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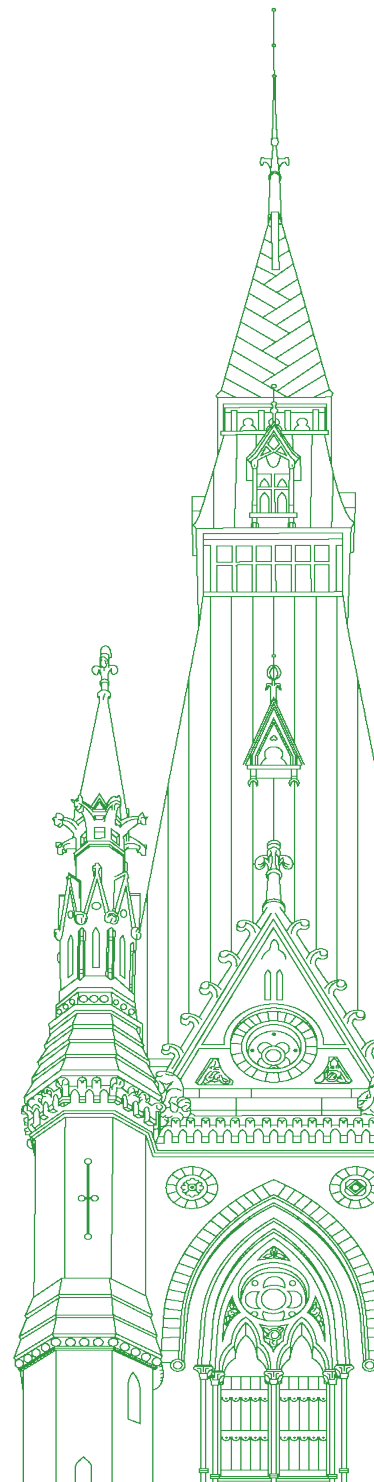
# Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 033**

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Chair: Mr. Sean Casey



## Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Tuesday, May 11, 2021

• (1550)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.)):** Welcome to meeting number 33 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. The webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

Today, we are going to receive a briefing from the 2014 Centennial Flame Research Award recipient. The committee grants the Centennial Flame Research Award to a Canadian with a disability to enable them to conduct research and prepare a report on the contributions of one or more persons with disabilities to the public life of Canada or the activities of Parliament. This award is presented in accordance with the Centennial Flame Research Award Act.

I'm very pleased to welcome Selma Kouidri, the 2014 award recipient, to begin our discussion with five minutes of opening remarks followed by a round of questions.

For your benefit, Ms. Kouidri, I would like to make a few additional comments. I expect that you are probably already aware of these things. First, interpretation at the video conference is available. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of "floor", "English" or "French". When you're speaking, please speak slowly and clearly, and when you're not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

With that, welcome to the committee. It's a pleasure to have you with us. You have the floor for five minutes.

**Ms. Selma Kouidri (As an Individual):** Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Good afternoon, everyone.

Thank you, honourable members of the committee for welcoming me today.

I'm going to give my presentation in French because that's my first language. Well, my first language is Arabic, but the second language I know best is French. I may switch from French to English from time to time. I apologize in advance to the interpreters in case I happen to stray from the notes I submitted in anticipation of this presentation.

Thanks again to the honourable committee members who made it possible for me to be here today to present the outcome of my work under the Centennial Flame Research Award I received in 2014. I was honoured to receive this award and this recognition from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on the basis of my personal work, and the work I wanted to accomplish on behalf of Ms. Maria Barile. The award enabled me to describe the rich intellectual and professional life of Maria Barile, a disabled immigrant whose profile resembles mine to some extent. I too am a disabled immigrant woman who has been in Canada since 1996.

I would like to briefly discuss the report that was sent to you about the research I completed. At the very outset, I really wanted to describe the unconventional career of Ms. Barile, who left us in July 2013. Her departure was premature because we didn't have enough time to get to know her, the scope of her work and her contribution to Canadian, and especially Quebec, society, not to mention what she gave to the disabled women I represent.

I met Maria Barile in 2008, when I began working at Action des femmes handicapées de Montréal, an organization that she co-founded after having created the DisAbled Women's Network Canada. She was really involved in every movement since the 1970s, and I would even go so far as to say since her arrival in Canada in 1964. This Italian girl, with her mother and her two brothers, joined her father who was already in Canada. She was the eldest child, and although only 11 years old when she came to Quebec, very quickly realized how much personal effort would be required of her not to mention the exertion needed to integrate into her host society, because she was already hearing impaired when she arrived. Another disability was discovered later.

Maria Barile displayed a great deal of perseverance throughout her life from the age of 11. She worked very hard on her studies, and was self-taught. You may be aware that persons with disabilities could not be educated after the age of 18, and they mainly attended special education schools in the 1980s. Fortunately, this is no longer the case today. People who want to can go a long way with their education.

When she was 18, Maria Barile was told that she could no longer pursue her education, given the system at the time. She didn't even have a high school diploma. She only had access to French and English language learning, and in her Italian mother tongue.

She worked very hard to complete her high school education, and her CEGEP studies, which she did by correspondence. This shows just how determined and persevering she was. My meeting with her really demonstrated that there are opportunities in Quebec, Canada and even elsewhere for a person with disabilities, and even a disabled woman. She had no limits. She told herself that if people really wanted to succeed, there were opportunities and you had to seize them.

It's also important to know that she worked very hard to overcome barriers and shatter glass ceilings. Allow me to repeat that glass ceilings are encountered in more than one specific setting. As disabled women, we encounter glass ceilings everywhere along the way when we want to fulfil ourselves as individuals.

• (1555)

I was able to think about all these things thanks to this research, which also showed me not only Maria Barile's intellectual and professional side, but also her involvement as a person, as a leader, as a role model for disabled immigrant women or any disabled women, and in particular, as a role model for girls and young women in years to come.

For me, she was a woman who cleared a path for all persons with disabilities. In the disability movement of the 1970s and 1980s, she was one of the first to condemn discrimination and violence against persons with disabilities, and in particular violence against women and girls. Right up to her premature passing, she spoke out about spousal violence and was emphatic that we should no longer remain in denial about persons with disabilities, particularly for women caught up in spousal and family violence.

At the time, her work was to remind us that all women are subjected to violence. It's not just any particular woman, but all women. It's essential to work and take action collectively. It's a social problem, and therefore requires collective solutions. It's up to us as a society to provide these women with resources and support.

