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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, May 16, 2006**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Judy Sgro**

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## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

• (0905)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order.

I hope everyone has had a positive weekend and is back to work again.

You have several items in front of you we have sent off. You have a blue binder, a briefing binder from the Library of Parliament that Julie has put together with a lot of information on what's been done by the committee up until today. If you have any questions or anything you need to have answers to, please don't hesitate to raise them. We also have the routine motions, as adopted by the committee in our last meeting. They were sent by e-mail on Monday.

You have in front of you a proposed workplan document based on our discussion at the last meeting. You will notice on the first page what we agreed to do for the first three meetings while we were working through our workplan. And that will probably concentrate more on the fall than it will this session. We would have on the 18th of May a report from Statistics Canada on women in Canada, a gender-based statistical report for 2005 on family violence in Canada, a statistical profile for 2005. They are committed and confirmed for the 18th, which is this Thursday. We would then have break week, and on the 30th of May we have invited departmental officials from Status of Women Canada to give us a bit of breakdown and a briefing on some of the things they have already been working on, specifically the violence against women, women's poverty, and matrimonial property rights, which are all issues of interest to the committee that the committee has flagged.

On the first of June, we would look at the 2006-07 estimates for Status of Women Canada, priorities for Status of Women Canada, and the follow-up on the implementation of recommendations from the committee's previous report. We have asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Status of Women, the Honourable Beverley Oda, to also appear. Have we had a confirmation from the minister yet? We are waiting for confirmation. Hopefully she will be able to join us at that meeting.

That is basically where we're starting off, with what we agreed to last week. On the following page are the issues we need to have some discussion on today as to where we would want to move forward in prioritizing our issues both for the balance of our session here until we rise in June, and into planning for the fall session so that various staff could be organizing up witnesses and areas that we would want to deal with in the fall. It would be important to go through this list and get comments back from the members as to

where they would like the committee to focus on come the fall as well.

Ms. Smith.

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Thank you.

It's very exciting to see this agenda. I think we have some really good things. Thank you, Madam Chair, so much for putting the workplan discussion document in place. I think it's very helpful to see that.

I promised last week, Madam Chair, that I would.... You had asked for agendas. I wanted to reassure you that we had submitted the agendas well ahead of time, so I would like to read this into the record very briefly before we go into the workplan, which I think is very good.

The e-mail we received on May 9, at 1:14 p.m. from Maria Mourani said members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women wishing to submit topics for the committee's future business should send it to the committee's e-mail account—which is agreed—and on Wednesday, May 10, the clerk will compile a bilingual list of items, etc.

We got that e-mail and we responded to it very clearly for you, so I wanted you to know that request was complied with. At 10:37 we sent the following: matrimonial property rights for aboriginal women, poverty among aboriginal women, poverty among senior women, and human trafficking. That was sent, and then it was all straightened out because Michelle Tittley was so kind to send us a reply. She said the oversight was hers and she apologized. This happens in any committee, doesn't it? As I mentioned to you, after the meeting today.... There was an apology for the oversight, so I wanted you to know.

I want to table this document because it says, "I apologize to Mrs. Smith for this oversight and for any confusion resulting from it. I will make an effort to be more vigilant."

You're very good, excellent, Michelle, thank you. I just wanted the chair to understand that her request was certainly complied with, so I would like to table these documents. You have a copy of it.

Thank you.

• (0910)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Smith. I apologize for that oversight. Clearly it was certainly not intended, and so noted and taken.

We will move forward to discuss the work plan as it is before you. We've made some suggestions as to what meetings one and two may be. We have put in a request for a meeting with the justice committee and also a meeting with the aboriginal affairs committee, as requested and suggested.

We have the various options here, but for the immediate meetings following the ones that we have booked, we are looking at having Human Resources and Social Development Canada and the National Advisory Council on Aging come and speak to us on the issue of economic security for women in Canada.

Is there a need for, or would you like to have, further discussion on that particular aspect of the meeting?

Yes, Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, everyone.

In my humble opinion, of the last five priorities, the ones that do not have a date, we should start with pay equity. I think it is crucial. A report was tabled last year, and we want to see what is going to happen. I know that the previous government was about to begin work on this bill, and then the election was called and everything came to a halt.

First of all, I think we should be asking questions of the government or the Department of Justice and the Department of Human Resources, which is responsible for the labour program, to find out whether they are preparing anything. I have no information about this. I try to get information from the Department of Human Resources, but I have been unsuccessful.

I would like to know whether these two departments are currently drafting a bill on pay equity. It is fundamental. There are 120,000 women in Quebec who are waiting for this legislation. We have been talking about it for a long time. The time for discussion is over, it is now time to act. I think we should give priority to pay equity, because most of the work has already been done.

In addition, we are in the middle of a major reorganization—a number of bills amending the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act have already been tabled. I think the Standing Committee on the Status of Women should be looking into this matter before legislation is passed that does not take gender-based analysis into account.

When I read the report on gender-based analysis, I was particularly interested in the Department of Justice. The report states that the Department of Justice—and I am putting it into simple language here—had a great deal to do in this regard. Consequently, I think the members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women should be concerned. Given that the work is underway at the moment, we could bring forward the point of view and vision of women. We could say what they think about this.

It is very important that we make a serious study of violence against women. I am not saying that this has not been done in the past. I am saying that we should take action regarding sexual assault,

particularly since there will be changes made to the sentences. We should also look at human trafficking.

That does not mean that the other points are not priorities. I am just saying that it might be advisable to start by examining these subjects before dealing with others.

● (0915)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Minna.

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Madam Chair, to follow up on Madam Mourani's comments, on the front page that we were going through, we had agreed at the last meeting that these were the meetings we wanted to have as a way to get started and to give an overview of the areas we had decided to work on. I obviously don't have any difficulty or problems, with the exception of two things.

One thing is that we agreed to receive the previous reports for scanning, and there had been a suggestion that we as a committee would then ask that those reports be re-tabled so we could get some feedback. We could maybe discuss that today, if we could get to it.

I would suggest the other thing is that, on page two, we have issues that are not yet prioritized. As a committee, we might want to spend a little time prioritizing the issues we want to work on. It would help the researchers, the clerk, and you, Madam Chair, to then prioritize the work in terms of the kinds of materials and the meetings that we need on the basis of the priorities we've chosen.

As part of the work this morning, when we look at the workplan, we might put it aside for a couple of minutes to prioritize and then go back to it. It would certainly help with the future direction of the committee.

**The Chair:** Yes, it's the intention to look at the list. It's not in any particular order, but these were the issues that were raised. We're all pretty precise on the issues. We all seem to care very much and feel these are the issues that need to be looked at. The question is on moving forward on them in which ranking and which one we should first move forward on.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Right. That's what I thought we might do now.

**The Chair:** Yes, exactly.

Ms. Smith.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** I have a comment.

This is very good. These are all very important issues.

Last year around the table, I had tried to submit the aboriginal issue, the marriage issue with aboriginal women. For me, on this side, on the issue of matrimonial rights for aboriginal women, I had occasion to actually visit a reserve where my son is an RCMP officer. I had two meetings with the women on this reserve. They said their greatest fear, and where they feel they are held hostage, would be if something breaks down within the family circle, because they could lose their homes. They were hoping that at this time members of Parliament would finally bring this to the forefront.

I took it to two ministers on our side of the government, and I know that Minister Oda's major concern right now is this issue.

I think it's one that we really have to move on, because families are suffering. Every segment of our society deserves equal representation. Looking around the table, I know that if something happened in our family, we would have fair and equitable representation in the courts of the land.

I feel for these women, who are at a huge disadvantage. They're trying to keep their families together, and they're trying to keep their homes. When a marriage breaks down, you don't have a home, you don't have a husband, and you don't have those foundations. I think it's a top priority that we have to look at.

● (0920)

**The Chair:** Ms. Neville.

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

I would like to endorse Madam Mourani's comments on pay equity. In particular, it is very important that we get a response from this government, whether it involves re-submitting the report we did before. We did have a commitment by the previous Minister of Justice and the previous Minister of Labour to introduce legislation. Even this morning in the news, there are two major private sector agreements on pay equity. It's a pressing issue for women across the country, and it's important that we move forward on it.

