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Chair

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi

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• (0900)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.)): Order, please.

Members of committee, we have on video conference, as you can see, our witnesses from the City University of New York, Professor Marilyn Rubin; the Scottish Women's Budget Group, Angela O'Hagan; the UK Women's Budget Group, Janet Veitch; and Glasgow Caledonian University, Ailsa McKay.

Now, I have to let you know that when they are talking, they'll appear on the larger screen. When they're not talking, they'll fade into the background. The Scottish Women's Group has to leave by 10 a.m. They have a prior engagement. We will start off with Angela O'Hagan and Ailsa McKay. They'll do a joint presentation. There will be half an hour of presentations, totally, because everybody will be doing 10 minutes.

There is a delayed reaction, so please do not speak fast. The chair is the only one who seems to speak fast, but please do not speak fast. Go slow, and wait for them to hear and then respond. Okay?

Welcome to all of you. Can you hear me?

Dr. Ailsa McKay (Professor of Economics, Glasgow Caledonian University): Yes.

The Chair: Welcome.

We would like to start off with Ms. O'Hagan and Ms. McKay for 10 minutes. I will do a hand signal, which you probably won't be able to see, but I will knock on the mike so that you know we are coming close to the timing. Okay?

Ms. Angela O'Hagan (Convenor, Scottish Women's Budget Group): Excellent. Good morning, everybody.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms. Angela O'Hagan: Good morning, Madam Chair.

It's very nice to see you there in Canada, London, and New York.

Good morning, distinguished members of the committee. On behalf of the Scottish Women's Budget Group, I would like to thank the committee for this very special opportunity to address you and for the recognition of our work that this invitation represents. I would also like to commend the committee for its initiative in undertaking this current study on gender budgets. I hope that our own relevant parliamentary committees will follow your lead and that a similar study on gender budgets might be undertaken in Scotland.

I would also like to imagine a scenario where witnesses could offer such frank, open, and progressive evidence to the committees of the Scottish Parliament on the importance and benefits of gender budget analysis, as previous witnesses to this committee have done.

I look forward to the rest of the study and to hearing your final recommendations and decisions.

Madam Chair, thank you for recognizing our time pressures and that we have to leave the session, as you say, at the end of the first hour. Thank you very much for accommodating our other appointments.

I will now make some comments on the history, character, and outputs of the Scottish Women's Budget Group, which hereafter I will refer to as SWBG.

SWBG is a non-funded group of individual women with a commitment to positive change for women through analysis of resource allocation and policy in the budget process in Scotland. SWBG was formed in 1999, following the creation of newly devolved government institutions in Scotland, including the primary legislature of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive of ministers and the civil service, now known as the Scottish Government, following elections in May 2007.

SWBG membership is fairly small, with some 25 women on the list and an active core of 12 to 15 women. Our activities over our lifetime have included tracking the budgetary process in Scotland, responding to government proposals for spending plans, responding to consultations on key policy areas, giving evidence to parliamentary committees on the budget process and the incorporation of gender analysis within it, and giving evidence to committees on key policy areas such as child care, social justice, skills, and economic development strategies. Our responses are formulated collectively, drawing on the wide range of skills and policy expertise that members bring to the group.

A brief summary of the promotion of gender budget analysis in the Scottish budgetary process runs as follows. Early in its existence, the SWBG lobbied the first minister for finance in the first round of draft spending plans for the Scottish Executive. He responded positively to the initiative and lent his support. SWBG further lobbied for inclusion of a commitment to gender analysis in government spending plans and budgetary processes in the first equality strategy of the Scottish Executive. With support from the Equal Opportunities Commission, which was the statutory body for sex discrimination, which has now been subsumed within the new Equality and Human Rights Commission, SWBG lobbied for the creation of a ministerial advisory group on integrating equalities in the budget process.

There are a number of important aspects of the Scottish policy context to note at this point. The first is that the commitment to equality is enshrined in the Scotland Act and in the founding principles of the Scottish Parliament. While very positive, it is a commitment to equal opportunities, not to gender specifically. This led to the development of a broad-reaching equality strategy covering a number of strands of equalities, including race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religious belief or faith, and gender.

While there have been specific policy initiatives directed at women and men and a considerable program of work specifically targeting violence against women, sex equality and gender policy have not been a priority area of government policy or related spending.

In policy terms particularly, for example, in social justice policy, there has been a tendency for social justice and equality to be used as interchangeable terms and for a growing absence of any gender analysis in both the policy analysis and resource allocation out-turn.

The commitment to mainstreaming, which underpins the Scottish government's equality strategy, is a commitment to mainstreaming equality, not specifically gender. The ministerial advisory group on budgets is the equality proofing budget and policy advisory group and not the gender budget group.

• (0905)

I should note at this point as well that the equality strategy of the Scottish Government is due to be reviewed this year, and we are hoping to see a renewed and reinvigorated commitment, and especially some action flowing from that equality strategy.

Another important point to note, and a point of distinction between the Scottish and Canadian experiences, is that the Scottish Parliament has the power to levy taxation within restricted parameters, but it has not done so. So the budget that the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government are concerned with is the expression of the government's spending commitments against its policy priorities, as there is no tax collection or other fiscal activity within it. Funding for Scotland comes to the Scottish Government from the U.K. government at Westminster, and that is where tax, benefits, and other receipt functions currently and continue to reside.

This is a crucial part of what we call the devolution settlement, and subsequently one that is yet again being revisited within the whole question of how devolved government is working in Scotland.

I'll speed up through some of the things the Scottish Government's budget group has been involved in. As I've said, we consistently comment on Scottish Government spending plans and budget proposals, and these responses are available on our website at swb.org.uk. We make specific recommendations on individual and policy program proposals and more general recommendations on the core approach to adopting gender budget analysis.

Specific pieces of work have been commissioned by the Scottish Government over the period in response to targeted lobbying and analysis by the Women's Budget Group. These include "Understanding the Scottish Budget", a research project early in the life of the Scottish Parliament, conducted by Ailsa McKay, sitting beside me, and Rona Fitzgerald, to track the newly introduced budgetary process. Subsequently there were pilot studies on gender budget analysis in smoking cessation and women's access to sport. Both of these studies are available from the Scottish Government website.

In response to SWBG pressure and focus on the budget process and documentation, several changes have come and gone from the budget documents, including equality statements within the spending plan proposals and the budget itself and a restatement by the Scottish Government in 2003 of its commitment to equality proofing in the budget process. That was in its one and only annual report on progress against the equality strategy. So in common with many gender budget initiatives and many women's lobbying groups, we seem to take one step forward and several more back are forced upon us.

As a lobby group, the Scottish Women's Budget Group seems to punch above its weight, is the phrase that is used. We are seen as an independent and authoritative credible voice. We have been consistent in the quality and approach of our analysis, and that we are independent from government or other institutions has helped protect our autonomy. However, as an unfunded, unconstituted entity relying on the entirely voluntary contributions of a small core membership, we're vulnerable. Sustaining a growing volume of work against a backdrop of receding commitment to gender equality is a significant challenge.

We have in our lifetime secured pockets of funding, and we have employed, at times, temporarily, part-time development and parliamentary liaison officers. We have produced publications and so on.

We'll conclude with a note on our international connections. One of the main levers behind the creation of the Scottish Women's Budget Group was learning from abroad. In fact, the first public event of the Scottish Women's Budget Group included representatives from the Canadian government—in 2000, I think. SWBG has retained these international links, and members are closely involved in the emerging European gender budget network.

I'll stop now and hand over to Ailsa McKay, who will present the specific activities with the equal opportunities committee of the Scottish Parliament and the challenges facing both the Scottish Women's Budget Group and the future of gender-sensitive budgeting in Scotland.

Thank you.

● (0910)

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Ailsa McKay: Thank you, Angela, and thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for the invitation to speak to you today.

I want to say a little bit more about some of the other activity that's been happening in Scotland around gender budget analysis that perhaps isn't directly to do with the activities of the Scottish Women's Budget Group, although indirectly it is.

I'll start off being a bit pessimistic, saying that, yes, after nine years of sustained activity, which Angela has eloquently detailed, and evidence of political will in Scotland to progress with a gender budget initiative, no gender sensitive budget is yet in place in Scotland. In fact, we can find no evidence of any concrete policy shifts arising from our activity over the past nine years. However, that's as pessimistic as I want to be. I would now like to be optimistic.

In Scotland we do have a gender budget initiative, and that gender budget initiative is ongoing. I'll take the next five to 10 minutes to say how and why I think that is. Angela has covered the work of the Scottish Women's Budget Group, and suffice it to say, I think that activity is sustained and it's ongoing. All I can say is, watch this space with regard to future activity.

The second aspect I'd like to cover, which may be of particular interest to the committee and its members, is the more recent activity at a parliamentary level in Scotland. As you may be aware, we had an election last May, and that brought about significant political change for us here in Scotland. We have a new minority government. We have a whole set of new committees and we have a significant number of new members of Parliament following that election.

As a direct result of the lobbying conducted by the Scottish Women's Budget Group, our new equal opportunities committee—we previously had an equal opportunities committee—following the election took the decision to appoint a specialist advisor with reference to the budget process. Although the committee had the capacity to appoint an advisor previously, they had never availed themselves of that opportunity. This year they took the opportunity to appoint an advisor, I think directly due to the lobbying activities of the Scottish Women's Budget Group.

