimes committed against women and the unborn".

Hon. Anita Neville: The subject matter is important.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: We introduced that at the front, Anita. We say the subject matter. We can't refer to the bill.

Let me have a go at this. Carry on.

• (1030)

The Chair: Ms. Bennett.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): I think the issue for me has been that the substance of the bill doesn't matter one bit, meaning if this was seatbelt legislation...this is a ploy used by the anti-choice, pro-life movement across the world to try to get the rights of the unborn child, *encadré*, put into any piece of legislation they can think up.

What this committee needs to look at is how, state by state by state, the pro-life movement has been using bills such as this to actually put their anti-choice, pro-life agenda into legislation. That's what's dangerous about this bill. I couldn't give a whatever about the actual violence.... It's the rights of the unborn child getting into any piece of legislation. There is a tracking that this committee could do of how this has been done in other jurisdictions. That is the danger of this bill.

The Chair: That's a very interesting point.

Ms. Mathysen, would you like to think about it and try to incorporate it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Goldring, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Goldring: With all due respect, there seems to be an assumption here that there is a problem with this bill before we even study it. In other words, we're prepared to line up against it as though there is something here.

An hon. members: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Peter Goldring: Just a second. The comments that were just made—that it is an attempt to somehow legislate an agenda—were shameful, irrespective of the violence to the mother and the child.

When we go back to Alberta and the recent legislation there that was to allow insurance protection for the child in the third trimester, to bring about some kind of recognition of the pain and suffering to the mother and the child.... The intent of this is to address the concerns of the mother and child, irrespective of the feeling of a greater agenda for other people. I would think the pre-eminent concern here is the mother and the about-to-be-born child, and we don't have anything in our laws at present to address that situation. If we stay focused on the good intention of this bill, that's what it is directed towards and to somehow move it....

I was suggesting that perhaps, leaving aside the bill...but you entered into a statement that went into injury or causing the death of an unborn child while committing an offence. Now, leave "and its impact on women" and this is what we're talking about: injury or causing the death of an unborn child while committing an offence.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring, with all due respect, we're the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We've just finished "Towards Gender Responsive Budgeting" and we're working on gender issues. When we started the discussion—

Mr. Peter Goldring: It must be relevant to the work of the committee.

The Chair: When we started the discussion, we said this motion was out of order because it was not ours, that we cannot study anything that's not within our mandate. We said, okay, what's the compromise. The compromise is that in light of a lot of women's groups fearing the impact of this bill, it behooves the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to do a study, not of the bill—

Mr. Peter Goldring: But enter into it with the expectation that you can have a determination but not have a presupposed outcome before you even discuss it.

The Chair: We won't, because our study never has presupposed outcomes anyway. We study; we bring in witnesses from all across the spectrum. I think that's the way committees are supposed to function. As a committee, I think we have functioned very well and have understood the needs of women.

Mr. Stanton is next, and then we'll go to Madame Boucher and Madame Demers.

Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think we've had a fairly fulsome discussion on this. I think the comments from the chair, as well as others, are instructive in terms of how a motion might be brought before the committee.

In recognition that this is Ms. Mathysen's motion—and perhaps with the comments that we've had here today—she might go back and take another stab at coming up with the wording that suits your purpose, and the committee could take a look at that. I think to belabour this.... We're slowly getting into a discussion about the very subject matter that we say we may or may not be able to study.

That would be my suggestion, Madam Chair, to take the comments that have been offered here today, which have been helpful in framing a new motion....

• (1035)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stanton.

Madame Boucher.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: My comments echo Mr. Stanton's. I think that we work extremely hard, as Ms. Deschamps said. We have to find another way to say it and see how we can reach agreement.

Ms. Deschamps, I know that a private member's bill, just like a government bill, can have very serious consequences. However, I want you to know that this is not a government bill and that we have no intention of reopening the debate on abortion. I want this to be clear to everyone.

