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Tuesday, June 12, 2018

Chair

Mrs. Karen Vecchio

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Good afternoon, everybody. We have quorum. Welcome to meeting 108 of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. This meeting is being held in public.

Today I would like to welcome our four guests. We have Jane Hilderman, executive director of the Samara Centre for Democracy. As individuals today, we have Louise Carbert, associate professor of political science at Dalhousie University; Sylvia Bashevkin, professor from the political science department at the University of Toronto; and Jeanette Ashe, chair, political science, Douglas College.

Today each of our witnesses will have seven minutes, starting with Jane.

Go ahead for the first seven minutes, Jane.

Ms. Jane Hilderman (Executive Director, Samara Centre for Democracy): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you about the barriers facing women in politics.

I am the executive director of the Samara Centre for Democracy.

[*English*]

Samara is a non-partisan charity dedicated to strengthening Canada's democracy. Its action-oriented research and programming are aimed at making our parliamentary system more accessible, more responsive, and more inclusive.

Samara believes that a House of Commons that better reflects the diversity of Canadians and their experiences will generate a more resilient and responsive Parliament and can improve Canadians' willingness to participate in public life, yet many groups, women among them, remain under-represented on Parliament Hill and in public life. Samara welcomes this important discussion about what is necessary to help create the conditions for a diversity of Canadians, women especially, to enter politics.

With this in mind, I want to use my time with you today to draw on some of the research that Samara has conducted over the years and that provides insight on the obstacles women face. I will do this from three vantage points: at the level of elected leadership, at the level of the broader political workplace culture, and at the level of everyday political citizenship.

Let's begin at the level of elected leadership.

Samara undertakes exit interviews with former members of Parliament out of a belief that they are uniquely placed, having served on the front lines of our democracy, to provide advice and insight about the health of our democracy. The results from our latest round of exit interviews include the perspectives of 54 MPs from across the country and across the political spectrum who all sat in the 41st Parliament. Of the 54 we interviewed, 23 were women.

The first report in the series was published today. It's called “Flip the Script: Reclaiming the legislature to reinvigorate representative democracy”. We plan more reports to follow, including a deeper look at the role of gender. For today, I'll share some unpublished insights from the men and women we interviewed.

These interviews revealed several key themes that generally align with other research on women in politics.

Broadly speaking, many of these women reported that they felt their credibility and their authority as a candidate and as an MP were often more open to doubt than those of their male counterparts. The sexism they experienced often took subtle forms. Women reported that they felt their opinions did not carry as much weight as those of their male counterparts, whether this was in caucus or in this very committee. This double standard tended to be even more acutely felt by MPs who were young women.

In response to this environment, women reported that they were compelled to work harder, prepare more, and speak twice as loud in order to be taken seriously and to be heard. Even this tactic did not solve some of the more shockingly basic difficulties that women face in Parliament, including inadequate washrooms, the need for more changing tables for babies, and there being no room left in Parliament's day care.

More evidence from Samara finds that the experience of women in politics is also quantifiably different. A year ago, we surveyed sitting MPs—you—on the topic of heckling, and 84 of your colleagues responded. This research showed that despite sitting in the very same room, 67% of women MPs reported gendered heckling versus just 20% of their male counterparts.

Samara is currently collaborating with the all-party democracy caucus to survey sitting MPs once again. This time, the survey asks you, as members of Parliament, to indicate your interest in different reforms to the way Parliament works, some of which have been raised as possible means to improve the experience of MPs with young families—for example, changing Friday sittings. We are pleased to share with you that to date 60 MPs have completed the survey. We hope more will before the end of the sitting. We'd be pleased to report back to the committee on the results.

Let's take it to a wider level and talk about the workplace culture around women in politics.

We know that in the last year the #MeToo movement has disrupted every sector. Politics is no exception. Earlier this year, Samara partnered with The Canadian Press on a survey of Hill staff. Never before had Hill staff been systematically surveyed about their experiences with harassment, and sexual harassment specifically. We had 266 staff respond, and 122 of those identified as women. The results were pretty sobering: one in four indicated that they had directly experienced sexual harassment while working on Parliament Hill.

These results suggest that the workplace at the heart of our democracy can become and must become a safer space. This is not a problem isolated to political workforces—far from it—but we know that it can have a particularly severe repercussion for democracy if certain groups are less likely to feel that they belong in politics.

● (1535)

Those groups remain less represented, not only in elected office but also in the ranks of political staff and campaign volunteers, those who also shape the decision-making of our country.

Finally, let's talk about everyday political citizenship.

For the past five years, Samara has put out an annual call to recognize what we call everyday political citizens, ordinary people who are involved in their community and just trying to make a difference. Several hundred nominations pour in from across the country, and a jury helps us whittle the list down to 15 finalists.

Here's the good news. Since the start of the project, women have consistently made up over half the finalists every year. In short, many women are the mobilizers, organizers, advocates, and educators in our communities.

However, too often, when we speak to these nominees about being recognized as an everyday political citizen, many say they don't think the work they were doing was very political. An entire group of leaders in our communities seem to overlook the link between the work they do in the community and formal politics. It is incumbent upon us to try to rehabilitate what it means to be political, and to better help women connect their democratic engagement in their communities to formal politics.

Samara welcomes this discussion on measures to overcome these barriers and improve the substantive representation of women in politics, and I'm very glad this committee's approach is considering multiple sites and different stages of women's involvement in politics, be they civic education, candidate recruitment for public office, or changes to parliament itself.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

I will be pleased to answer your questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move over to Louise Carbert for seven minutes.

Professor Louise Carbert (Associate Professor, Political Science, Dalhousie University, As an Individual): All right. Overall, we know that progress in women's candidacy in elections has been disappointing, but in the midst of that overall stagnation there are some changes and some bright spots that can inform new strategies that I want to talk about. In particular, there's an emerging shift across the rural-urban spectrum that I'm going to be talking about here.

This shortfall in rural women being elected has been identified going back to the 1950s in Canada. I went to update this material in the early 2000s and I found the same effect in the House of Commons and in the Atlantic provinces. A metropolitan district was consistently more than twice as likely to elect a woman than was a rural district. This effect is felt far beyond the strictly rural areas, going into small towns and small and medium-sized cities. It also crosses regional and partisan divides.

What's up with this? What caused it? I went out and interviewed 241 rural women leaders across Atlantic Canada and the western provinces. We had open-ended, wide-ranging discussions about leadership, public life, and running for elected office. My major findings were that there are more than enough qualified potential candidates to supply a significant increase. There's no evidence of rural traditionalism, and instead I had these three categories of barriers: an alarming reluctance to step forward on the part of the women themselves, intense competition for the high-prestige job of a politician, and the risk-averse gatekeepers.

I will say, though, that there was more enthusiasm and more curiosity about politics in those few areas where the local economy was thriving. That's significant, because it was really striking how often these conversations came back around to the mechanisms by which a fragile local economy added to those barriers. It came around to the fact that many non-metropolitan communities depend on single-industry resource extraction, and it's also a fact that the second-wave feminist movement that brought more women into public life in the 1980s and the 1990s coincided with a long slide in commodity prices and an ecological crisis. I came to the realization that bad timing in global markets exacerbated the rural deficit in women elected, and that was from my interviews in the early 2000s, when there really didn't seem to be much hope in rural Canada.

Now, fast-forward to today. Global markets turned. There was a broad resurgence in commodity prices, and here you have the Bank of Canada commodity price index above trend from 2005, and strongly below trend in the 1980s and 1990s. This is different commodity prices together. This is not just oil. That resurgence in commodity prices had a broad impact throughout Canada. This is not just oil. This includes Quebec as well. It had an especially strong impact on resource-rich areas in rural Canada.

It's fascinating to see, after all those decades of lagging behind, that suddenly rural Canada is starting to elect more women. This is a visual representation put together by Miranda Sculthorp over the last four federal elections.

Now let's put it on a more quantitative footing. Here we see the 18 women who were elected from the most rural districts in Canada according to Elections Canada designations. You see there that it's 24%, which is almost at the national average of 26%. Now of course we're not happy with 24%, but it's really quite a remarkable change from the early 2000s, when the ratio was approximately 10% rural women to 30% metropolitan women.

This isn't just a transition that's in the House of Commons. It's showing up in some provincial legislatures as well.

Here's Nova Scotia in 2017, when we had nine women winning the 31 seats from outside of Halifax. That's 29%. You see it's all three parties. Again, that's a big change from 2003, when there was only one woman from the 34 seats outside of Halifax.

At the other end of the country, we have British Columbia, and by my count we have 37% women. That is 12 women elected from the 32 most rural districts. Again, this is a big change from the early 2000s.

Other recent provincial elections have had mixed results. Manitoba is an exception here. Party motivation really has become key, which leads to the question, why are motivated parties making a difference now and not earlier? The Liberals have made a big reversal here.

● (1545)

I think the EDAs, the electoral district associations, are much more receptive now than when Paul Martin was leader. As you will remember, Martin and Chrétien used to talk about promoting women as well. The NDP has always been the most woman-friendly party, and it's winning more non-metropolitan seats and forming provincial governments where we haven't seen them before. We're also seeing glimpses of the mainstreaming of the agenda among a broader array of parties; you just saw the Nova Scotia Conservatives and the B.C. Liberals.

