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—
Chair

The Honourable Judy Sgro

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•(0905)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.)): Good morning. We'll call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone, and to Mr. Stanton, officially, congratulations. Thank you for joining our committee. We'll be very glad to have you with us.

We have a variety of things happening this morning. Before we go to our witnesses, I'd like to acknowledge that we have as viewers some individuals from the Parliamentary Centre, field officers from Ottawa, Ghana, and Senegal, who will be watching the proceedings this morning. You're very welcome, and we're glad to have you with us.

Before we start with our witnesses from Status of Women Canada this morning, I just wanted to go over a bit of what the work plan is for the morning. We'll start with witness presentations. We'll do our rounds of questioning. We'll do our committee business. The first item on the agenda to deal with will be Ms. Mourani's motion. We have a couple of routine motion amendments, and we have three study budgets. All of that should be before you at your desk. Then we will review our calendar of upcoming meetings.

So you should have a variety of things: copies of the presentation from the Status of Women that we're going to receive now, briefing notes from the researchers, Ms. Mourani's motion, the three study budgets, the amended routine motions, in which there was a discrepancy between English and French. I should slow down. We'll be giving you a revised committee calendar as the morning goes on.

We will hear our witnesses until 10:30, at which point we will go into committee business.

Is translation not working? You always manage to get one that doesn't work. Hopefully, we'll get our meeting under way here. Is it working? Is everyone okay with everything? Nobody's talking right now. We'll soon have our representatives from Status of Women Canada.

Let me go forward and introduce our witnesses this morning. We have Florence Ievers, the coordinator; Nanci-Jean Waugh, the director general, governance and communications directorate; Jackie Claxton, director general, women's programs and regional operations; and H el ene Dwyer-Renaud, director, gender-based analysis and accountability directorate.

Thank you very much for coming. We welcome you. We have been looking forward to having you as witnesses. As our committee

is getting under way on a variety of important issues, it is important for us to hear from you and from the department. So I will turn it over to you. Thank you for coming.

•(0910)

Ms. Florence Ievers (Coordinator, Status of Women Canada): Thank you very much, Madame Chair.

It's an honour to appear before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. I'd like to point out that I will be making short remarks that are derived from the long version that has been distributed to the members of the committee.

It's really gratifying that Parliament has continued its commitment to the work of the status of women and gender equality. This commitment really demonstrates that Parliament recognizes the importance of advancing gender equality.

During the last Parliament, the standing committee engaged in a tremendous amount of productive activity, which resulted in five reports to Parliament. These reports were not only comprehensive; they also put the government on notice that this committee means business, and we look forward to your continued vigilance.

[*Translation*]

Who are we and how do we work? To answer those questions, it's important to highlight the horizontal nature of this effort, which reflects a fundamental truth—gender equality is everyone's business. If we are to ensure the full participation of women in all aspects of the life of our country—economic, social, cultural and political—then ours is a mandate that must reach across every department at the federal level, as well as the provincial/territorial and municipal levels of government, and the private sector.

This is a broad mandate for a relatively small agency like Status of Women Canada. We seek to achieve our goals by acting as knowledge broker on gender equality by being a centre of expertise; and by being a catalyst in network building.

[*English*]

As a knowledge broker on gender equality, Status of Women Canada facilitates focused interaction and information sharing among stakeholders. We play a key role in identifying opportunities for timely and effective input into the federal policy development process.

As a centre of expertise on gender issues and equality for women, Status of Women Canada proactively promotes best practices, shares knowledge and frameworks with stakeholders and partners, and builds gender-based analysis capacity. Through these activities, Status of Women Canada assists them in their own efforts to advance gender equality in their own programs and policies.

As a catalyst in network building, Status of Women Canada connects people, strengthens communities, and facilitates opportunities for communities and stakeholders to interact with government and be engaged in taking action toward equality for women.

How do we look toward the future?

I want to emphasize here again that Status of Women Canada cannot and does not work in isolation. As I've said before, gender equality is everybody's business. Within the Government of Canada that means working with stakeholders from within and outside government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to contribute to achieving women's equality.

[Translation]

Reports to the Standing Committee have been important to us. They have helped us in preparing the blueprint for the work ahead. The Standing Committee's five reports have addressed important issues. The two reports on Women's Program—entitled “Increasing Funding to Equality-seeking Organizations” and “Funding Through the Women's Program: Women's Groups Speak Out,”—relate directly to SWC's area of responsibility. Similarly, the report on GBA—entitled “Gender-Based Analysis: Building Blocks for Success”—also links directly to our mandate.

[English]

In May, the committee chair re-tabled these reports in the House of Commons. We look forward to responding on progress.

In 2005 regional, national, and electronic consultations were held. Along with the work of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, these consultations provided valuable input from Canadians, policy-makers, and NGOs on issues affecting women's lives, including poverty, the situation of aboriginal women, accountability, and the funding mechanism for advancing gender equality.

Status of Women Canada's women's program undertook an independent evaluation. The women's program also established a dialogue on proposed options as part of its redesign. As Status of Women Canada prepares for the renewal of the terms and conditions of the program, we will work to maintain program flexibility while continuing to focus on results.

Following the government response to the standing committee's report on gender-based analysis, the Government of Canada created an expert panel on gender equality accountability mechanisms. Its conclusions and recommendations were tabled in the House of Commons in November 2005.

Various other activities have taken place to fulfill the commitments in the government's response made by the three central agencies. I'm talking about the Privy Council Office, Treasury Board Secretariat, and the Department of Finance. Each central agency has appointed a gender-based analysis champion and agreed to strengthen its challenge function to ensure that in the future departments and

other agencies do, in fact, demonstrate that gender-based analysis has been applied and that gender considerations have been taken into account.

While each agency pursues its individual capacity-building activities—such as training for officials and the creation of tools such as a best practices guide, as was done by the Department of Finance—a collective pilot project on a personal income tax policy initiative has been undertaken to provide them with a practical way of applying gender-based analysis within their challenge function.

The overarching themes of our current work are accountability and the sustainability of commitments to gender equality for the Government of Canada. We believe this builds on the government's work on accountability; therefore, we will be carrying out the following activities.

We will be developing indicators and benchmarks to help set objectives, establish priorities, measure change, assess progress, and flag problems or emerging trends. We will be increasing accountability mechanisms for the application of gender-based analysis and gender equality results.

● (0915)

[Translation]

We will also be conducting ongoing consultation with Canadians and raising public awareness about gender equality. Moreover, we will be providing effective support for women's and other equality-seeking organizations to ensure that women's realities, contributions and concerns are better reflected in policy.

Over the next few years, in the area of policy development, SWC will focus on the issue of poverty among certain groups of women, and on the situation of Aboriginal women. As regards poverty among certain groups of women, attention in this area will allow us to demonstrate links to the CEDAW Committee Report, to what we heard during consultations and last year's Standing Committee deliberations, and to SWC's work through Women's Program and the Policy Research Directorate.

The realities of poverty and women affect Canada at the international level, drawing criticism. In Geneva in early May, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights questioned Canada about our record on poverty, homelessness, Indigenous and migrant rights, health and education, finding the government wanting in all areas.

Several committee members said they were disturbed by the apparent lack of investment in social programs and by continuing high poverty rates of the most marginalized groups, including women, Aboriginal peoples, people of colour and immigrants.