The budget process this year in Scotland was truncated. It took place over a period of eight weeks. That was because of a delayed announcement of the spending review at the U.K. level because of the U.K. elections and the change of prime minister. So we had to wait until we knew how much money we were getting from the U.K. before we could conduct our own budget. It meant our budget process took place over a period of eight to 10 weeks.

Bearing in mind what I said about a new government, a new committee, and new members, my feeling is the committee felt better placed to appoint an advisor to assist them with the scrutiny process, given the newness of the situation and the very short time period available to them.

The advisor was appointed on the basis of open competition. A few names were put into the hat and I was subsequently appointed as advisor for that period, November, December, and early January. My subsequent remit was advise on prospective witnesses the committee may want to call to give evidence with regard to the contents of the Scottish budget; to provide the committee members with guidance on the appropriate line of questioning of those witnesses; to brief the committee members on the contents of the budget with a specific focus on where equality considerations were evident or, in many situations, where equality considerations were not evident; and, finally, to have input into the equal opportunities committee's written response to the finance committee of the Scottish Parliament, which is part of the formal scrutiny process.

We went on to have two evidence sessions. One involved the minister with the remit for equalities, and we also had a meeting of all the advisors for all the committees across the Scottish Parliament. My understanding is this was the first year that every single parliamentary committee of the Scottish Parliament appointed a budget advisor. Previously, only a handful of committees had appointed budget advisors, and the finance committee has been the only committee that's had a regular advisor throughout the lifetime of the Scottish Parliament.

● (0915)

The outputs from my role as advisor with the committee were the briefing on the budget with a focus on equalities, and the final report, which was submitted to the finance committee. I believe those outputs contributed to the scrutiny process in a very positive way by bringing gender concerns and broader equality concerns to the fore, albeit, I would say with a word of caution, at a marginal level. I don't think any significant change happened. However, I think there was a significant amount of awareness raising amongst committee members with regard to making the link between their equalities remit and the budget.

So for me the experience of working with the committee indicated the value of a specialist advisor. It may have been the first time in Scotland, but I firmly believe that it won't be the last. I think all members and the committee collectively recognized the value added of appointing a specialist budget advisor and will continue to do so in the future. In fact, we have a meeting scheduled for April 18 of all the specialist advisors to all the committees to consider how effective the process actually was.

The second main issue I'd like to raise with regard to the activity that's not directly associated with the Scottish Women's Budget Group is where I put on my academic hat and talk specifically about how we can relate our gender budget activity to the academic work in the field of feminist economics. In Scotland we've been acutely aware of the lack of understanding of gender budget analysis, in fact of gender as a concept within the resource allocation process, or rather its limited significance within the resource allocation process. In recognition of this, in 2004, with funding from the Equal Opportunities Commission, I and a number of colleagues initiated a pilot study, which we called *Economics For Equality*—not economics of equality. The focus was on understanding the economics of the gender pay gap, and we invited a number of community activists to a number of sessions to explore the economists' understanding of the gender pay gap and the policy responses that followed from that.

That pilot was pretty successful, and we've since secured funding from Oxfam to run a subsequent pilot with a focus on the national budget process. The purpose of this next stage of this program of work is twofold. One is to engage local community activists with the budget, but also, second, to engage policy makers with the equality and gender issues as they relate to the budget. So what we're trying to do with this pilot is bring feminist economic analysis out of the classroom, in an applied sense, and to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Now the Scottish Women's Budget Group has been heavily involved in these pilots in informing the work through their outputs and also participating in the work.

Finally, I'd like to say that this combination of activity represents for us a really well-thought-out response to the challenges we identified way back in 1999 about how we would progress with a gender budget analysis in Scotland. Those challenges remain for us nine years later, and I'd just like to briefly say what they are.

First is political change. I think we're all very aware of the significance of political change and the subsequent dynamics of the budget process and how we can keep abreast of that. I think we have done that in Scotland through the sustained activities of the Scottish Women's Budget Group and through our Parliament work. Our relationship with the equal opportunities committee of Parliament has been crucial in that.

Second, our biggest challenge I think has been the lack of understanding of gender and where gender sits within the policy process. I think our most recent activity in terms of the work I've been doing with the parliamentary committee has been crucial in raising awareness of that.

• (0920)

Thirdly, a significant challenge has been to try to ensure buy-in from across the wider community with regard to the concept of gender budgeting. I think we're getting somewhere in Scotland with that, with our economics for equality program.

I'd like to finish there and open it up to any questions the committee might have for Angela and me.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would like the indulgence of the committee. Since the Scottish representatives have to leave the teleconference by 10 o'clock, could we please do a five-minute round with them only, and then continue on with other witnesses? That way, you will have at least one round for the witnesses. As well, there will be some committee business, such as the work plan, to be dealt with in the last five minutes.

We'll begin the first round with Mr. Pearson, for five minutes, and I'll be very mindful of the time.

Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to have you here today. I was born and raised in Scotland, so it's wonderful to see you here.

I understand what you're saying about the political change. We have that problem here as well. As different governments come along, things tend to go up and down.

But you say there's a lack of understanding of gender and where it sits in the parliamentary process. I wonder if you could expand on that as to what that means. Here, we try to do similar things. We have champions and we try to get it into the process, but sometimes the outcomes aren't what we had hoped for. So could you explain that to us a bit?

Dr. Ailsa McKay: Sure.

The best way for me to explain it—and Angela may want to add something—is to give you a practical example of where I think we misunderstand gender in terms of the policy process.

There appears to be, in Scotland, a practice of viewing gender as synonymous with women and viewing gender issues or dealing with gender issues as dealing with women's issues. Understanding that, yes, there are a lot of issues that we need to deal with that are focused on women, as we all know that's not what we mean by gender-sensitive analysis.

The example I'd like to give to you relates to some work we've been doing around one of our skills training programs for young people in Scotland. We call it the modern apprenticeships program. I don't know if you have anything similar in Canada, but it's a government-funded training program that supports young people at an entry level into the labour market to gain skills that give them a trade.

We noticed early on, through the work of the Scottish Women's Budget Group, that the program seemed to be dominated by young men. There may be reasons for that, and maybe very good reasons, but we campaigned on it and indicated to the government that their spending may be allocated or may be benefiting young men predominantly and there may be a problem there.

Three years later, when we looked at the program again, a lot of work was done to encourage young women into the program. We looked at the figures, and yes, young women had increased their participation rates by 211% over three years as a result of direct action by the government to encourage young women.

The government used that as a mechanism to say that they had done gender or had considered gender. However, when we looked at the allocation or the nature of the participation of young men and women, we found that young men were participating in the program in the four-year-long funded training programs—plumbing, construction, etc.—and therefore were benefiting from quite a significant degree of spending and were gaining access to good trades when they finished. Young women, however, were participating in six-month-long training programs in hairdressing, child care, and the retail industry and were not benefiting from well-paid jobs or good career-oriented jobs at the end.

Therefore, there was a significant difference in terms of the nature of participation. However, the Scottish government viewed the head count aspect of gender issues—that is, they had increased the numbers of women, therefore they had addressed that gender inequality.

For me, that stems from a lack of understanding of what gender issues are. Merely adding women into the scenario and increasing the numbers of women does not mean you've dealt with gender inequalities.

I think that's quite a useful example to illustrate how gender is misunderstood in the policy process.

• (0925)

Mr. Glen Pearson: Ms. O'Hagan.

Ms. Angela O'Hagan: I'd like to follow up on Ailsa's comment about number counting. I think this is a problem we have in a mainstreaming approach. While we argue for the importance of quality data, there is a problem around how the data are utilized. It has to do with interpretation rather than statistics, simply counting numbers. This is one of the problems in the analysis of the modern apprenticeship scheme that Ailsa referred to.

In my introductory remarks, I made a comment about the backdrop against which we try to promote gender-aware policy. In Scotland, the U.K., and across Europe, we are increasingly in a policy context that wishes to talk about equalities from a broad perspective. Driving this are a range of groups pushing for increased legislative and rights protection under policy recognition. One of the more negative consequences of this is the assumption that women "have been done", that women are no longer relevant to policy or legislative development, that it's old hat, unnecessary, and unprogressive to focus on women.

I don't think I'm overstating the case. I think it is one of the key challenges we face and one of the key reasons why the Scottish Women's Budget Group is called what we are. That is, in a sense, our focus. It's difficult to conduct a gender analysis that breaks the policy-speak cycle. If you talk about women, then you have to talk about men in equivalent terms, and that is neither women-focused analysis nor gender analysis.

That's what we mean when we say there's a lack of understanding in gender. More broadly, as a student of public policy, I think the public policy process itself does not regard gender as a core variable. This is demonstrated by our various countries' attempts to follow Beijing in implementing gender mainstreaming. The public policy process continues to treat gender as an external variable relegated to the literature on women's networks.

• (0930)

Mr. Glen Pearson: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Demers, you have five minutes.

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Good morning, mesdames. Thank you for being here this morning. Like my colleague, I have Scottish ancestors. They were from the Cameron clan. So it's all the more important for me to speak with you this morning.