The Chair: Ms. Demers, we are all ears.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Let us stop beating about the bush, Madam Chair. We have already seen paternalistic attitudes toward us, so you can go and take your attitude elsewhere, we do not need it here. I have been fighting for 58 years on behalf of women and I will continue to do so. I will take my place and I intend to keep it. I am very sorry, but you are not going to change my views.

With regard to the status of women, our role is to ensure that women do not fall through the cracks and are no longer victims. Neither victims nor women are the subject of this bill. Women's groups advocating for victims do not want this bill. They are not crazy either. Only pro-life groups want this bill. Do not try to pull the wool over my eyes this morning, it is not going to work.

We must also remember, Mr. Goldring, that the Minister responsible for the Status of Women voted against this bill. As did the parliamentary secretary. If this bill is good, why are they voting against it? Ask yourself that question. They are not crazy. They voted against it because they know the consequences that it could have. Now, you have to walk the walk and stop saying simply that it is not a government bill, that it will not have an impact and that it does not matter because the government is not going to reopen the debate on abortion.

The government is doing it in a very backhanded way; it is extremely underhanded and quite insidious. Four similar bills have been introduced, Mr. Goldring. If you do not want to believe in our good faith and the fact that we just want to defend women, in that case put forward a bill to defend women who are murdered or who have three or four kids at home. They also deserve to be defended. Come on!

[English]

Mr. Peter Goldring: Why don't you go out to Edmonton on this, okay?

The Chair: Mr. Goldring, I'll just go to Ms. Neville first and then to Ms. Mathysen.

I understand, but let's not get our emotions high up. We're here to study an issue, and let's study the issue in a logical manner.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: This is an emotional issue, Madam Chair, and we've certainly seen how important this issue is in the explanation or concern expressed—and I share Madame Demers' concern.

You had a draft motion or an amended suggestion here. I would like to hear it again. I do not want to put this matter off. I'd like to bring it to a vote today, whether we move forward with studying the subject matter of it or... I don't know whether my colleagues would agree or not, but I'd like to deal with it and move on.

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen, there is a suggestion being made that I reread the changes the clerk has given me, and that if you're in agreement, we will vote on it. I'm going to read those changes again, and if you're not in agreement—because it's your motion—we will bring it back on Tuesday.

A voice: No, we're not here on Tuesday.

The Chair: Sorry, we're not here on Tuesday. We will have to do it today.

We're not here on Tuesday because the clerks and the analyst have to finish that report for your presentation on Wednesday.

An hon. member: We could come back for this, though?

The Chair: Oh yes, absolutely, you can. That's the committee's prerogative.

Ms. Mathysen, may I, for your benefit, reread it, and you tell me whether you are in agreement:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee study the subject matter of injuring or causing the death of an unborn child while committing an offence and its impact on women.

•(1040)

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: I think it's very important that we vote on this now, but I would like to take into account what Ms. Bennett said and Ms. Demers' concern. So I would like to request a small change:

...study the subject matter of injuring or causing the death of a fetus—

The Chair: Of a fetus?

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Yes.

...while committing an offence and its impact on women, and that the committee also consider the impact of similar legislation in other jurisdictions

I want to make the last addition because I think it would give us a more rounded understanding of this bill, not just in the isolation of this Parliament.

The Chair: I'm going to re-read the amendment first so that everybody is in sync:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) the committee study the subject matter of injuring or causing the death of a fetus while committing an offence and its impact on women, and that the committee also study the impact of similar legislation in other jurisdictions.

Do I have the wording right? I need a seconder for the motion.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: I so move.

The Chair: By “and similar legislation in other jurisdictions”, do you mean in Canada or somewhere else?

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: I mean internationally.

The Chair: You mean internationally, in Canada and other countries.

So we can do a cross-section of study. Shall I read it or are you all okay now? I will be calling for a vote.

I'll read it again so that we all understand the same thing:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) the committee study the subject matter of injuring or causing the death of a fetus while committing an offence and its impact on women, and that the committee also study the impact of similar legislation in other international jurisdictions.

I have a seconder for the motion, which is Ms. Neville.

