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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, February 23, 2016**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu**



## Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Tuesday, February 23, 2016

•(1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

Seeing that it's after 3:30 p.m., I'll invite the members to sit, and I would say *bienvenue encore*.

We have a very exciting meeting today. We are very fortunate to have the minister. Minister Hajdu is here. I don't know if all of you know her, but in the short time I've come to know her, I've been very impressed with her credentials, which include a degree from Lakehead and a post-graduate degree from the University of Victoria. What is even more important is that she has a huge history of work with shelters and addicted folks and helping with the whole social infrastructure.

It's my pleasure to welcome Minister Hajdu today. I'll turn it over to you.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women):** Thank you so much, Marilyn, for your very kind words. I appreciate that. I've started making my way around, but I'm a talker, so I didn't get all the way around. I hope to get to know all of you in a little more detail soon.

Madam Chair, I welcome the opportunity to appear before this committee today. I understand that Meena Ballantyne and the executive team of Status of Women Canada met with you last week to give you an overview of the agency and its work.

Today I first want to take the opportunity to commend the committee for all of its important work ahead on issues that make a critical difference in the lives of women and girls across our great country. I very much look forward to collaborating with the committee as we work together to create promising futures for all women and girls across Canada.

Let me say at the outset how proud I am to have the opportunity to serve all Canadians as Minister of Status of Women and to serve my constituents as a brand new MP. Both of my new roles allow me to continue my own professional and personal journey, which includes service to the community and social advocacy.

What has most often motivated me in my career, and still does today, is the desire to improve the lives of others and to help ensure that everyone has a real and fair chance to succeed. I intend to fulfill my duties by working with others in a renewed spirit of innovation, openness, and collaboration, just as the Speech from the Throne committed our government to doing last fall.

As a government, we are strongly committed to ensuring the full participation of women in the economic, social, and democratic life of Canada. As you heard from my agency last week, women have in recent decades made significant progress in educational attainment, participation in the workforce, and taking on leadership roles through the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors.

At the same time, we know that more progress is possible. It may be 2016, but violence against women and girls persists. Women remain under-represented in many sectors of our economy and in many leadership positions.

One of our government's first priorities is to address the urgent need to reduce and prevent gender-based violence in our society. It goes without saying that violence against women is not acceptable, and it should never be tolerated in our society. In my previous role, leading one of the largest homeless shelters in my home community, I saw first-hand the effects of gender-based violence, deep-rooted gender inequality, and victimization. As we know, these conditions cause profound suffering for women and girls. What I also saw was how the ripple effects from violence, such as poverty, inadequate housing, and lack of victim supports, can lead to overwhelming cycles of intergenerational poverty and violence that are very difficult to overcome. Still, we do know that change is possible and that we can create more hopeful futures.

How we respond to the issue of gender-based violence can make a real difference in the lives of women and their families. Our government is taking action. We have launched an inquiry into the high number of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in our country. Over the past three months, as part of the pre-inquiry process, I and my colleagues, the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and the Minister of Justice, have met with and listened to survivors, families, and loved ones. We've also heard from representatives of front-line services and indigenous organizations, and we've been profoundly touched by the stories that we've heard from family members and loved ones who have been directly affected by these tragic deaths and disappearances.

In the coming months, we'll be announcing details of the inquiry and how the inquiry will contribute to the government's commitment to reconciliation and a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous people in Canada.

I've also begun meeting with organizations, advocates, my provincial and territorial colleagues, and international experts to discuss innovative ideas that can be part of a comprehensive federal strategy to reduce and prevent gender-based violence. As part of this effort, our government is also committed to growing and maintaining Canada's network of shelters and transition homes as part of our infrastructure plans. We're taking these actions because enabling women and girls to live violence-free lives can remove a critical barrier to realizing their full potential and move us closer to gender equality.

When it comes to advancing gender equality, our government is also committed to leading by example. Under the Prime Minister's leadership, women now hold 50% of cabinet positions for the first time federally, and we are committed to ensuring that the federal government's senior appointments are merit-based and demonstrate gender parity. We also believe in making sure that the needs of women and girls are fully understood when we design new policies, programs, and legislation. For this reason, we will be applying a gender lens to the work that we do, taking into account the different impact our decisions will have on women when compared with men.

• (1540)

We've also accepted the recommendations of the Auditor General's report that was released this month. It recognized that progress has been made in implementing gender-based analysis, commonly referred to as GBA, across many federal organizations. However, we agree with the Auditor General that more work is needed to enhance the implementation and the impact of GBA.

As we move forward, Status of Women Canada will continue to promote GBA as an important competency for federal officials that will strengthen its application across the federal government. I will be working closely with my cabinet colleagues to ensure that departments are using GBA so that the work of the federal government is even more responsive to the needs of all Canadians, both women and men.

Madam Chair, these actions we are taking to move us closer to gender equality are not just the right thing to do for women but they are the smart thing to do for our economy. Women's contribution to the economy was \$130 billion in 2012, or approximately 7% of the GDP, according to the RBC. If we make gender diversity a priority in all sectors of the economy, this contribution to Canada's growth and prosperity will be even greater.

As you also heard last week, our international ranking when it comes to the gender wage gap is falling. Canada now ranks 28th out of 34 OECD countries for the wage gap between male and female full-time, full-year workers.

Our ranking with respect to gender equality has also been losing ground internationally. Canada dropped 10 positions, falling to 30th out of 145 countries in the World Economic Forum 2015 Global Gender Gap Report.