All in all, it speaks to a growing quality of democracy that erodes barriers.

One contributing factor is the easing of economic distress. Another factor is a growing emphasis on transparency and accountability, and that's important for women. Another factor is that civil society organizations are really making an impact. Here I'll add that we had our Nova Scotia Daughters of the Vote event, and it was really interesting to see how the Nova Scotia Conservatives were just so keen to be included and participate in that event.

If I'm going to wrap it all up, I would recommend that initiatives recognize that there are recent changes in the patterns and that electoral prospects outside the big cities really are improving, but at the same time, I don't think urban districts are immune from backsliding. Also, any direct initiative should be balanced by attention to the pervasive forces that are crucial to electoral prospects and governments should build economic vitality in every part, because pockets of distress harm the quality of democracy, to women's detriment.

As well, continue to build accountability and transparency.

Finally, nurture a multipartisan culture of recruiting more women candidates.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's excellent.

We're now going to Sylvia Bashevkin. You have seven minutes.

Professor Sylvia Bashevkin (Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, As an Individual): Thank you.

I commend the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for its interest in barriers facing women in politics, and I appreciate the opportunity to appear today.

Thanks to the support of the SSHRC, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, I have been able to study for an extended period many of the questions that face the committee. Given the open, public availability of my findings, I will not repeat here what I have stated in print.

What concerns me today is our neglect of very powerful brakes on the supply of women candidates. These obstacles come into play long before the formal recruitment and nomination processes begin. In particular, I want to highlight the threats to personal security that face many women in public life, which in turn discourage potential participants from entering the political process.

Many Canadians have heard about and are concerned about violence against women, including the particular challenges faced by aboriginal women. Many may have also read news reports about the 2003 assassination in a Stockholm department store of the Swedish foreign minister, Anna Lindh, who ranked among the most high-profile supporters of Sweden joining the euro zone in the European Union. Some Canadians will likely recall the shooting in 2011 of U. S. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in the parking lot of a Tucson supermarket where she was holding a meeting with her local constituents. More recently, Canadians may remember the murder in 2016 of the British Labour MP Jo Cox, a proponent of Britain's remaining in the European Union, when she was outside a local library while on her way to meet with her constituents.

We rarely discuss or even acknowledge acts of violence against women legislators in political systems that are similar to Canada's, even though these events should haunt us. We know that men parliamentarians in Sweden, the U.S., and the U.K. have also faced violent threats, but historically there were far more men than women in elective office, so the probability of the assassination or attempted assassination of a woman politician, assuming such attacks are random, would be much lower for a woman than for a man.

At the time of the incidents I described, Anna Lindh, Gabrielle Giffords, and Jo Cox were all mothers and they were all progressive politicians with very high public profiles. The subsequent investigations indicated that each was explicitly targeted by a male assassin. This pattern is consistent with international data gathered by the National Democratic Institute, which is a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington, D.C. The mission of the NDI is to strengthen democratic political institutions. In March 2016 the NDI launched a social media initiative known as #NotTheCost, Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics. If we read the NDI website, and I quote:

> Over the last few decades, gender equality in political life and public offices has grown substantially, bringing with it a host of positive effects for women, democracy and society. However, as more women have emerged as activists, elected leaders, officials and voters, they have encountered increasing levels of harassment, intimidation, psychological abuse — in person and, increasingly, online. This backlash discourages women from engaging politically, creates a serious barrier to their ability to freely and safely pursue their rights to political participation, and undermines democracy.

The text of the website continues, and I quote:

> Violence against women in politics fits within the international definition of violence against women. It encompasses all forms of aggression, coercion and intimidation against women as political actors simply because they are women and is used to control, limit or prevent women's full and equal political participation. This violence is both physical and psychological in nature, and includes the growing trend of cyberbullying and other forms of online violence. Women who are victims of violence may know their attackers, or the perpetrators may be unknown — even anonymous or acting across national borders, in the case of online violence.
>
> While political violence happens against both men and women, violence against women in politics targets women because they are women, in ways that apply particularly to women (e.g., sexual violence and sexist attacks), and discourages all women from political activity, with a particularly negative impact on young women or new entrants to politics.

The website of the National Democratic Institute encourages readers to report incidents of violence against women in public life and flags the reported incidents on a map of the world. I looked at the map yesterday and I was struck by the fact that the entire map of Canada remains entirely free and open, uncluttered by any indication of even a single incident. I bring this matter to the attention of the committee because a survey by two Canadian scholars finds that women members of the House of Commons have avoided posting on the Internet the names and photographs of their children because of safety concerns.

Also, I'm currently editing a book that examines the 11 Canadian women who have led our provincial and territorial governments. The media reports that have been used in that research show that two contemporary women premiers in Canada have faced unprecedented levels of hostility, and they are both leaders of progressive governments. Data from the Ontario Provincial Police and the Toronto police, cited in a 2017 article, show that Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne was the object of particularly venomous threats because of her sexual orientation. A 2017 report on Premier Wynne's social media accounts presents in detail the grotesque, often highly sexualized, messages that she received.

● (1550)

If we look at a 2017 report, we see that Alberta Premier Rachel Notley was the target of at least 11 death threats during her first three years as provincial leader. That story details 386 pages of what the Alberta Department of Justice calls "occurrence summaries" that document, and I quote, "...an alarming tweet, vulgar email, threat or call aimed at an Alberta politician—most often Premier Rachel Notley" during her first two and a half years a premier.

Alberta Justice also compiled a longitudinal record of threats against all Alberta premiers who held office between 2003 and 2015. It found that Premier Notley was by far the most threatened premier during that period. In the roughly seven months between winning a majority government and the end of 2015, Rachel Notley was the subject of 19 threats outside of social media out a total of 55 for all premiers, and these threats were logged over a 12-year period. We know from these data that former Alberta Premier Alison Redford was the target of 16 threats between 2012 and 2014. In other words, two women premiers in Alberta who were only briefly in office during the period that was studied accounted for about 56% of the threats.

My purpose in bringing these data about women MPs and provincial premiers to the committee's attention is to shed critical light on the assumption that all is well with the security of women in Canadian public life. Notwithstanding the map of Canada on the website of the National Democratic Institute, there have been many troubling incidents in this country. I recommend to the attention of committee members the work of the NDI and of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which has also published online the findings of research about violence against women in public life as well as recommendations to address it.

The IPU report concludes that as is the case with the general issue of violence against women, no action on problems affecting political women can occur unless members of Parliament and members of the public acknowledge there is a problem that warrants civic attention. In the words of the IPU authors, "...once the phenomenon is visible and recognized, solutions either exist or can be found or invented."

As long as we continue to live in denial of this phenomenon, the challenges will continue to be considered the private troubles of public women. Given the mandate of the House of Commons, notably for Canada-wide action in the areas of public safety and crime, I urge members of the committee to begin at the very least a directed national conversation about the security climate facing women in politics.

Thank you for your consideration.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

Jeanette, you have seven minutes. Thanks.

Ms. Jeanette Ashe (Chair, Political Science, Douglas College, As an Individual): Thank you for inviting me here today. My academic specialty is political recruitment, and I publish and advise parties on how to increase women's representation in legislatures. Today I'd like to make three key points about the barriers facing women in politics.

First, I'll talk about the problem. In terms of political representation, Canada is doing comparatively badly.

Second, I'll explain why Canada is doing badly. Party selection processes are the main cause of women's under-representation. There's a misconception that women's under-representation is caused by a lack of supply rather than a lack of demand. The opposite is true. Women do come forward in sufficient numbers, but party selectors and officials disproportionately select men.

Third, I'll tell you how we can improve. Because the problem is more due to demand, demand-side solutions will work best. The biggest difference that the Canadian Parliament can make is by legislating quotas for political parties, meaning that parties would be required to run 40% to 50% women candidates. If this isn't possible, Parliament should financially incentivize parties to run more women candidates. At the very least, Elections Canada must collect more information about nomination races and report this information to Parliament to increase the transparency of these processes and the accountability of political parties.

Point one is that comparatively, Canada is not performing well. Women hold 27% of the seats in the House of Commons. That puts us at 61st place out of 193 countries. As women are 50% of the population, fair selection processes would mean that they would win 50% of the seats. That's 169 seats, 78 seats more than the 91 they currently hold. Why does this happen?

Point two is that party selection processes are the problem. We need to better understand supply and demand. To get elected, women must first get selected as candidates. In 2015 women won 26% of the seats and were 30% of the candidates, a historic high. This means that 67% of the candidates were men. Looking at percentages can be misleading. It leads many to believe that women's under-representation is a problem of supply, but the raw figures tell a different story. Of the 1,792 candidates, 535 were women. We only need to elect 169 women to get sex parity, yet 535 women stood for office. That's a surplus of 366 women.

I want to repeat that: in the last election, we had a surplus of 366 women candidates. That means it's not a supply problem.

These data reflect only one stage of the selection process. Let's dig deeper and look at when people put their names forward to become candidates.

While Elections Canada doesn't collect all the data we need on nomination contests, we can use other academic work to estimate what happens during candidate selection processes. Although we know that some candidates are acclaimed, we also know that local party members vote in contests to select their candidates. Many of you in this room have been through it.