(Motion agreed to)

•(1045)

The Chair: There has been a suggestion that we have a joint committee meeting with the justice committee. If we want to explore a joint meeting, then we need a motion. So the committee needs to pass a motion that a joint meeting be held with the justice committee to express our concern on Bill C-484.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: I think that would be fine.

The Chair: Okay. The motion is as follows: “That the committee request the clerk to arrange a joint meeting with Justice so as to express the committee's concern on Bill C-484”.

You asked me to repeat it?

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: No, I am listening to the interpretation to be sure that I understand correctly.

[English]

The Chair: There's a motion on the table, which is that we ask the clerk to arrange a joint meeting with Justice to express our concern.

Can I have a seconder for that motion? Madame Demers.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Okay, now, Mr. Goldring, you have the floor.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I wish to comment that obviously this is a very emotional issue, and I want to apologize if I'm somehow saying the wrong words to it and causing any discomfort. But we too have the other side of the issue. This issue stems from a criminal act in my riding, which, with the boundary changes, was taken over by Mr. Epp. I have some personal involvement with people who very much wish to see some form of justice brought forward.

While certainly there are different opinions on this, I feel very strongly that there is also an opinion and an issue that are the basis and essence of why this bill came forward. So I hope we can have a rational discussion on this and try to look at all of the aspects of it fairly and come to a conclusion following this thing.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Goldring.

I think this committee has been very logical about most of its issues, and I hope we'll go forward with it.

Do we still want a meeting on Tuesday, now that we have addressed these motions?

Yes, Mr. Stanton.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: I do have one question, Madam Chair. In regard to our work plan for the remainder of this session, if we're missing our meeting on Tuesday, we potentially have three meetings left after that. At some point before the end of the session, do we wish to consider some committee business where we look at our work plan? If I recall, when I went back and looked at what the library had for us up to the end of April, we really didn't have anything beyond the completion of the gender budgeting report, which is now done.

The Chair: We had the action plan on our list, and the analysts... And we have the study now.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Yes, in regard to the action plan, I don't know that there was consensus. As I recall, Liberal members came to the conclusion that we really didn't have to do that. So we may have to go back and revisit.

The Chair: What we had concluded on the action plan was that the analysts be given the responsibility of gathering all the recommendations we have made from the previous reports and bring them forward to the committee so we can look at what are our

next steps as we go forward. We didn't want to reinvent the wheel. We didn't want another study. We wanted to see what our recommendations were and how we have fared. That's what we are going to be doing at our next meeting on Thursday. Is it on Thursday?

Can I seek the committee's acceptance that the clerk speak to the justice committee and see if we can get a meeting? I'm hoping the justice committee will meet next week. If we can, we will probably be doing it. You have your Tuesday...the clerks feel they need that time and the analysts feel they need that time to consolidate the report, do a proper concordance, and on Thursday you will have the press release and the tabling of the document. Then we can distribute the action plan that is the total combination of recommendations and work on it the week after. Is that okay?

• (1050)

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Madam Chair, that's all fine and well, but I wonder if before the session we might, under committee business, at least consider what that work plan looks like even into the fall. It might be a good opportunity for members to discuss what we have in front of us, beyond what's currently sitting there.

The Chair: And the clerks are going to submit some ideas on future business as well.

Here is my suggestion. When you get the block of recommendations that we have done from different reports, why don't you as committee members submit ideas for future business?

So that nobody is in any confusion, the recommendations would be submitted to you, and if as committee members you can submit your request for future studies, based on all that we have finished and compiled, by Friday, June 13, then we'll know what we are going to do the next week.

Ms. Mathysen, did you have your hand up and I ignored you?

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: I know you would never ignore me, Madam Chair.

I was thinking in terms of research that the clerk and our analysts may undertake over the summer, and I'd be very interested in seeing what other countries have done or are doing in regard to action plans. I think that would be very useful to facilitate our discussion and study.

The Chair: Yes, they have done some work and they'll integrate it. Since you will have all the work they have done so far, you will have the recommendations. You want to move forward. You don't want to reinvent the wheel; you need to see where you were and where you want to move forward to.

Seeing no further business, this meeting is adjourned.

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