Canada's persistent gender wage gap and the lack of gender balance in democratic institutions are cited as reasons for the significant decline. We know Canada set a record in the last election, with women now holding 26% of seats in the House of Commons.

As a government we have clearly stated that we want to make meaningful progress on reducing the wage gap between men and women across this country, and our government is strongly supportive of the principle of pay equity. That's why we supported the motion recently passed by the House of Commons to have a special committee examine this issue.

However, pay equity is only one small piece of the puzzle. No single individual, organization, or level of government will be able to single-handedly solve the gender wage gap in our country. We will need the support of our provincial and territorial partners to find innovative ways to close the gender wage gap. In fact, I expect this issue to be among the topics addressed with my provincial and territorial colleagues at our annual meeting this June, and, of course, we as a government are committed to doing our part.

Status of Women works collaboratively with stakeholders in the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors on projects at the national, regional, or community level that increase the representation of women in leadership and decision-making positions. In fact, last week I announced a new call for proposals, inviting organizations to propose projects that will empower women in two different ways. The first will identify projects that engage indigenous woman and strengthen the role they play in their communities. The second involves projects to empower women for political or community action.

Another way to address the gender wage gap is by removing specific barriers that affect the labour market participation of women. This is why we are committed to addressing issues such as child care, better access to flexible work arrangements, and more accessible home care.

Finally, Madam Chair, it is important that we take advantage of occasions such as the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women meeting in New York next month to make sure that Canada's voice is heard internationally when it comes to advancing the rights of women and girls around the world. I look forward to doing just that on behalf of Canada.

We will also be celebrating International Women's Day next month in Canada, in order to bring even greater attention to the need to advance gender equality. We will promote the vision that women and girls who are empowered are better equipped to fulfill their potential for themselves, their families, their communities, and indeed their country. This theme reflects the fact that we know women's empowerment is an essential ingredient in achieving gender equality. However, we must also move from vision to action and acting together.

Each of the actions I've spoken about today reflects the confidence I have that if we do work together, we will increase opportunities for women across our country, move Canada closer to gender equality, and inspire young women and girls all at the same time.

Let me end by saying how much I look forward to working with this committee over the coming months to tackle some of the barriers to achieving gender equality in this country. My agency and I would be happy to provide any information you need as you deliberate on your priorities for action going forward.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your questions.

•(1545)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister Hajdu.

The committee is going to continue the work we began last week when we had Ms. Meena Ballantyne and Ms. Linda Savoie with us. Thank you for coming again.

We are developing a list from which we will select areas of interest where we're going to begin working. There are so many things to do.

We wanted to give the opportunity for committee members to quiz you regarding your mandate letter and try to identify which things you already have on the go and which things have not yet been addressed, or areas where you have a focus and there's more work to be done that we might be able to contribute to.

In that light we'll be following our usual timing protocol, and I will keep you in line. We will start with my colleagues to the right, and I will let you just free-for-all it for seven minutes.

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Thank you for being here, Minister, and also for the important work that you and Status of Women are doing.

You have a background in gender-based violence. You've been on the ground and now you're the Minister of Status of Women. You're bringing a unique perspective to the role, which is welcomed by all of us.

There are many things involved with gender-based violence: prevention, education, intervention, and recovery. Do you see any gaps in the legislation or any issues that we as a committee could be looking at to help inform what you and the department are doing?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Thank you very much. That's an excellent question.

When we start moving toward the development of the gender-based violence strategy, that's when we will be able to identify with more clarity what legislative gaps exist. I've heard some concerns from different groups of stakeholders, but what we need to do is assess in a more thorough fashion—which is exactly the role of developing the federal strategy—to make sure that we're listening to stakeholders. Stakeholders from across the country, whether they're political stakeholders, whether they're community-based stakeholders, or whether they're advocates, have some strong perspectives on exactly that. What are the legislative gaps that put women at risk, that are making us not able to respond to women at risk, and that are creating barriers in terms of the ways that women even report gender-based violence?

I can't answer your question directly in terms of specific legislation, but I can say that it is a big part of the federal strategy.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I know you're going to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women later in March. Can you share with us what you're hoping to achieve at the session?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Absolutely. I'm thrilled to be leading Canada's official delegation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women. One of the things we want to do is work with our international partners to promote the idea of gender equality. We know that countries are in different places across the world in this regard.

We want to also include the notion of empowering indigenous women. There will be a strong focus on indigenous women at this particular conference, and we're looking forward to being strong partners in terms of that form of empowerment. Enfolded in that is the right to indigenous women to live their lives free from violence as well.

We're also supporting an inclusive and transparent approach to international diplomacy, which will give a greater role to NGOs, non-governmental organizations, at the UN. We want to empower the people who are working at the grassroots level to have a strong voice in these regards.

We'll be bringing five representatives that we're sponsoring. Of course, other NGOs will be sending Canadian delegates as well, and we're excited about that. We think we have a good contingency with a diverse group of women who will represent Canada admirably. A number of federal departments, as well as officials from five provincial and territorial governments, will also be part of the Canadian delegation.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I'm going to share my time with my colleague to the right.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.):** Good afternoon. Welcome, Minister.

I have a proposal. There is a large gap between employment in the genders in certain fields. Some fields that are particularly male-dominated include mathematics, engineering, the sciences, and skilled trades. While there have been many studies attempting to deduce why women take jobs in different fields, there has been no serious study on the interests of these women versus the realities they experience, both in the workforce and in academic settings, that may dissuade them from pursuing further studies and professions.