I would like to see us focus on the area of economic security for women. Last week Ms. Guergis spoke about it in terms of income splitting. It has come up as it relates to senior women, and it comes up regarding aboriginal women. It has an impact on young women today in terms of accumulating pension or not, and what happens further down the line if there is a marriage breakup, or whatever life hands out. The whole issue of economic security for women should be a priority of this committee. I would like to see us move forward on that in a very broad manner.

I'm repeating myself on the matrimonial property issue. I intended to bring the report with me today, but there was an extensive report done last year on matrimonial property that had almost 40 witnesses appear before the aboriginal affairs committee. The report has been tabled. The committee is attempting to re-submit it to Parliament for a response from the government. For whatever reason, the government chose to attempt to block it yesterday.

The area of matrimonial property is an important issue, but the work has been done already. To bring 37 witnesses to appear again before another committee is a waste of both human and financial resources and our time. I would suggest that we look at the report that was done by the aboriginal affairs committee to see whether we endorse it or not, and not try to reinvent the wheel as it relates to matrimonial property.

What that report did not do, Madam Chair, was look at the impact of Bill C-31 on aboriginal women, which also has far-reaching implications. We may want to do an appendix to it, but to reinvent the wheel and do another full report on matrimonial property is not using our time well, when we have such a full agenda of potential areas of discussion.

The other quick comment is that I'd like to speak again to the issue of re-submitting all the reports that were done by this committee last year for a response from government. It came up last week, and

some members said they hadn't had an opportunity to read them. But as part of our work on this committee, it is important that they be read and voted on, as to whether they be re-submitted.

**The Chair:** Do you move that as a motion?

**Hon. Anita Neville:** I don't know if I can do it as a motion, or whether you require a notice of motion. If we can do it as a motion, I'd be happy to move that—or to have a consensus, which is how we tended to operate last year.

● (0925)

**The Chair:** Based on our discussion last week, all of us were very much interested in seeing those re-submitted, so the government could have a chance to respond by the fall.

Let's finish our discussion, then maybe we can deal with the re-tabling issue of those documents at the end of our meeting. Hopefully we can do it on a consensus basis.

Ms. Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, ladies and gentleman.

There is so much to be done in the area of the status of women that we must not get off track. The previous committee has already done a great deal of work. I believe Ms. Joy Smith was a member at the time.

I have reviewed the committee's reports from last year. I would like us to review the government's responses, first of all because we have a new government, and secondly because public servants had been assigned to establish procedures to respond to the committee's request.

Before turning to other matters, we must ensure that the work done by the committee in the last Parliament was fruitful. This is a problem. There is so much to be done, and we are proceeding without insuring that action has been taken in response to the previous committee's recommendations.

I would therefore like to move an official motion that we should start by appropriating the reports of the previous committee, not just reviewing them.

Last week, I believe we agreed—and we can check on the proceedings—to study an issue that everyone agrees on—namely aboriginal women. In Quebec, and no doubt in the other provinces as well, there is a committee of aboriginal women that has been fighting since 1974 for recognition of their rights. These women, and their offspring from aboriginal marriages, have no rights at the moment and they lose everything if they separate. This is extremely serious. This subject would lead us incidentally to discuss the rights of aboriginal women in federal prisons with respect to the Correctional Service of Canada as well as the issue of violence against aboriginal women.

In order to get agreement from all committee members, I think this could be our first item of business. I trust we will be talking about pay equity. However, we can table the four reports, and make them our own. There is reference to pay equity and to gender-based analysis.

So I would move that we appropriate the reports of the last committee, that we review them and that we follow up on them. I would also move that we focus on the rights of aboriginal women in Quebec, who have been waiting for recognition since 1974.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Minna.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Yes, Madam Chair, I would like to suggest.... I agree with Madame Bourgeois and Madame Mourani. We're all saying the same thing here to some degree.

Could I suggest a way to go so that if there is agreement we can move in that direction?

First, of course, everyone has said they've looked at the reports they've received and they need to know what the government's position is. We don't want to have to rewrite those. There was agreement, I think, to some degree last time, that subsequent to us having seen them, they would be retabled. So we could probably do that as a first step. That wouldn't take a great deal of work from us except to retable the reports.

Second would be that we agree to start working on aboriginal matrimonial rights, and we make that our first priority in terms of the work we're going to do. I think Madame Bourgeois and Madame Mourani and others are in agreement.

I think we can work on more than one project as we slot them, but we will make that our first priority.

Thirdly, because there is already a report on pay equity, that would be our third priority. It's not third in the sense that it's not important, but it's third in the sense that there's a report there already, and we want to hear from the government whether it's going to table legislation. This is more a way of monitoring what's happening with pay equity and where we are going and where the government is going. That wouldn't take a great deal of effort on the part of the committee either, given the fact that the report has already been done.

On the aboriginal issue again—just to go back for a moment—we wouldn't want to redo the report. We should first study the report done by the aboriginal committee, because there has been a great deal of work done, and then decide what additional information we want to gather, as Madam Neville has said—the impact of Bill C-31 is one, and we'll see if there is anything else. So we could all read the report and decide how we proceed from there, and then have people come in.

Following that, I would suggest that we could then slot in the issue of violence against women, which includes sexual assault, human trafficking, and the subtext of these, and then economic security, and then we can see how our agenda goes. Obviously, we aren't going to be able to do all these studies that we want, depending on if we are able to break up with some structure.

I would suggest to my colleagues that we follow that order. Table the reports the government will give us, start work on the aboriginal group committee and immediately start reading the report, and have a joint meeting with the committee as we agreed we would do. Then

send a request on the government's plans with respect to pay equity. I imagine that when the minister comes, we could have that discussion with her and then follow with the other two topics, time permitting. There is only so much time we have, and I think we need to maximize the time we have on reports, on work that's already been done, either by our committee or by other committees. That allows us to maximize our time, I would suggest.

● (0930)

**The Chair:** You'll notice that everyone has a calendar in front of them, as well, so that we can be looking at that as we move forward on those issues.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Sorry, Madam Chair. My question, though, was whether we could get some consensus on whether that kind of priority direction works. Then all we need to do once we know what we've chosen as a priority is start working on the calendar.

**The Chair:** Yes, exactly.

Let me get the rest of our speakers, and then we can have that discussion, specifically.

Ms. Smith.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Thank you.

I thank the honourable members across. I agree with Madame Bourgeois. I would very much like to hear what has been done in Quebec. It sounds like you've been pushing since 1974, and I think you have a lot of knowledge you could bring to the table and help us push this forward as quickly and as prudently as we could.

I do have a motion that I would like to present to the committee on that very issue. Because I agree, this is something that has to be addressed immediately, and I think there is a lot of expertise around this table that can help us. I would really like to see that report from Quebec and read it, if you have documentation of the work that's been done. I think we could all share from that expertise. Thank you.

Madam Chair, with your permission, I would like to put a motion on matrimonial property rights for aboriginal women right now on the—

**The Chair:** We may have consensus. We had consensus....

**Hon. Maria Minna:** We need a motion, Madam Chair. I don't understand.

**The Chair:** I think we're pretty much all in agreement that this is what we want to do—frankly, our first meeting with the aboriginal affairs committee is specific to that report—and move forward on. I think we have consensus automatically that this is the direction the committee wants to go.

Is it necessary to table a motion? If we can all agree on a consensus, it would be just as easy.

● (0935)

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Madam Chair, we've already discussed this at our last meeting, so what is the problem?

**The Chair:** Ms. Smith.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Madam Chair, at the last meeting I mentioned this and asked to table a motion. I don't see what the problem would be, just for studying. It is a request from our side to do this and have it on the record.

**The Chair:** I think the issue is, clearly, if we all agree, we don't need a motion from one side or another side or whatever. Let's try to keep everything going with a consensus, if possible. We all want to do the same thing, so we all agree on a consensus.

I think it's a much more positive manner when we're going forward and all agree that these are the issues we want to study. It's just a question at which meeting we start and how we do it. We have agreement by everybody to move forward on a consensus. I think it's more positive, especially coming from a women's committee, that we are all working well on the same issues.

Ms. Smith, you still have the floor.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** That's a judgment you're making, but I'm not sure that.... I have had a request from Minister Oda to put the matrimonial property rights forward.