Mesdames, some of us had the privilege this week of meeting the new speaker and a few other members of your Parliament. They told us that you had managed to elect enough women members to reach 30% of the total representation. Do you think the fact that more than 30% of members elected to the Parliament of Scotland are women, including all political parties, will help establish gender budgeting? As is the case in Scotland, our governments have been minority governments for a few years now. What do you think would be the most appropriate political measures to ensure that gender budgets are taken into consideration and that women benefit as a result?

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms. Angela O'Hagan: Thank you, Madame Demers.

I'd like to start with your question on women's representation. In 1999 we celebrated grandly when 37% of the Scottish Parliament members were women in the new institution, very much part of the new politics of Scotland that had been a core feature of the campaign for devolution itself. The 50-50 campaign that was run by the trade unions and some of the political parties was very much in that spirit of new politics. We had high hopes that not just the physical presence of women but that an apparently more open attitude to gender politics would come to prevail in the Parliament.

Certainly in structural terms some changes did occur. The working areas of the Parliament are structured around school hours and school term times, and there is a crèche and child care facility in the Parliament, which unsurprisingly has come under regular threat of closure as it's not seen as an integral part.

However, nine years on from devolution, the number of women in the Scottish Parliament has fallen in successive elections. It's now just over 35%. We have seen an erosion of commitment among the individual political parties to 50-50 or women-only short lists or various other mechanisms that were used to promote women. Now the governing party in minority, the Scottish National Party, does have a number of women MSPs, and a number of those women are in the cabinet, which of course is to be welcomed even at the superficial level perhaps, all popular recognition of women in government. The SNP certainly would score highly there, and certainly more highly than on their selection processes and the promotion of women in the party. But that's a separate point.

As to whether women's presence makes a difference, I think that's a moot point in the experience of the Scottish Parliament. There has been a clear contribution by women MSPs. I personally believe some policy agendas would not have been so prominent had it not been for the women there—or domestic violence and child care. A number of individual women and men have made a significant difference to the promotion of domestic violence policy and prevention strategies in Scotland.

In terms of how we try to secure measures for gender budget analysis and women moving forward and how we try to introduce some unshakeable and structural provisions, we do have a number of levers we continue to use. The founding principles of the Scottish Parliament are enormously important. They state that equal opportunities and equal access to the Parliament—participation, openness, and accountability as principles of the Parliament—all add power from the outside to those of us who are looking to use the Parliament in that way. They can be very effective measures to hold the Parliament to account. There is a statute in our mandate to the equal opportunities committee of the Parliament, so there are some structural levers there.

The Scottish Women's Budget Group has found that the measures we have sought to embed in the budgetary process have been eroded as the budget process itself has evolved and changed in shape and timing. The equality statements that were secured have disappeared. The new legislation we have across gender budgeting, the public duty to promote gender equality, requires all public authorities to produce a gender equality scheme and to assess all policies for their impact on equality.

That approach is very new, and at the moment it's showing very mixed results, both in terms of the coverage and how deeply and practised those requirements are, but also the quality of the scheme is coming out and the quality of impact assessments. One of our major complaints to the new government is that in addition to the very strange language they use around equality and an erosion there apparently of commitments to equality is the lack of an equality impact assessment of this year's budget and the lack of any apparent equality impact assessments that went into the process of creating the budget. But as Ailsa referred to, this year was an extremely truncated process, with eight weeks to formulate the budget.

• (0935)

There was a lot of running around by civil servants, but I don't think that's good enough. It is a legal requirement to conduct an

equality impact assessment and a stated commitment in the equality strategy to equality-proof the spending plans.

I mentioned earlier that that equality strategy is to be reviewed this year. The Scottish Women's Budget Group would wish to see a robust and deliverable commitment to effective gender equality scrutiny going forward. Measures to set targets, to pick specific policy and program areas, to apply gender budget analysis to those areas, to build on situations falling under the scrutiny of parliamentary committees year on year, to call to account the civil servants, and to incorporate these mechanisms—all these are key aspects of building in gender budget analysis.

The Chair: Mr. Wallace.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. They didn't pick me just because my last name is Wallace, but you can't get much more Scottish than that.

Thank you for joining us today. I have a few questions. I am actually not on this committee regularly. I am on the finance committee for the Government of Canada, and I have some financial process questions for you.

Is it McKay?

Dr. Ailsa McKay: Yes, McKay.

Mr. Mike Wallace: I want to focus in on your role as a special advisor. Can you give me a brief description of your academic background? I know you're a Ph.D, but what is your area of expertise?

Dr. Ailsa McKay: My full-time job is an academic economist. I work in a division of public policy and I teach economics. There's a group of economists, political scientists, people who operate within a business school and a university in Glasgow.

I've been an academic economist for longer than I can remember, and I'm an active member of the International Association for Feminist Economists.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Thank you.

Dr. Ailsa McKay: So gender budgeting is a research interest of mine.

Mr. Mike Wallace: You're a special advisor to the equal opportunities committee, and I'm assuming you're appointed by that committee. Is that correct? Are you paid by that committee?

Dr. Ailsa McKay: Yes.

Mr. Mike Wallace: And are you paid to do that, or is it a volunteer job?

Dr. Ailsa McKay: There is a token remuneration that all committees pay all their budget advisors. I think it's public knowledge; it's a very token payment. It's not a consultant fee.

● (0940)

Mr. Mike Wallace: I'm not questioning the process. I just want to understand it.

In our process, we look after the revenue side, not just the spending side. This is slightly different from your system. We have a pre-budget consultation that lasts basically all fall and sometimes, as this year, into January. We see 300 to 400 Canadians or Canadian groups, plus there are written submissions from hundreds of others. Is the process the same for your finance committee? Do they have a pre-budget consultation process under which they hear from a variety of Scottish interests? Just say yes or no.

Dr. Ailsa McKay: Yes, normally, but this year was different.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Because it was shorter?

Dr. Ailsa McKay: Yes.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Does the equal opportunities committee then look at all the submissions to the finance committee and determine whether they have a positive or a negative effect on gender issues?

Dr. Ailsa McKay: No, I'm afraid there's not that much joined-up thinking, and I'm not being unfair to the parliamentarians in that. The equal opportunities committee would take their own evidence on looking at the budget and then feed it back to the finance committee.

Mr. Mike Wallace: And the equal opportunities committee is made up of all parliamentarians? It's a parliamentary committee?

Dr. Ailsa McKay: Yes.

Mr. Mike Wallace: So this committee then gives advice or recommendations to the finance committee. Is that correct?

Dr. Ailsa McKay: Yes.

Mr. Mike Wallace: I have a question for you, just for my understanding. Before the budget, we introduced a program of private pension income splitting, which didn't previously exist. Couples who are seniors benefit because they're able to split their income. In my riding I'm hearing lots of stories that it's saving them \$4,000 to \$5,000 worth of tax. However, it doesn't do anything for senior women who are alone, because they have no one to split a pension with them.

From your perspective as special advisor, would you look at that and think it's not a good policy because it doesn't help senior women? What's your role when it comes to specific policy issues?

Dr. Ailsa McKay: For a start, we wouldn't look at that policy because that remains a reserved matter. In Scotland we wouldn't be looking at pensions and tax, because they remain the responsibility of the U.K. government.

Mr. Mike Wallace: You can tell me as an academic.

Dr. Ailsa McKay: As an academic, yes.

In terms of gender budget analysis and advising the committee, I would be loath to advise that policy as being a bad policy, but rather to point out the perhaps unintended consequences of that policy and to be sufficiently cognizant of them in the evaluation process.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Do I have a final question?

The Chair: You are finished.

Mr. Mike Wallace: I'm all finished.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen, for five minutes.

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

Thank you very much, Ms. O'Hagan and Professor McKay.

I have a question for each of you.

Ms. O'Hagan, you said the Scottish Women's Budget Group had been punching above its weight. You also said you didn't receive any funding for the work you do. I assume you do a lot of research, lobbying, and advocacy work.

Would it be helpful to you to have some kind of government funding to pursue that?

The second part of that question is this. In Canada, the status of women department has cut funding for women's groups that are pursuing research, advocacy, and lobbying. What would your advice be to Canada?

Ms. Angela O'Hagan: Thank you very much, Ms. Mathysen.

I cannot be so bold as to offer advice to Canada. I can offer my personal opinion.

I think both the opinion within our group, the Scottish Women's Budget Group, and independent assessment of the Scottish Women's Budget Group as a lobbying group attest that we have become, as I said, a credible and authoritative voice. I think that is evidenced by the fact that we are continually asked for our opinion. We are invited to parliamentary committees. We are invited to participate in government initiatives.

That brings with it its own frustrations. Are we being used by government by being drawn in? When the approach to policy making that we advocate is not being followed through, it leaves us very frustrated, but having been part of the process is something to be positive about. We constantly have a tension, I think, between the extent to which we are being mollified by being brought into the process and yet continually frustrated by the time it's taking to advance progress on gender budgeting.

We have received funding in the past from charitable sources. Oxfam in the United Kingdom has a poverty program, and we have accessed money from Oxfam and previously from the statutory commission on sex equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission. It has now been subsumed within the new Equality and Human Rights Commission, which has a grant-making capability. It would be possible for the Scottish Women's Budget Group to access or to apply for grant funding from that new commission, should we wish to.