Academic environments and social circles, particularly in the fields mentioned above, still present challenges for and biases against women. The old boys' club, so to speak, is still alive and well in many of these disciplines. Engineering in particular, and the academic culture that promotes it, has been known to be hostile toward female students. The harassment they feel has visibly pushed females from pursuing their dreams in that profession. University culture can often be more intimidating than the professional realm for any teenagers or young adults who are still not as confident and secure as they would be in years to come, and would not be prepared or willing to face such adversity.

To what extent is university culture in typically male-dominated disciplines hindering women from attaining careers in the professions that interest them?

•(1550)

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Thank you very much.

You're absolutely right. One of the ways to address a gender wage gap is to encourage more women to enter what we call STEM professions—science, technology, etc. Status of Women knows this and has been working on it. I must commend the agency, because they've been leaders on this issue.

Much of the work we've done through granting has been around encouraging women to either enrol in STEM studies or to take that education and then gainfully apply it to employment.

There are two issues, really. There is the issue of engaging women to be interested in STEM, which is, as we can see from our academic outcomes, starting to decrease as a problem, but the bigger problem is actually moving women who are educated in STEM areas into the workforce. For example, the rate of women in mining is incredibly low. It's something in the range of 7%.

These are the kinds of things that Status of Women is very interested in. I had the great opportunity to visit one of the not-for-profit organizations that receive Status of Women funding in Vancouver. They have a very innovative program in which they have almost an online matching system whereby they connect young women who are seeking or pursuing a career in STEM jobs, for lack of a better word, to mentors they have sought out who will help these women navigate their way in an often very male-dominated field.

These are the kinds of things we're actively exploring to make sure that women who are interested in those careers have an opportunity to not only gain the education but then gain access to those fields.

**The Chair:** We will now move to my colleagues on the left.

Ms. Harder, you may begin.

**Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC):** I'll reiterate what my colleagues across the table have already said and thank you for coming and giving us your time today.

I have a number of questions for you, but maybe we'll take them one at a time.

My first question has to do with human trafficking. In my perception, this falls within this mandate concerning violence against women. I understand you are working on a national strategy.

In December there was a report of the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking that states the following:

Status of Women Canada is supporting the development of culturally specific services for immigrant and refugee women victims of violence and human trafficking at an Edmonton area shelter.

I think that's to be commended, but I wonder whether, in funding this one shelter, there are any plans moving forward to fund future shelters in this same capacity. As well, what do those plans look like, if they are in place?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** I think we have two questions in one. One is the issue around human trafficking. The justice department is taking the lead, and we will definitely support them in any way we can to protect women and girls, in whatever capacity that is.

In terms of shelter access, from my perspective—and this is something I know a tremendous amount about—we really have two distinct issues. One is the issue of enough shelter spaces, regardless of the programmatic issue. The other issue is around access. I'll be

working very closely with my colleagues and with Status of Women to uncover what kinds of levers we have available to us to make sure that women have access to shelters.

Women face all kinds of barriers to shelters, whether cultural, whether related to their health practices or even to how shelters define domestic violence. From our perspective, we know we have limited capacity to control at an organizational level what an organization will do, but we know that we can also offer some best practices, some training, some guidance and support, so that women's shelters are able to meet their mandate, which is really to support women fleeing violence, regardless of where that violence is coming from.

• (1555)

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** As a follow-up question, what do you as a legislator feel can be done with respect to addressing the social problems we see that lead to women being in places of violence from which they have to flee to these shelters? I'm curious whether you can shed some light on that aspect.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** I think it's a complex answer. I'm sure you agree.

There's legislation, but there's also practical support.

Prior to running a homeless shelter, my background was public health. That's why I'm thrilled about our government's investment in things like affordable housing, support for women in the burden they face in caring for elders, and support for child care as a solution. These are the kinds of things that will enable women to have safer lives and enable women to have more prosperous economic futures.

In terms of legislation, as I said to your colleague, as we move forward with our federal strategy, we'll be able to uncover specific legislative mechanisms that can either protect women or address some of the violations that we see women face.

In terms of the prevention piece, which is an excellent question, it is those foundations of a healthy beginning that I think provide the best opportunity for prevention. Investment in indigenous communities, for example, to equalize education opportunities is one of the best ways to prevent violence against women. The more a woman has at her hands and at her fingertips—even if she does end up in a situation of domestic violence, for example—the more tools she has to deal with that problem and to move from that problem more quickly than a woman who's living in dire poverty.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Thank you.

My next question has to do with a bill that was brought forward by the former Conservative government. We brought forward a provision to prevent cyberbullying and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. It was a direct change to the Criminal Code.

These laws were brought in because of a number of tragic incidents of teenage girls committing suicide because they were coerced or blackmailed into putting images online and then bullied severely at school.

It's my understanding that you've said, as the Liberal government, that you're going to reverse these laws going forward. You would reverse the laws the Conservative government brought in during our time in power.

I'm wondering if in fact that is the intention, and if you would lobby your cabinet colleagues to keep these Criminal Code provisions in order to protect young women?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Thank you.

I share your concern. I've followed with interest some of the stories that we all know about with women who have been severely bullied online, perhaps through sharing activities that should remain private, etc. It's an extremely concerning issue. It's under-reported. Many women and girls suffer in silence. In particular, young girls are extremely vulnerable. We live in a digital world that we don't fully understand yet. We don't fully understand how powerful the tool is and what the consequences are on the private lives of girls.