**The Chair:** There's a committee now, though.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** I know. But we have had meetings with our side of the House and agreed we'd like to put a motion forward today. It's to support what we're doing around the table. I'd like to make the request to table the motion today.

**The Chair:** Okay. Let me move on to the next speaker, then.

Madame Bourgeois, are you speaking specifically to this? Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Madam Chair, I would like to add something. I think we should have official motions. Women are accustomed to working by means of consensus but very often the consensus is quickly forgotten. So I would prefer that we proceed by way of written motions.

Second, I would very much appreciate having a schedule. It is fine to pass a motion, but I want to know how much time we are going to spend on the subject and when we are going to be discussing it, so that we can be prepared. We could do exactly the same thing with respect to my motion about studying and appropriating the last committee's reports and the government's responses. There seemed to be a consensus on this.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Mourani.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It seems like I have to fight to get the floor. And this is not the first time.

I agree with my colleague that we need a schedule so that we know where we are going. First of all, I think pay equity is a crucial issue for the women of Quebec and Canada.

The proposed work plan says that there will be a follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations made in past committee reports on June 1. This could be a good time to talk about pay equity and find out what the government intends to do about this matter.

I do not know whether we can do this, but I think we should even put forward a motion calling on the government to introduce legislation on pay equity. I don't know whether the committee can put forward such a motion.

As my colleagues were saying, the time to question witnesses and discuss pay equity has passed; it is now time to act. We want to know when this government will be coming forward with this legislation. This is a fundamental issue, particularly since the work required to deal with this problem has already been done.

If we agree on a schedule... I do not think we really need to put forward motions on schedules around this table. However, if it is important, we can proceed in that way. I see no problem either way.

I think the expression "violence against women" has become very common and banal. I was reading the last report, which discussed trafficking in women. There have been many reports on human trafficking and sexual assault. We must discuss these subjects. These issues must be priorities for us. Sexual assault and trafficking in women and children are major problems. Moreover, as my colleague was saying, aboriginal women have been waiting for their rights for thousands of years. This is a problem we should be focusing on as well.

We have very little time. Let us try to organize things so that we deal with at least these three subjects before the fall. Otherwise, what will we have accomplished? We will have looked at our previous reports once again and discussed the same reports at great length. We can continue talking about the same things, but personally, I think it is time to take action, and I think we all agree on that. We want to know what the intentions of the current government are. It is very simple.

Could we ask the Department of Justice and the Department of Labour to appear before the committee? Or perhaps the Minister of Heritage could report to us on these two departments. We need to know where we are at.

• (0940)

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Mourani, I do have a motion, following the discussion of our workplan, suggesting that we readopt the previous reports, table them and ask for a government response. That's on all five reports that were previously unanimously adopted by the committee. Once we have our workplan done, I was planning to deal with that toward the end of our meeting and try to focus on what we have in front of us.

Ms. Smith has tabled a motion and I have several speakers. Now, if those speakers are speaking to the motion, then we will take them. Otherwise, we need to deal with the motion that Ms. Smith has tabled at the moment.

I now have Mr. Stanton, Ms. Mourani again, Ms. Minna, Ms. Davidson, and Ms. Minna again. Is that specific to the motion that Ms. Smith has tabled?

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Not in my case, Madam Chair. I was going to speak, actually, on the workplan. Certainly, on the motion, if you want to go to that, I would—

**The Chair:** Ms. Smith has tabled it, so we need to deal with that. We'll put you on after we've dealt with this.

Ms. Mourani, do you have any other comments specifically regarding the motion that Ms. Smith has tabled?

Would you like to read that again, Ms. Smith?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** I have a question about the motion. Why do we need a motion when there is consensus? I'm just trying to understand.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** That's a very good question, Ms. Mourani. As Ms. Bourgeois was saying, sometimes we discuss things and they get lost in the number of things we do around the table. To me, this is very important, and I was very gratified to hear Madame Bourgeois say the same thing.

I have a motion. It is a top priority for me. I guess I've heard more about it as my son is an RCMP officer on a reserve, and I guess I have been pressing the issue on our side of the House. I'm very gratified to see that everyone here is in consensus. I want to formalize it so it doesn't get lost.

It's a simple notice of motion; it addresses everything we've been talking about. I think we're wasting more time arguing over whether we should have a motion rather than just putting it on the table. I think it would be prudent to do that, because it truly is in consensus of everything we've said. I just want to formalize it to say that we're all very serious about this—that's the reason.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Smith, please read it.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** I'll read it into the record, and then you can make a judgment.

Whereas the equitable split of matrimonial property is guaranteed for both spouses when divorcing under Canadian law;

and whereas this guarantee does not apply to status Indians living on reserves where property is split in favour of the male spouse;

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) the Standing Committee on the Status of Women undertake a study of matrimonial property rights of aboriginal women.

That study could also include all the things we've already done.

Thank you.

• (0945)

**The Chair:** Ms. Minna, to the motion.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Yes, of course.

Madam Chair, to be honest, I find this offensive. This is the first time I've been on a committee where the committee has decided on a workplan, has chosen matrimonial rights as a priority—probably the first one we were going to work on—and the government insists on bringing forward a motion.

I'm sorry, but I didn't realize the minister ran this committee. Regarding the comments made by Ms. Smith about cutting through whatever and making sure it doesn't get lost, I don't think there's any member on this side who felt it was getting lost, that it wasn't a priority. It was raised by Madam Neville at the very first meeting. I raised it and all of us had it as a first priority when we sent in our

priority lists. With the exception of tabling reports, that was the first report that we were to work on.

I don't understand why we need to have this. I find it offensive. I think there's an attempt here at trying to show that there's more interest in that issue from one side than the other. Quite frankly, this is not how I'm used to working. When there's a session for discussing the agenda of the committee, people put forward ideas and they work with consensus. This was one where there was consensus. We agreed that we would meet jointly with the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs because we had decided we were working on this issue.

In my mind, this is done. We voted on it as one of the key priorities—probably the first one—and we were already setting up joint meetings with the standing committee. I don't see the need for a motion for something the committee has already decided to do.

I'm sorry, I find that quite offensive. And if this is how it's going to operate, I guess from now on we will all have to get ourselves organized and bring forward motions on everything we discuss in this committee as a way of one-upping each another. That's what I see happening. It's unfortunate. It's not what I would like to see.

**The Chair:** I must say, though, that once a committee has consensus, it carries the exact same weight as a motion. It's unanimously agreed that we are going to study matrimonial rights as our priority item, along with the others. From a consensus perspective, it carries the exact same weight that any motion would carry.

Again, to speak to the motion that's on the floor, Ms. Davidson.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mine was to speak on the workplan, thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay, I'm sorry about that.

Ms. Bennett, to the motion.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Having chaired a committee on persons with disabilities, I have to say we found the way we achieved a culture of being able to get unanimous reports was to have as few motions as possible, because it actually does create a different culture.

I don't know why there would be a motion on something for which there is already consensus, but I do believe that it is going to be extraordinarily important that as the committee moves forward, the report from the aboriginal affairs committee be circulated to this committee.

It may have to be a much smaller study in terms of the issues that may remain outstanding after the tabling of that committee. Maybe in a joint meeting with the aboriginal affairs committee you may be able to find a consensus for going forward.

**The Chair:** The suggestion was to have a joint meeting with the aboriginal affairs committee, and it would be the intent at that time, rather.... I'll just mention the issue of starting another study when one that's very good has already been done. I think all of us want to see some action on that file, because it is very important. If they've already had 32 recommendations, we might be able to save a lot of time by having that meeting with the aboriginal committee, and then at that point deciding whether we are going to initiate another study or—

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** On a point of order, Ms. Smith, have you read the report of the aboriginal affairs committee?

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** I'm surprised and dismayed that this simple motion has caused a problem this morning. I'm here to emphasize the fact that we're all on the same page. A motion simply formalizes. We can all agree. Also, I think there has been much good work done on this aboriginal matrimony issue, and certainly I think that members opposite and everybody around the table will feel that we are together here and we're saying very strongly that all of us within the parliamentary system want to make this work.

So the motion is not to be offensive to anyone. It is to—

● (0950)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** If we find it offensive, then it's offensive.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Excuse me, may I finish a point of order?