That then opens another question about how robust we are. Are we in a position to be able to receive and manage public moneys? We have in the past taken a very clear decision not to access government money directly from the Scottish government equality unit, on the basis that we wished to remain outside government and to retain the autonomy and independence of voice that we felt may be, if not compromised, questioned if we were in receipt of government funding.

I personally think it sounds very unfortunate that Status of Women Canada is reducing funding for women-specific and gender-specific activities, just as I would feel it would be most unfortunate if that were to happen in Scotland, if the equality unit or the EHRC were to reprioritize in such a way that women, either directly or indirectly, by failure to subsume gender analysis into all aspects of equality work, were lost.

● (0945)

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

The Chair: One more minute.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Professor McKay, you mentioned the challenge of buy-in with stakeholders across government in regard to gender-based analysis. I'm wondering whether there has been the necessary buy-in. You seem to be optimistic, and you said that you were getting somewhere. I wonder if you could describe that. Has the gender disaggregated data been available to pursue that?

Dr. Ailsa McKay: I think I can be very brief in answering those questions and say that no one knows.

To expand slightly with regard to buy-in, it comes and goes. This is what I mean by one of the challenges we face in terms of responding to political change. Some of our political champions, and our previous first minister, have bought in. As we know, first ministers and justice ministers and equality ministers and the makeup of committees come and go. But through the activities of Scottish Women's Budget Group, as Angela said, we continue to ensure that there's buy-in across the policy-making community. If that means saying the same thing over and over and over again, we're quite happy to do that—well, maybe “happy” is too strong a word.

On your second point, the gender disaggregated data, we don't have sufficient gender disaggregated data in place yet. But that's not a reason to say we can't do this. We regularly come across that as a reason, saying we can't do gender budget analysis because we don't have the required data to do the analysis. That in itself is doing gender budget analysis: discovering where you don't have the data, the gaps in the data, and to go about collecting them for the next budget round. I don't think it's sufficient to say we don't have the data, therefore we can't start. We start by saying we don't have the data, so let's collect it, and let's ensure we fill those gaps.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we let you go and start with the next round of witnesses, Dr. McKay, we have been grappling with fine-tuning our gender budgeting. You mentioned that you went from the theoretical to the practical. If you have any tools you would like to share with us, we would appreciate you sending them to us.

We thank you very much.

● (0950)

Dr. Ailsa McKay: We would be happy to do that.

The Chair: Thank you very much. You can stay on video conferencing.

We would like to go to our next round of witnesses, with Janet Veitch from UK Women's Budget Group.

Thank you, Ms. Veitch.

Ms. Janet Veitch (Co-Chair, UK Women's Budget Group): Shall I fire ahead with my presentation?

The Chair: Yes, please, for 10 minutes. Thank you.

Ms. Janet Veitch: I understand you don't have this presentation in front of you yet, but I think it will be provided to you shortly.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Janet Veitch: I will go through it.

First of all, I will say that the UK Women's Budget Group has now been functioning for about 20 years. As you know, having heard from our Scottish sister organizations, there are other similar organizations operating in other parts of the U.K., principally in Scotland and Wales. Scotland is actually some way ahead of us, I would say, in terms of gender budgeting.

We call ourselves the UK Women's Budget Group because we work principally on the economic and fiscal policies that are implemented by the U.K. government. We're a membership organization—we draw our members from women's organizations, from researchers, and academics—and we rely on our members for the expertise we bring to analysis of public policy.

We're supported by one paid project officer and by volunteers and interns, and we're funded through independent charitable foundations. We don't receive any funding from government.

The evidence I'm going to give will focus on the relationship between the Women's Budget Group and government. That is my particular area of expertise. I'm not an economist by training. My background is in gender mainstreaming within government.

What the Women's Budget Group seeks to do is to influence government in developing and setting both its annual budget and its general economic and fiscal policies. We see this work as an integral part of gender mainstreaming, following on from the U.K.'s commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action, because we see that adequate resources are essential in order to implement gender equality policies.

We believe that gender budgeting ensures that policy is evidence-based and is therefore more effective in achieving the objectives the government wants to set. But this efficiency argument is also based on the political premise that gender equality is a desirable political objective in itself.

This touches, of course, on the question of whether gender budgeting is a political activity or not. I believe that gender budgeting is first and foremost a better and more informed way of making policy and developing evidence-based policy. But it's also political in the sense that we in the Women's Budget Group and other women's budget groups across the world apply a feminist perspective to the work. We're challenging traditional gender roles and traditional divisions of labour, so for that reason I would also call it a political activity.

At the U.K. level, we've had some significant changes recently in our law, in our policies and procedures, and in some of the government machinery. I just want to run through those, because they set the context of the gender budgeting work and provide some opportunities for us to promote gender budgeting.

First of all, we have a Minister for Women and Equality who oversees the whole equalities agenda. Until recently she was simply the Minister for Women, giving her responsibility for all equality—all of the equalities agenda is a fairly recent innovation. She is now supported by a Government Equalities Office—also very recently set up—which is a government department in itself. Previously she was supported by a small unit that lived within the department that she had the main portfolio for.

So our minister for women traditionally has always held other government ministerial posts, and in fact our current minister for women is not an exception to that—and I'll come back to that. But she does have her own small government department now, which has just been set up. We believe this could produce a natural focal point for gender budgeting.

The Women and Equality Unit co-sponsored us to run a gender expenditure analysis project with the Treasury department here, and I'll say a little bit more about that later on. Treasury also has an equalities champion at a senior level who drives forward activity on this issue, and I think that's a very helpful initiative.

The Government Equalities Office also sponsors another newly created body, which is the Commission for Equality and Human Rights, to which I think my Scottish colleagues referred. The role of that commission is to offer independent advice and scrutiny to the government on equalities issues.

• (0955)

Originally we had three equalities commissions, working on race, on disability, and on women's equality—the Equal Opportunities Commission, which looked at gender. Those three commissions have now been subsumed into one, and they've also taken on responsibility for human rights and for protection of groups: of LGBT groups, of groups on the basis of age, and groups on the basis of faith. They take forward the whole equalities agenda, among them.

Women's organizations were quite ambivalent about that change. On the one hand, we could see that bringing the whole equalities agenda together might be an advantage for gender equality because it would give a stronger voice within government. On the other hand, we were very concerned about the possible loss of focus on gender because we see gender inequality as in some ways quite different from other forms of discrimination.

We also have a new law, a gender equality duty, which you may already know about. That came into law about a year ago. This duty requires all public bodies to promote gender equality—equality between the sexes. It means they have to carry out gender impact assessments of all new and existing policies. They also have to publish a three-year gender equality scheme, which sets priority gender equality objectives.

We believe this could be a key lever to introduce better gender budgeting, and certainly better gender mainstreaming generally. That will be a key lever for the equality human rights commission to use to determine whether government is meeting its quality objectives or not.

The other mechanism I wanted to mention to you is that all central government departments are required to publish public service agreements, PSAs. These set out their key high-level targets. There are a number of cross-departmental PSAs, some that relate only to a particular department and some that run across departments. There is an equalities PSA that sets some equality objectives.

These PSAs set measurable outputs for each department within the context of the comprehensive spending review, which is a three-year review and allocation of government spending. It sets out identified allocations of funding to each department.

One of the priorities in one of those PSAs is the need to close the gender pay gap, which is quite a significant pay gap in the U.K.; it hovers around the 18% mark for people in full-time work. If you look at part-time work, the gender pay gap is more around 44%, so it's quite significant. I believe we're still amongst the highest in Europe for that; I think we're either the first or the second in Europe in terms of our gender pay gap. The government has set closing that gap as one of the key priorities within its PSA.

The link I've just been describing here between targets and resources in budgets is still not as transparent as we in the Women's Budget Group would like.

That's the machinery and that's some of the context within which we're working.

• (1000)

The Chair: Mrs. Veitch, we have one minute within which you need to wrap up. What the clerk tells me is that the presentation they received hasn't been translated, but they will submit it to the committee on Tuesday of next week.

If you could wrap up, it would be appreciated.

Thanks.

Ms. Janet Veitch: Let me focus quickly, then, on what we believe needs to be done.

I've said something about the gender equality duty. I'd also like to say that we believe that the capacity of government officials to undertake gender analysis with the policies they are developing is still very limited. Most officials received some training on the equalities angle, but not enough. We think that needs to be improved.

We also believe the political pressure on government departments to implement gender budgeting is extremely limited. It mainly derives from women ministers who have been committed to this agenda for a long time. The more women ministers we've had, the more significant gender budgeting has become. We would like to see that further prioritized.

We believe the equalities focal points within government, the machinery I've just been describing, is not well resourced. The Minister for Women, for example, has a number of other portfolios. She is leader of the House of Commons. She's also deputy leader of the Labour Party. So she has a number of other hats that make it difficult for her to focus on women as such.

There is a lack of gender-desegregated statistical data available to officials. We do have a gender statistics users group, which is an NGO that is supported by our Office for National Statistics and the Royal Statistical Society, and they do a lot of work to try to improve this, but more needs to be done.