As a person who has been a young woman, I can imagine what it's like when you take schoolyard bullying to the next level and it becomes bullying at a global level, and when anybody can have access to anything you've ever said or done.

This is an area that I would encourage the committee to spend some time looking at, because any federal strategy needs to include the reality that women are facing digital violence on a regular basis.

Look at some of the women that are commenting on violence on Twitter, for example. One woman I met, Julie Lalonde, who has taken on the issue of gender-based violence in a digital world, has had incredible.... If you follow her Twitter feed, you'll see that it's unbelievable what gets thrown at her.

She is committed to raising and elevating this issue, and she stays online despite the fact that she has been threatened, harassed, smeared, stalked—you name it.

I would encourage this to be part of your deliberations. As we move forward into this brave new world, how do we protect the women and girls, especially the young girls, who are coming up in this world? It is almost like a lawless wild frontier.

There was also recently another case in which some women pursued legal action against a man who had been extremely violent on Twitter. He was found not guilty.

These are the kinds of things we need to look at in terms of legislation, in terms of protective measures, in terms of education, and in terms of prevention.

Thank you. That's an excellent question.

•(1600)

**The Chair:** Excellent. All right. We'll move along to Ms. Malcolmson. You get seven minutes too.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the Minister.

There is lots of common cause so far as to what you want to achieve, so I'm going to focus right into the timelines of some of the

specifics. That's so we can get a sense of what to prioritize in our own work.

One concern is shelter funding. We know the numbers. As many as 8,000 women and children are in need of shelter on any given night. With the running-down of the shelter enhancement program under the previous government, I think there is a near-term need to look at how much money you are returning to that program. What's the timeline? How many beds are you able to create?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Thank you very much for that question. You know that this issue is near and dear to me as well.

I have to say, "Stay tuned." You know that our budget will be released on March 22. There will be more detail in that budget about how we specifically intend to address the significant social infrastructure deficit. I'm extremely proud of the work that my colleague, Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos, is doing on this issue. Certainly he is very well aware of the needs of vulnerable people, including women. I have confidence in him and I have confidence that he'll be addressing this issue in a very thorough way.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** At that point, will we be able to see what your goals are as far as number of beds and a timeline are concerned?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** I think that we will not be drilling down to the specific number of beds, but certainly you'll have a sense of the budget portfolio. Then as we move forward with our stakeholders, we'll be able to define in a clearer way where that money needs to go in terms of provinces and programs.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Is there any sense of the general timeline, of how soon you think you might get to that point?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** At this time there is not.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** All right.

Concerning the murdered and missing indigenous women's inquiry, another one that's thankfully very high-profile in your work, I'm curious whether you have, within your ministry, a mandate to implement, and also whether you are confident that you will be able to secure funding to support the families, advocates, and survivors of violence within the murdered and missing indigenous inquiry.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Thanks. That's a two-part question as well.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Yes.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** On the matter of confidence around implementing the actions that come out of the inquiry, many of the things we're hearing preliminarily that would support women—first of all in avoiding the experience of violence and second in managing the experience of violence—will be addressed by a number of the items in the budget. I've said before in sessions with families and the media that we're not waiting to act on issues that we know will have an impact on the lives of indigenous women and girls; we want to do those things now. We plan to move very quickly. The budget, as I said, will be released March 22. There will be a number of items in it that will specifically address the needs of indigenous people across the country.

With respect to specific actions, we'll have to wait to see what the inquiry recommends. Certainly there is a commitment on the part of our government to renewing a nation-to-nation relationship, and that includes implementing the TRC recommendations, especially the ones that we have the direct means to influence. I anticipate that we will have the support of all of you to examine the findings of the inquiry and then have a concrete plan going forward.

In terms of the money, right now, as you know, the platform commitment is \$40 million. We are going to see what the recommendations are as we go forward. We feel that this is a very good start.

• (1605)

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Great. Thank you.

Another major piece of the domestic violence agenda is a gender-based violence strategy for the country. I'm encouraged by the amount of work that has been done by NGOs across the country to create the framework for a strategy in the absence of previous federal leadership. I'm hoping you can give us confidence that you intend to harness that work well and not start from scratch, given how much work has been done at the grassroots level.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Absolutely. I think that's an excellent question. It would never be expeditious to do that. My perspective is that there is great work. I just met with a representative of 23 agencies, the group that created the blueprint. I had a very extensive conversation with them.

My goal is to build on the great work that both NGOs and provinces and territories have been doing. We know that this movement has been happening for a very long time at the grassroots level. For one thing, it's respectful to honour their work, and often they voice the direct concerns and wishes of women on the ground, so to speak. Second, I think it's wise. A lot of work has gone on, and we can build on the knowledge.

Therefore, it is not my intention to start from scratch. The challenge will be to decide how we enfold all that work, and we'll be continuing that conversation with our colleagues as we go forward.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Great. Thanks.

Another area where we need to make up ground is that the funding for Status of Women as a ministry was cut back quite a bit. I'd love to hear you say that you've been advocating within this budget cycle for a restoration of some of that funding.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Absolutely.

I jokingly referred to this the other day when speaking with my colleague Minister Morneau, saying that running Canada is really no different from running a shelter: the need exceeds the capacity. We have some fiscal constraints and we know that. In terms of my perspective, I want to make sure that the agency has the resources it needs to be able to conduct the work in the mandate, and that's exactly what I'm advocating for.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We are back to my colleagues to the right, starting with Ms. Ludwig.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Madam Minister.