The report you've received demonstrates the extent of her involvement in society and everything she was able to accomplish. This woman, whom I met in 2008, did so much. I believe she was an agent of change; I too joined the feminist movement with an intersectional approach. Thanks to Maria Barile, I fulfilled myself as an individual, as a mother, and as a citizen in my host society, in Quebec and Canada. Thanks to Maria Barile's work, I could see that there were no longer any limits. You probably know that for an immigrant coming here, integrating into the host society involves challenges. When someone has an incapacity or disability, the challenges get more difficult.

People like Maria Barile, who have already cleared a path to some degree, have thus given us this opportunity to find our place and to tell ourselves: "I'm not placing any limits on myself. Just because I have a disability doesn't mean I have to be set apart. I have something to contribute to this host society as a citizen. I can make

changes and I can help other people and other women with disabilities."

I sought out information, most of which came from family members, colleagues and people who knew her. Maria Barile worked. She went to university and was among the first to do postgraduate work. She was a professional, a social worker, who unfortunately was never able to work in her field because at the time, there were barriers, and disability-based discrimination.

She used to joke that she did hours and hours of social work, but in her kitchen. All kinds of women would call up Maria and go to her place for support. The watchwords of Action des femmes handicapées de Montréal, an organization that she founded, were openness and inclusion. Women of all kinds from the diversity showed up there, whatever their disability, ethnocultural origin, or sexual orientation might be. They all had access to a safe space. Maria Barile was among the first to establish safe spaces where women could define and fulfil themselves.

I wanted to share all this work with others. I wanted people to know that the history of persons with disabilities was written by many people, but particularly by some of the women who were part of the movement. People tend to forget the contribution made by this social work, and social action, by those women. I also had first-hand accounts through the generosity of family members who opened their doors and shared her work with me.

Maria published numerous scholarly articles. She did considerable research into the needs of persons with disabilities and their adaptation to them. She was among the first to advocate universal accessibility. Today, we're happy about the fact that an accessibility act is in force across Canada. We are already seeing some results.

• (1600)

It's thanks to pioneers like Maria Barile that, in Montreal for example, public transportation and the subway are becoming increasingly adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Ms. Kouidri.

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** Yes.

**The Chair:** The parliamentarians are eager to ask you some questions. I would therefore ask you to finish your opening address. You will have the opportunity to add a few more details as you answer their questions.

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** I'm finished.

The outcome of all the research that was done is described in the report, which also includes hyperlinks and filmed interviews. As Ms. Barile worked in French, English and Italian, the information could be in any of these three languages.

I am prepared to answer your questions and might be able to add a few details afterwards.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Kouidri.

We'll start the first round of questions with the Conservatives.

Ms. Dancho, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Thank you.

And thank you, Ms. Kouidri, for your address.

My first question is the following. I always find it interesting to hear about female entrepreneurship. Could you tell us more about the consulting firm founded by Ms. Barile, called Éco-Accès?

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** Yes. Ms. Barile founded the Éco-Accès consulting firm to achieve her sustainable development, recycling and climate change goals.

For example, recycling was not available for all persons with disabilities. They might have a recycling bin and the tools needed, but these were not adapted to their needs. Everything pertaining to recycling was designed for people without a disability. Ms. Barile's firm therefore worked to ensure that bins were more accessible to persons with disabilities and that their design would make it easier for them to take them out.

She also produced recycled materials, such as the bags she distributed. She encouraged lots of people to use the bags produced by her company instead of plastic bags.

She also did consulting work for companies, and for the City of Montreal, to ensure that recycling services were better adapted to persons with disabilities. She was a specialist in universal accessibility and universal design.

She was among the first to really promote accessibility and to speak out more about recycling. She established discussion groups. She also made sure that women with disabilities took part in all matters pertaining to sustainable development and combating climate change.

• (1605)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you very much.

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** I'd like to add that the company no longer exists. This is unfortunate, but we are continuing the work that that she began. I could tell you more about it afterwards.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you.

I've lived in Montreal for a number of years now, and I know that the recycling services there are excellent. I didn't know that Ms. Barile had contributed to that. I find it very interesting.

My second question is the following. Could you tell us about Ms. Barile's Action des femmes handicapées de Montréal organization and its sustainable heritage committee?

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** Action des femmes handicapées de Montréal is an association that she co-founded in 1986, further to her involvement in the establishment of a Canada-wide organization called DAWN Canada. All of the women involved in the creation of DAWN returned to their respective provinces to create what they

used to call, "little DAWNs", small women's associations. In the groups for persons with disabilities and in women's groups, there was nothing for disabled women. They often tell us that they were working on behalf of women's rights or disability rights, and that only afterwards would they look at the intersectionality or specificity of certain groups such as women with disabilities.

So Ms. Barile established Action des femmes handicapées de Montréal, saying, "If there's no environment for us, then we'll create it; we too have to work." That was the basic idea behind DAWN. Action des femmes handicapées de Montréal still exists, by the way, and it has been there since 1986.

She worked a lot on issues and challenges that concerned women, but also persons with disabilities, because she was deeply involved in the various groups; women's health and welfare, and sex education, among other things. She also worked hard on reproductive rights and sexual health, as well as all kinds of violence against disabled women and girls, whether institutional, spousal, family or sexual.

It's a legacy. I have benefited considerably from this legacy and am continuing her work. I think about all the work she did with Action des femmes handicapées de Montréal, and even her writings and her research to promote the distinctive identity of disabled women, and to encourage support for these women.

She was also one of the first to approach the Quebec government about our inclusion in discussions of action plans to combat violence against women.

In 1995, the first action plan in which there was much more discussion than usual about disabled women, came about because of Maria Barile's work. Women were treated as victims, but a number of other measures and approaches were developed.

Unfortunately, there is still work to be done. It's not easy for all women. I am happy today to say that this legacy, everything that she left us, is something that we as women support. I personally feel involved.

With members of her family, we established the Institut national pour l'équité, l'égalité et l'inclusion des personnes en situation de handicap, or INEEI-PSH, to continue her work, to combat violence of all kinds, to promote equity, to achieve de facto equality—her obsession—between women and men, and among all women too, with a view to achieving inclusiveness.

What she did for disabled women was incredible, particularly for Quebec and Canadian society. No one will be able to say that they have never heard of Maria Barile, or what she did.

I would also argue emphatically that this is also true for postsecondary education. She worked hard to make education accessible for persons with disabilities, particularly girls and boys and young women and men, so that they could go farther in life.

• (1610)

**The Chair:** Thank you for your testimony.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you Ms. Kouidri.

**The Chair:** We'll now continue with Ms. Young, who will have the floor for six minutes.

[*English*]

**Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Kouidri, for your report on this amazing woman, Maria Barile, who, as you mentioned, died in 2013. It's so unfortunate because her life was not without many struggles. You talk about this in your report.