[English]

Status of Women Canada contributes to policy research on and understanding of women and poverty and the situation of aboriginal women. For example, the policy research fund currently has 12 research projects underway, several of which are linked to the theme of poverty and its impact on women, under various areas including.... I will spare you the reading of the list that is in the document in front of you.

In addition, the policy research fund is planning to release five new research projects under the theme of urban migration. These projects examine specific aspects of poverty among aboriginal women living off reserves who have migrated to urban areas and have found themselves in temporary or episodic poverty or have even faced long-term homelessness.

And I'll again spare you the list of other research reports that will be published, which is in the longer document we've circulated.

● (0920)

[Translation]

Aboriginal women in Canada face a multitude of barriers to their full and equal participation in the life of their communities and of this country. The barriers include high rates of discrimination based on gendered racism, violence, poverty, single motherhood, disability and low rates of employment, to name a few. All of these factors negatively impact Aboriginal women's access to opportunities to realize their right to health and other human rights.

[English]

These factors also underscore the importance of our commitment under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and how deeply we need ongoing consultations with Canadians if we are to find solutions.

They underscore the importance of the standing committee's work and of our efforts in support of the Sisters in Spirit initiative. They also underscore the benefits arising from the federal-provincial-territorial aboriginal policy research conference that was held at the end of March of this calendar year, the family violence initiative, and the federal-provincial-territorial violence indicators, which will be released in the fall.

In partnership with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Status of Women Canada has previously funded a document on matrimonial real property rights on reserve that informs aboriginal women of their basic rights upon marriage breakdown. We will continue to work with INAC while they consult with aboriginal people on what changes might occur to better address the current situation.

Accountability, as we mentioned and as the committee mentioned, is important to Status of Women Canada. We will work to advance accountability across government to achieve gender-equality results.

Through Status of Women Canada's role as a knowledge broker on gender equality, as a centre of expertise on gender issues, and as a

catalyst in network building, we will work with others to bring our unique knowledge and expertise to the pressing need to address gender-based poverty and the situation of aboriginal women.

Madame Chair, we look forward to your continued work in advancing equality for women.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That was brief, to the point, and you have given us a bit of an overview.

Can I just ask one question? The 12 research projects that you referred to, what are the timelines on those projects?

Ms. Florence Ievers: Five on migration will be released in the coming months, possibly into next year. The others are under way. At times they take less time; at times they take a little longer. We could provide ballpark information to the committee members on the projects that are currently under way to give you an idea of when to expect some of these publications.

The Chair: Thank you very much. You're very helpful.

Does anyone else want to speak directly to the committee or would you like to go right into questions?

All right.

Ms. Minna, for the Liberals.

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

I would like to start off with a very quick one. I wonder if you might be able to tell us when the release of the full report on the expert panel of the GBA will be made, if you know, if you've seen it. Could you tell us what the status of the report is at the moment, because we're very interested in seeing it.

Ms. Florence Ievers: The government is studying the report at the present time. As I said earlier, the recommendations and conclusions of the report were tabled in the House last November.

Hon. Maria Minna: Maybe we could try to get that to this committee as quickly as possible. Maybe our friends could express that to the minister, and when the minister comes to see us we will discuss it.

I have quite a lot of questions, but I'll start with the GBA.

Was there a gender-based analysis done on the recent budget, specifically with respect to the \$1,200 that is being called the universal child care? And I don't mind telling you very honestly here that it's not.

Have you done a GBA analysis on whether that \$1,200 is helping anyone in terms of what impact it's had on families—the drop of the supplement for the young child, and of course, the fact that the \$1,200 is taxed in the hands of different families, so where families have both working, they're going to get less than families who don't, and then if you include inflation and no child care?

Has there been an impact study done, a proper GBA analysis of the impact of that particular announcement and what it really means for women, where it's negative and where it's a benefit, a gain?

•(0925)

Ms. Florence Ievers: My understanding, and Hélène Dwyer-Renaud can give you more information on this, is that the Department of Finance did gender-based analysis on one measure in the budget, a tax measure.

On the questions that you asked related to the \$1,200 that will go directly to families and other measures, I think that question would be better asked of the department responsible for those policies. They have perhaps conducted a gender-based analysis, but we're not aware of the results of that analysis.

Hon. Maria Minna: I'm sorry, I don't want to challenge you, but my understanding is that there are champions, as you said earlier, in different departments, and your job is to work across departments. So at this stage, presumably, I would hope you would know whether or not there has been any gender-based impact analysis done on that particular part of the budget, which is of huge importance to women in this country.

Ms. Florence Ievers: I will ask Hélène Dwyer-Renaud to explain to the committee how the whole question of gender analysis is dealt with within the government. I mentioned specifically in my remarks the work that we were doing following the report of this committee with the central agencies, but Hélène will be able to give you a better idea of how it works throughout the government as a whole.

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud (Director, Gender-Based Analysis and Accountability Directorate, Status of Women Canada): Thank you.

I think that's a very good question. Indeed, you may know that the role Status of Women Canada plays in gender-based analysis is a capacity building role. In terms of the other departments, what we provide them are tools and training, but the ultimate responsibility to apply the GBA to their own businesses and to their policies is the departments' responsibility.

That being said, you may obviously know that when the standing committee tabled its response, the previous government came out with a response. In that response it was obvious from both sides that the government wanted to put an emphasis on accountability. The accountability within the federal government obviously helps when you have the three central agencies on board playing their challenge role, vis-à-vis the other departments. So for the past year Status of Women Canada's work has been to work with the three central agencies to have them integrate gender-based analysis in their processes.

In the case of the Department of Finance, in fact, in the case of the three departments, what we've negotiated with them was a collective pilot project in which they would apply the knowledge they received through our training to see how they can work their challenge function.

Our understanding is that there was only one issue, if you like, that was picked by the Department of Finance. It was an income tax policy. We are working with them to build that capacity, but I would agree with Madam Ivers that if the committee wants to know more about the activities at the Department of Finance, it's up to the department to respond to that question.

Hon. Maria Minna: I agree.

Maybe, Madam Chair, the ministers responsible, whether it be one, two or three of them, should come before this committee, because, quite frankly, identifying one piece, the tax, doesn't address the issue. This is a major departure from previous practice, and it's a major direction, and it has major impacts on women. We just heard about women's poverty in the report by the UN with respect to this, and this has an impact on that.

So I would like to ask our witnesses here today, through the chair, to try to get some response from the different departments that are responsible for this piece, because I think we need to deal with it.

If I have a bit of time, I'd like to go on to ask another question, again along the lines of gender-based analysis. I've got tons of questions on other things, but I'll get back to those in a minute.

With respect to immigrant and visible minority women, there are two issues. One is whether you could give me a bit of an update, in terms of the core funding for some of those organizations, because of the vulnerability that those women find themselves in. The other is whether or not, when you or any of the departments that you work with does gender-based analysis, you include culture and race as a lens in addition to other lenses. I'm just asking.

•(0930)

The Chair: Could we have Jackie and then Hélène?

Ms. Jackie Claxton (Director General, Women's Programs and Regional Operations, Status of Women Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

On the question of immigrant and visible minority women, through the women's program, we do provide support to groups at a number of levels, including, for example, the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada, which is right now looking at issues related to employment. There are also various groups across the country at local and provincial levels. We would be happy to provide the committee with a list of those groups.

Another example, at the national level, is an organization which is bringing together francophone immigrant and visible minority women to look at their specificity, both within the context of the immigrant groups, and within the francophone organizations, the two aspects of their realities. We can provide information and follow-up.