I have two questions, actually. One is a follow-up to Ms. Harder's question about exploitation and trafficking of persons. Can you provide, or would you provide, any update regarding Bill C-452, an act to amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons)?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** As you know, our government has been monitoring and is aware of the situation in Quebec, where young women have gone missing, and of course we send our thoughts and our prayers to the families and the young women who are in this situation. It's always a tragedy when children disappear, particularly in circumstances of possible exploitation or danger, as most of the cases we've heard across the country indicate.

Our government takes human trafficking and the exploitation of women extremely seriously. We're very committed to strengthening our efforts to combat this problem, and that's why we've committed to the inquiry in particular. We know that many women have reported the experience of being trafficked in terms of the challenges they face.

We're committed to working with our provinces and our territories, indigenous communities, law enforcement, and community organizations to combat the exploitation and to support victims and potential victims.

We're committed to achieving Bill C-452's important objectives quickly and responsibly. We are right now examining whether and how the reforms in Bill C-452 can be brought into force. We do support the principle of Bill C-452, but we have some concerns that parts of the bill may be in conflict with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I anticipate we'll hear back from the relevant ministers as we go forward with that examination.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Thank you.

There are actually quite a few pieces to my second question. It's regarding International Women's Day. Obviously it's just around the corner. It's an opportunity to celebrate our progress towards gender equality and to honour the contributions of women around the world.

You mentioned, Madam Minister, that one theme you're working on is empowering women, and taking it from a vision to an action.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Well, I'm excited about this year's International Women's Day, and in particular our theme here in Canada, which ties into what we talked about earlier, the theme of the granting opportunities we talked about.

The theme for this year is that women's empowerment leads to equality. We believe that empowerment, as I said earlier, is essential to gender equality. We think that when women and girls are empowered, they are able to fulfill their potential, contribute to their communities and our society, and in fact will experience fewer of the negative aspects of gender-based violence.

We've asked people to use social media to tag inspiring women, using #YouAreEmpowerment. I've been seeing these flip up on my Twitter, and it's really interesting to see. Men and women can do this, so please tag women who have inspired you along the way, or women who are inspirational to you now, whatever the case may be. That would be one way to advance empowerment.

We're also hosting a party, essentially, and we invite you all to attend on March 8 at the National Arts Centre from 5 to 7 p.m. We'll actually be hosting this party. I've asked the critics to co-host with me, and we've received confirmation that Ms. Ambrose and Ms. Malcolmson will join us and co-host this event. It really is a non-partisan event, and it's open to anybody of any gender who wants to come and celebrate with us.

• (1610)

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Thank you.

I'm actually sharing my time with my colleague.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Hello, Minister. Thank you for coming and attending today.

My question is a bit of a follow-up on your experience of travelling across the country with your colleagues, Minister Bennett and Minister Wilson-Raybould. You've listened to many stories from survivors and families and loved ones of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

I've heard some of the news stories. Can you shed some more light on your experience, without getting into the details of cases? The numbers are astonishing. What has put us here, in this position, to begin with? What are the steps to get us out or to correct what's been done?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Thank you. That's an incredibly comprehensive question with a very long answer.

Clearly the history of colonization, sexism, and racism has gotten us here. I think we have to acknowledge that we are inheriting policy that has been divisive ever since the country was formed. There have been significant disparities in terms of all kinds of things that have contributed to this condition, but in particular in terms of women. Women in general are more at risk, and they haven't traditionally been valued.

We celebrated the 100th anniversary of the women's right to vote in Manitoba last month and will celebrate that anniversary next year across Canada. Well, indigenous people didn't receive the right to vote until decades and decades later, in the 1960s. These are some of the things that I think have contributed to the situation, and we certainly heard those things. It was not so much in that historical context, but we heard about the disparity of income, the disparity in opportunities for education and in people's living situations.

In terms of the effect this had on my colleagues and me, it was incredibly moving. It was very difficult work, even for people like me, people who have spent some time in the trenches. The sheer desperation of families to have answers to where their loved one is, to know what has happened to their loved one, certainly creates a profound responsibility for all of us—and I mean all of us—to act on this issue and to move forward and to make sure that we honour their trust in us in repeating those stories.

**The Chair:** Absolutely. That was a great answer to a very tough question.

We're going to turn now to colleagues on the left, starting with Ms. Vecchio.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** First of all, thank you very much, Minister Hajdu, for being here. It is wonderful to have you, and I look forward to working with you.

I am very pleased with the program that was announced about empowering women. I believe our role as legislators and MPs is to lead and to mentor our women in Canada—not just this generation, but all generations to follow.

In 2014 there was a study tabled regarding eating disorders. I bring a lot to this committee about my own life. I look at my children and my own teenage daughters and I too am concerned about the eating disorders that occur here in Canada.

Do you have a policy or a direction you would like to proceed in with this issue?

• (1615)

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** I'm checking with my officials on what we've done in the past.

I agree with you that eating disorders are endemic. It's interesting that they happen at all ages. Certainly I am acutely aware of the challenges we all have, even among us, with body image. It's ongoing. It's an indication of the hyper-attention that women face on a regular basis about what we eat and whether we work out and what our body size is and what we're wearing. I think no one among us is immune to those negative messages, as much as we work on combatting them on a day-to-day basis.

It's an excellent question. It is something that probably deserves more attention, and I think it actually ties in to the idea of how we define what a woman is in general.