I thought it would be good for this committee to hear about how especially difficult it was when she first came to Canada. Maybe you could talk about the terrible attack she suffered when she was quite young and how this impacted her life.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** As I was saying, Maria Barile faced many challenges and suffered a great deal of discrimination. I could mention a serious incident that was a catalyst for her work following her arrival in Quebec and Canada.

When she was 11 years old, she attended a special school for people who were deaf or hearing impaired, the MacKay School for the Deaf. She was already experiencing discrimination at the time because she was being told that she could not take her education any farther. That's what she would have wanted, but she was being told that she would be incapable of learning more than she already had. She experienced lots of discrimination.

She used public transportation a lot. She was disabled and also deaf, which no one knew. She tried to hide it, because she was afraid. She also experienced health problems, and occasional muscle spasms caused by dystonia. She visibly had a disability.

Her brother allowed me to read it. She tells about being attacked and explains how vulnerable it made her feel. Two people accosted her in a dark area of the subway. All she was worried about was the fact that she had some research work to submit. She never even thought about her safety or her health. Her only worry was that she didn't know how she would manage to turn in her work. She was being attacked and had lost her purse. That was her concern.

When she asked for help, no one in the subway supported or helped her immediately. When she ended up at the police station, no adaptation measures were available. She had trouble speaking because of her disability and what she was saying was often not believed. When she talked about the attack, its severity was downplayed. They thought she might have made it up, even though it had

really happened. In her notebook, she wrote that she felt alone and that nobody was there to support her when she made a complaint. She had to work hard to get the police to believe her, and for them to pursue the matter. In the end, nothing was done.

She was emphatic about her claim that a victim could end up alone in circumstances like that when they weren't being believed. A powerless victim was undergoing trauma, but there was nobody there to support her. At the police station, there were no adaptive measures to provide support. Here she was, a disabled person who had just experienced trauma and she couldn't hear what was going on. She didn't understand what was happening around her and was not receiving any support from the police or the caseworkers. At one point, there were only the members of her family.

This trauma was something that haunted her throughout her life and led her to work to support all women who survive violence, whoever they may be. For her, the most important thing would have been to have had someone by her side to give her support when making the complaint, and afterwards, to combat violence.

• (1615)

[*English*]

**Ms. Kate Young:** Thank you so much.

You say in your report that she felt "invisible". I can really feel that from reading your words. I wonder what she would think today. If she were here today and could talk to our committee, what would she say?

Things have changed, in many cases for the better, but people with disabilities, and especially women with disabilities, still really have roadblocks. The Accessible Canada Act is moving us in the right direction.

Do you think she would say that we are moving in the right direction?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** I am absolutely certain that she would say there's been a great deal of improvement. She would have been happy to see what's happening.

In fact, I wrote an article about that two years ago to describe how the situation has progressed. I can tell you that not much has changed. There have been some very positive steps forward and were happy to see that consultations were carried out in connection with the bill. However, some points were not taken into consideration.

It's being worked on, though, using an open and receptive approach.

Violence against disabled women, for example, is still not a priority. Support services for victims of violence are still not included in the bill, meaning that the provincial legislation takes things farther than the federal legislation. Once we're dealing with provincial areas of jurisdiction, the bill is narrower in scope. Nevertheless, we feel that it's a tool, and that's very important to us.

Maria Barile would be pleased with all the changes that are being made, but much remains to be done.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Thank you, Ms. Young.

**Ms. Kate Young:** Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Chabot, you have the floor now for six minutes.

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Koudri, it's a privilege to have you here and we thank you for your efforts to tell us about a great woman who had to fight in spite of her disabilities.

It's well known that disabled women experience a dual form of societal discrimination. Your report describes the barriers she encountered, and in particular her willingness to fight to change things. Thank you for telling us about this and for having taken all this time with us to tell us about her. As you said, she left us too early in the battle she was leading.

I'd like to ask Ms. Young the same question. If Ms. Barile were here today, what would she say to us? I believe that in the association you run, you are continuing her efforts, and I would imagine that many of your workers have drawn a great deal of inspiration from her.

You also mentioned de facto equality. In terms of equal rights, there has been a great deal of progress, but for de facto equality, I think much remains to be done.

What goals has Ms. Barile left for us to address?

**Ms. Selma Koudri:** The approach she always advocated was intersectional analysis from a feminist standpoint. She believed it was very important to understand everyone's realities and to accept everything about a person. She felt that it was up to individuals to step forward and explain their habits and needs to others. It's not up to us to decide what is best for them.

Ms. Barile did in fact work on de facto equality because at the time, she was already working with everyone else and any organizations that called upon her, whether on behalf of persons with disabilities or women's organizations. Even if she didn't feel they were the right place for her, she went to these organizations to make them aware of the realities of disabled women.

Ms. Barile asked the Fédération des femmes du Québec where the disabled women were and how the federation could do its work without including them, particularly after she began to get involved in the World March of Women, which developed out of the Bread and Roses March. She worked very hard to make sure that this

march would be accessible. However, she was told that it was important to begin by working for women's rights and only then look into it. This demonstrated to her that disabled women were still on the fringes of society.

She said that she didn't share the federation's opinion, but wanted to continue to work with them because she wanted disabled women to be included in its work. She wanted to see disabled women among the others making demands. She said that it was impossible to speak on behalf of women while excluding some of them. As there was a wide range of groups, it was important to include all of them. I myself firmly believe in this approach, which Ms. Barile employed to make groups of persons with disabilities understand.

It's clear that parity was never very strong in these groups. It still isn't. However, we are working hard, just as she did, to be at all the decision-making tables and groups to speak about equality with them. Ms. Barile wanted to know what these groups thought about the equality issue and what was happening in this area. She told them that in some important issues, such as violence against women, real progress could be achieved by working together. Women alone could not get it done. She therefore forged ties with many different groups and I think that she found it exhausting, because it wasn't easy to make her case to every single group.

She was also one of the first women to condemn policy inequality. In Quebec, she worked hard on getting policies adopted that would give an equal place to persons with disabilities. She wanted to know what role women would have in preparing the reports.

Today, the reports of the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec, which are often consulted, do differentiated analyses by sex or GBA, but nothing beyond that. Of course women are not a single homogeneous group; there are diverse groups of women. It's important to know which women we are dealing with. That is what Ms. Barile accomplished and what we are pursuing.

I am one among others who are continuing her work. I also work with others who knew Ms. Barile at the time and who didn't really agree with her approach, but who agree with it now. I'm thinking among others of Dr. Patrick Fougeyrollas, an anthropologist and disability expert, who is known in particular for his development of the disability creation process model. He is currently working hard to ensure that there is equality, even in research work, on behalf of the advancement of all persons with disabilities.