Hon. Maria Minna: Am I out of time? All right, I'll come back. Not enough time ever.

The Chair: Ms. Mourani, go ahead, please.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Good morning.

I would like to ask about your budget. Approximately how much is your budget? How is it broken down among the various sections like, for example, the Women's Program and GBA? How is it distributed, more or less, between research and the rest, in terms of percentages and numbers?

Ms. Florence Ievers: I can tell you exactly where we are at. The total budget for Status of Women Canada is \$24.6 million for 2006-07. Research represents 5% of the budget. Subsidies represent 44% of the budget. We are a knowledge organization, if you will; I explained our various roles earlier. Therefore, we invest a substantial amount, 33%, in salaries for experts, be it for gender-based analysis, research, policy analysis, or communications.

Does that give you a clear enough picture?

Mrs. Maria Mourani: What does 44% correspond to in terms of numbers? The 44% is for the Women's Program is it not?

Ms. Florence Ievers: The 44% of the \$24.6 million goes directly into grants and contributions for equality-seeking organizations. Program administration is included in the salaries and operations. So 44% goes directly into grants.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Okay. I am trying to see how much that makes. A small proportion goes to management. Is that correct?

Ms. Florence Ievers: A percentage goes to management and operations. Moreover, 5% of our budget goes to contributions for employee benefit programs.

There are some administrative issues that are inherent and that are part of all budgets, which means that the amounts don't add up as clearly as we would like them to.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: You say that the budget is approximately \$24 million. As the overall budget gone up or down compare to 2004-05?

Ms. Florence Ievers: There was an increase of about \$1 million. It was an amount that was transferred to Status of Women Canada to coordinate the Sisters in Spirit Initiative, an organization for missing Aboriginal women. As part of this project, Status of Women Canada will receive \$1 million per year, for five years, and it started last year. So we have already completed one year. The money will go directly to the Native Women's Association of Canada, which received the mandate to do the work.

• (0935)

Mrs. Maria Mourani: And that association looks after Aboriginal women, does it not?

Ms. Florence Ievers: It is an Aboriginal women's group that is Canada-wide, including Quebec.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Does the money go directly to women groups, or is it for managing an entity?

Ms. Florence Ievers: The \$1 million in total goes directly to the Native Women's Association of Canada, the role of which is to do research to assess the scope and causes of the problem of missing women and violence against Aboriginal women. These are truly race-based studies.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: So that is for research too?

Ms. Florence Ievers: No. The money is also used to conduct an awareness campaign for government, individuals, and groups that are doing research on violence, as well police services throughout the country, to make them aware of the specific dimensions these women face. It is also used to influence and guide governments so that their policies do a better job of meeting the needs of Aboriginal women.

Aboriginal, Inuit, and Metis women in Canada are also part of the program. The association must also look at how, at the end of the five-year period, these women will be able to continue this work without government funding.

So that is part of the work they will be doing over the next five years. Evaluations are scheduled over the years to ensure that things are going well.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Which means that some of the 44% of the budget that is provided to women's groups can also go to aboriginal women, in addition to the \$1 million.

Ms. Florence Ievers: Absolutely.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I may be wrong, but has there not been a major increase in the Women's Program budget in the past few years?

Ms. Florence Ievers: There has been no change in the budget.

In 2000, the government provided Status of Women Canada with funding to undertake certain projects and to take part in the Women's Program. Today, that would represent an annual increase of \$2.5 million compared to 1999.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: However, as I understand it, there has not been a major increase in the past two years.

Ms. Florence Ievers: No, but in 2005, the program was ahead by \$2.5 million over the 1999 budget.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: That's true, but quite a bit of time had elapsed between 1999 and 2005. I understand that the Women's Program needs much more funding than one might expect in order to meet the needs of a number of women's groups.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Mourani, I'm sorry, but you'll have to save some of that maybe for the next round.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Could I please have an answer to the question?

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Florence Ievers: You can ask the minister about that. Forty-four per cent of our budget is already earmarked for women's groups and groups that promote gender equality. That is a lot of money.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you, Ms. Ievers.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): I want to thank you very much for your insightful presentation. It's gratifying to see what your organization is doing and how attentive you are to the needs of women, both in gender-based analysis and particularly regarding the aboriginal aspect. So many of our aboriginal people in Canada are facing challenges on the reserve.

I was very interested in what you had to say about the marriage rights. In our committee, we had a very clear discussion, and members on all sides of the House agreed that this is an issue we really have to address. The Senate came up with a report, which I'd be very happy to share with everyone around the table. Also, there's another report by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. There's been a lot of study.

Could you please give an outline pertaining to women, specifically for us—I know there are some new committee members—particularly about the challenges that women and children are facing on the reserves right now, in 2006, and about why the work you're doing is so important, so the quality of their lives can be improved?

• (0940)

Ms. Florence Ievers: It's clear that the quality of life of aboriginal women as a whole across Canada.... You mentioned on reserve, where there's a deplorable situation, and the federal government is responsible there for their welfare and their well-being.

That's why at Status of Women Canada, we were pleased that the consultations we held last year confirmed our views that focusing some of our attention on aboriginal women and particularly on violence was important. You talked a bit about conditions on reserves. Women who live on reserves are much more vulnerable to violence and family violence, and those are issues that the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers have decided to look at.

I see that in the government's budget, \$450 million has been earmarked to improve water supply and housing on reserve, as well as education outcomes that will benefit aboriginal women, children, and all of their families. This is a step in the right direction.

We will continue to do our work. As you may know, we held a conference of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers at the end of March to look at how governments can look at their policies and programs to improve them by taking into account the dimensions and realities of aboriginal women, both on and off reserve.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Florence, I was so impressed with the practicalities of what your organization is doing: getting down to the grassroots, looking at the realities of how people live day-to-day, and making those recommendations and coming forth with those ideas.

Could you be more specific? I know one issue we discussed around this table was property rights for aboriginal women, in the event of a marriage breakdown?

Ms. Florence Ievers: I said that last year we partnered with INAC to develop information. Often what happens with aboriginal and other groups of women is they're not aware of their rights—and they do have rights. Although the situation with aboriginal women and matrimonial property is bigger than just sharing information, we felt that this was a good first step, at least in making sure that aboriginal women know what their rights are.

We will be continuing to work with INAC, as they continue to look at this issue. We were pleased that INAC has indicated recently that they will be looking at this issue. We will continue to partner with them to ensure that the gender differences and the gender

dimension of their work in this regard benefits from the knowledge and expertise that we have on the situation of aboriginal women.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Further to that, I think what we're talking about, Florence, is the fact that there's a difference between aboriginal people who live on reserve and the ones who live off reserve. The matrimonial property rights are very abysmal; aboriginal women actually have very little rights on reserve. Could you elaborate on that?

Maybe I should backtrack a little bit, but I had occasion to visit a reserve a short while ago and was talking to some of the women there. In actual fact, a lot of them don't feel they have any rights and fear their marriages breaking down, because they could lose their homes. Could you elaborate on that a bit?

• (0945)

Ms. Florence Ievers: I think it would be difficult for me to do so this morning, but if you would like, we could provide you with some information at a later date, and have persons who are knowledgeable about these issues and who have done some research come and tell you more about how we have worked on that, what we've noticed, and where there might be areas of solution.

Mrs. Joy Smith: How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have 38 seconds.

Mrs. Joy Smith: All I can say in 38 seconds, Florence, is thank you, and keep up the good work.