To your specific question around the actions we have taken on eating disorders, we have worked on these issues in partnership with the Public Health Agency of Canada, and they have actually presented to this committee in partnership with Status of Women. We'd be happy to bring them back to speak on that issue.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** That would be wonderful. Thank you very much.

Also, we see that there is a large increase in anxiety, and I want to bring it back somewhat to what MP Harder talked about. We talk about anxiety and about the digital world, and one of my biggest concerns is the protection of our females not just against violence but against the cyberbullying we're referring to.

What kinds of protection are we looking at against cyberbullying? I don't mean to put you on the spot, but are we going to be moving away from some of the things that we currently have in our Criminal Code under section 300, or are we going to continue to build on it as a strategy, knowing that we are in a digital world and that photographs and body image and so many things are so important to young women and older women as well? Are we going to continue to build on that to protect our women and girls?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Thank you. That's also an excellent question.

I think it's important that we look at the impacts of hypersexualization of young women and girls, and that ties in to all of what we're talking about. When you talk about body image, when you talk about cyberviolence, and when you talk about the digital world, at the root of it—and I refer back to my previous answer—we have to start talking about how we're defining the state of being female in our country.

On a personal level, I never felt more empowered than when I let my hair go grey. It sounds like a crazy thing, but it was about seizing my own power to be who I was and to not necessarily confine myself to how society defines what's attractive, including youth. I think this is something we can all play an active role in. It certainly ties in with studying the issue of cyberviolence. You could broaden that and talk about violence in the lives of young women and girls and include an exploration of the hypersexualization of women in general and girls in particular.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Wonderful, wonderful.

Can I continue?

**The Chair:** You can have a quick question.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Thank you very much.

One other great program that I remember is the Be Her Champion program. My mentor was the previous MP. Whether it's with CEOs, with newly elected officials, or a variety of different people, is this a program that we're going to continue to extend or maybe even build on as well?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Do you mean the Be Her Champion program?

**Ms. Meena Ballantyne (Head of Agency, Status of Women Canada):** Are you talking about the It Starts With One program?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** This was a mentorship program...?

I'm sorry, I'm not briefed on that particular program, but we can bring more information back about that particular program. I'm not familiar with that specific program, but what I can tell you is that mentorship plays an important role.

Generically we're interested in programs that support women through the role of mentors. I've spoken extensively in media and in various speaking engagements about the value that mentorship played in my life. As I moved forward in my career, the need for mentors in different places at different stages transitioned. In terms of Status of Women work, we recognize that as mentors—as I mentioned earlier, whether it's in the STEM area, or whether it's in the academic area, or whether it's in the entrepreneur area—we need other women who have succeeded, who have a vision of what life might be like at the next stage, and who can help guide us in that journey.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

Now we'll move, for five more minutes, to Ms. Vandenberg.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Minister, for coming here today.

I think we're fortunate to have a minister with the background that you have on the ground, especially in terms of your experience with some of the most vulnerable women in our society through public health and through the shelter system. You would be in a good position to see the different impacts that legislation, regulations, taxation policy, and other government policies have on women and men.

I'd like to go back to the Auditor General's report. You said in your remarks that you agree that there hasn't been enough implementation in terms of gender-based analysis. We all know that when a particular law is put forward, it can have a different impact on women than it does on men.

Could you talk a bit about some of your plans in terms of a strategy on gender-based analysis?

• (1620)

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Absolutely. I'm very grateful for the government's leadership on this issue in terms of highlighting the need for gender-based analysis to be applied in a more rigorous way from the mandate letter on. It made receiving the Auditor General's remarks that much easier, because we have a plan and an idea about how important this is. I'm committed to ensuring the federal departments are conducting the GBA that's been required of them for the past 20 years.

This isn't a new requirement or even a new concept, which is one of the things I found rather surprising when I started. It has been on the books for a long time.

I've been mandated to ensure that government policy, legislation, and regulations are sensitive to the different impacts, as you said. We've made some progress. There are some departments that are doing great work, some that are coming on board with new enthusiasm, and some where gender has not traditionally even been considered, such as security or science.

We're going to work closely with the Privy Council Office, my ministerial colleagues, and my parliamentary colleagues to ensure GBA is applied to government proposals before they arrive for decision-making. I would also encourage you to work through your channels to encourage your parliamentary colleagues to consider the impacts of gender in their private members' bills, and we can assist in that regard. We'll be working with the PCO and the Treasury Board to improve monitoring and reporting on GBA, because who's watching and how are we determining that it's happening is a big component. We'll provide advice, tools, and training for a wide range of sectors to ensure gender is meaningfully considered in Government of Canada initiatives.

The other thing that you can do on a personal note is take the GBA Plus online course on our website. It doesn't take very long, and it gives you an insight into your own comfort level, knowledge, and expertise around not just gender but other issues of diversity.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** You mentioned that some departments are actually doing much better in this area. Are there examples of departments that have practices that could be shared between departments across government so that those best practices can also be spread between departments?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Well, there are a number of departments. For example, the immigration department is mandated to do GBA, so I must say that their GBA is extremely thorough. I didn't realize they were mandated until I saw the fantastic memorandum to cabinet they produced for a particular issue. I went back to my officials, raving about the thorough job, and found out that in fact it is a requirement.

There are other departments. Recently we've had Public Safety really step up their game and do a really thorough job in some of the work they're doing. We're very excited about new partners coming on board, such as the defence department, which is looking at some of their work through a gender lens.