Let's imagine, because we don't have the full data, that two competitors vie for each of the 1,792 candidacies, for a total of 3,584 coming forward in the hopes of getting selected. That's the supply. To repeat, I estimate that about 3,500 people came forward to stand as candidates in the last election, but only 1,792 were selected. That's the selection process. That's what the filtering or winnowing process does. If 30% of those coming forward were women, the supply of women would be over 1,000. That's 1,075 women coming forward when we only need 169 for sex parity, so we have more than enough women coming forward. This should help undermine the idea that supply is the problem.

Of course, what this analysis is missing is the impact that parties play on selection process outcomes—that is, who gets selected as candidates. My own research shows that in some Canadian cases, men are six times more likely to be selected as candidates by party members than are women.

● (1555)

I want that to sink in: men are six times more likely than women to be selected as candidates, and that's when everything is held constant, so again, it's not supply; it's more demand. It really comes down to the will of the parties, regardless of the electoral system that we use. If party leaders want more women candidates, they'll make it happen.

Since the problem of women's under-representation is due more to demand, point three is that we need to consider more fully the demand-sized solutions. In an ideal world, Canada would bring in sex quotas for women, and this is already done in more than 100 countries. For example, some countries entrench reserved seats or legal candidate quotas in their constitutions, while others simply pass new laws.

As Canada is unlikely to change its constitution, changing electoral law would seem to be the most palatable way forward. For example, under Belgian law, parties that fail to run sex-balanced candidate lists are disqualified from participating in the elections. The mildest option is to financially incentivize parties to run more women candidates, as is the case in Ireland and France.

This mildest of measures was rejected by this Parliament in 2016 in the form of Bill C-237, the candidate gender equity act. I would strongly advise this committee to revisit the measures proposed in Bill C-237, but if doing that isn't possible, then at the very least empower Elections Canada to compel political parties to provide additional data on candidate selection contests on all those who come forward to stand for selection and on all those who win and on all those who lose so that the two pools can be compared.

More specifically, I recommend that subsection 476.1(1) of the Canada Elections Act be amended to make mandatory the provision of intersectional data on all aspiring contestants who participate in selection contests, including information on sex, gender identification, race, indigenousness, physical ability, sexual orientation, and so on.

Right now you're actually amending the Canada Elections Act through Bill C-76, the elections modernization act, and you can easily make these changes so we can better understand how women fare in selection processes.

Thank you.

● (1600)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to start our rounds. We'll start with seven minutes for each of the participants, beginning with Pam Damoff.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thanks, Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses for being here today.

I want to ask a little bit about the nomination process because a couple of you have touched on it, but we don't really have good data on how many women are coming forward to run. We know how many actually end up running.

I can't recall now the name of the book, but after the 2011 election, someone did another interview with a number of candidates. At that meeting there were a number of people, and there was a former MP. She said, "You have to change the nomination process." Part of that was financial. I wonder if you could touch on that. A lot of women seem to not come forward because of financial barriers.

Memberships are sold, and all parties do it. There are those who buy memberships and use their own funds. Even though it's illegal, it happens.

With regard to the financial barriers, including around the nomination process, is there anything we can change or anything further to encourage more women to actually be selected by the party?

Ms. Jane Hilderman: I'll jump in, but my panellists may have something more to add.

You're right. In our experience, speaking to former MPs—and these are the people who won in the nomination process—they often called it a "black box" in terms of what goes on behind the scenes. There are a lot of ways for parties to manoeuvre in order to sort of help out certain candidates or to dissuade other candidates from running. That creates an uneven playing field or an uncertain information environment.

To emphasize the point made by Louise Carbert, transparency and accountability, as conditions in politics, are really helpful generally for women. If they know everyone is having the same rules applied to them with the same timeline, that can improve the experience.

What would it take to get there? One suggestion that has been raised in the past is to give Elections Canada a more formal role in monitoring nomination processes. That would be a fuller way of looking at the problem.

If you can't go that far, maybe have parties report on their nomination process and on how much notice was given in terms of when membership deadlines closed, etc., so that you can actually see if races were run equally and whether that might have disadvantaged a candidate, so that there is just greater illumination of this black-box process.

● (1605)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Ms. Ashe is chomping at the bit to say something here.

Ms. Jeanette Ashe: Yes. I did a study a few years ago in the U.K. I got access to three general elections' worth of party census data on everybody who sought to be a candidate for the British Labour Party. I also got some data from the Conservative Party and from the Lib Dems as well. This included everybody who came forward, both people who were selected and people who were not.

I did some surveys. I put together about 44 variables that we associate with the ideal candidate type and tested those. I tested things like ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, income, profession, education, and how much money was spent on nomination processes —all those kinds of things.

Only three variables of the 44 mattered in terms of who was selected and who was not. The first was sex: party members were much more likely to select men over women. Again, all of the variables were held constant and were controlled for. The second was being local to that constituency. The third was having a seat previously on local council, which is another kind of local measure.

Of the 44 variables that we think matter, only three really do, with sex being the most important, and in all seat types.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Did anyone else want to add to that?

Okay. To Samara, I attended the event you had when you released your report on heckling. You have data on what I have seen in the House, that it's different depending on who is answering the question.

We had someone here last week who talked about being at a model parliament that was so overwhelming that she didn't want to be a part of it. I witnessed a model parliament at Queen's Park many years ago when my son was in university, and it was horrible.

How do we change the culture? Have you seen any change since you released your report a year ago?

Ms. Jane Hilderman: Well, this was the second time Samara surveyed MPs. We surveyed them in the 41st Parliament and now in the 42nd. I think there was a change in the sense of awareness of this problem.

There seems to be a cultural change around how heckling is perceived, from a moment when it was seen as just a traditional part of politics to something that is recognized as a tool that can shut down voices, and that for some people even may be seen as a form of harassment, or at least at a minimum a technique used to shut down others. I think that has changed.

In terms of the frequency of it or its intensity, I don't think we've seen a change in our politics. At Samara, we have tried to say that there are a few different ideas we could use and experiment with, with the emphasis on “experiment”, because we're not really sure exactly what will happen. For heckling, many people point to the fact that it really grew as a practice when cameras were introduced in 1970s, and I can assure you that's not what people in the 1970s thought would happen when they introduced cameras. They thought it was going to open up the Commons and raise the level of debate. When we introduce change, we don't always know what will happen.

Among some of our suggestions, one we've included is to experiment with camera angles so there is less anonymity for hecklers. We've suggested—

Ms. Pam Damoff: I don't have much time left. Would showing people other than the Speaker help?

Ms. Jane Hilderman: That's a suggestion we think we should try, because I think anonymity is certainly letting people off the hook when they do heckle.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Right.

Is that my time?

The Chair: No, you're still good. You have another minute and a half. We had a little bit of a clock issue here, but we're good. We're thinking it's about six minutes. Where are you?

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'm at seven minutes.

The Chair: We're a little behind. How about we go with one minute extra?

Ms. Pam Damoff: That's fine.

Ms. Ashe, you mentioned quotas. There are very polarized views on that. Obviously the private member's bill did not pass. I was quite proud to sponsor it, but....

You've done research around the world on the effect of what happens in terms of people being elected. Could you share that? Where there has been a quota in place within a party, what has been the impact in terms of—

● (1610)

Ms. Jeanette Ashe: We use the same electoral system as the U.K. The British Labour Party uses all-women short lists. It's permissive legislation, so all parties are allowed to use this kind of party quota. Now up to 50% of the party's target seats or safe seats are set aside for women. The first time it was used, in 1997, there was a 100% increase in women elected.

The Chair: Excellent.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Could you give us—

The Chair: No, we're way past time now.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

The Chair: Stephanie, you have seven minutes, please.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much to all of our witnesses for being here today.

I'll start by saying, Sylvia, that I very much support your work in regard to violence against women. I'm the former Alberta South Chapter chair of Equal Voice. I'm very fortunate to have had many pieces published over the years as a result of several roles I've played, but I'm most proud of the December 17, 2015, article entitled “Death threats risk silencing democracy”. It was published in both the *Calgary Herald* and the *Edmonton Journal* with my counterpart at that time, Ms. Lana Cuthbertson. Thank you very much for your work on that.

Jane, I will always answer the Samara surveys that come out. You will never get a non-response from me. With that, in your report “It's My Party”, you mentioned that one of the problems members of Parliament face in the party system is frustration on how their work is evaluated. This is a direct quote:

> Many MPs voiced disappointment when the criteria for promotions, particularly to cabinet posts, were not explained. Even though most MPs acknowledged the importance of balance in gender, region and ethnicity in promotion decisions, several said that too many appointments were undeserved.

Can you please elaborate on this and the concerns with awarding promotions to politicians without merit or necessary experience?

Ms. Jane Hilderman: In our exit interviews we try to show the voices of MPs, so this is me reading into what we've heard in the past.

One big point we find in our surveys generally is that for MPs, the career ladder at Parliament is very strict. There are not many options, other than trying to get into cabinet. That's how you climb. That's how you are seen to accrue greater influence in policy-making, so everyone wants it, and of course there are limited spots. I think many MPs have a view that they have something to offer. Many of them do, but when it comes to decision-making in parties—I think this is universal across parties—a lot of decisions happen in opaque ways.

It kind of goes back to my point about nominations being a black box. As MPs, you don't really have a good idea as to what is being weighed in a decision made by your party leadership at all times.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you, Jane, for that very honest answer.