I believe that Ms. Barile would be proud of what we are doing. She would also take pride in being with us and being able to speak to you. She would certainly consider it a great honour to present all of the work she did, and all of the women for whom she was a role model, who have followed her lead and are continuing her work.

● (1620)

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

[English]

Next is Ms. Gazan, please, for six minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Thank you so much, Chair.

Ms. Kouidri, I want to start out by congratulating you on your research, and also on being awarded the scholarship to research. You spoke a lot, certainly, about intersectionality and the impact of not just being disabled but also being a woman who immigrated to Canada and the impact that had in terms of making things a lot more difficult.

I've often spoken about intersectionality and how it impacts people's lives. We know that, for example, 70% of individuals who are disabled live in poverty. I have brought that up many times. In fact, it's even higher when you research rates of poverty among BIPOC communities.

I'm wondering if you could speak to that and if you could make a couple of comments on your research of your mentor.

• (1625)

[Translation]

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** Thank you.

You mentioned that there was a very high poverty rate among persons with disabilities, and that this has been increasing in every province across Canada. Access to the workforce is still limited for these people, particularly women. It's acknowledged that women have the highest unemployment rate, or rather that they have the least access to the labour market. Moreover, disabled women have the lowest income in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. It's an alarming situation.

That's the way it was when Maria Barile was with us and it's still the case today, unfortunately. Things haven't changed. What we saw and experienced during the pandemic showed this clearly. The people who were more or less abandoned were those with disabilities, particularly women, who had to become caregivers. Maria was also a caregiver. She took care of her mother her entire life and this was never acknowledged. The vast majority of disabled women are single mothers. They are heads of families and don't even have equitable access to the labour market. There is a great deal of poverty, and some lost their jobs during the pandemic. We can see the inequalities and inequities even more clearly in a crisis like the one we have been experiencing since 2020.

The labour market is closed. There's a great deal of discrimination based on disabilities, and also gender and ethnocultural origin. There's no point in trying to hide it. All these forms of discrimination intersect, making it more difficult for someone with a disability to live in dignity, and even more so for a woman. The rate is therefore still very high, even today. Women are the lowest paid and poorest workers in Canadian society, particularly in Quebec. We face all kinds of problems.

Disabled women are the best educated among those with disabilities. Their graduation rate is very high, but it would be difficult to find anyone who could tell you that she is working in the field she studied for. Each will end up trying to find any job that will pay the

bills. They often turn to self-employment and entrepreneurship, even though they are afraid of doing that.

Maria had also firmly encouraged women's entrepreneurship, because these women do not have much access to the regular labour market. It's therefore important to create employment opportunities, and there is often no help available for them. Many women, as I did, end up becoming self-employed to meet their needs, as mothers and support workers.

Poverty has not changed for women. The rates are always more alarming for them than for the rest of the population. There is work to be done. I don't think the legislation acts directly enough. At one point, we were in agreement on quotas and said that it was important to comply with them, but perhaps stricter policies are required for businesses to hire them, because they have a lot to offer. People are afraid of a disabled person. They will always say that perhaps...

[English]

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Because we have less than a minute left, I just have one more question for you.

I know Canada has signed on to the UN convention on persons with disabilities. I would argue that we have failed, certainly the government has failed, in upholding these minimum human rights.

What are your thoughts on that?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Could you give a very brief answer, please.

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** We rely a lot on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Canada was asked in 2016 and 2017 by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to arrange for better work for women and young women with disabilities. Consultations on a counter-report to be tabled to determine where things stand will also begin shortly.

There was also discussion about the importance of adopting an intersectional approach to support disabled women and girls with disabilities who are victims of violence. Nothing has been done yet. All of the spending and assistance programs are not benefiting people in the field directly. That's what concerns us the most. We'd like to know how to go about getting social projects to support these people. We therefore refer a lot to this convention in connection with our work.

• (1630)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much, and congratulations.

**The Chair:** Next is Mr. Tochor.

Go ahead, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.



Thank you, Selma, for the work you've done and for sharing the wonderful story that is Maria. I'm inspired and I'm sure others are, especially people with disabilities or those facing the challenges that Maria faced. It's an inspiring story and I thank you for sharing it. It's a little bit belated, but congratulations on receiving the scholarship.

As I read the report that was forwarded to us, I attempted to do some additional research on her. I couldn't find additional information, unfortunately, on Google, by googling either the name of the report or her name. There is limited information out there. I just wanted to raise that with you to hear if you have any plans or if you've tried other ways of sharing the story more broadly.

[Translation]

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** I fully agree with you.

I'd like to point out that all of her research and all the work she did can be found with search engines and on university servers. However, access can be restricted and there is often a fee to get access to the articles. It's therefore not accessible to the whole population, which is unfortunate.

In my work with the Centre d'éducation populaire, for example, I tried to get hold of all the works of Maria Barile that are available. Some of them are, but not all. It's difficult to gain access, and considerable funds would be required to do so. We therefore created a physical rather than a virtual library of Maria Barile's work with Action des femmes handicapées de Montréal. The report has not yet been made available to the public and I'm waiting for the fall to do so.

I should point out that Maria Barile is on the list of the 100 women who have contributed to the advancement of women in Canada. The Department for Women and Gender Equality ranked her among the top 100 Canadian women.

In short, we are going to publish this report. It will also be possible to have access to Maria Barile's works at the INEEI-PSH website.

The Dawson College website also has many of Maria's works, but they are not available to the public. This is unfortunate because she's a woman who deserves recognition. What we want to do is to pursue her work to make people more aware of it. I personally send information to groups that represent persons with disabilities, and in particular movements on behalf of the rights of persons with disabilities. But it doesn't seem to get through. People appear reluctant to give the enormous work she did the credit it deserves. That's not going to stop me, because I intend to keep going. When we talk about the INEEI-PSH, we describe it as a structure that was established because of Maria Barile and as the continuation of her work. We mention her work at every presentation we give.

I agree with you that it's unfortunate. I think that this report and everything I've been able to compile will be available at various sites like the INEEI-PSH and perhaps taken up by Dawson College and other institutions, to make her work more accessible and better known.

[English]

**Mr. Corey Tochor:** Absolutely. I was riveted by the stories in the report and the successes that she had.

You did comment that you were careful not to veer into a biography, but it sounds as though what you have been collecting would be enough information. Do you think that would be something on the horizon, an official biography that you would be able to write and hopefully have support in publishing, to get that story out to the masses?

• (1635)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Kouidri, a brief answer please.

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** I thought that it would be overly pretentious for me to say that I had written a biography, although her family gave me authorization to do so, because I was very close to her. I also have fond memories of the Barile family, especially her brother Bernardo, who was very helpful.