I think there's a new enthusiasm for GBA. I'm really hoping that we can continue to keep the ball rolling. I know that with all your work we will be able to do that, especially if you encourage your colleagues to consider it as well.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** You mentioned that we're going to be active at the CSW, the UN Commission on the Status of Women. I know that a lot of countries around the world, through UN Women and others, are starting to do gender-based analysis.

Canada was always a leader in terms of helping a lot of other countries take this on. Is that something we'll be promoting at CSW and other international forums?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Absolutely, yes. It's something that we think is of value to all women across the world, right? I mean, if we don't consider how policy impacts women, we're missing out on 50% of the population that we're expected to serve. We'll definitely be working with other countries, whether it's to share tools, to share ideas, or to encourage people to consider GBA in the work they're doing in their countries.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** That's fantastic.

Am I out of time?

**The Chair:** You're out of time.

Actually, we're out of time, because the minister has been gracious enough to give us an hour.

I appreciate it very much and I appreciate your great answers to the questions.

Here's what I would suggest to the members. The estimates were sent out late yesterday, I think, so you may not have had a chance to look at them. We didn't want to rush through those estimates of what the Status of Women committee will have from a supplementary budget point of view. We will arrange a time for the minister to come back, and we can ask questions about the estimates at that time.

Thank you again for coming, Minister. I will invite you to depart so that we can finish the last part of our meeting.

I'm hoping that you can all stay for a few extra minutes to see if there's anything we want to add to the list of things this committee would like to look at. We'll go in camera for that portion.

• (1625)

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** I would just like to add that you had asked for some data, so the department has provided you with some data that they've collated for you.

**The Chair:** Yes. Did everybody get this? All right.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Madam Chair, may I ask why we're going in camera?

**The Chair:** Oh. Well, it's just because we did the last time. We don't have to if the committee wants to be.... You're fine?

Okay. We'll stay public, then. Great. I'm all about openness and transparency.

All right. Basically, from the the last time, the clerk put together the list from the various items that were suggested. If you remember, what we said we were going to do in the second part of this meeting was that the steering committee was going to take a look at all of those items and make sure the wording was good and clear so that we could send it out to the members, who would be able to vote their priorities and return it to the clerk so that we could get that all together. Then, at the next meeting, we would know the prioritized list of things we want to work on.

Ms. Damoff.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Are we going to come up with the list and distribute it, and then everybody will vote on it and send it to the clerk? Is that what—

**The Chair:** Yes, that was the suggestion from the last meeting. We made lists as we listened to Ms. Ballantyne and her folks. Afterwards, we had some discussion about what we might want to work on. As we were going, we took notes of anything that was talked about there.

I thought there might be other things today after the minister was here. We've jotted down a few things, as well as questions that were asked. Then the steering committee would look at that complete list just to make sure that when we wrote it down, we captured it correctly and clearly, so that when it goes out to you, if you get a list of 20 ideas, you'll each have a good chance to state what your priorities are. Then we would take those all back together and put them together.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Okay. I'd hoped that we could narrow it down a bit, and that rather than 20 topics going out to everybody, we could come up with maybe four or five.

**The Chair:** Do you mean with the steering committee, or with the committee of the whole?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** We can do it with all of us.

My only concern is that with 20 topics, you end up with everything getting one vote and you really aren't any further ahead. I'm not quite sure how we're going to vote for it or what the process will be.

**The Chair:** Usually you do a Pareto vote. For example, I'm not sure how many we would have, but if we had 20, each person would prioritize seven out of the group. When they come back, you basically get a distribution with the one that has the most votes at the top one on the list, but you see the rank order of what the team feels. Obviously some things would only get one vote if only one person supported it.

If there's an opposite suggestion, I'm open to it.

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.):** I think that to keep us organized at the end, it would help if the committee voted on a single work plan that we could discuss after we narrowed it down to a smaller feasible work plan. That is maybe a job for the steering committee or maybe we could have that debate here, but I'm a little uncomfortable with having 20 different items on a list, and when I pick my three, they may get lost.

I think we could have that discussion and reach a work plan together as a group.

**The Chair:** All right.

Are you comfortable for the steering committee to take a look and try to narrow it down?

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** If it comes back to the committee for approval in the end, then that's the ordinary course of events, is it not?

Maybe the clerk could educate us on this point.

**The Chair:** All of the steering committee's decisions come back to the committee of the whole for consideration. My suggestion would be that we adjourn the meeting and that the steering committee get together and talk about items.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Could we, maybe as a committee of the whole, sit and go through all of these, or would you prefer that you just do this—

• (1630)

**The Chair:** I would prefer doing it with the steering committee. Having facilitated a number of these discussions, I know that if you have 10 people with 30 ideas, you'll never come to agreement on narrowing it down. I would suggest that we defer to the steering committee.

Go ahead, Ms. Harder.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** On a point of clarification, if it goes to the steering committee, are you asking for any further recommendations before it gets to that point?

**The Chair:** I wanted to make sure we have them all, so if there are any others, we were going to add them at this point.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** When it's appropriate, I do have a comment to make in that regard.

**The Chair:** All right, we will open it up for ideas to be added.

Go ahead.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** When I read the list that was discussed at the last committee meeting—unfortunately I wasn't able to be here for it—I noticed that we discussed the possibility of studying violence against women and girls. Now, I understand that the minister has been asked to put together a national strategy with regard to this issue, so in one sense it would be easy just to abdicate and allow her to do that at another committee level of some sort.