Louise, what a joy and a pleasure to see you here again in this capacity after our time together on Equal Voice. I want to congratulate you on your book. The review I saw said that your style is "earnest and academic" with "tantalizing glimpses" into the life of pursuing political office for women.

I'll use some quotes from the review by Rosemary Speirs, who of course was the founder of Equal Voice:

> Others, including many party recruiters, suggest women themselves are opting out of a game they perceive as too rough. "We seem to eat our own women alive in this country," said a former party insider whom Carbert interviewed.

It also states:

> We know from anecdotal evidence across Canada that...high-profile incidents [have] a...depressing effect on aspiring women.

Have particular incidents of publicly ostracizing women in politics perpetuated the fears of women wanting to run for office, in your opinion?

Prof. Louise Carbert: Public ostracism? From my interview results, no, I don't think public ostracism is at stake. I think that's more relevant to what Dr. Bashevkin has been saying, so no.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: That would be your long and short answer: "no".

Prof. Louise Carbert: Yes. It's not ostracism per se, no.

Prof. Sylvia Bashevkin: Could I interject here?

● (1615)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Please do.

Prof. Sylvia Bashevkin: The research on women at the provincial level, where we've had women party leaders who've often come out of cabinet, suggests that, first of all, there's a problem with women's recognition in many fields, not just politics. Knowing how you move up is often not clear. One problem suggested by Canadian research as well as comparative research is that party insiders are often using different metrics to assess the effectiveness of women versus men politicians.

Look at women politicians at the provincial level, some of whom managed to win majority governments for their parties. I think of Catherine Callbeck in P.E.I. and Kathy Dunderdale in Newfoundland. Kathleen Wynne in Ontario did win a majority government, which we often forget. The impatience of party insiders with these women is significantly greater than it is for men in the same position, just as there's the assumption that we can never have another woman leader. In other words, all women are therefore guilty of her supposed ineffectiveness, yet we never hear people say that we'll never have another male leader because he lost us power or caused the party to be weakened.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Thank you very much, Sylvia, for that comment.

Louise, my apologies. Perhaps I didn't provide enough examples from your book in referencing these negative experiences. The Atlantic women pointed to the fate of the only female prime minister, Kim Campbell, who lasted less than five months, and who was set up, as they saw it, to be the fall guy. They cited the battering of former Liberal cabinet minister Jane Stewart, knocked down by media during the Human Resources and Development Canada scandals as she took heat for a male predecessor, and the sympathy for MP Elsie Wayne of Saint John, criticized by the national media for her sweaters, of all things, purchased in New Brunswick.

One woman said, "The store that sells her clothing was very put out. They said she dresses very classical", so no further comments on that.

Prof. Louise Carbert: When I was thinking of ostracism, I was thinking of ostracism within the local community among their peers that they interacted with every day—

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Okay. My apologies for not clarifying.

Prof. Louise Carbert: No, that's fine. It's been a long time since I've read Rosemary Speirs' review.

What I was referring to there was what I think I called the "cautionary tales". There are some real threats and barriers, but I also think there are stories that women tell to each other that are cautionary tales about the dangers of politics, and I think they're overrated.

One of the problems here is that I don't think politicians communicate about the fulfilling work that they do. Instead we see them lambasted on the national media and they identify with Elsie Wayne or they identify with Jane Stewart in those circumstances and think, "I could never withstand that kind of pressure." I wrote that what they don't see is Jane Stewart going back behind caucus and being cheered as a hero among her peers there.

It was suspicion about cautionary tales that we tell each other.

The Chair: You only have 10 seconds—

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Okay.

The Chair: —so we're going to stop you. Sorry about this.

Irene, it's over to you for seven minutes now.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for the breadth of information you've provided. It connects brilliantly. I know we're going to be able to write a very substantive and helpful report based on what you are saying.

I have a question that's maybe a little bit political. To what degree would a system of proportional representation help, if at all, to elect more women? Would that have the kind of desired effect that we've been talking about?

Prof. Louise Carbert: I'll start out very briefly. The committee on electoral reform dealt with this last summer at great length, and my impression from my colleagues' presentations was that proportional representation does not directly guarantee that more women will be elected. It might in some countries. Those are countries with a strong tradition of social democracy. In short, I would say that it's social democracy in those electoral systems that's propelling the election of women, rather than the electoral system per se.

As there are expanding numbers of democracies around the world, we're starting to see more variation in the patterns of women elected in those electoral systems.

Prof. Sylvia Bashevkin: I would say that proportional representation probably would help numbers of women in Canadian politics, but having watched this debate unfold over many, many decades, I don't think it's going anywhere as a solution any more than I think that quotas are going anywhere.

I think what we really have to work on is transparency in the nominations process, because it seems to me that Canadians are really not showing much appetite for the sorts of institutional design discussions that we would need to actually get either PR or quotas.

Ms. Jeanette Ashe: I would say that PR systems are more likely to lead to an increase in women's representation, but typically when they're supported by quotas and there is some kind of quota in place, they kind of go hand in hand. Also, it always comes down to the will of the party. There are countries that use PR and women's representation is still low, so it really comes down to the party's will.

● (1620)

Ms. Jane Hilderman: I think we've answered it.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: You're saying it's the will of the party, the leadership, the decision to make sure that women are on these lists and that they have been given a fair shake. I think we come back to the culture of the leadership within any party, which I think is interesting.

We know that quota systems have a bad name. I can tell you that I introduced a bill some years ago that would have required crown corporations to have 50% female representation on their board. It went down in flames.

My question, then, is about financial incentives.

Jeanette, you've talked about financial incentives. Have you considered what kind of financial incentives might be most useful?

Ms. Jeanette Ashe: Yes. On financial incentives, I suppose that if parties don't select a certain per cent of women candidates or candidates from other politically marginalized groups as well, you could have a threshold of 10%, or some wiggle room, so that if they don't select a certain per cent, then they don't receive a subsidy. That could be in safe seats or, if you wanted, all seats. That's up to you.

That would be a financial incentive. It's a way of framing it that makes it sound more positive than “quota”.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: We'd have to go back to a system of the number of votes you get?

Ms. Jeanette Ashe: Yes, you could do it like that. There are different iterations of this. Quite a few countries do use financial incentivization now. The two most recent ones would be Ireland and France, Ireland most recently. It's had some success.

Bill C-237 was modelled after France's and Ireland's examples of incentivization. You could pull some threads from that, I suppose.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Okay.

You referenced Bill C-237, the candidate gender equity act, which did not get supported in Parliament. What elements of that bill would have supported the election of women? What pieces of that should we be looking at in terms of how in the next Parliament we want to bring back something that is workable? What from Bill C-237 would that be?

Ms. Jeanette Ashe: I think the focus is on incentivizing political parties. It's just recognizing the key role that political parties play in the recruitment and the selection process. If parties are made aware that if they don't elect a certain percentage of women or other politically marginalized groups, they'll lose a certain per cent of their subsidy.... That could be decided and negotiated by Parliament.

It's just about getting back to parties, to parties taking responsibility for the outcome of selection processes, because it really does reflect systemic institutional discrimination, right? If there weren't any institutional discrimination within the party selection process, then we would see a more or less random even distribution in terms of sex and other under-represented qualities across the board, and we don't see that. You have to really delve into the secret garden of nomination processes.

The Chair: You have one minute left.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: You were talking about violence against women and violence against elected officials in terms of the physical violence, and also in terms of the social media violence, with which I have had first-hand experience, as have many women. If we address the cultural reality of violence against women and put a real effort into their financial security and their social security, will that have an impact and help in reducing the idea that it's okay to launch an attack against a woman, either anonymously or actually physically?

● (1625)

The Chair: We have about 10 seconds for this. There was no time left, but we have 10 seconds for anyone who wants to answer.

Prof. Sylvia Bashevkin: I'm not sure, really, that it's going to be easy to shut down social media attacks against women, but it seems to me that acknowledging that they occur is way better than denying that it's part of Canadian political culture.

The Chair: That's excellent. Thank you very much.

Sean, we're going to leave you with three minutes.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Okay. I'll try to be quick.

One of the things we've heard quite a bit about over the course of your testimony is the need to improve transparency and accountability in the nomination process. I'm curious about what that looks like, aside from having disclosure of data about the immutable characteristics of the candidates who run. Are there things we can do other than requiring parties to disclose data to, say, Elections Canada?

I see you nodding your head, Ms. Ashe.

Ms. Jeanette Ashe: Yes, okay. How much money is spent in nomination races would be something that would be considered important.

Mr. Sean Fraser: For the panel, are there other things we can do to improve that accountability and transparency?

Prof. Sylvia Bashevkin: The Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, after the 1988 federal election, had a very detailed look at exactly how we could open up this process, including the purchase of bulk party memberships, the timing of party nomination meetings, and shutting down child care early when women candidates are affected. There's a lot out there.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Excellent.

I have a quick question for Dr. Carbert on recruiting women in rural communities.

Thanks very much. This is a fascinating concept for me, representing a rural area and being an alumnus of Dalhousie as well.

With regard to rural nominations, it strikes me that they often have smaller party memberships than big urban centres do. Is there an opportunity for us to tap into that ability for women to go recruit new members and potentially commandeer these smaller memberships? Does this present an opportunity in rural Canada to beat the national average despite the historically opposite trend?