The Chair: Thank you, Florence, for offering that, which might be quite helpful. I think it would be good for us to have as much information as possible as we go forth on that matrimonial property rights issue, so it would be helpful.

Ms. Mathysen.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you very much, and I have to say thank you for the work that you do.

I've been reading through some reports, the gender equality consultation report, and more disturbingly, I think, the United Nations Economic and Social Council report that came out just last week. They are very damning in terms of our response since 1993 in regard to women and children and their social conditions in this country, among all of our people.

In light of that, and the enormous amount of work that remains to be done, I wanted to come back to the budget and ask you a bit more about that. I was curious and compared the estimates for this year with the estimates for last year, and I noticed that in terms of the promotion of equitable public policy, there was a significant reduction—about half of the money that was there in the previous year is missing from the budget. In terms of the importance of building that capacity and the mandate we need to address these very significant issues, why was that money reduced? Can the department function and do its job with that reduced budget?

Ms. Florence Ievers: The budget itself was not reduced; it's the way it was reported in the estimates. The first priority is to promote equitable public policy. Every department has been looking at new processes and ways of reporting their activities under a program activity architecture, as prescribed by the Treasury Board. When we did the budget the year previously, what we found in digging a little deeper is that some of the money that had been put in priority number one—to promote equitable public policy—really fell under building knowledge and organizational capacity, when you looked at the activities and the work that was being done. For example, a lot of the work that's being done on gender-based analysis, a lot of research work, and a number of our other activities fell more comfortably under priority number two.

So there was no reduction in budget; it's just that when we looked at our work, a lot of it fell under building knowledge and organizational capacity. Also, the \$18 million there does include the grants and contribution program, like the women's program. So it may look like a loss for the first priority, but in reality, it isn't. One activity builds on the other; in order to be able to promote equitable public policy, you have to do knowledge building and capacity building, and fund organizations in order to bring information to the fore. So one priority builds on the other. The fact that moneys may seem lower in the first is not really indicative of a loss for that priority.

● (0950)

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Okay, thank you.

But funding hasn't increased over the last few years. I'm interested in the fact that it's almost \$25 million, but based on these reports, it still seems we're behind.

My question is what would you need in order to fulfill your mandate, as envisioned by this committee?

Ms. Florence Ievers: You're asking a good question. It's a tricky question for an official to respond to, but let me take it another way.

Over the last number of years, we looked not only at how Canada was working, but how a number of other countries are working to advance gender equality. When we appeared before the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in 2005, it was to take stock ten years after the Beijing conference to see if countries were really progressing.

Canada and a number of other like-minded countries realized that what we needed to build was more accountability. We needed to have indicators. We needed to do gender-based analysis in a more systematic way to ensure gender equality results.

It's not only a question of money. It's a question of commitment at the highest level of the government. It's a question of building more accountability, so that we can see progress: so that we not only hear of our progress and what's still lacking from international organizations, but that as a government and as a country, we know where we're going.

That's why we're investing in accountability. We're investing in a more systematic application of building accountability in the application of gender-based analysis. In so doing, the committee's work, which has finally encouraged central agencies to take their responsibilities and help us in achieving gender equality results, is

key. We also need to consult with Canadians to make sure that we're getting the equation right.

Also, we need to find appropriate and fair funding for women's organizations and equality-seeking groups, in order to be able to achieve gender equality results. It's not just a question of money, it's a question of how. It's a question of commitment and accountability. It's a question of being able to say in two, three, or five years that in 2006 this is where we were on the health of women. This is where we were on this or that, and four years later, have we progressed? If not, we will ask why, then adjust our policies.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: You mentioned finding the appropriate funding for equality-seeking groups. Is there a process? Are you undergoing a review of how that money is allocated, and could you describe it?

Ms. Florence Ievers: Yes. In 2005-2006, we proceeded to an evaluation of the women's program. The program was found to be efficient, to be reaching its objectives, and useful for women. The question of funding and the funding mechanisms was an issue that the committee had looked at in hearing from groups, and it's a question we are currently looking at in order to ensure that there is flexibility and that we are reaching the results we expect from the grants and contributions from the program.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

It probably would be very helpful to direct some of the questions relating specifically to policy or program expenditures to the minister, when we have the minister here, to get a feel from the minister and the government.

Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna: Thank you, Madam Chair.

If I could go back for a moment to follow up on the questions that were asked with respect to the report we had from Statistics Canada earlier this week. The report indicated that while women are almost caught up with respect to their education, and about to outstrip and surpass men, their income still hasn't caught up. Women's income is still low.

I wonder if you have done any research with respect to seeing what the correlations are and what's causing that delay? You may have done that as a result of the equity studies. Could you give us an idea of what's holding that back? What are the impacts on that—apart from discrimination at the workplace, which could be happening, and other situations, and women still working in certain traditional jobs? Why are they going into traditional jobs if they have university degrees and the same education? I wonder if you have done any studies on that and can tell us why?

● (0955)

Ms. Florence Ievers: We have done work on that. It's clear that it's a troublesome situation.

The fact is that even though education levels are at par or higher at times than men, as you say, it's not translating into income. Often women undertake other responsibilities, as we all know. They are the ones who still do most of the unpaid work in our society; although with parental benefits and other possibilities, men are taking up the challenge more than they used to. Women are also often in non-standard work because of caregiving responsibilities not only for young children, but for the elderly, the sick, and the more vulnerable in our society. At times they are involved in occupations that are not necessarily generating revenue at the same rates as others.

I would ask Zeynep Karman, who is the director of the research directorate and is responsible for the policy research fund, to give you more information on some of the research we've done that you might be interested in reading.

Ms. Zeynep Karman (Director, Research Directorate, Status of Women Canada): Thank you.

There are a number of research works that we certainly can send to you.

It is basically a month of time that women spend on unpaid work. There is the difference between the earnings of men and women, which doesn't seem to be improving or is improving very slowly. There is a continuous concentration of women in traditional occupations. The other interesting factor is that while there are more women going into medicine or law, for example, which are traditionally higher paying jobs, when women began to enter them, the salaries started to go down.

One other point I would like to make is that it's always the market economy that's supposed to decide the value of certain work. In terms of caregiving occupations, however, because they are done freely, we are always paying them less.

For example, in Canada there are lots of immigrant women who are in special programs to work in Canada. Canadians are not taking these jobs because they are always being paid less. If you ask people, the value they place on their children is very high, but what we are paying is very low for taking care of them.

These are some of the issues, but we can certainly provide more information on the research work that we have done.

Hon. Maria Minna: I'd appreciate that because the report was quite enlightening in what it showed. It was obviously pretty disappointing as well. I think pay equity legislation might go towards remedying that, but not all of it.

The other thing the report showed is that 67% of women with children under six were working, and close to 72% of women with children between six and fifteen were also working. Child care is needed for both. Do you have research showing the impact on income for women and their ability to work to earn a proper living, given the numbers of women who are in the labour force and who have small children?

Ms. Zeynep Karman: The information that we have is from our work with Statistics Canada. We have not particularly asked that question, because the factual information is out there.

Hon. Maria Minna: We haven't crossed that yet. There hasn't been a correlation done on some of these pieces yet. Is that right?

Ms. Zeynep Karman: I will have to look into it.

Hon. Maria Minna: Okay. It would be useful.

To go back to caregiving, there were two issues that came up.