I'm curious about this strong reaction. I would rather just get on with the work. I think it's a very useful motion. We can vote it down if you don't like it, but it is on the table, and I would like to put it forward so we can formalize it.

I would like to say that we need to put this to the forefront and move it as quickly as we can.

**The Chair:** I still have speakers to the motion, and we are probably going to end up talking longer to the motion than to the workplan.

We have Ms. Neville, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Bourgeois.

Ms. Neville.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I do find this offensive. I find it very offensive. Last year the status of women committee was noted in Parliament as a committee that worked together in a collegial way, and within a very short period, within, I think, ten months—I've got all of the reports here—we were able to table five reports. We tabled those five reports because we worked together in cooperation without the need for motions and one-upmanship and whatever.

We've had agreement that matrimonial property is an important issue. It's an important issue for everybody. I do want to say that within the aboriginal affairs committee yesterday, the government was not anxious to see matrimonial affairs moved forward. I don't know what is going on over there, but there certainly was an issue around it.

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*].

**Hon. Anita Neville:** I'm telling you what the government members did yesterday; I was present.

I've read the report; it's a comprehensive report. There is a response from the government. There is also a Senate report dealing with these issues.

Moving forward on this agenda item, I think it's important that those two reports be brought before the committee, as well as the numerous studies that have been done on it, perhaps incorporating the matters of Bill C-31 that also relate to matrimonial property and the impact on women.

I guess what is distressing me more than anything, Madam Chair, is the change in culture of this committee. This committee was a model for committees of Parliament last year. We accomplished much, and we accomplished much by working together to make things happen.

We're now in our third week. We didn't meet the first week. The second week we met we were into procedural wrangling, and we're back at it again. As we've all said, the agenda is substantial, and it really is time to move forward on the agenda. Nobody disagrees with the issue of the importance of matrimonial property. Let's not reinvent the wheel. Let's move forward on it, but let's try to do it in a collegial way, as we should all topics that we undertake.

**The Chair:** To the motion, Ms. Bourgeois. Then I'm going to call a vote on that motion, if it's still on the table.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Petty in-fighting and power struggles have always hampered the women's movement. The worst power struggles have always found women fighting each other. While women were fighting each other, their cause was not advancing. Earlier, I supported Ms. Smith and agreed to proceed by consensus, but I just realized that to some extent, the current government is demonstrating... I'm saying this very frankly, because there is nothing in it for myself; I am here only to defend women's rights. The government would probably like to demonstrate that it is introducing motions. That's fair enough. However, we are here to work for women. So, could we stop fighting each other? Ms. Smith, I would amend your motion, because it is too long. We all want to work toward improving the living conditions of aboriginal women, particularly with respect to marriage. If that is the point, let us remove half of your motion.

In addition, could we stop quarrelling over words and motions and get rid of your motion altogether in the spirit of working for women? While we are talking and quarrelling, aboriginal women do not have access to the equity to which they are entitled.

That is all I wanted to say, Madam Chair.

● (0955)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Smith, last speaker on the issue.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Yes, I totally agree. The only purpose, regardless of what has been said around the table, is to put this up to the forefront. It's very important. I have been in numerous meetings with our government, and we're very wanting to move this forward.

Ms. Bourgeois, if you could put an amendment to this to shorten it, then we could take that motion forward and do it as a consensus around the table, and to formalize what we want to do to make sure that it isn't lost. It's very important. We could do that very briefly, get it done and it's over.

**The Chair:** Can I make a suggestion? Ms. Minna had initially suggested that we do the following things, if I have them all straight: retable the reports that were unanimously adopted; focus on the matrimonial reports; get a presentation on the pay equity report; and, again, focus on the whole issue of violence against women.

If we were to list our issues on our work plan as the issues that we were going to agree on, there would no longer be a need for a motion, because we'd be unanimously agreeing to what our work plan was. We don't want to initiate a study until we've had a meeting, I would suggest, with the joint committee on aboriginal affairs. Following that, we could see what was necessary for us to focus in on at that particular point—what part of a study was not covered in the 32 recommendations, what area might be more focused—in order for us to be more successful.

I would make that suggestion as a way for us to move forward, but as a compromise, if we go ahead and we move forward on our work plan, I think there's no need for a motion. We would unanimously agree on the work plan, which is that the matrimonial issue be the first item on that work plan. There would then be no need for a motion, because we would have come to a compromise.

We are all saying the exact same thing—the unanimous consent of the status of women committee that we are going to focus on the issue of the matrimonial challenges, and that our first meeting, following the initial three, would be the aboriginal committee and a review of the 32 recommendations. At that point we would decide on what more needs to be done so that we could move that forward, from that perspective.

So if I could make that suggestion, it might be a way for us to move forward so that we can start to get some of these things done. I'm sure Ms. Smith doesn't want to reinvent the wheel and is anxious to see some success on that very important file.

Ms. Smith.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** It seems to me, from what I'm hearing, that it's the word “study”—we don't want to go through a study—so let's take that word out and let's just put “undertake the matrimonial property rights of aboriginal women as top priority”.

Then we might as well just have a vote on it, because we're—

**The Chair:** Because we're all agreeing that's exactly what we're going to do.

You have the motion on the table, Ms. Smith.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** You are laughing in our faces over there, so if you're going to grin at us, leave the room. This is my committee, not yours.

**The Chair:** Let's get back—

**Hon. Maria Minna:** I don't need this young man over there grinning at us the whole time. He can leave and go to wherever he belongs. You should tell him to keep decorum.

**The Chair:** Let's get back to focusing on what we're trying to accomplish. All of us sitting around the table care about exactly the same issues. We all want to see it, so let's just have a vote on that motion and move on, so that we can get a workplan finalized today.

Would you repeat the motion, Ms. Smith?

• (1000)

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** I'm going to take the word “study” out of it, because I don't want it to be a problem for anyone; that's not the intent. I'm going to read this into the record:

Whereas the equitable split of matrimonial property is guaranteed for both spouses when divorcing under Canadian law;

and whereas this guarantee does not apply to status Indians living on reserves where property is split in favour of the male spouse;

pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) the Standing Committee on the Status of Women undertake matrimonial property rights of aboriginal women as top priority.

So I took out “study”.

**The Chair:** We'll have a recorded vote.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Madam Chair, I call for the vote.

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes, we are voting on it now, Ms. Mourani, finally.

We are in the midst of a vote right now, Ms. Smith. Thank you.

[Translation]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** I don't understand.

She's stubborn.

[English]

**The Chair:** Needless to say, the motion carries unanimously.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 11; nays 0)

**Hon. Maria Minna:** On a point of order, Madam Chair, at this point I'd like to know whether we intend to go through this with all the other motions. I understand Madam Smith has other motions on all other things that were part of our workplan. She's taken the workplans and put motions to them, basically, which is what I find offensive.

So now I want to know, are we going to go through this over and over again, or are we going to go to the workplan, which is what we were approving? If not, we might as well all leave, because we don't have any consensus here.

**The Chair:** Let me bring to everybody's attention that it is five minutes after ten. We have accomplished very little so far. I'm going to ask all of us, if I can as the chair.... If we can't work by consensus in this committee, you really have to question what's going to happen in the other committees. I ask all of us to please work together.

These issues are so important. Let's not get tied up in political rhetoric and the rest of it. Lots of other committees do, but this one shouldn't. Let's try to work together. We all want the same thing, all of us in this room. Let's try to move on. Motions cause hassles for all of us. When necessary, let's table them, but if not....

Can we have some order? Let's get together, guys. Let's try to avoid motions, if everybody agrees. We can all play politics here, or we can move on the issues that matter to each and every one of us around this table. Let's try to bring ourselves together. Let's try to avoid motions unless they are absolutely necessary. When there is consensus, we should be moving forward and not wasting time.

Now, can we move forward on the workplan we have proposed here?

Yes, Ms. Smith.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** You know, I don't think because a motion....

I mean, we could have had this over in three minutes. I also changed the motion. I took out the word "study". It's unfortunate; in this committee we should be able to put a motion forward, get it simply done in about two minutes, and reiterate it.

Around this table today, there has been a terrible display from members opposite, shouting across the way. Simply, all we wanted to do was table the motion to bring it up as top priority. Members opposite have said, "Oh, the government doesn't want to do this." We do want to do it, and that's why I wanted to put it into the record.