Prof. Louise Carbert: That's an interesting positive suggestion. I like your question, because it gives me a chance to point out that the nomination races across Canada are so very different. Usually we hear about the high-profile, well-financed races in the major urban centres, such as Toronto and Montreal, and yet there's such variation across the country. As you say, a lot of these nomination races are determined by 15 or 20 people. You're right. It would be very easy to take charge and commandeer a nomination race and put a woman in. It could happen.

That possibility is there. It's exciting. I think the problem is that sometimes a nomination race in a rural area is more like collusion among local elites and a local establishment in terms of deciding which candidate should go forward, and the funding flows to that candidate.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I have about 30 seconds. Is there an opportunity for the federal government to fund community organizations to recruit women in areas where they could potentially win these nominations? Is that a strategy you think might be effective to get women's names on the ballot? I'm thinking about Equal Voice, for example, or another organization like that.

Prof. Sylvia Bashevkin: The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has been running an initiative very similar to that.

Prof. Louise Carbert: And there are campaign schools.

Prof. Sylvia Bashevkin: Yes. That can be expanded. I think it can have a real impact.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Excellent. Thank you very much.

The Chair: I was just advised that they are coming too, so we do have some great witnesses coming up.

I would really like to thank the four of you—Jane, Jeanette, Sylvia, and Louise—for coming today and providing us this insight.

We're going to suspend for about two minutes, and then we will be back with our next set of panellists.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

● (1630)

The Chair: Welcome back to the status of women committee. We are on our second hour now of the panels for today on barriers facing women in politics. I'm pleased to welcome our next four guests.

We have Rosie Campbell, professor of politics, Birkbeck, University of London, by video conference. We have Sarah Childs, professor of politics and gender, Birkbeck, University of London, also on video conference. We have Melanee Thomas, associate professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, also by video conference, and in person we have William Cross, professor, Department of Political Science at Carleton University.

I'm also checking on this. Rosie and Sarah, you're together. We are going to provide seven minutes, but we want to make sure we have ample time for questions, so if we can reduce any of that, it would be fantastic.

I'm going to start off with Rosie and Sarah for seven minutes.

Go ahead, please.

Professor Sarah Childs (Professor, Politics and Gender, Birkbeck, University of London, As an Individual): Good evening.

The Chair: I want to interrupt. I was just advised you are appearing separately and not together, so you are each being provided seven minutes.

Prof. Sarah Childs: We don't need that. We are presenting—

The Chair: Fantastic. Thank you so much.

Prof. Sarah Childs: Are you happy for us to start now?

The Chair: Go right ahead.

Prof. Sarah Childs: Thank you.

First of all, Rosie and I very much welcome this opportunity to feed in to you our British-based research and wider thoughts.

We want to make three very broad points about women's underrepresentation.

The first point we call the “quota-plus” strategy. There are clearly interventions that can address the supply side and the demand side of women's under-representation, but the global evidence is very strong that really it is quotas that increase women's representation in politics. Whilst they're often unfashionable and quite often contested, they are mechanisms that have increasingly been proven to work, particularly when they are incentivized, and therefore parties see that it is very positive for them to adopt them.

There's a difference of about 10 percentage points between countries that use a sex or gender quota and those that do not. In countries where women members make up more than 30% of Parliament, over 80% use some kind of quota. I think in this discussion, it's always important to put that on the table. Often it's too easy to buy into criticisms of quotas, when increasingly they're proven to be mechanisms of party behaviour in this respect.

We call it a “quota-plus” strategy because it's also really important to maximize the supply pool of women, and particularly to diversify the supply pool of women. It's important, in our view, that we don't just increase the numbers of women who put themselves forward but also make sure that those women are themselves representative—particularly in terms of the ability of women with lesser financial resources to participate in politics, and in terms of ethnicity—to ensure that we have representative women as well as a representative parliament.

It's also very, very important that we not give up on the demand side. Parties are often resisters to change and often don't wish to respond positively to interventions. We feel very strongly that parties need to be encouraged—dare we say incentivized, and sometimes penalized—to increase their women. It's very easy for parties to be rhetorically in support of greater numbers of women, but it's become increasingly the case that people won't speak in public about it, or they are more likely to agree that there should be more women than to actually put their party resources behind that idea.

I noticed in your last panel that there were questions around financing of candidates. Again, we would support that. Parties need to think about what they do, how they define the ideal candidate, and also what provisions they have to make politics something that ordinary women do ordinarily. I think that's where we would want to start.

That's our first point, a quota-plus strategy, and the second follows on from that. It's about the concept of party recruitment. Asking her to stand is a very easy thing to say, but we're concerned that sometimes that looks as though it's blaming women for not putting themselves forward. Asking her to stand really means that parties need to think about “recruitment” as an active verb. Parties need to change and go out of their way to recruit, not just assume that saying to women “Please stand” means that they'll necessarily be able to take up that invitation. Parties need to make themselves attractive as a place where women wish to participate.

Our third point is about parliaments and how these could be made more gender-sensitive. I will talk about two points and then pass this over to Rosie.

First, we feel very strongly, for both symbolic and substantive reasons, that parliaments need to ensure formal and transparent provision for members of Parliament to take maternity and paternity leave, and indeed adoption leave. This shows that Parliament is a place for people who have families. We feel very strongly about it. In the U.K. we noticed a motherhood gap a few years ago. We're looking now to see whether that gap may be declining. We need to make Parliament a place that is suitable for those members who have caring responsibilities.

On the basis of my report “The Good Parliament”, I really feel that parliaments should be subjecting themselves to a gender-sensitive parliament audit. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has a framework that can be applied. They will support parliaments who subject themselves to an audit. Of course, a parliament can do this themselves, using their own parliamentary clerks and other academic inputs. They're really to conduct an audit that identifies where a parliament isn't sufficiently sensitive to gender and, I would argue, other diversities.

● (1635)

Often, parliaments haven't thought about what different kinds of members of parliament need, because overwhelmingly they were set up by men and have been filled predominantly by them.

Therefore, it's maternity leave and paternity leave for MPs, and a proper audit. Also, Rosie and I are very much in favour of providing the possibility of job-sharing for MPs.

Professor Rosie Campbell (Professor, Politics, Birkbeck, University of London, As an Individual): I'll just add a few points to Sarah's, particularly around the approach to the recruitment of women candidates, which suggests a passive role for women or that women are not interested in politics and that's why they're not putting themselves forward.

There's increasing and very convincing evidence of a role model effect that women in politics can play to make young women more interested in politics, more engaged, and perhaps later on more likely to participate. There was a very famous study and experiment in India in which women were randomly allocated to be leaders in villages, and the effect that had on young women in those villages and on their parents' aspirations for their children was quite dramatic and fascinating.

The research would suggest that if parties are actively demanding women, be that through the use of a quota or because they are really actively seeking them, women realize it's a demand and actually become more engaged. Equally, when women see more women involved in politics, a new generation of women is more likely to come through, so you can create a virtuous circle, whereas when politics looks like a men's game, you have quite the opposite, a vicious circle.

I also think there's a real argument for the reputation-enhancing case for the introduction of a quota. Sarah and I were just on an expert panel for electoral reform for the Welsh Assembly. The Welsh Assembly has been at the forefront of the representation of women since it was first constituted, when it had one of the highest proportions of women members in the world. It was 50% at the time, but it's fallen back to the mid-forties. Our recommendation that they adopt quotas has been relatively positively received, we think, because of the fact that Wales has this reputation for being forward-thinking about gender.

I can see that Canada equally has a global reputation for being progressive and forward-looking. I think there's a real case to be made to Canada, having fallen from a higher position to 60th out of 190 countries, for actually making an intervention and making a statement that Canada's committed to gender equality.

Finally, there is Sarah's point about job-sharing for members. We did some research in 2013 and then followed it up last year, investigating the parental status of MPs in the British House of Commons, and we found a substantial gap between men and women, with more women MPs not having children.

One of the reasons we strongly advocate a quota-plus policy is that quotas are important to send the signal that women are welcome in politics and that they're wanted, and to create this virtuous circle. Equally we want a diverse group of politicians. For those who have caring roles and perhaps also for people with disabilities who find it hard to work full time, we think that in the modern world many employers offer the ability to people to work flexibly, and there should be a way for that to be possible for representatives as a group where we need a diverse group of people. That's why we're advocating job-sharing wherever we can.

● (1640)

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much.

We're now going to move over to Melanee Thomas via video conference as well. She is from the University of Calgary.

You have seven minutes. Go ahead, Melanee.

Professor Melanee Thomas (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, As an Individual): Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I don't want to repeat many of the things that I think my co-panellists and others who are testifying might be inclined to say. Instead, I want to address what I think is the real root problem of all of these barriers, and that's sexism. I realize that's not a surprise to anybody, but we have some interesting work that looks at both explicit and implicit sexism. They're very different and they have different effects, so I want to make you aware of what we're finding.

The ultimate conclusion I draw is that overcoming women's implicit internalized bias against themselves acting in politics isn't going to do very much for women in politics in general if the far greater problem of explicit sexism in politics is not addressed as well.

When I say “sexism” in this context, I mean two things: it's a combination of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination, coupled with a lack of power. Women in Canada are on average in about 26% of all elected positions across all levels of government. In things like local politics, it's not more friendly towards women in Canada. This combination of prejudice, stereotyping, and bias, plus this disempowerment, is powerful in a number of ways.