Finally, I want to say that we consider that gender budgeting should include macroeconomic as well as microeconomic policy. We believe, for example, state accounting principles are not gender neutral, and we think they measure mainly male economic activity, rather than, for example, unpaid caring activity, which is largely undertaken by women. So we would urge you, if you are undertaking this, to look at both—macroeconomic and microeconomic issues.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now go to Professor Rubin. We have your presentation before us. You have 10 minutes, please.

Professor Marilyn Rubin (Professor of Public Administration and Economics, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York): Thank you for this invitation.

I would like to also say hello to Janet. I haven't seen her since we were in Korea.

Hello, Janet.

Ms. Janet Veitch: Hello.

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: The title of my presentation really says what this is. "Gender Budgeting in the United States: The San Francisco Experience" is the experience of gender budgeting in the United States. So my presentation is going to be somewhat different from the previous presentations because I will be focusing on a local government. One of the lessons here, really, is that gender budgeting can be implemented at all levels of government.

Here is just a brief word about San Francisco. It's one of the 20 largest cities in the United States. It has about 750,000 people and a budget of about \$6 billion, so it's a very large government.

Also, just for a very quick background, I know you're all familiar with the fact that the United States is, actually, the only industrialized

country in the world that has not ratified CEDAW, and that really sets the stage for San Francisco.

In 1998, in frustration with the failure of the United States government to ratify CEDAW, the City of San Francisco became the nation's first government to pass its own CEDAW ordinance. This is very important because the gender budget initiative in San Francisco is in the context of human rights, so human rights has set the stage for gender budgeting in San Francisco. The CEDAW ordinance requires that city departments use a gender and human rights analysis to review their policies regarding budget allocations, as well as employment and service delivery.

San Francisco's CEDAW resolution is significant in its explicit treatment of budget issues. Unlike the international CEDAW treaty adopted almost 20 years earlier, which makes no specific reference to public expenditures or revenues, CEDAW's ordinance in San Francisco specifically requires that agencies integrate the human rights principles set forth in the ordinance into local policies, programs, and budgetary decisions.

The adoption of the San Francisco CEDAW ordinance resulted from the efforts of a public-private coalition, spearheaded by the Women's Institute for Leadership Development, called WILD, and the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women. Other members of the coalition included Amnesty International and the Women's Foundation of California. I'm just going to quickly tell you about these groups.

WILD is the non-profit organization primarily responsible for the introduction and subsequent adoption of the CEDAW ordinance. The founders of WILD saw the ordinance as a way to implement the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. WILD spent 18 months building support for the ordinance among other advocacy groups, politicians, and the general public. This is critical, what WILD did.

WILD had a partner, the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women. The commission was established in 1975 by a resolution of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and in 1994 was made a permanent body under the city charter. San Francisco, I should say, is both a city and a county, so San Francisco has a city council that is also the county board of supervisors.

The commission, whose seven members are appointed by the mayor, establishes policy priorities that are implemented by the city's Department on the Status of Women. The involvement of the commission in the CEDAW coalition provided what has been called "a valuable government partner with key contacts in City Hall". So here we had women's groups, human rights groups, and the government all involved in implementing CEDAW.

Who else was involved? The Women's Foundation of California is a statewide organization focused on investing in women and girls. The foundation's strong relationships with many women's rights groups were a critical element in the coalition efforts to implement the CEDAW ordinance.

Also involved was Amnesty International, a worldwide human rights organization, with many chapters in the United States, and its western region chapter provided a membership base and a strong human rights network to the CEDAW coalition.

So this is really the background for gender budgeting in San Francisco. In addition, the board of supervisors, which is composed of 11 members, is headed by a president and is responsible for passing laws and budgets.

• (1005)

At the time of the CEDAW ordinance enactment, the board's president was Barbara Kaufman, a supporter of women's rights who was heavily involved in drafting the ordinance.

They also had an ally in Mayor Willie Brown, who was San Francisco's first African American mayor and was well-known for his support of human rights and CEDAW. He signed the ordinance at the conclusion of San Francisco's first mayor's summit for women.

The CEDAW ordinance specified the establishment of an 11-member task force to advise the mayor, the board of supervisors, and others, on the local implementation of CEDAW. Task force members included elected officials and representatives from a wide range of organizations: labour, government, and community advocates. There was a broad base here.

At the core of the ordinance is the requirement that the city integrate the human rights principles set forth in the treaty into local policies, programs, and budgetary decisions. To accomplish this, the ordinance required the city departments to undergo a gender analysis in three areas: budget allocation, service delivery, and employment practices.

In March 1999, consultants were hired to work with the task force to develop guidelines to help governments with the gender analysis, and there was a five-step process formulated to do this. Just quickly, the five steps were: collecting the data, analyzing the data, formulating recommendations, implementing an action plan, and monitoring the results.

For each of the five steps, the CEDAW guidelines provided information to departments as to what should be included in their gender analysis. Seven of the 50 departments in San Francisco were selected to undertake the first gender analysis.

I've just taken excerpts from the gender analyses of two of the departments to show you the challenges they said they faced in doing the budget component of their gender analysis.

The two departments I'm looking at are very different. One is the department of public works, and when they first heard about gender budgeting they said, "What is that? We're public works." But they did find out, when they began looking at all of the different aspects of public works, that it was not gender neutral and there was an impact on men and women. They said it was difficult to conduct the gender analysis because they didn't have the data. I know our previous speaker said that shouldn't stop them—and it really didn't stop them—but they said it made it difficult. I'll come back, hopefully, during the question period to talk more about what they actually did.

The other department that was interesting was the department of adult probation. They said their budget priorities did not reflect the consideration of gender; they reflected a consideration of the needs of the total clientele, even though the department of women and others looking at this found out that there definitely is a difference between what's available for females on probation and males on probation.

The city got all this information, and it recognized that to move its gender budgeting initiative along, it had to provide assistance to departments, especially in their efforts to collect gender disaggregated data. The city then came up with a five-year strategic plan—called for in the CEDAW ordinance—to provide the structure for departments to move ahead in integrating gender into everything they did, including their budgets. The action plan was prepared by the task force I referred to earlier, which worked with the city's department on the status of women, and it was supposed to provide a road map for how departments were to move along.

Now that I've given you the background, I'll tell you what happened.

• (1010)

The Chair: You have a minute to finish.

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: Okay.

The commission approved the strategic plan. There was one thing on budgeting in there that specifically said they had to integrate gender into every city department to achieve full equality, but nothing has happened yet. The strategies to operationalize this goal have never been implemented. However, the city did begin to examine the incorporation of gender into its budget decisions in preparation for an anticipated budget cut.

In 2003, there was going to be a very large cut in the budget, and the board passed a resolution urging the city departments to analyze the impact of these cuts. Sixteen departments actually looked at this; most of them said there was no specific impact by gender. However, the budget cuts never really were put in place, so there was never any effort made to see what would happen because nothing happened.

My last comment is that the new mayor and the new board of supervisors in San Francisco are actually saying they would like to work on having an analysis done of the impacts of the cuts in state aid to the city. There are steps being taken to implement gender into the budget, but it's happening very slowly.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to both our guests.

It was interesting to listen to you, especially with the different perspectives—one was national, the other was more local. It's encouraging to see that there was a great deal of commitment to follow-up.

My first question is to Madam Janet Veitch. You referred to an all-equality agenda, for which a minister is responsible. Can you expand on that? What would be the difference between a minister for the status of women and what you call an all-equality agenda?

You also mentioned that a government equality office has been set up. Is that within the Prime Minister's office, the finance department, the Privy Council Office, or where? Could you give us the results on the expenditure of the treasury project and how it works?

The new law intrigued me very much. Could you give us the parameters of the new law and when it was put forward? Was there any opposition? How is it being received by the various departments? Is there sufficient political will to make sure it's adhered to?

• (1015)

Ms. Janet Veitch: There's a lot to cover here in the short time we have.

If I could start off with the gender equality duty, the new law, I agree, is perhaps the most important. The idea of the new law is to make it compulsory for all public bodies—not just government departments but local government, public bodies, and anyone who is performing a public service—to promote gender equality in the provision of those services and in the design and development of their policies. This follows from a similar law on race equality, which was passed in the year 2000. So the same kind of principle of a public duty to promote race equality has been extended to disability and also now to gender.

I think it says something about the political will issue that you raise, that it has taken us so long to move from the race duty to the gender duty. It's taken us nearly 10 years to do that. So that's the first thing to say. What that means is that although it's been illegal in the U.K. to discriminate against women in policy and services since about 1970 to 1975, when different laws were passed, this law now goes a step further in requiring departments to look at the impact of their policies and consider whether they promote equality between the sexes. So that's a very considerable change, and a very exciting one, I think.

The second question you asked was about the government equalities office. Lots of information is available from the usual government sources on this. But let me tell you briefly that it has been set up as a separate department in its own right. This again is an innovation for us. Our equalities units traditionally have been embedded within departments, as you suggested, within cabinet office and others. This is now set up as its own department. However, necessarily, it is quite a small department. It doesn't have a large spending budget as the other departments do. Its permanent secretary, I believe, has been appointed at a slightly lower level than other permanent secretaries. So I suppose one of our questions in the Women's Budget Group would be how much authority it will have to influence other departments, and we look forward to seeing that happen.