It was really a dream for me to do this work and write her biography. I want people everywhere to know about her. At the moment, she's better known internationally than she is in Canada. She had many contacts in the United States. Great Britain even awarded her a posthumous Masters degree in accessible design. Unfortunately, she is not spoken about enough in Canada and Quebec.

I think that's something I should do, and I will. Thank you for encouraging me to do so.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

**Mr. Corey Tochor:** Just briefly then, I want to thank you again for sharing her story.

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

Next we have Mr. Long, for five minutes.

**Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon to my colleagues.

Ms. Kouidri, thank you very much for your wonderful report and presentation. I have been lucky enough to be a member of HUMA since 2015, and certainly, we've had many very worthy recipients with the respect to the Centennial Flame Research Award.

With respect to the Centennial Flame Research Award, what can we do, as a committee, to improve that award and make it more meaningful to researchers like you?

[Translation]

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** I was honoured to receive this award. I had no information about it and didn't even know it existed. When I heard about it, I checked my eligibility and submitted an application.

I think the public should have more information about how to proceed. Support should be given to applicants, particularly those who don't do much research or who would be doing it for the first time. If they want to write, they should be encouraged. I think it's very important to support them with documentation explaining what is expected of them in the report to be submitted.

Publishing this work more widely would also provide support for us. When I wanted to look at earlier reports, I had a lot of trouble finding them. I personally believe that it's very important to know what was done before and to have a model to follow. Publishing these works on different platforms would be even more useful. It would share the information that people are looking for. It amounts to making expertise available. It's important from a human standpoint to have this showcase for these people.

For me, it's an honour. It's so wonderful to have this platform for persons with disabilities. They are told, "go for it, you can do it, go ahead and show us that you have what it takes." After that, it's publicized. You can't ask for more than that.

I think that a more visible platform that can be shared with everyone would be something even more appropriate. We take a great deal of pride in doing that. I was very proud, and I think the other recipients were as well.

[English]

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Absolutely. The chair and colleagues should take note. Certainly, I think something we can improve is to actually promote and publicize the Centennial Flame Research Award for applicants and winners. That's something we can all endeavour to do better.

Ms. Kouidri, I want to talk to you first about barriers to employment, and I know you touched on that. Did you do any work at all, any research, with a Mark Wafer at Tim Hortons, or a Randy Lewis at Walgreens?

Did you cross paths with them at all in your research?

[Translation]

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** No, I haven't done any research on that subject. I think it's something worth looking into.

• (1640)

[English]

**Mr. Wayne Long:** For the committee's information and your information, Mark Wafer was an owner of a Tim Hortons restaurant. He has a hearing impairment. Randy Lewis was a vice-president of Walgreens in the United States. They both did amazing work, hiring people with disabilities in their businesses, and obviously, with great success.

Ms. Kouidri, what can we do, as parliamentarians, to help break down barriers to employment for persons with disabilities? What did you find in your research, and do you have any suggestions for us, as a committee, about what we can do to help break down those barriers?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Briefly, if possible.

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** I can say that a lot has been done, but at the political level. Things need to become even more concrete. You spoke about some people who started their own business to promote hiring persons with disabilities.

Maria Barile was one of them. Representing her own company, Éco-Accès, she approached businesses to explain to them that when the time came to write a job offer, it might be useful to mention at the bottom of the page that the position was open to disabled people or to women, meaning a marginalized group.

[English]

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Yes, absolutely.

[Translation]

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** Doing that could make a big difference. If I don't happen to see a sentence like that at the bottom of the employment offers I look at, I don't even apply, because I tell myself that these employers will not hire me and that if I mention my visual impairment, they'll asked me all kinds of questions. They are often afraid.

More promotion is needed for work by disabled people. Discussions about the existing models are needed with employers, including some top business and organization leaders. Non-governmental organizations, NGOs, and not for profit organizations, NPOs, enable people with disabilities to acquire skills. These organizations are run at arm's length and don't have much funding. Why not encourage them?

There are also organizations run by and for persons with disabilities. They pay taxes, and are involved in society. Why not provide effective promotion and support for the work they do? Demonstrating their competence would take away the misgivings felt by businesses. Private businesses would see that we are capable of managing organizations. Why then could we not manage private companies?

I think we could be invited from time to time.

[English]

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you very much.

Thank you, Chair.

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

[Translation]

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Thank you.

I'll take this opportunity to congratulate you on this award and on your work.

I might have a suggestion to make our work today more visible. We can discuss it in committee. We could at least, through a press release, inform people of what we are doing here on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, which gives these awards. In any event, I think that we could do a little more.

The mandate letter for the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion clearly indicates that she is to work on an action plan for disability inclusion.

What would be your message, if you had one, to make this a reality, whether for women and people with disabilities, or through them?

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** As I mentioned, the mandate is clear. The problem is that the same organizations are always approached, those that have always worked in concert with the government, I think, or those which have always been there. Change has not been all that concrete.

It might also be necessary to alter our focus and see how we might help these people in the field. For example, the non-refundable tax credit offered to persons with disabilities might well provide useful and adequate assistance, because there would be no access unless people were working. That could constitute hiring assistance and help for disabled people themselves, so that they could create their own jobs or support the labour market. I think working with businesses would be something worth exploring.

Even though I've been told that quotas are not really very good, I agree with them because they can lead to jobs for persons with disabilities. They also need time to develop. For example, the Royal Bank hires a lot of disabled people, but they remain in the same position forever and never move up the ladder. Why? They have the skills. They have been educated, have knowledge, and also want to be helpful. So we need to adapt!

The pandemic forced us all to adapt. We have all seen that working remotely is just fine. As it happens, disabled people have been asking for decades to be able to do remote work, which would have enabled them to enter the labour force. However, employers have always been very reluctant to do this. When everybody started working remotely across Canada, no one asked for assistance from persons with disabilities. And yet they have more expertise in this because they've been doing it for decades.

I believe that if I were to have a discussion with the minister, I would have a lot to tell her and many suggestions to make.

• (1645)

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** We'll invite you.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

Next we have Ms. Gazan, please, for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much, Chair.

I just wanted to build on my last question around the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I agree with you. Since the pandemic, we certainly have seen—and we knew all along, in fact—how the disabled community's human rights are not upheld in this country, and certainly the support for disabled persons during the pandemic was, in my opinion, much less than adequate.

What changes do you feel could be put in place that would make a difference right now to improve the quality of life for disabled persons and to ensure that all disabled persons could live with human rights and dignity?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** I believe that I'm already familiar with the population of people with disabilities, which most people do not know very well.