One was the poverty of unattached seniors, specifically women, but men as well. A couple with two incomes is doing better than unattached seniors, as we all know. Obviously, it's something that needs to be addressed through income support.

The question I have is on caregiving, which you mentioned earlier. A lot of women who are now caregivers are losing out on their own pensions and income levels. As you said, they're either getting low pay or doing it for free or part-time, and they're looking after the family and sacrificing. We have a whole group of women who are now probably in their fifties, who are going to be poor seniors not too long in the distant future.

Have any studies been done on behalf of the government to see what can be done to remedy the situation, either in the pension area, through income support, or with respect to the funding of caregiving? Are there any studies going on with other departments and with yourself to try to preempt this?

• (1000)

Ms. Zeynep Karman: We did a series of studies on unpaid work, and there are some recommendations, independent recommendations from the researchers, that we certainly can share with the committee.

Ms. Florence Ievers: As well, with this problem emerging in recent years, we have seen, as you say, more women giving up some of their paid work in order to be able to look after family members and others. This is not a new issue but it is relatively new. Perhaps the department that looks at pensions and at how women and men will fare in their later years has been doing studies on this emerging issue to make sure that the programs are adapted in order to not penalize them. But we have not done them.

Hon. Maria Minna: So your shop has not been involved or has not been asked to participate in any of this stuff.

Madam Chair, perhaps we could ask the departments responsible to come before the committee on these issues.

The Chair: We have it down on a list of people we want to have come.

Hon. Maria Minna: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Stanton

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

I thank you for coming in and presenting today. I commend you on your work on these important issues.

I have some interest in the theme around accountability, which you spoke about. I recognize that this is one of the overriding themes, I guess, for the work you see in front of you. I wonder if you could expand a little bit on what types of groups, for example, you would work with to intervene and/or make suggestions and/or provide some guidance on what kind of accountability mechanisms they should be employing. Given that there is gender-based analysis available, for example, what steps would you then take to put those kinds of mechanisms in place? I'd be particularly interested to know where and how you would work—perhaps through INAC, especially within aboriginal communities—on those kinds of systems.

If you could expand on that theme, that would be of some interest to me.

Ms. Florence Ievers: As I mentioned earlier, it's clear that a number of countries around the world have committed to gender equality. Canada is one of those countries. We are lucky in that equality is enshrined in our Constitution, we have the Canadian Human Rights Act, and we have other legislation that helps us in that regard. What we've realized, though, over the last number of years is that even though we have those commitments, and even though progress is being made, there is not enough accountability built into the government. I'm talking about the federal government because this is what I do, but I would say that provinces would say the same thing about the work they do.

We have benefited, on the question of accountability, from consultations we held in the late summer and fall of 2005. We consulted almost 3,000 people in six regional consultations, one national consultation, and an electronic consultation where not only women's groups and equality-seeking organizations but also men and women, interested Canadians, gave us their views. Accountability was one of the issues they mentioned.

The work of the standing committee was key in flagging to us that there is a need for more accountability. When Canada reported to the United Nations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the question of accountability and the lack thereof within the federal system was highlighted, as was the need to have not only more accountability within government as a whole with regard to gender equality but also with regard to accountability regarding gender-based analysis.

Also, after the report of the standing committee, we set up an expert panel to look at the questions of accountability and what kind of mechanisms could be or should be brought in, in order to enable the government to be more accountable. You'll see when you look at the conclusions and the recommendations of that committee, which were tabled in the House last fall, a number of suggestions. One interesting suggestion is that the Treasury Board and the government look at management accountability frameworks. We don't want to blanket the government and try to do it all at once, because that would never work, but we've started our work with central agencies, and they are going to use their challenge functions with departments and others as policies come to the fore, slowly but surely, in order to be able to build that accountability. We believe that with the help of Treasury Board in that challenge function, using gradually the

management accountability frameworks of departments, sometimes with one policy, sometimes with all of their policies, we will build part of that accountability.

So that's one kind of mechanism. We are also developing, with Statistics Canada, a set of indicators and benchmarks that will help us measure progress, identify issues, identify gaps, and identify emerging issues and trends in order to be able to help confirm the focus at times, that the focus is right, or to at other times say, "You should perhaps shift to this." For example, the previous member's question talked about older women who are leaving their jobs. This is a new phenomenon, and that's the type of thing that maybe in a year or two we should be looking at more.

Those are the kinds of things we want to do in order to build more accountability, and not just for Status of Women. Within Status of Women, given what I'm telling you about developing indicators, looking at more accountability for gender-based analysis, looking at using the management accountability frameworks, we are in the process of reorganizing and looking at ourselves to see if we are best equipped in order to be able to meet those challenges with the government.

In a nutshell, that's where we're going on accountability.

• (1005)

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Thank you very much. That was an excellent answer, I must say. I recognize that it's a work in progress and that you still have much work to do there, but that does give me a better sense of where you're going in that regard.

You mentioned Sisters in Spirit, and that you have additional dollars for that. In terms of working with INAC, recognizing that when you're dealing specifically with aboriginal cultures there are some different dynamics you need to work with, I wonder if you could talk just briefly about how your work so far is playing out and what progress you're making in that regard.

Ms. Florence Ievers: We have a good working relationship with INAC, and we partner on some things. INAC has equipped itself with a good gender unit and does a lot of work to bring the gender perspective and women's equality to their work. We have at times worked as a network builder, for example, on Sisters in Spirit. It's an initiative that really involves INAC with Status of Women and a number of other departments in order to bring the full realm of interests to bear on this initiative. Status of Women Canada, because our role is to coordinate policy with regard to equality, was tasked to coordinate this initiative. We are doing it with INAC.

Earlier this spring, INAC had a conference on research and aboriginal peoples and how to develop better research. This is the second time this kind of event was hosted by INAC. We're a solid partner with them. Within that conference we had a special workshop that looked specifically at gender issues, and at how aboriginal women and men can better equip themselves to provide the research that is required for us to gain a better understanding of their issues.

We also had our policy conference, the FPT, and INAC again was part of that. I talked about the work we do on matrimonial property, and there are a number of other issues that we deal with.

• (1010)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Bourgeois, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Good morning ladies. I am pleased to see you here this morning.

Ms. Ievers, I am happy that Status of Women Canada is concerned about aboriginal women who have gone missing. I believe that this issue is related to that of the Mexican women of Ciudad Juárez. I believe that you sit on the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In my opinion, Canada should act on these two files because it has not yet signed the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' agreement, but I won't go any further on that.

Congratulations on your appointment. I believe you are the chair?

Ms. Florence Ievers: I am the coordinator, or *coordonnatrice*, a feminine title in French.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I believe your appointment is quite recent. You have been in the position since last year, is that correct?

I have a number of questions for you.

To continue along the same lines as my colleague, my first question will deal with the Women's Program. Are any groups excluded from the program? What are the selection criteria? What percentage of the money allocated to women's groups goes to Quebec, compared to the rest of Canada?

For some time now, Status of Women Canada has been working on gender-based analysis. You have a great deal of expertise. I would like to know how things are working out in practice. When a bill or government measure is tabled, do you immediately begin to examine how the bill will affect women? Can you apply gender-based analysis to a new program or bill?

My last question deals with employment insurance benefits. Have you looked at the eligibility rates that penalize part-time female workers and women working in a family business? A large number of immigrant women work for their husband and are not eligible for employment insurance benefits.

Ms. Florence Ievers: I will ask Jackie and then Hélène to answer the first two questions.