You asked about the gender expenditure analysis project, and I did bring the report with me, but it is also on our website, which is wgb.org.uk. This project in essence was a project we undertook in partnership with Her Majesty's Treasury, and our project manager, who works full time for the Women's Budget Group, went on secondment to Treasury for two days a week to undertake this project. Professor McKay, from whom you heard earlier, and Professor Diane Elson, one of our members who unfortunately couldn't be here with me to give evidence today, were participants in this project. They provided the academic and technical expertise to train the treasury officials and the officials from the government departments that took part in the project. We analyzed two different government programs, two different expenditure programs, to see what the gender impact was. The findings were mainly that we didn't have sufficient gender desegregated data to undertake the analysis properly. I think that was the main learning point from it.

• (1020)

The Chair: Ms. Minna, you have one minute if you want to ask one last question.

Hon. Maria Minna: Thank you. That's very good.

One quick clarification. When you mention the new law, do I understand you correctly to say it covers local governments as well as the national and regional governments?

Ms. Janet Veitch: Yes, it does. Any organization fulfilling a public service, carrying out a public service—

Hon. Maria Minna: Would that also mean not-for-profit organizations?

Ms. Janet Veitch: No. It would mean organizations fulfilling a public function. So it could, for example, cover utilities companies.

Hon. Maria Minna: I see. Okay. That's interesting.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Maria Minna: Am I over?

The Chair: Yes, you are over.

Ms. Davidson, for seven minutes.

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

And thanks very much to our presenters. It's certainly been an interesting morning, in hearing the different aspects, as we have, from the different countries.

My questions, to start with, are going to be directed to Professor Rubin, please. It was very interesting to hear about the San Francisco experience. It's amazing that one city has passed the ordinance when the nation has not and when apparently others have not.

Have other jurisdictions looked at doing the same thing that San Francisco has done? Is this something that is catching on? That's one question.

I think you said at the end that there has been very little, if anything, done at this point. Have there been any improvements? Has this made a difference at all?

You also referred to some challenges that were apparent in the public works department. So I wondered if you would like to specify some of that and maybe just talk a bit more about those challenges.

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: I would like to also say that even though the United States has not ratified CEDAW, about 20 states and more than 50 cities have passed resolutions in support of the country doing this.

In terms of what individual municipalities have done, in September 2007, Fulton County, Georgia, which is the home of Atlanta, Georgia, passed a resolution with the objective of making gender equality central to the way Fulton County government works. One of the components of the resolution includes resource and budget allocation as key elements. It's particularly notable that this was not explicitly framed within a human rights context, as it was in San Francisco. But it really is framed in terms of gender equality. I think a critical thing here is that just like in San Francisco, where the head of the board of supervisors was an advocate, the person who has been pushing this is one of the members of the Fulton County Commission, whose name is Barbara Boxer. She was the one who brought this in. So Fulton County is actually doing this.

Just yesterday I got an e-mail from a woman there, saying they are actually moving along. We did some training there in December, and there were a number of people from various departments within Fulton County who were there to learn how to do a gender analysis, how to think of gender budgeting. The people who weren't there, though, were the people from the finance office. I think they realize that for this to move along, that has to happen.

Los Angeles passed an ordinance to provide for the local implementation of CEDAW, but Los Angeles is not moving along very quickly. They're still getting their feet wet. So in terms of other places in the U.S., that's sort of it right now.

In terms of what's happened in San Francisco, I didn't mean to imply that nothing has happened. In fact, there have been a number of areas where there's been a rather large step taken, especially in the area of violence against women and also in juvenile probation. The department of juvenile probation has actually been looking at how they house their young women relative to their young men when there's a need for housing. So there have been movements, but it's just that in the budgeting area it's been very slow. One of the reasons, I believe, is that for many of these advocate organizations budgeting has not been high on their list. They know it's important, but they've been looking more at violence against women and more pressing questions, they feel, than looking at the budget issue. I think that's one of the challenges, to really get all of this coalition active again and to get them to start to realize how important budgeting is in terms of everything else that has to get done.

Some of the other challenges...to get the people from the finance department to really say, "This is what we're going to do".

•(1025)

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Could you comment on the specifics with the public works department that you referred to in your presentation?

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: Oh, I'm sorry. When the department of public works was first approached with this, they said that fixing sidewalks and street lighting really does not have any gender implications.

Everybody is affected by this. The department on the status of women and other people in San Francisco sat down and worked with them, and they came to realize, for example, that when they do curb cuts for wheelchairs and strollers, most of the people who push those wheelchairs and strollers are women. So there is a differential impact. They also saw, for example, with street lights, that in areas near parks and other rather dark areas, the people who are most in danger of crime are women.

They actually came to realize that there were gender implications of many of their expenditures, but they had a very difficult time in collecting the data that could actually document these implications.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: What do you see as a way forward for your group and for the San Francisco experience? How is it going to be ensured that it continues and that there are improvements made?

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: Well, one of the things—and this is very important—is the leadership in San Francisco. If you know San Francisco, its leadership is always in the forefront of doing things like human rights. They feel that promoting gender equity is very important.

The mayor has now said he is going to have more work done on trying to look at the impacts of spending. He wasn't actually ready to have them look at the impacts of city spending. But because there are all of these budgetary problems at the state level, the mayor and the finance people are saying that a good place to start would be looking at the impact by gender, race, and other characteristics of the state cuts. This would be a way for the city to use this information to say to the state, "Look at the differential impacts of your cuts on men and women, people of different races, people with disabilities and so forth." So that's one area.

There's also a lot of movement in non-budgetary areas such as violence against women, the treatment of young women in jails, and young women on probation and so forth. But on the budget front, I mentioned to you what is happening.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We now go to Madame Deschamps.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Thank you.

Good morning, mesdames.

I listened carefully to the testimony of each of you, who come from elsewhere on this big planet. I heard about all the efforts made by each of the organizations to make submissions to each of your governments to put in place policies to improve the status and economic security of women.

Based on your experience, could you tell me which policy is the most effective? What should the government focus on to improve women's economic security, in particular? Should we talk about tax policy or income tax cuts? Should we focus more on all matters pertaining to income support, such as employment insurance benefits and pension income? Should we guarantee a minimum? When I say a minimum, I'm thinking of our Guaranteed Income Supplement and the minimum wage, which should be indexed to the cost of living to guarantee a minimum level for the poorest people in our societies.

Can you give me an answer based on your experience?

• (1030)

[English]

Ms. Janet Veitch: There are many things we would like to see—we have a long shopping list. Looking at economic support, I would say that within the U.K. we have a system of child care tax credits where parents, particularly mothers, are able to get a tax credit to enable them to return to the labour market and pay for child care. That has been an extremely successful policy in allowing women to access the labour market.

More recently, we have also recognized caring responsibilities in the pension system. I would like to see more done on this, but it has been very helpful. People are now given pension credit towards the state pension for periods when they are outside the labour market, undertaking caring work. The tax credit system has had a redistributive effect—taking money from men's income and giving it to women, which is why we have called this policy “From the Wallet to the Purse”.

Finally, our national child care strategy, which this government brought in nearly 10 years ago, is a proper U.K.-wide strategy to ensure that there are good-quality affordable child care places for all women who need them. This gives women access to the labour market, and it's an excellent policy.

On all of these, I would want to see more done, but I think those are useful areas.

If I have time later on, I would like to refer to the work on violence against women. I think it is a key cause and consequence of women's inequality, including their poverty.

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: I agree with Janet that these are all critical issues, but I think there is something overlaying all of this; namely, when tax policy and income support programs are considered, there should always be a gender component. That's the important thing. What happens is that many times gender budgeting is over on its own. People talk about gender budgeting and then they talk about government policy. I think what's important is to bring them together.

For example, in the United States, when President Bush's tax cuts were put into effect, people did a lot of analysis on tax incidence. You heard that these were tax cuts for the rich, but nobody really looked at the gender impacts. Nobody looked at the income distribution and said who was going to benefit by gender.

Critical in all of the policies you just mentioned—and in gender budgeting initiatives, tax policy, income support policies, minimum wages—is to get gender considered as an integral part at the very

beginning when analysis is going to take place. How is this going to effect women? How is this going to effect men?

You asked which of these is most important. They're all important, but I'd like to know what the impact is on women and how it is going to be different from the impact on men.

[Translation]

The Chair: You have one minute left, Ms. Deschamps.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: We've talked a lot about women's economic security, but I would like to make a brief detour to talk about women's rights.

I believe that we all agree on this subject and that we have all criticized the lack of funding within our governments and the under-representation of women in our government institutions. We have not yet achieved parity. We also have major groups that, through their work and research, can provide a lot of information, tools and recommendations to our government bodies to improve, among other things, the law, defence and economic security of women.

I would like to know your opinion on this. I think we could provide more funding to these women's groups whose studies are often highly relevant to the issue of improving the status of women and gender equality.

• (1035)

[English]

Ms. Janet Veitch: I'll just say quickly yes. I know you heard from Debbie Budlender previously, and one of the key elements of gender budgeting for Debbie, I know, is the use of active and informed NGOs.