**An hon. member:** Thou doth protest too much.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Then to hear from the chair that we don't have political motivations....

My political motivation, and that of members on this side of the House, is to attend to aboriginal women's needs—period. And if it takes a motion to focus on that....

It takes three minutes to pass a motion. I even changed the wording in the motion to accommodate everybody. I don't think around this table we should be made to feel as if that's the wrong thing to do—

•(1005)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** It is; motions are wrong for the culture of a committee.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** —when we have decided that it was a really good thing to do. We won't have many motions, and on today, with the other motions, I will not present that....

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*].

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** That is not true—excuse me—that I have a whole litany of motions to present today. I do not.

This was a very, very important issue. It's not this side of the House that's making this a political issue. If we had gotten this out of the way initially, it would have taken three minutes.

**The Chair:** It is generally the focus and the consensus on committees that when you have unanimous consent, you move forward, and you only table motions when there is not a consensus. That has been the practice on the committees that I have been part of

previously. I expect that generally the culture is one of trying to work together to move forward the agenda that's in front of us.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Madam Chair, I don't know if this is a point of order or not, but—

**The Chair:** Yes, Ms. Mourani, I'm sorry.

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** I don't know, you don't seem to see me....

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Wait now; hold on.

If we're going on to the workplan, I have had Ms. Davidson and Mr. Stanton patiently waiting to talk about the workplan. If there's a point of order, raise it as a point of order.

**An hon. member:** No.

**The Chair:** Otherwise, Ms. Davidson, I believe you have the floor.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Thank you.

I think you did a good job of putting the workplan together for us to look at and to determine where we're going. My problem is not with the content of the workplan; my problem is trying to understand, as a new member, how the determination was made that we came to a unanimous consensus on some of this stuff.

I guess it just went over my head, but I don't remember last meeting saying that we definitely agreed to table the five reports. I think I said that because I hadn't seen them, before I decided that I wanted to do it I wanted to have the chance to at least read them. So I take a little bit of offence to the statement that we definitely decided by unanimous consensus that we were going to do this, because I don't think we did—or I didn't.

So I'm confused. I'm not trying to say we shouldn't be doing it; I'm just a little bit confused with the process, I think.

I like what you've got in here. It's great that for the next meeting, on Thursday, we're going to have Stats Canada here and we'll have the opportunity to go through one of these prior reports and ask some questions. I did have a chance to read them, and I thank the committee for giving me that time.

As my first question, then, are we going to have the chance to go through each of them, maybe spend a half hour on each of those reports, before we make a final decision on where they're going or what's going to happen with them? I'm not saying we should study them to death or anything. We could have maybe 20 minutes for each one of them so that we have the opportunity to ask questions, as the next meeting we're going to do. Maybe we don't even need a whole meeting on the next one. Maybe Stats Canada is only going to be here for part of the meeting and we can put another one in there for discussion at the same time.

I certainly support the joint meetings with justice and aboriginal affairs. I think that's critical. We need to have that. I'm certainly glad to see that there was consensus on the matrimonial real property rights for aboriginal women. I think that's critical, and I was glad to see that everybody supported that. It's just the process that has me a little bit confused, not the content of what the future discussion is going to be.

I would really like to see us accomplish something rather than keep arguing back and forth.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** If I can clarify, the unanimous consent I referred to concerned the work that was done on the previous status of women committee, of which several women on all sides of this table right now were part. It was all five of those reports that were unanimously approved by everyone who was a member of that committee. Last week, I wasn't referring to us giving unanimous consent, but to the previous committee giving unanimous consent to those reports.

I think if we are anxious to hear the government's response and want to give the 120 days the government requires to refer back to these reports, they need to get tabled in the House. Then we can get a response back from the government in order to know where we should move forward on those particular five reports. That's what I was referring to.

•(1010)

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your comment.

Mr. Stanton.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** By the way, it's very nice to have another male here.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** I was going to say I'm delighted to be here myself.

Good morning to all of you.

It's a tremendous honour to be part of this committee. I'm filling in for Mrs. Gallant, who had some other priorities with scheduling, and so on. I'm delighted to replace her when I can.

I've looked at the workplan, and seeing how ambitious it is, I would agree with the other members who have spoken to this that there is a lot of important work in front of this committee.

My riding is in north Simcoe County in central Ontario. While we are often mischaracterized as a relatively affluent part of Ontario, there are many issues affecting women in my riding. We have two native communities, as well as a large Métis community, that are definitely affected by the matrimonial property issue. These are of critical importance to many citizens in my riding of North Simcoe, as well as across the country.

In looking at the workplan, I do have a couple of questions. I apologize because I've just got the briefing book and started into this. There were five reports tabled in the last Parliament, which I agree should come forward. It wasn't clear on the workplan when we might be doing that. If we're going to bring them back to table them, will we be more or less reviewing them and approving them for adoption, then moving them along? And have we accommodated some time to do that?

The other item that wasn't clear to me concerned the delegation that we'll hear on May 18. Was the Statistics Canada report tabled in the last Parliament? Was it one of the five, or was it separate?

**The Chair:** It's a recent report.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Okay. So we'll have that in front of us on Thursday. That wasn't part of the five, so we've got to reconsider, or review and adopt, and then put forward the five reports from the last Parliament. Then we'll look at the Statistics Canada report on Thursday. That seems sensible.

I was intrigued by the discussion on consensus versus motions. I had the pleasure of chairing a committee by consensus in the early nineties on workplace health and safety. There was big labour on one side, and big business on the other side. It was quite a remarkable experience.

I know how confusing consensus can be. I agree that when it makes sense to use consensus to come to conclusions we should try to do that, but I also know that when it gets difficult to do that we sometimes have to resort to what is said in the Standing Orders. There are procedural guidelines there for us if we need to resort to them.

To Ms. Davidson's point, we certainly want everyone on the same wavelength; when we reach a conclusion, the committee should know.

The other point is that while the practices in the past Parliament or past committees may have been a certain way, it's completely up to the committee to steer and guide how it should manage its deliberations. I'm not suggesting that necessarily has to be a point of discussion for this committee, but if this question of motions versus consensus does become contentious, perhaps we should just solve that question once and for all, agree on the procedures, and then move on.

On the specifics of the workplan, I agree with the other members that the matrimonial property issue is important. We should take into hand the important work that's already been done. We don't need to reinvent the wheel. Let's avail ourselves of all the information we can on this to hopefully get this moved along. There's a lot of work in front of us.

More recently, we've seen the negative effects of human trafficking—it's becoming more prevalent—and the damaging effects it has brought to our society. It's one of those issues that needs to be front and centre. It's not something I necessarily see in my particular locale in the country, but we're not completely immune to it either.

I would agree with other members about the other one, the economic security of women, particularly seniors. I saw it time and again while out working in the ridings or during the election, speaking to senior women and seniors in general. The incidence of poverty among seniors is scaling up beyond what we can imagine. It's an area I have some specific interest in.

Those would be my three. I recognize that there's some interest in pay equity. I've had a little bit of experience with that over the years as well. While that may not be at the top of the order for me, I certainly look forward to seeing what previous work has been done on pay equity.

That's about it, Madam Chair.

•(1015)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Bourgeois is next on the workplan.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** I listened very patiently and with much interest to Mr. Stanton. I researched the repercussions on women of Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conditional sentence of imprisonment), and Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum penalties for offences involving firearms), and another act in consequence.

Were they discussed the last time?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I raised that with the clerk this morning. My understanding is that we were talking very generally about the issues that Ms. Mourani and others had raised, and wanted that meeting with the justice department to talk about a variety of related issues.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** In other words, we did not focus on them this morning.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** So that is not the focus of the discussion.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** I have another comment about the work plan. The reason I asked us to draw up a schedule, is simply because women—I have said it and I will continue to say it—are expecting us to act. When they learn that we have a schedule, they will know when we will be able to examine their file, and they will be able to contact us so they can come to speak to us. I think it is important to establish such a schedule.

A schedule is also important for each of the reports that we have presented. I don't know if 20 minutes will be enough, given the repercussions that these reports may have.

The reports tabled by the previous committee contain requests. Have these requests been followed up on? Do the people who have been asked to respond to these reports have a schedule as well? Are they required to produce results?