Ms. Jackie Claxton: Thank you for your questions. I will begin with the exclusion of some groups from the Women's Program.

Our guidelines are positive—we will provide committee members with a copy—because they list which groups are eligible as opposed to stating which ones are not. Eligible groups include women's groups and others that promote gender equality or women's equality, or even volunteer groups. We only fund volunteer groups, and not individuals. Nor do we provide funding to universities or to provinces. Because of the funding that is available to us, we have targeted mainly women's groups and other related groups.

We have no set definition of equality as it applies to women. We refer mainly to the Beijing platform for action and to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We deal with a wide range of groups, including older women, disabled women or aboriginal women. Each group has its own vision. We believe that it is important to identify the issues that relate to equality and that prevent these women from fully participating in Canadian society, be it from an economic, social, political, legal or other standpoint. That is my answer with respect to the groups that are excluded.

As to the selection process, you will find our objectives in the guidelines. We have three funding streams: the economy, social justice, and violence. There are many issues affecting women, but we have identified the above-mentioned three, which we feel are broad enough to support a large number of groups. We look at the group's objectives, the relevance of the issue and the group itself. Who are the members, is it democratic, are the issues that it espouses relevant to the community? That is where the guidelines become useful.

I will now deal with your question on the share of the Women's Program budget that is allocated to Quebec groups. As a follow-up to Ms. Ievers' comments, our budget is about \$10 million. Close to 30% of the budget goes to support Canada-wide initiatives, and the rest goes to the provinces. Quebec receives \$1.5 million and Ontario gets \$1.8 million.

We can't give you any more details. I don't have the exact percentage, but a formula was devised to ensure that the budget would be allocated according to objective criteria.

• (1015)

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Could you provide us with those documents? Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, please. I think it's important that we get the responses.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Dwyer-Renaud: You compare the role of Status of Women Canada to that of a department. In the past, we have noted that if we waited for the documents to work their way through the entire process before they reached Status of Women Canada, it was quite unlikely that gender be included in the drafting of a bill, a program or a policy. That is why we are stressing capability. We want the departments to consider all of the consequences and include gender as they begin to develop a policy.

The training that we provide deals with every stage in the development of a regular policy, while including the concept of gender throughout the entire process. We explain to the departments how to itemize the data, to undertake a consultation and develop options. We try to give them the tools that will ensure that the data are included in the proposal as it is approved. That does not mean that Status of Women Canada does not have an important role to play within the departments, but it is almost impossible for us to cover all of the initiatives that are developed.

That said, it is at this point that accountability comes into play. This is also when we work in conjunction with the central agencies so that they might have a greater role and ask the departments to provide the data that had been requested from the outset and the impact this will have on women.

In answer to an earlier question, there are already various accountability mechanisms. The departments must target their initiatives and, for a given year, they must track gender and the accountability framework in their report on planning and priorities. There are tools for accountability within the public service, to ensure that public servants produce quality analyses and take into account the impact of their policies and programs on various social groups. That is what we are doing with the central agencies, and, eventually, that is what we will do with all government departments.

I will not deal with employment insurance. However, when we last appeared before the previous committee, we provided training on comparative analysis. The committee worked in conjunction with one of our trainers to draft a very popular policy. If the committee would like a half-day of training on gender-based analysis, we would be happy to do it again.

•(1020)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Mathysen.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: I'm quite interested in the gender equality consultation process and the themes that emerged from it. According to the document, 34% of the respondents were professionals working in organizations on gender equality, or members of NGOs—women's organizations.

What efforts were made to ensure that the online consultation reached a representative sample of Canadian men and women? How did the responses of those actively involved in gender equality activities through memberships and groups differ from other respondents? Were the responses different from region to region? Did you find variation in terms of the various regions?

I'm wondering specifically about Quebec. I know, for example, that in Quebec they have a universal regulated child care system. Were issues around child care different in Quebec than in other regions where we have nothing?

Ms. Nanci-Jean Waugh (Director General, Governance and Communications Directorate, Status of Women Canada):

Perhaps I could just answer that question. The on-line questionnaire, the electronic consultation, was a first for us. What we wanted to do was to try to reach out to a greater number of Canadians than we had been able to in the past, and also in terms of that, we could through in-person consultations. So that was a first.

It was by no means a scientific survey, and I think that's important to put down. It's not of the Statistics Canada variety in terms of where we could say that out of 2,000 people, this was a representative sample in terms of women, men, age groups, the diversity of Canadians throughout.

Through the Government of Canada website it was advertised as one of the new initiatives of the government during the period of time it was up last fall.

We had between 2,600 and 3,000 responses, which we considered actually a very good first start in terms of finding out what people were thinking. When you get into a little more of the detail as to the themes, we weren't able to, as I would say, peel the onion in terms of more detail in the differences from one region to the other.

We did certainly find a correlation of the key themes. Obviously, poverty was identified. The issues of aboriginal women were strongly identified and then underneath those, for example, under poverty...older women, women with disabilities....

One of the things we did that was a little unique was to try to reach out. One of our staff was in the north at a conference on aboriginal women's issues, and because some of the participants in the north were unfamiliar with using the technology, this person made herself available for a number of hours or days to sit down with the respondents to help them in terms of navigating the technology. That was also done in some cases in each of the regions of the country.

It's certainly something we experimented with. It was a good experiment and we would like to try to do it again.

•(1025)

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: I was going to ask, in terms of a tool there was obviously a learning process, and I'm sure you discovered many things that you would do differently, how you would hone this to make it work.

Ms. Nanci-Jean Waugh: I say the most important thing is that it was not scientific, but the correlation was very strong in terms of our in-person consultations. And it is a good way to talk to individual Canadians, recognizing that there are a number of people who don't have access to the technology.

Also, I should mention on that, we also made it available via paper to poverty groups, for example. Women's organizations and poverty groups did use it and transmit it through their own organizations and vehicles. So we did try to do both.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Ms. Mathysen, your time is up.

Ms. Davidson.

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

First of all, thanks very much for your presentations this morning. They have certainly been very interesting and enlightening.

Ms. Ievers, one of the things you said during your presentation that I found to be an extremely good statement was that gender equality is everyone's business. I sometimes think we do ourselves and the Status of Women a disservice by having this committee, actually. We do great work, and this committee is very important, but I think we make it easier for other areas to say they don't need to be involved, and they don't need to carry forth with so much of the equality issues because they're being looked after here.

Perhaps if more emphasis were put on having to handle equality at every step and stage in every committee as it goes along, it might get more attention than it does—and rightly so. It needs to have more attention than it's getting. So that's my first comment, and I don't know if you want to respond to that.

Secondly, I was extremely interested in Ms. Mathysen's questions about the consultation process. In the different areas that I've been involved in over the years, I've found that consultation is one of the most difficult areas in which to get the correct and most meaningful information. I've often found that those who respond in the consultative process are the ones we're least looking for to respond. We always get responses from a certain segment of society, but to get the responses from those we want to help the most and get the message to the most is sometimes the most challenging.

I was very interested to hear what you had to say regarding the online survey and how it went much further than we would be led to believe in reading about it. So I think that part of it's good.

I'm not sure that I caught the answer—and maybe the question wasn't actually asked—about the different type of response you got from those who were professionals working on gender equality, as opposed to those who were non-organizational or non-governmental. Maybe you could respond a bit more to that, please.