And I would say you have the expertise already in your country of women's organizations that have done a lot of research on this. That activity can easily be harnessed, and a very small amount of money is required to allow that to happen. So I would absolutely support that as a mechanism for getting women's voices and women's expertise into the policy-making process.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, madam.

[English]

We now go to Madam Mathysen, for seven minutes.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to address my first question to Ms. Veitch. You were talking about the impact of violence against women and didn't get to expand on that. I wonder if you could, please.

Ms. Janet Veitch: Yes, certainly. This is something we've identified as a key cause and consequence of women's inequality generally—but specifically their poverty—for a whole range of reasons.

For example, for a labour market that is heavily gendered, as our labour market is—and most are across the world—women are kept out of male-dominated segments of the labour market by sexual harassment and by violence generally. We think a lot can be done to address that and a lot more needs to be done.

Specifically, the Women's Budget Group in the U.K. is a member of the End Violence Against Women coalition in the U.K., which, each year, does an audit of all government departments' work on violence against women. We've just published this year's report, called *Making the Grade?* We have a specific question in that to each department on the resources and the budgets they put into their violence against women initiatives. And it's very noticeable, as Marilyn said, that they don't actually know how much money they're putting into these issues.

We believe that is a key indicator of the political will around violence against women and also the understanding of what needs to be done and how it relates to the remit of every single department of government.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

Ms. Rubin, I want to give you a chance to answer the question in regard to support and funding for women's organizations, NGOs, doing the research and providing the information to government in order to make policy decisions.

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: I think it's critical. One of the themes you hear over and over again is the lack of data. Many of these organizations are working on how to build these databases where an excuse can't be given of, “We don't know”, or “We can't do anything because we don't know how we're affecting men and women differently”, and some of these groups are actively involved in data collection.

But it's really interesting. I ran out of time before, but I just want to mention something. Somebody else had asked me about where else this is taking place in the United States. An interesting place where gender budgeting is taking place is in Korea, and that's where I met Janet.

The reason I'm bringing this up is that in Korea there is actually a gender budget research centre that is part of the Korean Women's Development Institute, which is actually part of the governmental structure. Since Korea is under mandate to have a gender-informed budget in place by the year 2010, they felt this was something they wanted to set up.

So I would go even further. Not only do I think NGOs should receive funding, but I think if this effort is really going to be undertaken, there should be a concerted way to see if there could be some sort of research centre funded that focuses specifically on gender budgeting.

I know in Canada there are very active women's groups; they're all over the country. But I think it would be very useful to think of perhaps a gender budget research centre.

● (1040)

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

My next question was in regard to South Korea. I knew you had done some work there with Ms. Veitch.

You sound very enthusiastic. How successful have these initiatives been so far?

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: The budget has to be in place by 2010, and they have been working. I think they have run into challenges, the challenges that have been faced in many other places, and one of the challenges has been getting different departments within the Korean government to actually understand this. It's interesting to me that this was a legislative mandate. This mandate actually came out of the Korean legislature, and I find it very interesting that in a lot of the information that comes out of Korea, the people in the National Assembly refer to the other branch of government as “the government”. I'm not used to that, because in the United States, when we talk about the government, we talk about all branches of government. We don't just differentiate and talk about, for example, the Congress and then the government. We usually talk about the executive branch.

They are trying to do this. They've had a lot of analysis done by women in local government. They've had a large number of women's organizations working on this for many years, but nothing has been done yet because this is for 2010, so that's what they're working toward. They're working toward putting this in place by 2010.

I don't know if Janet saw things differently.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

Ms. Janet Veitch: Could I just add a similar point to support Marilyn's point about funding the government machine? Status of Women Canada has a lot of this expertise embedded within the government, but I understand that cuts have made it very difficult. Funding cuts in Status of Women Canada have made it very hard for them to do the excellent work they have been doing for a number of years. They were always considered by the international feminist community to be leaders in the field and gave Canada a fabulous reputation, but the cuts made a big difference to their ability to deliver that to you, I think.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Thank you. I appreciate that.

The Chair: We will go now to Madame Boucher. It will be for four minutes, because we have a time constraint for some business.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): I will split my time.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, mesdames. That is very interesting.

Some previous witnesses said that gender budgets weren't being introduced as a result of a lack of political leadership. Some said that it was as a result of a lack of data. The further we advance on this issue, the more interesting it becomes and the more we would like to have a solid foundation, but it seems to be a very big issue at the national level. You are at the municipal level.

Are you encountering any reluctance regarding gender budgets on the part of decision-makers? Despite their good will, are parliamentarians, leaders or any administrator afraid to put forward certain measures because they think this is too big an issue?

• (1045)

[English]

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: When you're dealing with a municipal government, it's very different from when you're dealing with a national government. Even at the municipal level there has been a concern that this is a very large undertaking. That's actually why San Francisco started with a few departments. In fact, they're wondering now, having to make a decision, whether to ask all departments to do this or just start with some departments. This is a concern even at the municipal level.

My background is a little bit different from some of your other witnesses. My background really comes out of a budgeting background, and I've worked in other budget reforms over the years. Whenever there is a budget reform, everybody throws up their hands and says, "We'll never be able to do this". Some of them have been successful and some of them haven't.

I don't think it's bad to not necessarily do everything at once. I don't think it's bad to start perhaps in some departments, not necessarily women's departments, and use experiences there to then build on that, because then there is at least something that says to departments that this is what's been done and these are the problems they have had and this is how they've solved them, and we can go from there. Doing it incrementally, to me, is not a bad idea.

I don't know how Janet feels about this.

The Chair: Bruce, for one minute only.

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

It occurred to me that we have a motion coming up in the near future that discusses the whole question of utilizing legislation to enshrine some of these important principles to, of course, support the objectives but actually to put some stronger accountability mechanisms in place.

Have there been any lessons learned by your approach to any such measures?

Ms. Janet Veitch: One thing we did find was that we enacted a sort of gender equality duty in Northern Ireland alone a few years earlier than the one we've just enacted in the U.K. One of the things we did there was focus too much on process. Every government body had to submit its gender equality scheme to the Equal Opportunities Commission. What happened was that people got bogged down in doing that.

What we've tried to do with this current gender equality duty is to make it output focused rather than input and process focused. That would be the key lesson, I would say, that you should try to learn from that. Don't make it so that people have to just tick boxes, but to think about outcomes and closing specific equality gaps. I think that's the key thing that makes our law useful.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: That's very helpful. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

For the last question, we'll go to Ms. Neville, for four minutes.

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

Thank you very much to both of you for your presentations this morning. They've been very helpful.

I want to follow up on Mr. Stanton's question. My question is similar to his. It relates to the legislation.

You just talked about looking at outputs. I'm also interested in knowing what you do as it relates to compliance with the legislation. Are there any sanctions in place for departments as it relates to gender budget initiatives, and if not, should there be?

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: May I take that first?

The Chair: Yes, please.

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: One of the interesting things in San Francisco was that when the board of supervisors passed their resolution in 2003 requiring governments to put together the impact of the budget cuts on their services, there were no sanctions. So one of the questions, to me, has always been, what kinds of sanctions should there be? It's almost like when you have a government in the United States that's using all sorts of performance measures and doesn't tie those performance measures to any kind of budget allocations.

But there has always been hesitation to do that, about what kinds of sanctions you place, how strong those sanctions should be, and whether those sanctions should be tied to your future budget allocation. I think that's a very serious issue to be undertaken.

• (1050)

Hon. Anita Neville: Or tied to performance, as you indicated, performance review.

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: Yes.

Hon. Anita Neville: I'm just waiting for the other comment.

Ms. Janet Veitch: If I may add quickly to that, under the gender equality duty, it is possible for individuals to seek judicial review if they believe the gender equality duty hasn't been complied with. We've produced a tool kit for individuals to use at the local level to try to enforce the gender duty. That's one thing.

Secondly, we have a well-established auditing process. There are audit commissions for all public bodies, which then make reports to Parliament, and there is a parliamentary select committee that oversees all that work. So although it doesn't have equalities as a central issue, because it's overseeing all the auditing work, it will look at this as part of that.

So it's not adequate, but there are some steps towards it.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

To our two panellists, if you have any final statements to make before we say goodbye, I'd invite you to do so. I thank you profusely for being here and for giving us your time.

Janet, would you like to go first, followed by Professor Rubin?

Ms. Janet Veitch: Yes.

The main thing I would hope you would do is look at some of the work that's going on internationally, where I think there are some very successful examples of gender budgeting that you can simply adapt to the Canadian context.

I know that Diane Elson, if she'd been able to be here with me today, would have said it's the triangle of having progressive elected politicians, effective government institutions and trained officials who understand gender analysis, and active and informed NGOs. That triangle is the most effective way forward. If you can address those three issues, those are the ones that I think you should be focusing on.

I could say a lot more, but I'll stop there.

The Chair: Thank you.

Professor Rubin.

Prof. Marilyn Rubin: I think the fact that you're holding these hearings is a wonderful example of the mindset that's now in the Canadian Parliament. It's certainly far ahead of what's happening in the United States on the federal level.

I agree with Janet. It is critical for there to be a close relationship with elected leaders, political leaders, and grassroots. Experience has shown that one cannot do it alone.