Statistics Canada does not do very precise studies. Even we don't understand who the people with disabilities are and how to define this population in order to be able to serve it and support it.

Programs are based on things like population statistics, and that's the crux of the problem. During the pandemic, we found that support for persons with disabilities was virtually nonexistent. Financial support to persons with disabilities was at the bottom of the list and yet it had already been determined that the cost of a food basket had increased enormously. But no one thought of disabled people, who don't even have their own financial resources and have to rely on social assistance. I'm talking not only about people living in Quebec, but elsewhere too. They only came to mind at the very end. A list of poverty priorities for the entire population was drawn up.

We know our population groups. We've asked the Canadian and Quebec governments to take persons with disabilities into account. The WHO and the UN made a declaration to this effect. Persons with disabilities need to be included in all measures implemented to combat the pandemic and provide people with support. They shouldn't be an afterthought. The problem is that measures are created for the general population and only adapted later to certain groups. We need to think more globally.

We've been told about inclusive societies, and our programs should reflect that. Persons with disabilities have significant financial needs.

The last budget provided for assistance to person with disabilities, but not enough. Not all disabled people have access to the tax credit for persons with disabilities, and don't even know how to go about getting it. It's important to talk about it.

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

[English]

Next we have Ms. Dancho, please, for five minutes.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Chair.

I'll add my thoughts to the rest of the committee members' that this is incredible information that you've shared. When I lived in Montreal, I had never heard of Maria Barile, so I was thrilled to read your report and to hear so much about her.

I thought you did an excellent job and I really appreciated the specific quotes you chose from her stories. You really built a narrative of what kind of woman she was, and I congratulate you on that, as well.

I was interested to learn in your report that she had attended McGill University, and I believe she was one of the first in her family to do so. I had a kind of bonding moment when I read that, because I was also the first person in my family to attend university and I also went to McGill. I believe you mentioned in your report that she didn't see many people like herself, she didn't really see any acceptance and she faced quite a bit of what she felt was discrimination at McGill.

I want you to perhaps give us more detail on what she experienced. Also, in your report it seemed that you alluded to that as being the spark that started her activism, so can you tell us a little more about that?

For anyone else who attended McGill, it's a great school and they've made a lot of progressive moves forward, so I was glad to see that they've come a long way but also disappointed that she had that experience.

Anyway, I'll let you take it away, and if you could share with us more of her experience, that would be great.

• (1650)

[Translation]

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** She would often report on snatches of discussion. By speaking with some of her family members and reading some of her writings, I learned about her experience in social work at McGill University. She really wanted to be close to people and give them emotional support. For her, this meant social work, and it was all she wanted.

The feminist movement was very big at the time. However, when she looked into feminist studies, she could never find any statistics about disabled women or immigrant women. The statistics she did find about persons with disabilities came from the United States, not Canada. She wondered where we were on that and came to the conclusion that disabled women were invisible everywhere in society. That motivated her deeply.

She told her university professor that she wanted to engage in a thorough discussion on the realities of disabled women and to shed light on this issue, because she couldn't understand why people knew so little about it. Her professor encouraged her to do just that.

She had problems however, because all of her work was based on facts and statistics from the United States rather than Canada.

She was unable to base her research on her own realities. The process was very difficult.

Statistics on persons with disabilities in Canada were monolithic. There were no differentiated analyses by gender at the time. She had to get all her information from abroad, in the United States. She was in close contact with American support organizations and those fighting for the rights of disabled people.

This university work led to her decision about what the cornerstone of her work would be. Her main concern was the fact that disabled women were invisible in the women's groups. Even in the women's groups, women from the diversity were excluded, both immigrant and disabled women.

Her work was also the first of its kind at McGill University to investigate the segment of the population made up by disabled women. She was part of that and afterwards worked on this issue. She concluded that these women had many challenges to face, including poverty, exclusion, and violence, which was one of her major concerns.

[English]

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you.

Mr. Chair, do I have just a few seconds left?

**The Chair:** If you have a closing comment, go ahead. You probably don't have time for a question and answer.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Okay.

Thank you again, Selma, for your incredible work, and please keep sharing incredible stories like Maria's with the world. I think you've made a great addition to the Canadian landscape.

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

[Translation]

The final question is for Mr. Dong.

[English]

Mr. Dong, you have five minutes. Go ahead.

**Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Chair.

To Selma, if I may, congratulations on your great work. I went through the report. It's quite fascinating. I agree with my colleague MP Long and other colleagues that we should do more to promote your work and make it known to more people so that we get more support on battling a lot of the issues raised by your report.

I heard you talking about stats, and today is the deadline to return census forms. I see in your report that Ms. Barile spoke about the long-form census and how important it is to obtain “a realistic profile of a part of the population that is often invisible.” Speaking as a former census commissioner, I can tell you how much I appreciate the amount of work StatsCan staff and census staff put in to ensure the integrity of these data and how important these data are to help us shape policy going forward.

Can you talk a little bit about what she meant by that and expand on the importance of the census?

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about that. I believe it's very important. It was a real battle. Maria Barile was very disappointed when the long-form census was shortened. We were not very aware of it, but the more time went by, the more we could see how important these statistics were. We want to be more than just a number, but numbers are important as we draw up plans and, as you pointed out, policies.

She worked hard. She wrote articles about it. She complained about the new version of the now very short census. I remember being very disappointed when I received the form, because there was not enough space to include all the information that I thought was important and that represented me. It meant that my right to inform my political representatives, my MPs, and the government that I existed had been taken away.

Using such a short and simple census makes the most vulnerable groups invisible. But it's important to make these groups more visible. We therefore feel that it's very important for the long-form census to be used. Unfortunately, that requires some work. In our organization, we work a lot with statistics. We rely heavily on what Statistics Canada produces, even here in Quebec, to demonstrate the importance of working with vulnerable and more marginalized groups. For our decision-makers, unfortunately, the numbers matter.

In short, we would like the census to be much more accessible and much longer, and to include the space we need to describe our reality. It's an ongoing battle for us.

[*English*]

**Mr. Han Dong:** From your response, I can tell that you perhaps received the short form of the census before many Canadians. The lucky ones get the long form of it. Like you, I'm happy to see the return of the long form.

I also read the report, and there was a quote in it that I couldn't agree with more. That's why I took a screenshot of it. It goes, “If you look at a disabled persons and only see their disability, you're not looking at them the right way.” That was a quote by Maria. I couldn't agree with her more because it's so true. You can expand that. Whether it's gender-based, race-based, religious-based or newcomer-based, it's all discrimination. That's the essence of discrimination. It's so counterproductive to society, given what they can bring to the table.