People who hold explicitly sexist views will tell us that they think men are naturally better leaders than women. They will tell us that women are too emotional for politics, or that women are too nice for the rough and tumble of politics. This attitude clearly relies on stereotypes and is only looking at gender as a reason to rule women out from political leadership.

We have work that shows that approximately 20%—or one in five—of Canadians hold these views. Men are more likely to endorse these views than are women. Older people are more likely to endorse these views than younger people. Most importantly, it cuts across all levels of education, so post-secondary education doesn't fix it. It's also present at the same levels in every single political party.

One point I want to make is that every single political party in Canada, by our data, has 20% of its members holding explicitly sexist views. This is going to have a real material effect on recruitment for candidates.

When we look at other forms of explicit sexism, we see they are focusing more on stereotypes about women, mothering, and work. These are people who reject the idea that women can work outside the home if they have children or can form a good bond with their children if they work. Again, men hold these views more than women do.

The implicit bias is very different. The implicit bias is unconscious. People don't say this out loud. What we're finding is that the implicit bias is a hesitation when people associate women or more feminine names with political power or political jobs. It's more unconscious in this context. The surprising thing is that we find implicit bias towards women in politics—against women in politics—amongst women only. Men don't exhibit it. Only women do.

For me, this is really profound. It says to me that a lot of women have internalized this explicit sexism they're seeing in the political system, and that in turn is driving down their political interest and their confidence in their ability to be a political actor and driving down their political ambition.

One of the things we find for women who don't have this internalized bias is that they are more interested and more confident, and they have ambition. Women who have the bias are not.

Explicit sexism has more material consequences, though. The implicit stuff drives down things that are going down with individual women, but explicit sexists are really critical of women candidates. In one study, we asked people to evaluate hypothetical candidates. We had four candidates, four profiles, and identical credentials in all of them. We just changed the names from Steven to Rebecca, and from Robert to Amy. When we changed those names and left all those credentials the same, people who held explicitly sexist views rated women significantly lower in terms of their competence or their perceived intelligence, their perceived likeability, and their perceived warmth.

This tells me a number of things about people who hold explicitly sexist views. They're not going to recruit women as candidates, or they're going to be a lot less likely to do it. They're less likely to mentor women, they're not going to support women as party leaders, and they may not even vote for women as candidates. Worse, though, they can see a woman who has the same credentials as a man and still think that she's less appropriate for a political job precisely because of this explicit sexism that they hold.

I also think that this explicit sexism plays into the idea that women's levels of under-representation aren't important as a political problem that we ought to be addressing.

● (1645)

There are some people who will say that it's just normal and natural for men to be overrepresented in politics and for women to be under-represented. It's these explicitly sexist things that in my view feed into that implicit internalized bias that we're also seeing in some Canadian women.

I see this show up in nomination contests. I had an earlier paper with my colleague Marc-André Bodet at the University of Laval. We looked at nomination contests between 2004 and 2011, and we found that nearly every single political party nominated a supermajority of women in districts that were unwinnable, but a majority of men either in districts that were competitive, where the campaign mattered, or they were in safe seats for their party. This pattern held for open seats, so we can't say that this is a problem with incumbency, and worse, it held for women incumbents, which means that women who already held seats in the House of Commons were more precariously placed than were their male peers.

I think parties and leaders need to acknowledge this pattern, and they need to acknowledge that all of them have explicit sexists in their ranks. What this means for parties and for organizers is that they actually should start saying no to candidates who volunteer or who are easy recruits from overrepresented groups. It means that leaders need to tell their organizers to find a set number of women to run. That number for parity in Canada is 169, so it's a low bar. If this sounds like a quota, I would simply point out that I would just call it the leader's prerogative. We all know Canadian party leaders get from their parties what they ask for. Every party leader has at some point asked for this and has received it, so don't call it a quota. Call it leader's prerogative, and just get the job done.

One thing I would be happy to speak about in questions is how this explicit sexism plays into online threats towards women. I agree with my colleagues that women need role models and that we could deal with this implicit sexism if we simply had more women who were elected into public office. All of the evidence shows that quotas bring in more meritorious women and displace mediocre men, so people concerned with merit shouldn't be that worried about a quota, and that you actually need to get close to a gender-equal parliament for those role-model effects to take place.

Thank you very much.

● (1650)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.)): Thank you.

We will now go to Mr. Cross for seven minutes.

Professor William Cross (Professor, Department of Political Science, Carleton University, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have not had the privilege of previously meeting all of the members of the committee, so I'll briefly introduce myself. I'm a professor of political science at Carleton University, where I hold the Bell chair in Canadian parliamentary democracy. My research focuses on political parties, and for the past several decades I have been writing on questions of intra-party democracy, including leadership selection, candidate selection, EDAs, and the like.

As part of my research, I conduct surveys of party members, EDAs, and candidates. Many of you have completed some of my surveys; I thank you for that and I hope you'll continue to do so in the future.

In recent years I've explored the under-representation of women in political parties, and in my opening remarks I'll highlight some of the findings from these surveys.

First, in terms of different attitudes towards politics among candidates, we find a significant difference in terms of innate political ambition by gender. I'll give you a couple of quick examples. Among those who ran for one of the three major parties in the 2015 election, candidates were asked to indicate their level of political interest prior to first running for Parliament. Two-thirds of the men described themselves as being a “political junkie”, and they were 30% more likely to do so than were the female candidates. Similarly, men were 40% more likely to say that running for federal office was the next logical step in their political career, and on average, to have decided to pursue a life in politics at a considerably younger age than female candidates.

In short, the men were what I have characterized as “political entrepreneurs”, while recruitment was considerably more important for female candidates, who were significantly more likely to report that they were recruited to run by party officials at either the local or the national level.

Party nominations are, in my opinion, the key event in the process of getting more women into Parliament. Again looking at data from the 2015 election, we analyzed the number of women seeking nominations. With respect to the black box that was talked about, we actually do have data on the people who run for nominations and lose. When we examine this data, we find very little drop-off among the percentage of women seeking nominations, the percentage of women winning nominations, and the percentage ultimately elected in all three parties.

For example, with respect to the New Democrats, in 2015, 44% of all nomination candidates were female, as were 43% of the party's candidates. The numbers for the Liberals were 30% and 31%, and for the Conservatives, it was 22% and 20%. These numbers are very similar to those for the percentage of MPs elected to each caucus.

In short, there is little evidence, from 2015 at least, that party members are reluctant to nominate female candidates when they are given the opportunity to do so. In fact, in a significant majority of these EDAs, when a woman stood for nomination in 2015, a woman was nominated. The problem, to my mind, is that too few women are contesting these nominations.

Given this, in my recent research I've focused on trying to figure out under what conditions women are most likely to seek nominations. Of course, we know incumbent MPs are rarely challenged for renomination, so I will focus on open nominations and will share some of the results with you with respect to the three largest parties.

First, the presence of a local search committee is key. Associations with an active search committee are significantly more likely to have a female nomination contestant. While all of the parties, to varying degrees, have policies encouraging or requiring search committees, a surprising number of EDAs in all three parties, after the 2015 election and where they did not have incumbents, reported that they did not have an active search committee.

Second, having women in positions of power in the EDA matters, since they are both signals of openness to potential female candidates and potential recruiters of female candidates. This means having local association presidents, but it also means having female presence on EDA executives. In cases in which the local EDA president was a woman, in two-thirds of these EDAs at least one woman contested for the nomination in 2015. When half or more of EDA executive members were female, 62% of EDAs had a female nomination contestant.

The problem is that about three-quarters of EDA presidents are male, and most have a minority of female executive members. This is not surprising, as our surveys have consistently found that about six in 10 party members are male. This number has not moved since our first comprehensive survey in 2000.

● (1655)

There are a couple of other rather surprising findings that may be worth considering.

In recent elections, as you know, parties have been nominating more of their candidates earlier in the process, prior to the writ, than was traditionally the case. All three of the major parties nominated a significant number in 2014, a full year or more prior to the general election. Interestingly, even when controlling for all the other factors I've mentioned, there remains a significant relationship between the timing of the nomination and the likelihood of a woman seeking the nomination. EDAs holding their nominations in 2014 were significantly more likely to have a female nomination contestant than were those held closer to the election.

I must say that I'm not sure why this is. Perhaps it provides more opportunity for candidates to organize their personal lives in preparation for the campaign. We would want to do more research on this aspect.

Similarly, there is a significant relationship with the length of the nomination campaign. We find that longer contests are more likely to have a female contestant. Perhaps the longer campaign provides the appearance that there is not a favoured candidate and that the nomination contest is truly an open one.

To conclude, I would simply say that the parties are the key to solving this problem. I'll hang my hat with Sylvia Bashevkin, whom you heard in the earlier panel, and say that short of changing our electoral system or legislating quotas, neither of which I think is likely to happen, the key is for parties to increase the participation of women at all levels of their activities, particularly in positions of leadership in their EDAs, and to double their efforts at recruiting women to seek nominations. As we all know, there is no shortage of qualified and talented women in every community across this country who could make valuable contributions to their parties and to our parliament.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Thank you very much.

We'll begin our first round of questions with Mr. Serré.

You have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I also want to thank the witnesses for preparing and presenting their testimony today.