You're all familiar with the initiative in Australia, which was always given as one of the primary examples of gender budgeting. Of course, for a while there was political will but the grassroots people were not involved. Yet, in other places you see the opposite. I think what Janet said is critical: looking at international experience is seeing what's worked and what hasn't.

My last comment is that a lot of what we've seen in gender budgeting is really just gender budgeting initiatives. Gender budgeting has been slow to take hold within governments. A lot of steps have been taken, but we're still waiting for gender budgeting to become something that's done as a matter of course when budgets are put together.

The Chair: Thank you both. We would like to share best practices and whatever you have.

Janet, I think you talked about the grassroots women's organizations that are going to participate in the local budget processes. If you could, send us some information on how the voice of experience is going to be successful.

In Britain there was an analysis that violence against women costs the treasury...how much?

Ms. Janet Veitch: It's 24 billion pounds sterling.

The Chair: We would appreciate that information as well.

Ms. Janet Veitch: I will send it.

The Chair: On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank you for your excellent presentations and for being here to share your knowledge with us.

• (1055)

Ms. Janet Veitch: Thank you.

The Chair: Because we have video conferencing, we do not have to suspend the meeting, but I'll bring the gavel down to suspend the meeting and then to start it again.

The clerks have given you a gender-based analysis in the central agency and a gender-based analysis of the federal budget. The summary of evidence was provided to each of you electronically on April 2, 2008. You have an updated version of the work plan.

As the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, we have been studying gender budgeting. We had advised the clerk and the analyst to find witnesses and to make necessary amendments if they did not find witnesses.

Please review this material. Other changes have already come to our attention. On April 10, the Assembly of First Nations Women's Council would like to appear on culturally relevant gender-based analysis. Since neither Caroline Moser or Dr. Jyoti Tuladhar have confirmed, we might be able to put them in.

Hon. Maria Minna: I'm sorry, who were they again, Madam Chair?

The Chair: The Assembly of First Nations Women's Council.

Hon. Maria Minna: Okay.

The Chair: For April 10, there are two people who have not confirmed yet.

As we move into May, we will need suggested witnesses for the work plan. Supply us with a list of witnesses as we move forward. If there's any need for clarification, advise us.

We now have a motion that we're going to deal with.

Yes, Madame Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: On April 15, why is Nancy Peckford not there with Rob Wright from Finance Canada?

The Chair: Ms. Peckford is not an economist. She is....

Hon. Anita Neville: An advocate.

The Chair: She is an advocate, so that's why she has been looking at witnesses. The two economists have been asked to come, but if you want Nancy Peckford to come, we will invite her.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I'd like to have another view, yes.

The Chair: Sure. We will invite her for April 15.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: For April 15.

The Chair: And if you want to propose a different witness, you are more than welcome to propose any witnesses.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Sometimes I like to have the

[*Translation*]

women from Quebec. I said at the outset that I would like to meet the people from the provincial government. It would be good to hear from Nancy Peckford on April 15, since she has always accompanied the other two witnesses.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will.

Does anybody have an objection to Nancy Peckford?

Do you have any other witnesses in mind, as long as we can keep them to a reasonable limit? Please send your list to the clerk at the earliest, so they can be invited.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: It's very important. I will send a list to the clerk.

The Chair: Okay. There is a motion before us.

Ms. Minna, I think you wanted to advise us that your motion can be postponed?

Hon. Maria Minna: No. Madam Chair, you suggested at the last meeting that my motion with respect to the commissioner should wait until we have the Auditor General come before us. When is that?

The Chair: April 10.

Hon. Maria Minna: April 10.

The Chair: Sheila Fraser and Ron Thompson.

Hon. Maria Minna: So we can deal with that motion right after that, and maybe the legislation at the same time.

The Chair: Okay, fair enough.

Madame Demers, we have your motion before us. Could you read your motion for the record, please?

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Certainly, Madam Chair.

That the Standing Committee on the Status of Women informs the Standing Committee on Justice of its formal opposition towards Bill C-484, which questions the rights of women to abortion.

[English]

The Chair: I had the clerk advise me there was a question—

Mr. Mike Wallace: May I ask a question?

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Wallace.

Mr. Mike Wallace: This is a private member's bill, Madam Chair, and I have mixed feelings on the actual motion. I voted for it to go to committee, but we'll see what comes out of committee, whether I stay in favour or not. I've had a private member's bill myself and was happy that folks supported me at least to get it to committee, and we had a discussion there and it went to Justice.

The words “formal opposition”—is it in order for a private member's bill, for a committee to take a position on it? I'd like the clerk to clarify that for me.

• (1100)

The Chair: The clerk did, on page 448 of Marleau and Montpetit. It is a resolution that makes a declaration of opinion or purpose and it's similar to the resolution of the House. So the bottom line is, yes, it is in order. It is her opinion. It is the committee's opinion. It's the declaration of purpose.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Then I'd like to move an amendment.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Mike Wallace: My amendment is that we strike the words “formal opposition towards” and substitute “major concerns with”.

Madam Chair, the reason I'm doing that is I haven't made up my mind yet on this particular item, and I just happened to be here today for this. I'm not sure how everybody voted around the table on this. I

think there's a variety of opinion in the House that may change based on what happens at the justice committee, if and when it comes back. I think it would be more appropriate for this committee to say we have major concerns, because it's a private member's bill and it was a free vote—I know for our side and I'm sure it was for most—particularly when it comes to the right of women to access abortion. The justice committee should definitely be looking at those issues when the bill goes there.

So it's a bit of a difference. It doesn't say the committee is completely opposed, because it's an individual decision, and that's why I think it gives a little more flexibility. If the amendment changed to that, I would support the motion. Otherwise I can't support it.

The Chair: Madame Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Chair, I e-mailed you the documentation concerning the 37 states that have an act similar to that proposed by Mr. Epp. We have concerns because there are reasons to be concerned. A genuine witch hunt was triggered in the United States after these kinds of laws went into effect.

The women's groups of Quebec and Canada are urgently asking us to oppose this bill. They are very much afraid. A significant mobilization is underway, not only in Quebec, but across Canada as well. The person who sent us this information is American. She is even concerned for Canada because she knows how harmful these laws are for the women of her country.

Madam Chair, I can't support an amendment that would reduce the scope of the motion I have introduced this morning. If my colleague wishes to oppose it, I regret that, but I'm going to request a recorded vote.

[English]

The Chair: So you do not want to replace the words “formal opposition” with “major concerns”?

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: No.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

Madame Boucher.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I'll try to be quite clear. Everyone here knows that I voted against Mr. Epp's bill. If we had to do it again, I would do the same thing, but, out of respect for those who do not think the way I do, I'm going to vote against this motion. We passed a motion to the effect that each of us would talk to our colleagues in caucus.

We are at the second stage, in the context of another committee, and it is in this committee that any amendments must be made. So I'm going to vote against this motion. It's a free vote; we live in a democracy.

•(1105)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Davidson.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Before I make my comment, Madam Chair, I'd like to ask how long you're allowing this to go. We're past our time. We do have other commitments.

The Chair: Yes, I know.

I'll take two more interventions and then we'll vote.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: I think this is an issue that everybody should be allowed the time to speak to. It's a very controversial issue. It an issue that was a free vote in the House of Commons. It's a private member's bill. As my colleagues said, there are many varied reasons for why people voted the way they did, and I don't think this committee has had the opportunity to debate it and make a committee decision. Again, what will happen here today will be an individual opinion. If we're going to put an individual opinion forth as a committee position, then that is wrong. We need to have time to debate it.

I think this meeting needs to be adjourned. If the motion needs to be carried forth, we need to have the time to debate it so that it is a committee decision.

The Chair: Ms. Minna.

Hon. Maria Minna: Madam Chair, we all understand this is a private member's bill, and as is the case in the House, it is a vote according to how each member feels. They're not whipped votes. I would think that in a committee structure we'd do the same thing; we vote as if it were a private member's bill.

The members around this table were well informed on the bill before we voted in the House. Otherwise some of us wouldn't have voted the way we did. The information is there. I think people know pretty clearly how they feel about this. So today the vote could be that everyone will vote according to their feelings toward this issue, as they did in the House.

Probably we should take it to a vote and get on with it, because it's not a major thing. It's only a message to the justice committee. The justice committee doesn't have to take it into consideration or listen to it—or act on it, for that matter.

The Chair: Madame Deschamps.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I find the comments Ms. Minna just made really persuasive. This is a private member's bill, and each of us was free to take a position on this subject based on our conscience. However, I'm not sitting on the Foreign Affairs Committee, but rather on the Committee on the Status of Women. I'm not here as a citizen; I was elected by people whom I have a duty to represent as faithfully as possible.

My colleague Nicole, from the Bloc Québécois, and I have made a number of addresses and submissions to various groups. We have also listened to them. To make a decision, I have to go beyond my conscience. I must also, of necessity, check with my peers as to what has previously been done.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Deschamps, Ms. Minna is requesting a vote.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: All right, we'll vote.

[*English*]

The Chair: What I would like to do is have a vote on the amendment to the motion.

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: On the main motion.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The last thing I want to say before I adjourn the committee is to ask you, please, to think about what you would like to study in May and submit it to the clerk.

The meeting is adjourned.

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