I don't think that Ms. Davidson's proposal to spend 20 minutes per report is... I propose instead that we spend at least one hour per report. Should I make this an official motion, Madam Chair, so the wool isn't pulled over my eyes like it was earlier?

• (1020)

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** I move that, when we consider the four reports tabled by the previous Committee on the Status of Women and the government's response to these reports, we spend at least one hour per report.

Madam Chair, I imagine that someone has to second this motion.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** If I can just clarify this, we were talking about tabling those five reports from the government again, in order to get a response from the new government on them and where they plan to go. Once we get that, it will be very important for us to find time on

the calendar to review the response from the government and look at the reports further.

If we start to study them all over again, we'll be going right back to the issue of what we're trying to accomplish. I think the previous committee did a lot of work on them. They were unanimously adopted.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** The government's response to the second report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on gender-based analysis reads as follows:

Consultation by Status of Women Canada to engage civil society on the equality goals for priority action for the future strategy on gender equality is being planned for fall 2005.

May we ask Status of Women Canada if that consultation took place?

The report reads a little further on, again with regard to gender-based analysis:

The onus is on the lead department to ensure this assessment is full and complete.

Do the departments have implementation plans? Has a follow-up been done?

Madam Chair, I was elected to the House of Commons in 2000 and I have been responsible for the status of women since that time. Status of Women Canada has told us every year since 2000 that there will be an implementation plan.

The creation of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women has given rise to expectations that, in turn, have resulted in responses from Status of Women Canada. Some \$20 million is allocated to this agency. It is our responsibility as a committee to ensure that this money is well spent and in accordance with the requests of the parliamentarians who sat on this committee.

I can, of course, read a report in 20 minutes but that is not enough time to allow everyone to speak. If we had an hour, everybody would be able to speak. Canadian women are depending on us. Consequently, I move that we have at least one hour to consider each report.

Furthermore, does this government—and Ms. Smith will be able to tell us the answer—intend to insist that Status of Women Canada deliver?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Minna.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Maria Minna:** I want to suggest a minor amendment to Ms. Bourgeois's motion.

[English]

Obviously, regarding the response from the previous government, we should study what the department is doing, if anything. That's fair. I also think that given the fact we do have a new government, there may be a different direction. So we can both table the reports and ask for a response from the current government with respect to its position. For instance, on pay equity, the previous government said they would table legislation; I don't know if that's the position or not of the current government. So we would like to hear their position.

As well, we could still do what Madame Bourgeois is suggesting, and have the bureaucracy meet with us to tell us what actions have been taken as a result of the previous government's response. So we're then doing both, which I would suggest we do.

**The Chair:** The 30th of May, when we have the departmental officials here, will be the time to find out exactly what they are doing in response to previous recommendations. That particular point would be the opportunity for us to find out what the department is doing in response to those.

The second part, as was pointed out, is that it's important for us as a committee not to be spinning our wheels in order to get a response back from the government on the previous work the committee has done. It was unanimously supported, with several members here. So both of those need to be done. So at our May 30 meeting, you should certainly come ready with those questions, because that's when we'll have a chance for the department to respond to previous recommendations of the committee.

Madame Bourgeois.

•(1025)

[Translation]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Madam Chair, I want to make sure I have understood correctly.

Officials from Status of Women Canada are supposed to have begun work in order to respond to questions from the previous committee. Does this mean—and please excuse my naiveté—that the new government could prevent staff from working or continue what they've started, no matter which party forms the government?

I also want to know what the government in place intends to do. You are saying yes, but yes to what? Please explain.

[English]

**The Chair:** On the 30th of May, we have the departmental officials coming here. We can ask questions about things that have previously been adopted or given direction to, and ask where is Status of Women Canada on those issues you just raised and have been working on for so long.

We also have the minister here on the first of June, hopefully. We can also ask the minister for her comments on previous things that have been done.

The third avenue is that when we retable the previous reports of this committee, the government will then have 120 days to respond to those reports and on where they feel they are going with them.

So there are two different things happening here. One is that we will have two meetings coming up, which I think will answer many of the questions you have raised. And the second is to table our previous reports, as we've mentioned before, in order to get a response back from the government, so that we can move forward on anything that may need to be done with those in the fall. So we will get a feel for the government's direction on those reports as well.

Have you tabled that as a motion, Ms. Bourgeois?

[Translation]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Yes.

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** May I speak, Madam Chair?

[English]

**The Chair:** It's okay if it's to speak to the motion of Madame Bourgeois.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** First, as Ms. Bourgeois said, it is important to meet with the officials. We are meeting with them on May 30th. Instead of asking them to provide us with an overview of issues such as women in living in poverty, the division of marital property, economic security or violence against women, we could simply get an account of all the reports that have been tabled.

I don't think that in just two hours, we will be able to talk about the reports and issues such as poverty, violence or marital property, unless we limit ourselves to one or two questions. Let's be logical. We can examine either the reports, or the questions being asked here, concerning poverty, violence and marital property. We will have to choose because we can't do everything.

The officials will be here on May 30th. What will we talk about? Poverty, violence, marital property or the reports? The reports are quite long and contain a number of recommendations. We need to know whether these recommendations have been implemented. It is good that we are meeting with the officials before the minister because, at the very least, we will know where things stand, the minister's starting point and the direction in which she is headed.

[English]

**The Chair:** The intent is to find out from the department what their plan is and what has happened to a variety of other issues.

If we decide that we want to review all of the previous five reports, before getting any comment back from the government, it will take a lot of time. If we are truly committed to moving forward on a variety of agendas, we need to get some comment back from the government.

I'm in the hands of the committee, but I have a motion in response to those committee reports. Maybe I should read this to see if the committee is interested in going in this direction.

If we decide that we want to revisit the reports that were unanimously supported by the committee before, it will take more than 20 minutes for each, because each one is very important. At the end of the day, if the new government wants to go in a different direction, I think it's important for us to know that so we can be working on whatever is appropriate for us.

I want to make one suggestion here that we would concur in the recommendations of the previous reports:

That the Committee concurs in the recommendations of the First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Reports of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women presented to the House in the 1st Session of the 38th Parliament; that the Chair report to the House the concurrence in these recommendations; and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee request that the Government table a comprehensive response to those reports.

From the response to those reports, we would know what the government feels. Following that, we could make other decisions on where we might want to go. But it is very important that it be done so that we can get a response back from the government.

It's a suggestion I was going to put before the committee so that we could move on.

Ms. Bourgeois.

•(1030)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** May we make this a motion, Madam Chair?

[English]

**The Chair:** It is read out in that form.

Before we deal with this, we have a motion on the floor by Ms. Bourgeois.

Could you repeat your motion, if you want to table it as a motion, or is it necessary?

[Translation]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois:** Madam Chair, I agree with your motion. It is simply a matter of time. I don't want us to rush through the consideration of the reports. That is why I wanted us to have an hour. In one hour, we can consider the five reports, but I don't want us to rush through them.

Last week, I received a request from two groups that I will not immediately name, but I could give you the names in camera. It is a matter of time. I agree with your motion. I would withdraw mine because it is almost identical to yours.

[English]

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

We don't have a motion on the table other than the concurrence on the recommendations, which I would hope we would have unanimous consent on.

We need someone to move that concurrence.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** I so move, Madam Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** It's moved by Ms. Mourani.

Ms. Smith.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** I'm confused, because five minutes ago we were saying no more motions, and now there is another motion moving forward.

**The Chair:** Ms. Bourgeois has withdrawn her motion.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Yes, I know she has, but now there's another motion you just read out.

**The Chair:** As the chair, I was making a suggestion, because I need some direction from the committee to table the reports to get a response.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Can we do that by consensus, as was suggested a few minutes ago?

**The Chair:** Yes, it's not a problem.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** You are willing to do that?

**The Chair:** Certainly. We would be very.... I expected everybody was going to agree to it.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Madam Chair, my motion is clear. I am making a motion based on your suggestion, Madam Chair.

[English]

**Hon. Maria Minna:** She is moving your concurrence; she is happy with it.

**The Chair:** She is moving concurrence, but we're back to the same issue. Everybody is agreeing, but you have moved it in motion form. I was asking for consensus.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Madam Chair, a motion was introduced earlier despite the fact that there was consensus. So we are moving in the direction the government wants the committee to take and in the direction of a new culture that seems to be becoming the norm.