To recall the context, let us not forget that we are 60th in the world. That is truly disgraceful. This is a crisis and we must really find a way of shaking up the system. Some of the witnesses talked about that. In 2015, about 214 new MPs were elected. As Mr. Cross and other witnesses pointed out, statistically speaking, it is very likely that a large number of those MPs will be re-elected. There will be no more than 26% or 27% women in the next election, in 2019. There will hardly be any change if we do not take fairly drastic measures. I know quotas are not very popular, but I would still like to discuss factors that come into play. If we do not set a quota, we will have to see how people can be motivated.

What can we do to address this, Mr. Cross? You talked about the parties and another witness also mentioned the party leadership.

What can we do to legally mandate increasing the participation of women and to ensure that all parties play a more active role with respect to the act, Elections Canada, and the recommendations made to us regarding nominations?

[*English*]

Prof. William Cross: It's a difficult question around quotas. When we look internationally—there was talk about Ireland in the earlier panel—we have to keep in mind that they have a different system. They're electing three, four, or five members from each constituency. It's easier to impose a quota when the central party says to the local party, “You have to nominate at least one or two women each time.” We nominate one in each riding. You can't divide up one. I think that's the crux of the challenge.

Think back to Mr. Chrétien in 1993, who first started appointing a lot of candidates: the party was sued. We have a strong tradition of local party democracy. You all know better than I do the tension that can arise in your own parties when leaders try to influence events.

If we want to get more women involved at the local level, we could do some things. Parliament could provide financial incentives to local EDAs that have more women on their executive or to local associations that have gender parity in their membership. A lot of this happens at the local level, as you know, and we don't provide, except for some administrative aid in filing financial reports and accounting, any financial assistance to the EDAs. That could be one way we might try to get more women at the grassroots. I think we would then see that filter into more women seeking nominations.

● (1700)

Mr. Marc Serré: I like what you said about the riding associations, because there's absolutely no financial support for riding associations for a search committee to get more women, other than the will of the local individuals.

I want to ask the University of London something. In your experience with the U.K., have there been incentives, motivation, or financing to provide support to parties at the riding associations at the grassroots?

Prof. Rosie Campbell: We have the same problem you have at the national level. There's a lot of variation by party. The Labour Party has a much higher proportion of women MPs than the other parties do, and they use quotas. The devolved institutions in Scotland and Wales have much higher proportions of women because a number of parties use quotas. When we are describing incentives, quotas can be an incentive. Quotas can be about changing financial arrangements for parties. You could call it an incentive rather than a quota. If what you're concerned about is sending a signal to the whole country that Canada welcomes women politicians, why start just at the grassroots? Why not have incentives at the national level?

Do you want to add something, Sarah?

Prof. Sarah Childs: I think it needs to be a bespoke response in terms of your regulation of political parties and what your laws around parties actually enable you to do.

In the U.K. we struggle, because we don't have state funding of political parties, but where there is provision of funding to political parties, that can very easily be linked to party efforts. Then you can incentivize very directly in certain circumstances, where the regulation of political parties and where electoral law permits it. We often talk about rhetoric, promotion, and guarantees, but if you want that shock, then I'm afraid the unfashionable road to go down is quotas.

What we had in the U.K., as Rosie suggested, was permissive legislation—legislation that allows political parties to do that, but they don't have to. What that's created is this asymmetry amongst our parties. I guess the idea is that it should create competition amongst the parties to have higher numbers of women. Unfortunately, we're only seeing very slow improvements, particularly in our second major party, and I think that's because they are very reluctant to accept the logic of quotas.

Mr. Marc Serré: Ms. Thomas, you've commented on the nomination, but I also want to hear your thoughts. You mentioned about online and you mentioned role models. Can you expand on those two elements or give us some ideas around them? I have about a minute left.

Prof. Melanee Thomas: On role models, electing women makes more women interested in politics. That is straight up. We can find evidence for that throughout all OECD democracies. There's very clear evidence from Sweden, starting in the 1970s, that when a party started implementing seriously a voluntary party quota to get women elected, in subsequent elections women have been more interested in politics.

One of the things I want to push back against is that women just need more resources. I think women do need resources. Canadian women need child care. We need education. We need to be in these high-status occupations and things like this, but moving women into these positions doesn't actually decrease these engagement gaps that make women more interested in politics. What makes women more interested in politics is seeing more women do politics.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): That's your time. Thank you.

We'll now go Rachel for seven minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): My first question is for you, Mr. Cross.

Your research fascinates me. I'm wondering if you can comment with regard to reasons why women do not run or the barriers they would list. What are the top five?

Prof. William Cross: I would actually defer to Professor Childs and Professor Campbell, who have done more work specifically on that.

Professor Childs has written a fabulous report on making a more gender-friendly Parliament, which I think is part of it, seeing themselves in the role and thinking they can do it. Then I think Professor Thomas is right that seeing more women in Parliament makes them think that it's something that's open and accessible to them. That's where I think having more women on EDA executives and having a female EDA president is key. When we surveyed, one of the EDA presidents told us that one of their key jobs is to make sure they have candidates seeking the nomination. Women are more likely to seek out other women to be in those positions.

It seems to me from our data that the women who actually run are less likely to perceive themselves as being self-starters. They want to be asked. They want to be recruited in, as opposed to the men, who are much more likely to just see it as a natural progression in their careers.

● (1705)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Right.

From your research, and just based on your observations, would you say there should be diversity among the women who put their names forward, or should it be only one type of woman?

Prof. William Cross: No, no, there are questions of intersectionality. Sometimes it's a problem that we think of this dichotomously —man and woman—but absolutely not; there has to be outreach into ethnic communities, visible minority communities, lesbian and gay communities to make sure our parliament is representative of all the different facets of Canadian society.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay.

Melanee Thomas, I would ask you the same question. Is there space for diversity, or should there be space for diversity, in parliament?

Prof. Melanee Thomas: Well, why wouldn't there be?

For me, the most persuasive argument comes from Jane Mansbridge, who wrote a 1999 article in the United States entitled "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women?" Her answer was "yes". Her argument was that all of these historically under-represented groups—groups that would have had legal barriers preventing them from participating—should have numbers in their representative institutions that match their demographic weight in the population, precisely because they are diverse groups.

Women are not a monolith. Women are 52% of the population. Of course there is great diversity among women, with any number across the ideological spectrum, across the economic spectrum, and across any kind of policy preference spectrum. The argument I would make is that our deliberative democracy inside parliament would be made better by bringing all of these diverse experiences forward into parliamentary debate. That is the real benefit, for me, in having a gender-equal parliament, for sure.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Are there some women who are just not cut out for it, who are inappropriate and shouldn't bother running?

Prof. Melanee Thomas: I think there are some people in general who do not aspire to have a political career. We find in our estimates that levels of ambition for a political career are actually really low. We see ambition for public office as a really low event.

In our most recent sample, 5% of men indicate some kind of ambition for political office, and 1% of women. There is still a gender gap there, but if you have a district that has 60,000 electors, let's say, then 30,000 of them will be women, and 1% equals 300, so in that community alone you would have more than what you would need for an entire party to run a gender-balanced slate.

I would also say that under section 3 of the charter, every Canadian has the right to vote and every Canadian has the right to seek public office. It's constitutionally entrenched, and the court isn't going to let us down on that.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Rosie and Sarah, I would ask you the same question. Should there be space for a diversity of views and beliefs in women in parliament, or should that be restricted?

Prof. Sarah Childs: For me it feels like a very strange question, because the answer would be that our parliaments should be representative of the countries they serve. Gender is a salient characteristic. Women are diverse, and that diversity should be present within our parliaments.

Prof. Rosie Campbell: Is your question about whether, if you have quotas, it's creating a restriction, or is it about—

Ms. Rachael Harder: No, it's quite simple. Do you believe there should be space for diversity within the parliamentary system?

Prof. Rosie Campbell: Yes. Absolutely. Obviously, voters have to vote for candidates, but we want to create an environment where there is much more equal opportunity and where a more diverse slate of candidates is possible.

Prof. Sarah Childs: I think if a parliament is so skewed, one would wonder about what barriers are stopping different types of people from entering it.

In a way, for me the absence of different kinds of people from a parliament indicates or demonstrates problems of gatekeeping that keep certain kinds of people out. For me, it really questions the fundamental democratic quality of an institution if it is so overwhelmingly—as we know globally, drawing on the work of Melanie Hughes from the University of Pittsburgh—elite majority men everywhere who are overrepresented in our parliaments. I don't think we should be apologetic about calling that out.

● (1710)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Are there specific reasons diversity is important to protect?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): You have about 30 seconds left.

Prof. Rosie Campbell: We all know the research about groupthink. Unfortunately, if people's voices are not represented in a parliament, policy isn't of the same quality.

Take the example of domestic violence. In most countries it used to be considered a private matter. If you called the police out to it, they would not deal with. Then when you actually get women entering politics, suddenly it's a public policy issue. It's very similar with child care.

That can be spread across different groups. You need to have people's voices in parliament in order to deliver better policy for their communities.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Thank you.

We will now go to Ms. Mathyssen for seven minutes.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for your input.

I wanted to start with a question about this system. The British parliamentary system is reflected here in Canada. It's adversarial. We square off on opposite sides of the House of Commons, two-and-a-half sword-lengths apart. The language we use is very aggressive and warlike. Does that dissuade women from wanting to become involved? Do you think they look at it and think this is nonsense and they don't want to be involved?

