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Chair

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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• (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP)): Good afternoon everyone. I'd like to call to order the second meeting of the Standing committee on the Status of Women.

Ms. Ashton, go ahead.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Good afternoon, Madam Chair. Since this is our first meeting since you were elected, I'd like to congratulate you.

Today, I'd like to submit a notice of motion. My motion reads as follows:

That, in the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, the chair may approve a motion to meet in camera only when the committee is to discuss one of the following subjects:

- (a) wages, salaries and other employee benefits;
- (b) contracts and contract negotiations;
- (c) labour relations and personnel matters;
- (d) a draft report; and
- (e) confidential documents or matters, such as those pertaining to national security.

And that all votes taken in camera be recorded in the Minutes of Proceedings, including how each member voted when recorded votes are requested.

We are obviously trying to ensure that Parliament's work is transparent. Yet, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women is the committee with the second highest number of in camera meetings. That means the committee is not being transparent. We believe the committee should meet in camera for the reasons I mentioned. We must strive to meet in public to let Canadians in on the good work we are doing.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Ashton.

Are you moving the motion?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Truppe, you have the floor.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Committees decide when they choose to meet in camera and when they choose to meet or discuss in public. That's something that committees normally do: they decide to go to in public or they decide to go in camera. So we don't agree with that.

[Translation]

The Chair: Would anyone else care to comment?

Ms. Ashton, we're listening.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I would add that, of course, all committees make the very important decision about whether to meet in camera. Ours, however, is unique, but not in a good way. We meet in camera a lot more than the other committees do. And that clearly goes against the principle of transparency.

The Chair: Ms. Sellah, you have the floor.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is my first time speaking in this committee. I support the motion proposed by my colleague. I simply can't see what we have to hide, except when it comes to internal privileges or national security. In a transparent and democratic system, Canadians have a right to know what the Standing Committee on the Status of Women is doing, and I want them to know. No matter which party is speaking to advance women's interests and their status, people should know what's being said.

Thank you.

• (1535)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Ashton, go ahead.

Ms. Niki Ashton: We put forward our motion. Unfortunately, it appears that not everyone supports transparency.

I would like a recorded vote.

The Chair: Thank you.

A recorded vote was requested.

Ms. Truppe, did you have something to add?

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but I think there are transcripts of these. Can I recheck that with the clerk?

If somebody wants to see what went on in committee, there are transcripts. Is that correct?

The Chair: Yes, there are transcripts at the clerk's office.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Right. Thank you.

The Chair: The transcripts are available only for public meetings. For in camera meetings, they are kept at the clerk's office but are not available.

Is that correct?

A voice: Yes.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Moving on to the recorded vote.

(Motion negatived: nays, 7; yeas, 4 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Ms. Truppe, go ahead.

[*English*]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Madam Chair, since we're going to be discussing committee business, I move that we go in camera.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Niki Ashton: I would like a recorded vote.

The Chair: A recorded vote was requested to determine whether the committee continues in camera.

(Motion agreed to: nays, 7; yeas, 4 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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