Can you speak a bit about that? I heard your previous answer about opening up the job opportunities, but how do we, as a society, see beyond a disability to a person's true talents and true contributions to an organization, community or business? How do we ensure that this takes place in our public policy?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** Awareness is very important. Today, the beneficiaries of this award are making people aware of this work and of the fact that these people make a very important contribution to society. That's part of the promotional effort. It takes stock of their social engagement and their economic inclusion.

As for me, I represent intersectionality: I'm a woman, I'm an immigrant, and I have a visual impairment. I often get around without a white cane, but when I use it, my world changes completely. People no longer look at me the same way. I am no longer Selma, the person everyone knows, perhaps even as a colleague. All people see is the white cane. It's as if they were all suddenly cut off. What I want to do is make them aware. I want to tell them that the white cane is only one aspect of me, that I am much more than this white cane, that I am a fully developed individual, that I have a lot to offer, and also that I have a lot to learn about them.

We try to raise people's awareness every day. We do this as part of our work, and in workshops. It's important to ask us in. I don't know whether it's possible to occasionally have a meeting with someone who is disabled. Perhaps you have employees who have a disability. Placing these people in the forefront also helps to identify models that might lead to deciding that it's possible for us to get beyond the disability fact. By seeing a person right in front of them, even employers can determine that it's possible. It's not necessary for these people to have done anything extraordinary, whether in sports or elsewhere. They could just be ordinary people from the general population.

• (1700)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** Sorry. I've been talking a lot, haven't I?

[*English*]

**Mr. Han Dong:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Your passion is obvious, and we appreciate it. We are also grateful for your work and your expertise. It's also obvious that you clearly have an impressive future ahead of you.

Your testimony will also help parliamentarians in their work. As you know, this award is given out annually. It has been a wonderful experience to have you with the committee, and it will definitely help us with our selection of future recipients.

Thank you once again, and thank you for your work and for being here today.

We're going to continue the meeting and move on to the committee's work. You're welcome to sit in, but you could also leave the meeting if you prefer.

**Ms. Selma Kouidri:** Thank you very much for this honour. Allow me to repeat that it's a real honour for me. We'll be doing a launch this fall and we will of course send you all the information about our report.

If anyone needs me to show a little more passion, I'll be available and would do so with pleasure.

Thank you for your attention.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*English*]

Colleagues, the committee will now proceed to consideration of matters related to committee business. I want to remind you that we are in public and not in camera.

First and foremost, I want to thank you for submitting your prioritized lists of witnesses for the seniors study. They have been received, and the clerk is working on inviting our first panel for tomorrow, I believe.

You have been sent and you should have before you, a budget for the seniors study. It has been circulated, and I would now like to entertain a motion for its approval. The budget is for \$4,300, primarily for headsets and phone lines for witnesses.

Can we have a motion for approval of the budget for the seniors study? Would anyone care to move it?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** I'll move it.

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

[*English*]

Is there any discussion?

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you, Chair.

It's not that I'm opposed to the budget, but I know that, in terms of expert witnesses, our team proposed having indigenous elders come. I am wondering if we could add on to the budget, tobacco and a small honorarium, as this is customary in our communities—if everybody is comfortable with that.

• (1705)

**The Chair:** First of all, I think it would be in order to allow for that.

The only question I have, and I'm going to direct it to the clerk, is whether we believe that \$4,300 would be sufficient to allow for that or whether we should increase it a little bit.

Madam Clerk, would you like to comment on that? I just want to know if there's enough flex to allow for it.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Danielle Widmer):** I will ask the logistics officer and I can come back to the committee with a more direct answer on that.

**The Chair:** Ms. Gazan, to err on the side of caution, I think it would be in order to say \$4,500. I presume that would cover it. Are you okay with that?

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Yes. It's for tobacco and just a small honorarium.

**The Chair:** I'm not sure about honorariums—

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I don't know the list of witnesses yet, so it's hard for me to say that, but....

**The Clerk:** Mr. Chair, I could come back to the committee and resubmit a new budget once I speak to the logistics officer about the subject.

**The Chair:** I take your guidance on whether we are able to do an honorarium. Let's table the budget for now and our clerk will get back to us on it and we'll consider it at our next meeting. They are fair questions and they deserve to be answered before we vote on it.

The second item—

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Mr. Chair, I have a question about the budget.

**The Chair:** Ms. Dancho, go ahead.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I have a small question about the working meals. It says \$250. I don't believe any MPs are there, so is that just for the staff? I'm wondering who that food is for.

**The Chair:** My interpretation is that if anyone shows up to a meeting in person, a meal is served, but I will also defer that to the clerk to see if I guessed correctly.

**The Clerk:** We had added one working meal. If there are no members, the money will not be used. It is included in the budget just in case.

**The Chair:** I think the idea here is to try to plan for every exigency so we don't have to come back to the committee for further approval.

I trust that answers your question, Ms. Dancho.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a question about the budget. With what you have added, out of caution, a \$4,500 budget is fine with me. I think it's minimal. If we compare it to what it costs when we are physically present, the budgets are very different.

My question is about the witnesses. We have invited a coalition of seniors representing six organizations. If this coalition comes, there would be three witnesses. Is there an additional cost for another headset? If so, how to plan for it? Will the budget cover that, if required?

It's a technical question, but I just want to make sure they would not be refused because of a budget shortfall.

**The Chair:** I believe there's enough to cover that.

Do you have any comments, Madam Clerk?

**The Clerk:** Usually, there are two witnesses per organization; however, when there's a request for a third witness, the chair simply decides and makes sure that the budget includes this expense. For virtual meetings, the chair decides and informs me that we will need three headsets for the witnesses.

So it's pretty straightforward.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Mr. Chair.

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

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Can you handle that then? Because I have a question about our agenda. We could deal with it later. Do you want to finish with financial matters first?

• (1710)

**The Chair:** Yes, that's right. For the budget, I have two other things to mention.

Do you have something too?

Okay, go ahead.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** It's not about the budget.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** I have something else to raise about the agenda, and would like you to tell us during the meeting what the plans are.

We've learned that 24 hours of work has been set aside for the HUMA committee next week, during the parliamentary recess.

Could you tell us exactly what's going to happen next week?

**The Chair:** Right.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** What's the purpose?

**The Chair:** I'll be glad to explain it.

[*English*]

Colleagues, the budget implementation act is before the finance committee. The finance committee has had discussions around referring sections of the budget implementation act to this committee with a return date of May 21. As a precaution, I have asked for time to be reserved for committee meetings during the break week.

I have not yet brought this to the committee, and I am not bringing it to the committee now, because the referral from the finance committee has not yet happened. If sections of the budget implementation act are referred to us, it will be up to the committee to decide whether they want to study the budget implementation act and report it back to the finance committee within the deadline they have prescribed.