Prof. Melanee Thomas: One of the reasons I think adversarialism in our system is not a bad thing is that it helps clarify different positions that different actors are taking. You have to take a stand on important issues, and that's what this structure helps to facilitate.

I can understand that many people, not just women, look at some of the more adversarial moments and are a little put off by that. Research by Tali Mendelberg of the University of Pittsburgh and also by Chris Karpowitz of Brigham Young University looks at gender balance on political decision-making groups and decision rules. It shows that under majoritarian rules like ours, as soon as you get into a majoritarian context, you get adversarial positions, and in those contexts, increasing the number of women matters a lot in terms of how often women speak, the kinds of policy positions that come forward, how often women are perceived as leaders. The conclusion the research draws from very innovative work is that you need a lot of women in decision-making groups, but you need majoritarian rules.

The really disheartening thing for me is when they increase the number of women in consensus-making groups, it just doesn't do anything to change interruptions, speaking times, all these other sorts of things.

In that sense, sure, some people are turned off by adversarialism, but we're not changing that out of our system, and there are things we can do with it that will be good for women in that context too.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you very much.

Professor Campbell, in your research on the representative audit of the British Parliament, I wonder if you found if voters are influenced by the gender of the candidate.

Prof. Rosie Campbell: There's very little research that voters are influenced by the gender of the candidate, not in my research in the U.K. We did find one example in the 2010 election showing that women who were more feminist were more likely to vote for women. There were similar findings in the United States in 1992, which famously became the year of the woman election with the Clarence Thomas hearings, where women, particularly feminist women, voted for women candidates.

Mostly there is no effect. There isn't a punishment effect, but neither is there a positive effect. Most voters will vote according to the party rather than the sex of the candidate.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: I wondered if you noticed anything in media treatment of female candidates.

Prof. Rosie Campbell: The media treatment of female candidates is not my expert area, but if you look at the media treatment of women leaders in particular, I can think of some current examples. Our current Prime Minister and Julia Gillard are constantly described by the media as being wooden and not clubbable. Others might be able to jump in there.

● (1715)

Prof. Melanee Thomas: For six premiers, three women and three men, we wanted to see if there was a variation in the number of stories that were written about them and the kinds of policy that was forward in those stories, and then the tone. One of the things we found was that women had fewer stories published about them. For me, the most striking thing was that in the first year of her premiership in 2015, Rachel Notley in Alberta received fewer stories per day than Jim Prentice did in the nine months he was premier prior to the 2015 election. We have some evidence to suggest that women as heads of government don't get as much coverage as men do. Encouragingly, we find that the policy areas they receive coverage on are not overly feminized. They are on the issues their governments prioritize.

We have some evidence to suggest that when the media do talk about women's appearance, they are quite condemning. The tone is really negative. That's only in about 3% of coverage. We also found that men's appearance was discussed in about 3% of stories as well, but that was neutral.

I think the news has come a long way in Canada. It's more things like social media and the Internet that become a problem.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you.

Professor Childs, you also wrote a report. Since the publication of that report, I wonder which if any of the recommendations have been implemented. If they were implemented, what results did you see?

Prof. Sarah Childs: Yes, there have been a number of the recommendations implemented, starting from the institution itself recognizing the report through one of the governing bodies, which really plays into the idea that Parliament, as an institution, has a responsibility to reflect and put into place interventions to increase diversity.

The Women and Equalities Committee, which was a recommendation, has been made permanent, so that's happened too.

There is currently consideration of adopting maternity and paternity leave—baby leave—and that has been approved in principle by the House. A procedure committee has devised a scheme, and that will need to come back before the House to be implemented.

There have been changes to the identity process, because there were concerns that certain kinds of members were often questioned about where they were on the parliamentary estate.

There have been efforts to better collect data for the diversity of committee witnesses. Often when we talk about changing Parliament, we're talking about the political side, but if we want our parliaments to be representative of the people and to bring in different kinds of views, clearly we also need to make sure the people Parliament speak to as they undertake inquiries are also diverse. There are new efforts to try to increase the diversity of witnesses who come before parliamentary committees.

We famously—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): That's your time; I'm sorry.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you so much.

Prof. Sarah Childs: I could provide details, if you would like on those.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Nassif, for seven minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for their presentations.

My first question is for Ms. Childs.

I took a look at your research and your areas of interest. Your biography says that your research criticizes the idea put forward by academics and politicians that the identify of elected representatives is not important.

If I understand you correctly, you believe the opposite. You think it is important, but they do not. Can you please summarize your point of view?

[*English*]

Prof. Sarah Childs: I'm sorry; with the translation of that, it was rather difficult to get the core of the question.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: You think the identify of elected representatives is important. I read in your biography, however, that academics and politicians maintain that the identify of elected officials is not important.

What are your thoughts on that? Please explain your point of view.

● (1720)

[*English*]

Prof. Sarah Childs: When you ask politicians publicly whether they think the House of Commons should be more diverse, there is increasing acceptance of that claim. What I was querying, if I understood you correctly, is that often that doesn't translate into the efforts within political parties that would be necessary to actually increase women's participation throughout the party.

It's very easy to stand up and say we want more women and it's very easy to put on training for women, but really it's about whether political parties fundamentally address the barriers to women's political participation.

It's very important for political parties to engage in recruitment rhetoric and recruitment drives, but they need to change their parties. In very similar ways to what Bill Cross was saying in his opening statement, parties need to change how women participate within the political parties so that they are ready and able to participate when a selection comes up.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Do you share that view?

[*English*]

Prof. Rosie Campbell: Was that a question for me? Yes.

I really do agree. I think what Sarah was saying is that it's very easy to be rhetorically committed to increasing diversity, and parties often say they care about having different people represented, but then don't do anything about it. I think what she was saying is that it's often skin deep.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: My next question is for you again, Ms. Campbell.

I was reading about your areas of interest. You said that the public finds certain politicians in the new political class disconnected. Recent evidence suggests that politicians are primarily from the same social class, the privileged class, despite major efforts to increase the diversity of elected representatives.

Are you saying that, despite a record of electing more diverse representatives or MPs, their economic status is a key factor that determines the public perception of them?

Could you elaborate on that?

[*English*]

Prof. Rosie Campbell: It's really important to note that populist arguments often hinge on the idea that there is an elite that's disconnected from the people, and it's easier to make that argument if there is an elite that looks very different from the average voter. For example, in the U.K., at least in the post-war period, more working-class people entered politics through trade unions than they do now. These days it's very difficult to be elected as a politician in Britain if you don't have a university degree and if you haven't come from a relatively privileged background, and that creates a disconnect.

It's really important to combine measures to improve the representation of women and ethnic minorities with measures to think about how we make parliaments more accessible to people who don't come from privileged backgrounds.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Would you go so far as to say that, in striving for diversity among candidates, we should strongly consider those from a less privileged background, from the working class, in other words? As you just said, in the past, we used to elect people from the working class.

Is that just an observation or do you really think that is something we need to do?

[*English*]

Prof. Rosie Campbell: Absolutely. I don't think it's a zero-sum game. Clearly there are a lot of working-class women, so we should be doing these things at the same time. At least in Britain, it's also about a lot of people accessing politics by doing things like free internships. Some of the routes into politics and the amount of money or time spent to get selected mean that the pool is narrow. People often give up paid employment even just to get selected, let alone for their campaign.

All those things inhibit who can stand. We ought to think about measures to actually make money less important in terms of who stands and who can participate.

● (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Ms. Thomas, what changes to our democratic institutions do you think are needed to increase the number of women candidates?

[*English*]

Prof. Melanee Thomas: I would echo everything that has been said by my colleagues about political parties. I know we're running out of time for my answer, but one thing that would probably be very effective for all of those electoral district associations that required a search committee and then didn't form one would be some kind of mandatory reporting and disclosure that would require people who are doing this kind of work to actually say what they did. That could then be made publicly available, because the public can judge it as it sees fit, in any direction it wants.

That's a really effective thing for things like corporate boards as well. In Parliament, if you just tell us what you did and why you did it, people will then be able to form their own judgments on that. Social desirability will nudge people in a direction that will make it more open and more diverse.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Pam Damoff): Thank you.

Given our time, I think that's it for our questions. I have a couple of things to go over just before we finish.

Thank you to all the witnesses, both via video conference and for being here today to share your knowledge and testimony with us. It will be most helpful as we move forward.

Committee, our next meeting is on Thursday, June 14. We're continuing our study on the barriers facing women in politics. Ms. Malcolmson will be chairing the first hour, and I'll be chairing the second hour. Our chair won't be here on Thursday.

I would remind you to think about the email and a letter received from the chairman of the House Committee on Women in Parliament of the National Assembly, Nigeria, so that we can make a decision at the next meeting under committee business.

Do you want me to go through all the witnesses? For the next meeting, our witnesses are the Honourable Deborah Grey, a former MP. We have two witnesses from the Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, Madame Esther Lapointe and Madame Thérèse Mailloux; the Honourable Joanne Bernard, former minister from Nova Scotia; Jenelle Saskiw, former councillor and mayor of Marwayne, Alberta; and Karen Sorensen, the mayor of Banff.

With that, we are adjourned.