•(1030)

Ms. Florence Ievers: I want to touch on the first point you made. I think it's extremely important, and I repeated it twice in my remarks because it's so important. It is the business of everyone, and for the longest time people thought it was just the business of Status of Women Canada.

We were very pleased when we saw that Parliament had decided to have a committee on the status of women, and we are pleased that this Parliament has decided to continue the work you have done—and I think Hélène and others have touched on it—to ensure that key players in the federal government are now paying more attention to equality for women and men. I'm talking about the central agencies, so that's very key.

When I talk about accountability, it's accountability for all of the government. As you say, there is often a risk when issues are dealt with in one area—for example, on your committee—that they are excluded from all the work of all other committees. We have for many years encouraged parliamentarians to ask questions about gender equality in all of the committees.

The question was asked as to whether we are doing gender-based analyses on every policy and legislation that the government does. Obviously we cannot, but good questions put at those committees will go a long way toward making sure that happens.

You also have departments appear before this committee—not only the usual list of suspects like Status Women and others, but Finance and other departments—to explain the work they do, the challenges they encounter, and how they can improve to make sure the results on equality are what you, as parliamentarians and as the Government of Canada, want to have happen. I think there is an important role that your committee can play, and it's far from ghettoizing the issue.

The Chair: I would like to thank our witnesses very much.

I think it has been very helpful to all of us to have you come this morning and give us an idea of some of the research that you're doing and the ongoing work of the Status of Women as well.

You referred to several reports. Could you please ensure that we will get them, including the policy research that you're doing on the timelines, the list of the programs funded through Status of Women, the information on matrimonial property, the research on unpaid work and on seniors and unpaid work, and the table of the breakdown of funding through the women's program? If you could supply those to the committee, it would be helpful.

Committee members, the other reports that were referred to, regarding matrimonial rights, are being delivered to your office. They should be in your office when you go back, to prepare us for next week.

Thank you very much to the witnesses. We appreciate your coming and your continuing to work with us as we move the agenda forward.

Ms. Florence Ievers: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

We really appreciate the opportunity to dialogue with you and your committee.

The Chair: We expect to see a lot of you.

I will suspend for a moment while the witnesses leave.

•(1030)

_____ (Pause) _____

•(1035)

The Chair: We can call our meeting back to order.

Thank you, again.

We have a variety of things to deal with. I would like to acknowledge a couple of representatives from the YWCA who have now joined us, and who will hopefully be presenting to us later on, before the break.

I want to congratulate them because they just announced a report they had been working on, *A Turning Point for Women*. We'll hear more about that throughout the day, I'm sure. I hope the media will give us some coverage on that.

I'm glad to see that you had a few minutes to come back and sit in on our meetings.

All of you will also receive a report that they've released this morning, so we'll have lots of information as we move forward.

The first order of business that we need to discuss is the motion by Ms. Mourani. It's very much a technical issue that arose from the tabling of the previous reports that we had concurred in.

Ms. Mourani, would you like to address the reason you have the motion before us?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As you know, Canada does not yet have any pay equity legislation. Since Canada is a human rights country and since it is high time that Canada have a pay equity act, this motion is intended to illustrate the pressing need for the bill that should be introduced as soon as possible, and no later than this fall.

We hope that as soon as Parliament reconvenes, a pay equity bill will be introduced and passed before the end of the year. As the chair has said, this is a technical motion to underscore the pressing need for this bill. This is what it says:

That the Committee prepare and present to the House, before June 23, 2006, [...]

It would be done before we rise for the summer,

[...] a report recommending that the government draft, before October 31, 2006, or any other date [...]

...that we have chosen. It could be November, since we reconvene in September. We can give them enough time to table it.

[...] the Committee deems advisable, a bill on pay equity.

I think it has already been debated not once but twice. Moreover, a report was submitted to the new government. I think that everyone here would agree.

I'd like to thank all of you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Smith, go ahead, please.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you.

I very much appreciate that motion and the spirit of the motion, Ms. Mourani. It is redundant, though, because we have already tabled it in the House. It takes 120 days from the time of tabling of that to hear from the minister. With all due respect, I don't think this motion is necessary. It's already done.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on this? Could we have Ms. Mourani and then Ms. Minna?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I would like to respond to Ms. Smith. You are correct in saying that the report has already been tabled; however, the deadline in the recommendation to the government is October 31, 2005. That date has already passed. The government has 120 days to respond. However, it could decide to wait until 2009 or 2010, since there are no restrictions. There is no real deadline, since the date has already passed. It is in a report that was produced last year, which is why I have moved a motion to update the timeframe. We need it because of the deadline.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I understand that there is going to be a report to Parliament on the part of the government as a result of the report that's being tabled. But as our colleague has said, the government doesn't have to give a report if legislation hasn't been started. I think this tries to encourage the government to start drafting legislation, because various ministries, certainly the Department of Justice, which would be involved, can get started and get some direction. This would just give it a bit of a push, because women have been waiting.

There's always a report, there's always a response to the report, and then there's another response to another report. Before you know it, there's another election, and then we have another report, and we go for another five years. We've been going for I don't know how many years already on this issue.

There is another issue, especially given the report from Statistics Canada this week showing the huge inequity in women's incomes and the poverty that women are forced to live in because of discrimination in their pay, not only while they are raising children and while they're looking after other members of the family, but also when they're seniors—they continue to suffer right to the end. This is the feminization of poverty, really. It's persistent. And somebody out there is making money. Businesses are making money by lowering the wages of lawyers now that there are more women lawyers, lowering the level overall, and I think it's just unacceptable that we as a society continue...

All of this is to say to the government that we really want you to start dealing with this now, not too much later. Given the information we've just received, I think it is totally incumbent upon us to act and send that message.

● (1040)

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Yes, I'd like to support Ms. Mourani's motion too, for very similar reasons. We've waited a very long time. We've heard testimony here today. There are very clear indicators that we need to move ahead on this. We've waited a very long time. Surely some of the work must have already been done. The 2005 deadline would suggest that this is a work in progress. It's time to bring it to Parliament.

The Chair: Are there any further speakers on this issue?

•(1045)

Hon. Maria Minna: There should be a recorded vote, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Okay, you want a recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: Needless to say, the motion has passed.

Let me just reread what we've just done. The committee has adopted the motion of Ms. Mourani:

That the Committee prepare and present to the House, before June 23, 2006, a report recommending that the government draft, before October 31, 2006, or any other date the Committee deems advisable, a bill on pay equity.

It was adopted without amendment.

We have a couple of routine motions in front of you that had problems with translation.

Would someone like to read motion number 9 into the record?. Again, there was an issue with translation. Does everyone have it in front of them?

This was an issue of staff being able to attend, which was in the English translation and not in the French translation. We wanted to make sure that those were quite specific—and that a member of the government party would also be required to be there. Does everyone have it in front of them? We're dealing only with motion 9 right now:

That the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present provided that at least 3 members are present, including a member of the opposition.

We're amending it to read that a member of the government party also be there. It's pretty routine.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Routine motion number 3. Again, it's the French version....

Yes, Ms. Mourani.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I'm sorry, Madam Chair. I would like to ask a question on motion 9 before we move on to number 3, if I may.

[English]

The Chair: Yes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I had a look at what was adopted last time. I don't understand why we are revisiting something that we have already passed.

[English]

The Chair: It was an oversight when we initially did it. Previously, it was a member of the government who was chairing and now it's a member of the opposition, so it's also important to have a member of the government as part of the quorum requirements. It was an oversight, initially, because we had switched from government to opposition.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I see, but do you acknowledge that an identical version was adopted last time? There has been nothing added?