Therefore, I so move, Madam Chair, and my colleague seconds my motion.

•(1035)

[English]

**The Chair:** All right. Then we will vote on the motion.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Could you please read out the motion again? I'm not clear. So that one is withdrawn, and now we have a new motion. Could you read it out, please?

**The Chair:** It's been moved by Ms. Mourani, concurrence in recommendations of reports: that the committee concurs in the recommendations of the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth reports of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, presented to the House in the first session of the 38th Parliament, that the Chair report to the House the concurrence in these recommendations and that pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to those reports.

This is a process kind of motion, which is evidently what happens at all the committees when governments change to re-table the report to get a response, and then the committee can, following that response, decide if it's going to do anything with it or how it wants to respond to that. That was moved by Ms. Mourani.

Just to make sure we focus on the words, re-tabling means you're reproducing the concurrence of BOIE's having to reproduce the reports in a multitude of copies, and frankly saves the government and taxpayers money by using the word "concurrence" rather than re-table.

That is on the table right now to vote on. Are there any comments to this motion?

Ms. Davidson.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Yes, a question to the motion. Thank you.

This is because I'm not familiar with your terminology. I don't have any problem with not having to reproduce the reports again, but is this motion saying that if I vote for this motion I agree this is the direction we should be taking? I'm just not clear.

**A voice:** Yes, we are not clear on this.

**The Chair:** You are agreeing to re-table the reports in the government and ask for a response from the Government of Canada to these reports.

Am I clear, Madam Clerk?

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Before we've had a chance to discuss them at all.

**The Chair:** They were unanimously approved by the previous committee. Right? Getting a response from the previous government at this point wouldn't be helpful. We need a response from the current government to these reports. We are re-tabling concurrence, regardless of which word you use, asking the government for a response to these reports that had been previously tabled.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** That there was unanimous consensus from the previous committee—we're not saying there's unanimous consensus from this committee on these issues.

**The Chair:** The previous committee had tabled them in the House. The only way you're going to get a response now in a change of government is to re-table them and ask for a response.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Ask what they're doing with them.

**The Chair:** Otherwise, all the work the previous committee did in preparing those reports is lost if we don't table them in the House to give the government the opportunity to respond.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Then they come back here for us to discuss.

**The Chair:** They would come back, and at that point we could decide whether we want to do something more on those particular issues. We could re-examine the recommendations that come back from the government as to the direction the government wants to go in, or whatever.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Thank you for your clarification.

**The Chair:** Do I have any other speakers to the motion before Mr. Stanton?

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Just on this question, I heard something different. I don't have the motion in front of me, unfortunately, but it essentially read that this committee in fact concurs with the conclusions of the committee in the last Parliament, and then it in turn submits these for tabling and for government response.

That's the only part I take issue with, and only on a matter of procedure, simply because we haven't had the chance to even look through them to see what's in front of us and whether in fact we concur. So before I sign off and agree with this, in the current form I would vote against this motion, only on the basis that I don't want to

sign on as a committee member to just instantaneously adopt the work of the former committee. I don't want to make any comment about its work. I'm sure it was very well done and the conclusions were well put, but this is a new committee and I would think we need at least a bit of time. I wonder if we could table this motion and give ourselves a bit of time and come back to it, perhaps.

I agree that because of the 120 days we need to move this to get a response, but at least let's give the committee the opportunity to digest what the last committee did. I apologize if perhaps we should have done that by now; nevertheless, if we could put this off for even a brief period of time to give us a chance to catch up on that, that would be good.

I agree with Madame Bourgeois that even if it's 20 minutes' consideration or a round-table discussion on the five reports, it might be healthy in terms of just acquainting the members with the subject matter that is contained in those five reports.

I note that, for example, on pay equity, that's a report, in fact, on one of our workplan items, so perhaps there's some tie-in there. But before we move ahead and send these five reports out the door today, it might be beneficial to have a bit of time to at least take them in and make sure that the current committee is completely up to speed on them.

• (1040)

**The Chair:** Well, there are several members on the committee now who were on the committee previously, and these were unanimously adopted by the status of women committee.

Clearly, part of the frustration in government when you change like this is that all the work that was previously done, all the time of the witnesses, on all those five reports....

The first one is "Increasing Funding to Equality-Seeking Organizations"; the second is "Gender-Based Analysis: Building Blocks for Success"; the third is "Funding Through the Women's Program: Women's Groups Speak Out"; the fourth is "Pay Equity"; and the fifth is the "Interim Report on the Maternity and Parental Benefits under Employment Insurance: the Exclusion of Self-Employed Workers".

There was an enormous amount of work done by Ms. Smith, Ms. Grewal, Ms. Guergis, and the other members of the committee. To not get a response back from the government is almost a waste of all the time and effort of all the people who worked on it.

It's important to get feedback from the new government so that we can have some help and direction in trying to move these very important issues forward. If we don't get a response back from the government and we decide that, before that, we would start to relook at these issues, we can forget about all the other issues that we now want to work on, because these issues are complex. It takes far more than 20 minutes. You get nothing more than an overview of them, and it makes it very difficult.

I would suggest that we move it forward, get a response back from the government, and at that point decide where we need to go with those issues. If we don't move them forward, all the work that was previously done isn't going to get redone. We won't have enough time to redo it, and it makes it very difficult for all the people who participated, including all the women's groups and witnesses who came forward on those issues.

Speaking to the motion, Ms. Mathyssen.

**Mrs. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Chair, I would like to move ahead with this motion and simply add that members of this committee at the last meeting made a commitment to do the homework, to read the reports, to understand the work of the previous committee. We are from time to time going to have substitutions, and we cannot have people who are coming in as substitutes delay the committee by saying they haven't done the work. We very clearly said in the last meeting that we would come prepared. I would ask that committee members do that, so that we can indeed move ahead.

**The Chair:** We will now have a vote on the motion for concurrence.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Madam Chair, I would simply like to make a comment. I would like to remind my colleagues that three of them were part of this committee last year.

Ms. Smith, Ms. Grewal, and Ms. Guergis, your names appear on all of the reports. Only two people, who were not part of this committee, did not really have time to read these reports, perhaps. Nevertheless, three people were present, as their names appear on these reports.

Ms. Grewal, your name perhaps does not appear on all reports, but Ms. Smith's does. Consequently, I think that the majority of us have read all of the reports, including myself, even though I was not on the committee.

• (1045)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Let me read this again, please, so that everybody is well aware of what we're doing.

That the Committee concurs in the recommendations of the First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Reports of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women presented to the House in the 1st Session of the 38th Parliament;

that the Chair report to the House the concurrence in these recommendations;

and that, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee request that the Government table a comprehensive response to those reports.

Do we want a recorded vote on that? It was moved by Mrs. Mourani.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

**The Chair:** Let us get back to the workplan we have before us. We have until June 1 already there. Given some of the comments we've raised this morning, I suggest that after June 1, which would bring us to our June 6 meeting—June 1 we have the minister here—on June 6, if we possibly could, we have that joint meeting with the aboriginal affairs committee on matrimonial rights. We will put a request in. That would help us to review those 32 recommendations and look at just how much might be—

**Hon. Anita Neville:** There are only three recommendations, Madam Chair. I'm sorry; somebody said 32. There were 37 witnesses, and three recommendations.

**The Chair:** I suggest we have that joint meeting on June 6, if possible. I think that's very important, and there's clearly consensus from all of us. We will try to do that at the June 6 meeting. Then we'll try to have the justice department meet with us on June 8.

I think there are a lot of issues that are going to come out of these meetings, and the earlier we can have them, possibly, the better for us as we're trying to plan where we're going in the fall. We know where we're going on that.

Possibly on June 13 we would have the Department of Human Resources come in. On June 15 we would no doubt require a second meeting with those two.

Is that acceptable?

June 13 and 15 would be Human Resources, because they tie into so many of our other issues. Will we leave it at that?

June 13 and 15 would be HRDC. We may have to move people around if we can't get our joint meetings going. The intent in those four meetings would be to try to cover off those things from that perspective.