[*Translation*]

In fact, Ms. Chabot, we've set aside enough time for this requirement, but we don't have to come to a decision now, because it has not yet been referred to the committee. It's expected, but not yet official.

[*English*]

Perhaps we could move to the news release that has been prepared by the Library of Parliament analysts and provided to you. This is a news release announcing that we are going ahead with the seniors study and proposing that written briefs be no longer than five pages, approximately 2,000 words, to be submitted electronically before June 7.

Is there any discussion or are there any comments with respect to the news release? If there aren't, I would be happy to entertain a motion that we give it the go-ahead and post it on the website.

Is there any discussion on the news release?

Do we have consensus to publish the news release as it has been drafted?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thank you, colleagues.

Finally, we will go back to the centennial flame. If agreeable, we can adopt a motion for the drafting and publication of the news release inviting persons with a disability to submit an application for consideration for the 2021 centennial flame research award.

If it's the will of the committee, we could issue a press release calling for applications. If you were so inclined, the motion would read as follows:

That the amount for the 2021 Centennial Flame Research Award be set at \$5,500, that the deadline for submitting an application be set at—

—a date you would determine—

—that a news release be published on the Committee's Web site.

Is there any discussion on the advisability of such a news release? Are we comfortable with going ahead and calling for applications for this year's award?

(Motion agreed to)

Very well, then.

In terms of an end date, is a month reasonable? Today is the 11th, so how about we say June 11?

• (1715)

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Chair, just to clarify, would the deadline for applicants to submit be a month from today?

**The Chair:** That's right. I am throwing that out there. I am open to more informed suggestions, for sure.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I think a couple more weeks, maybe six weeks, would be good. By the time we share with our constituents and for a person to write the application, that just takes a little time. I would suggest extending that by just a couple more weeks. I'm thinking back on how much work it took to fill out scholarship applications. I'd like to give people a bit more time.

**The Chair:** Sure. My only concern is if the committee is going to consider them that we would be able to get them in before we rise. If it's too tight all the way around, then we could look at it as a project for after the summer.

I do take your point that there would be a fair bit of work involved in it.

Ms. Young, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Kate Young:** I agree with Ms. Dancho. I think we need to give people more time. I would think six weeks would probably be what people would require, but I understand your concerns.

I'm looking at the calendar, and I think that could maybe be our last order of business.

**The Chair:** Mr. Turnbull.

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** What I was going to say was almost identical to what Ms. Young said, so I also agree with Ms. Dancho that we probably need a little more time, but I understand your concerns as well.

**The Chair:** I detect a consensus forming.

Madam Chabot.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** I should have lowered my hand. I think time is more important than our work schedule. So we need to have more time.

[*English*]

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I have a question, Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** How long is the application? I'm wondering because a lot of students could probably use some research funds right now, with the lack of jobs. It would be nice. It could be a summer project for a student. I'm just hoping we can get it out before summer.

What's involved in the application process? Is it a long application?

**The Chair:** I defer to the clerk or possibly Mr. Long.

**The Clerk:** I have a quick response on that question.

They must submit a letter or presentation to describe who they are, their disability and their work experience. They also must submit a letter of support for the application from a person of their choice in terms of the research and proof of Canadian citizenship.

That is all submitted to the committee.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Just to clarify, it's a letter of intent of who they would like to research, a little bit about who they are and their disability. It's like submitting a resumé.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Yes, it's very straightforward. It's not cumbersome at all, Leah.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I would think a month would be adequate. It could result in a student having research income over the summer.

**The Chair:** Ms. Dancho.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** I think Ms. Gazan makes a really good point.

Maybe the clerk can answer this. We get all these applications. We review them. We select somebody. How quickly would that funding get to them? If the deadline is in a month, would they be getting it in two months, six weeks or when?

Is it reasonable to think that if we make it only a month deadline for this, we could actually get a student the research funds in the summer or are we looking at months going by before the money will flow? I'm wondering about the logistics.

**The Clerk:** We get the money out as soon as possible. It's usually distributed in two installments. The first installment is at the beginning and the second installment is normally, roughly, when we see the report at the end. It is funded pretty quickly.

**The Chair:** Five weeks from today would take us to June 15. Six weeks would take us to the 22nd. Can we say the 15th, in the hopes that we can get some funds rolling before we rise? It's more than the four weeks suggested, but a little less than the six that we had talked about. Can we agree on June 15?

Okay.

We will issue a press release to call for applications with an award set at \$5,500 and a deadline for submitting an application at June 15.

Do we have consensus on that?

• (1720)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Chair, how much money is in the account?

**The Chair:** Madam Clerk.

**The Clerk:** I can confirm that this afternoon and send an email, if you please. I don't have it off the top of my head right now, but I can check that for you and get back.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** I think I'm correct in saying that we topped it up a couple of years back because there was an excess of money there.



**The Chair:** I think the \$5,500 is consistent with past years. Can you confirm that, Madam Clerk?

**The Clerk:** In 2016, 2017 and 2018 it was \$5,500. There was a year where it was roughly \$5,700. The last three times when we did submit it, it was \$5,500.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** I think the reason we did top it up, if I remember correctly, was that there was extra money in there.

**The Chair:** Mr. Tochor, please.

**Mr. Corey Tochor:** Chair, I would like to know what's in the fund first before we talk about topping it up any more. If I understand right, it's for money that's thrown into the collection. Over the last year and a half, it's been probably depleted because there's not the tourists that usually come through.

I'm not saying to reduce it, but I don't think it's the time to increase it, regardless.

**The Chair:** I think this is a legitimate concern, and we do have a little bit of committee business in terms of finalizing the budget.

Is everyone comfortable to delay a decision on this until we get those answers? Perhaps we'll deal with it on Thursday. It seems to me that, once we have that information, we can probably proceed fairly quickly. Are we good to defer a decision on that?

Okay.

**Mr. Han Dong:** I have a point of order, Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Procedurally, do you need a budget approved for us to invite the witnesses for tomorrow? I just want to understand that.

**The Chair:** No, we'll be okay to approve it when we next meet.

The only other thing I want to do, colleagues, is give you a little look ahead.

We talked about the possibility of meeting during the break week if the BIA is reported to us. If that happens, we'll have a further discussion before anything happens.

You should know that Minister Schulte and officials have indicated their availability to come before the committee on May 25 on the seniors study. Romy Bowers is available to come before the committee on May 27 in connection with the order in council appointment.

Is there any further business to come before the meeting? Is it the will of the committee to adjourn?

Thank you, colleagues. We'll see you Thursday.

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