[English]

The Chair: It was an oversight, Ms. Mourani.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Fine. So we are returning to the motion that has already been adopted.

[English]

The Chair: Motion number 3 regarding the in camera meetings is a clarification so that it reads the same in English as it does in French. You have it before you.

Would you like to read that, Ms. Mourani?

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: This is what it says:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each Committee member be allowed to have one staff person present at in camera meetings.

[English]

The Chair: All agreed?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

The next issue that you have before you is budgets. You have one, violence against women. I would need somebody to move adoption of the budgets, which reads:

That the proposed budget for the study on violence against women in the amount of \$ 32,000, for the period of May 29, 2206 to December 29, 2006, be adopted.

Moved by Ms. Minna.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The second, on matrimonial property rights of aboriginal women, is:

That the proposed budget for the study on matrimonial property rights of aboriginal women in the amount of \$34,400, for the period of May 29, 2006, to December 29, 2006, be adopted.

Moved by Ms. Smith.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: And the third, on the economic security for women, is:

That the proposed budget for the study on economic security for women in the amount of \$32,000, for the period of May 29, 2006 to December 29, 2006, be adopted.

Moved by Ms. Ratansi.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madam Bourgeois, do you have a question?

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: I would like to clarify a point relating to a previous committee meeting. Once you have finished, Madam Chair, I would like to ask you a question on that, if I may.

[English]

The Chair: Okay. We've completed our work on the budgets and so on. Go ahead, Ms. Bourgeois, you can make your point now.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Madam Chair, I read the minutes of our May 11 meeting. I believe that we had all agreed, since Mr. Cotler was here, to once again table last year's committee reports. We had even considered re-adopting them.

Has anything been done?

• (1050)

[English]

The Chair: Yes, they've been tabled in the House. All three of them were tabled in the House, I believe on May 18.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Does that mean that we won't be able to recover them, or re-read them? We had produced reports but the government had not yet responded to some of them, including the last one.

We will have to read what was said on May 11. I think it was an oversight. We didn't simply want to table them so that the current government could respond and see if it would act on them, but we also wanted to check the progress of our committee.

We have a procedural problem. I think that from now on, our intentions should be worded in straightforward, clear motions and, in my opinion, in view of what I have read in the minutes, we must do more than simply table the reports. That is all well and good, but then what happens to them? Nobody has taken them on, nobody has discussed them here.

A women's group asked me where we were heading and pointed out that the motion was lacking in substance. I had to agree.

I will leave this in your hands, since I don't know what can be done. What it comes down to is a technical irregularity.

[English]

The Chair: I think that as a committee I agree with what you're saying. We want to know that we're moving forward on those issues and not just tabling them. I think it's imperative that we hear from the minister and from the government. We have to give them the time that they require, and they have 120 days to respond back. I think it's important for us to get that response and then have that kind of a discussion on those issues to see where we can move along with the government in doing our jobs.

With the 120 days we should have a report by the time we come back in September. We may get a response earlier than that, and of course through the summer we will do our best to make sure that any responses are circulated to the committee members, but they do have 120 days to respond. In fairness, for us not to redo things, it is my suggestion that we should get that response, and then we would move forward on it, given the fact that we have a fair amount of

issues that we want to cover off between now and the next couple of weeks as well.

Ms. Minna, to that issue.

Hon. Maria Minna: Yes, Madam Chair, I understand the frustration. However, possibly for those of us who weren't on the committee last time but have read the reports, when the minister comes in front of us we certainly can use the reports as a basis for questioning in addition to any other directions as to what, if anything, the minister herself and the various departments are now doing to get ready to respond.

While I understand the government has 120 days, I presume they have read the reports even before they were elected and currently the minister may already have some plans. We should probably take that opportunity to find out. After that we can see where we go.

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Madam Chair, I'd like to add that I am not the one who is frustrated, it is the women's groups, particularly one group who told me that some excellent work had been done, that they had appeared before the committee but had received no response. It has been more than 120 days since the reports were tabled. Now, as a courtesy to them, we have tabled a new report: we have to wait another 120 days. I'm not familiar with how it works.

We need to know what is important to us, as committee members. Depending on the nature of the response, and whether or not the government is interested, what does the committee intend to do? Must we ensure that the report is brought forward and implemented? I don't know the answer and I don't know what to tell these people.

• (1055)

[English]

The Chair: May I suggest, since you're raising it—and it's very important because I think we need to make sure we have enough time ourselves to be able to respond back to whatever the government says and whatever additional work we need to do on those issues—that as we're moving forward with our September schedule we will allocate a specific meeting. I expect we will get that answer over the summer and maybe one of the first meetings we have will be to deal with the response from the government and move that along. We'll make sure to allocate some time on that issue if that's okay.

On the calendar you have in front of you, on our meetings next week, we've had great difficulty. The logistics of trying to coordinate a meeting together with the aboriginal committee or the justice committee is very difficult. Knowing our own schedules, one of the suggestions might be that we ask the chair of the aboriginal committee as well as the chair of the justice committee and some of the departmental people to come before us, which would be an easier thing to coordinate on those two issues.

Hon. Maria Minna: Perhaps we could had a three-way meeting that makes sense and we could just get on with it. I have no problem with that.

The Chair: Sure. What we've got planned for next week is the matrimonial real property rights on June 6, and we've asked the Native Womens' Association of Canada to come before us and the Assembly of First Nations. INAC is meeting with the minister and was unable to come before us at that particular time. That would give us a good briefing on the matrimonial property rights issue.

On Thursday would be the economic security of senior women, and we are waiting for HRSD to come. As we move forward to June 13, again would be the economic security of senior women. If we have an opportunity to have the individuals from the YWCA report on a turning point for women, as well, before the end of June, we would try to fit them in as well. We will try to continue to have people before us who will address the issues that we are most interested in as we move forward.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Madam Chair, will we be hearing from someone from the justice department or from the justice committee before June 22? Things do not look very promising.

[*English*]

The Chair: We were going to ask that at the June 20 meeting, if not before, we have the chair of the justice committee and some departmental officials come before us, if that is satisfactory. I'm trying to move forward. We still very much want the meeting with the minister.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I think we should meet with them before the fall, because we have a great deal of work to do on violence against women, human trafficking, etc.

[*English*]

The Chair: Exactly, that's agreed.

I think part of what we need to be looking at is what do we want to accomplish with those meetings?

If we can get the chair of the aboriginal committee to come before us and some officials, I think we know where we're going with that, because we don't want to redo that work, but we want to embrace it and do a little bit of our own work with it.

On justice issues, these are very much tied into the role of the justice department in addressing violence against women. We just need to narrow what kinds of questions we are going to ask the departmental officials.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: What do you mean?

[*English*]

The Chair: When we have the departmental officials from the justice department, specifically, what were the issues we wanted them to focus on or that we were going to be asking them about, so that they can come fully prepared for that meeting?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Yes, of course. Would you like us to do that now?

[*English*]

The Chair: I think you've indicated that we know where we're going with it. I think you've been clear as well.

As well, next Tuesday we will be considering the draft report on Ms. Mourani's motion. We'll have something ready for Tuesday for consideration by the committee as well.

We had a request here on a budget issue. Okay, we are fine with that. All right.

I see we're at 11 o'clock. Thank you all very much.

I move that the committee be adjourned.

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