I wanted to make the suggestion that when we have witnesses come in we leave the last 15 minutes for committee business. If, following the witnesses, we need to discuss any motions or anything we'll have the last 15 minutes of those meetings reserved so we don't carry on after eleven. We'll try to keep ourselves in our nine to eleven slot because we're all on so many committees.

Are there any other issues?

On June 6 and 8 we're going to try to meet with the committees. The minister is coming in on June 1. On June 6 and 8 we're going to try to have our joint committees with aboriginal affairs and justice. On June 13 and 15 would be HRDC. We'll move after that.

• (1050)

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Is that confirmed?

**The Chair:** We're awaiting confirmation from the minister for June 1.

Yes, Ms. Smith?

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Could you have a copy of this agenda and this timeline sent to our offices as soon as possible so we can prepare for those days?

**The Chair:** Yes, definitely.

We are awaiting confirmation from the minister for June 1.

Yes, Ms. Mourani?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Madam Chair, you are proposing to meet with the members of the justice committee on June 8. Do you think that will be enough? We have many topics to address: trafficking in women, sexual assault, etc. It might well be very short. I don't know how we could do all of that.

[English]

**The Chair:** There are many issues. The results of those discussions may help us to determine a variety of other things we also want to deal with. At least let's have the two hours with both aboriginal affairs and justice and then we will assess following that which other issues have come up that we feel are important to discuss further.

Again, we're just trying to move things forward in a constructive way here. There's a lot to be done.

Yes?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Do you want to devote just two meetings to the economic security of older women?

[English]

**The Chair:** What we will no doubt find when we're talking about economic security of women is that it's quite complex and complicated. I would expect we would want to talk about everything, from caregivers' income splitting to even the issue of matrimonial rights for aboriginal women, which also has a piece to play in there, so I think we would need the two meetings. If it's the will of the committee not to, that's fine, but I'm suggesting we should block off these two, because I think the more you meet with many of these people the more questions will come up that you need to follow up on.

Yes, Ms. Guergis?

**Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Thanks very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to say that income splitting will be a very complex discussion, and we will require that time and may require even more time down the road.

**The Chair:** Exactly. Thank you.

Yes, Ms. Minna.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** I only want to clarify something, Madam Chair.

We are talking about income splitting and economic security. Since we went through a motion this morning, I only want to see whether there is a consensus on the workplan that aboriginal matrimonial rights is now number one and then we're going to economic security. What are our priorities? Is it violence against women and economic security, or the other way around?

I only want to have some consensus on what we've approved as a committee so that we don't have to go back to motions again.

**The Chair:** Thank you for clarifying that.

Yes, I think it's clear that we're going to deal with the matrimonial property rights for aboriginal women. The economic security of women and the challenges that are facing them is the second issue we would be prioritizing.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Okay, that's the second issue.

**The Chair:** The third issue would be the issues of violence against women.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Madam Chair, Ms. Guergis made comments about the matter of income splitting being a very complex one, and it relates to a lot of pension issues as well. Would it be possible for our researchers to map out an outline of what would be the components of a study on economic security for women?

There are many aspects to it. If we choose to do it all, we could do it all. If we choose to focus on some aspects of it, we could do that. There are many aspects to that study, and it could in fact take us many weeks to do a full and comprehensive one.

It's only a request, but I think it would be useful.

• (1055)

**The Chair:** Ms. Guergis.

**Ms. Helena Guergis:** Thank you.

I support what Ms. Neville has suggested. It takes pensions into account, and we might even want to consider having some senior folks from the finance department come and answer a few of our questions.

Maybe the researchers can separate it into looking at senior women and then looking at the entire population. To get things started, perhaps we'll end up making a recommendation for only part of the population.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

To summarize, we have confirmed matrimonial property rights as our first issue, the economic security issues as our second issue, and violence against women as our third issue. We have concurrence on that.

Reports will be distributed in advance from Statistics Canada for the upcoming meeting. We're going to make specific mention of income splitting to HRDC and the appropriate officials to try to narrow it down on that issue as well.

Ms. Mourani.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** I would like to make sure I understand. On June 6, we will meet with the members of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to address the issue of the matrimonial property rights of aboriginal women. Is that correct? Will we also be dealing with other issues that affect aboriginal women?

Then, on June 8, we will hear from officials from the Department of Justice. Will we be dealing with two very specific issues: human trafficking and sexual assault? I would like to have a detailed plan.

If I understand correctly, on June 13 and 15, we will deal with the economic security of older women. That includes several topics, including income splitting and care to be provided. Have I understood correctly?

[English]

**The Chair:** That is the intent. We may have to move these around, depending on departmental officials. Clearly, the intent is to focus on several issues with each one of the various departments. We're allowing two hours in which we should be able to at least get a feel for a variety of those issues and to determine from that point if additional work needs to be done.

These are joint committee discussions, one with the aboriginal committee and one with the justice committee. We will have a chance to discuss a variety of issues and exchange viewpoints on them. We've agreed to that.

Ms. Minna.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** I have a point of clarification, Madam Chair.

Given that we seem to have agreed on the workplan for the tabling of the reports and the studying of aboriginal matrimonial rights, economic security, and violence, I only want to ask if Madam Smith has other motions that were tabled prior to or during the 48 hours. Are these motions staying, or are they being withdrawn now that the committee has agreed through consensus to the rest of the workplan?

We're going to come back to motions next week on Thursday.

**The Chair:** No, I believe Ms. Smith indicated she wasn't—

**Hon. Maria Minna:** I didn't hear that. I'm just asking for a point of clarification. Are the remaining motions withdrawn now, or are they still on the table?

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** You know, I find it curious. We've just had a big conversation about motions. It took several minutes objecting to my motion, and not less than five minutes later there was another motion from members opposite, and we agreed. We will bring motions as we see it prudent to do so, as we expect you to do.

That's why, when this motion was brought forward from the other side, we thought it was great—this is what we should be doing.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** With respect, actually that was from the chair. It was a concurrence motion; it was not a 48-hour notice on our side.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Well, if members opposite brought motions, of course that's part of the process.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Okay, but all I'm asking about, though, are the motions that you, Madam Smith, had put forward last Friday. In addition to the aboriginal one, you have three others. I'm asking you if those motions are still standing.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Yes, they're still there.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** They're still standing.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Yes, absolutely.

**The Chair:** Are there any other issues?

Ms. Mourani.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Madam Chair, I hope that when Parliament resumes in the fall, we will not forget the two meetings that we want to have with officials, since we will not have an

opportunity to meet with them between now and the end of the session. On June 8, we are going to discuss human trafficking and sexual assault with the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

So, if everyone agrees, I would like us to devote the first meeting when Parliament resumes in the fall to hearing from officials from the Department of Justice and Correctional Services Canada, on, among other things, the topics that we will have addressed with the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, in other words, sexual assault and human trafficking. I would like you to take note of that, because part of our agenda in the short and medium term is missing.

On the other hand, we will not be able to meet with officials from Foreign Affairs Canada on human trafficking. We also wanted to meet with stakeholders, but that will be impossible. So it would be important to do that on a priority basis when Parliament resumes in the fall, to complement what we will have already done on June 8.

• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair:** May I suggest that we revisit that issue after we've had our meetings with our justice committee, and so on? We can revisit those issues and come back before the House rises with a plan for the fall, based on the kinds of discussions we've had.

Clearly, when we have the justice committee and the aboriginal committee—

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Okay.

**The Chair:** —we have full opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues with all of them. Following those meetings, we will reassess where we want to be going in the fall. It would be helpful at that particular point.

Ms. Guergis is next. Then we are closing the meeting.

**Ms. Helena Guergis:** Thank you. I like what you just called me. I'll keep that one.

I wanted to point out that I'm hoping all members around the committee table will have ample opportunity and time to gather our witnesses or to provide a list of witnesses, so that they're not given one or two days' notice. I'm hoping we can proceed with that, because I recall that in the past a lot of our witnesses didn't get enough time to be able to be with us.

**The Chair:** Okay. I agree.

We will distribute the calendar to you from the clerk as soon as possible. Hopefully we can confirm our meetings. Then we can move forward.

Thank you all for your patience. I hope that when we reconvene on Thursday, we can immediately move on to work, and that we'll be able to accomplish a lot of things together.

Thank you all very much for your patience.

The meeting is adjourned.





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