However, I wonder if we could play a complementary role—not a competitive role, but a complementary role. The minister was suggesting today that perhaps cyberbullying might be an area that this committee could study. If we were to focus on the social media side of things with regard to violence against women and girls and how social media perpetuate it, I wonder if that could act as a complementary study to assist the minister with her overall national

strategy. It would help to give us some focus as a committee and help us be a part of a larger picture, a national framework, which I think could be a lot of fun for us.

**The Chair:** I did add it to the list when we were going around with the questions.

**Ms. Rachel Harder:** Okay.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I really like that part of it.

If we're going to be looking at something, we could look at violence in the lives of girls and women and include cyberbullying and make it a bit broader than that.

I sit on the public safety committee as well, and sexual exploitation of children is something that has shot through the roof in terms of crime. Also, how can we apply strategies in universities and colleges to make sure that this type of violence isn't happening there?

It would be looking more generally at violence in the lives of young girls and women. We would be doing that as a component of it, an important component, but we would be making it a bit broader.

**The Chair:** That's fine.

We'll come out of the discussion with the steering committee. When they narrow it, we'll be able to put that out as one of the ideas that goes before the committee. We don't have to scope it ourselves. As a committee, we can then say that we want to work in a certain area, but what do we want to do in that area? What do we want to study? What tasks we will bring forward?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** There's a lot that's tied into that. The minister mentioned the hypersexualization of girls. How is that feeding into cyberbullying in turn? There are a few things that we can be looking at under that context.

**The Chair:** They're interconnected for sure.

Are there other ideas?

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Before we throw out too many more ideas, was the list of all the topics circulated? It would be helpful to know what's on the list so that we aren't repetitive.

**The Chair:** It was not. Can I read the list to you?

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** That would be very helpful.

**The Chair:** They include sexual trafficking through online websites; female entrepreneurs; murdered and missing indigenous women, including a review of the estimates and the results, because the department is actually doing the inquiry, so we have a role to watch what they do and watch their estimates and make sure they're getting the results we want; gender-based analysis at the federal level; sexual harassment in the military or other government areas or Canada Post; women on corporate boards and in leadership positions; access to the justice system for women in Canada; female appointees to federal boards; housing for women in Canada and domestic violence shelter funding; and a gender-based violence action plan, because the federal program is going on and we have the ability to look at their estimates and their results and make sure they're covering it adequately, or we could do anything that they're not doing.

They also include gender and economic security; any pay equity issues not covered by the pay equity special committee; initiatives for young women and girls; gender-based violence issues not covered by the federal program, such as intimate partner violence or child sexual abuse; increasing the number of women in non-traditional roles, such as pipefitters and engineers; improved justice system approaches to violence against women, which is in regard to the idea that today the abuser gets to stay in the house and the women have to go to the shelters; issues impacting indigenous women and girls; female refugees and their issues; increasing the number of women entrepreneurs, which is a duplicate; and preventing Internet posting of pictures of girls, which takes us to this one.

● (1635)

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** If I may, I would suggest that although hearing the list is useful, it is hard to wrap your head around all the different ideas that we came up with. We had a great discussion last time, but if we could get those lists, go home and think about them, and come up with our top priorities, as you were suggesting, I think that is a good idea. It will give us some time to mull it over, because it's very hard to remember that whole list. A lot of those things are overlapping at times, so I think that will help us eliminate the things that are redundant.

**The Chair:** Ms. Damoff.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I wonder if you could distribute the list. We could come back with some ideas for some studies that we might consider. As my colleague said, a number of them overlap. I've just mentioned an idea that includes a number of them.

Maybe we could take some of those issues and come back with some ideas. That would narrow it down from 20 or 30. Maybe we could come up with five or six different issues that incorporate some of the other ones and take a look at them. We could each go back and take a look at some of that.

**The Chair:** Yes, and I think it would be fine to add the things that we heard today as well. Human trafficking is one area that I heard about today, as well as cyberbullying and picture-sharing, the digital threat, and the hypersexualization of women and girls. On Bill C-452, it sounded as though the minister was going to address that one. I wrote down "section 300 of the Criminal Code". I didn't know if that was something they were addressing or whether that would be something for us.

Certainly I can put together the list, and the clerk will translate it into both official languages and submit it to you. Then we could come back and take a look at the list, having prioritized it that way. Is that the preferred method?

Go ahead, Ms. Malcolmson.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** I agree absolutely that this decision is a very big commitment. We need to see the list well in advance so that we can have a good conversation about it.

I have a process-related question that maybe the clerk can help out with. Is there a reason that we have to adopt a whole work program now? Is there any downside to putting it off? My feeling is that until we see the budget and know what it is that the Status of Women department is going to take on, it's going to be hard for me to decide which things I want to commit to for our work together.

I'm also very compelled by the suggestion at the previous meeting by MP Vandenbeld around tackling the gender-based analysis report. It's fresh. The work has been done. The idea is for us, as an early inquiry, to invite in some of the departments that have really done well. If there's a piece of work for us to take on early and sink our teeth into, it feels like there's no downside to that one, but there might be a downside to tackling some other pieces that maybe another committee's going to take on or that maybe the minister is going to take on. Then we might be spinning our wheels a little.

**The Chair:** On Thursday we will have the Auditor General come to our meeting on the GBA report. We could also talk about the estimates this Thursday. That could be the work for the Thursday committee.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, we would send out the lists, in both official languages, for people to consider. I think the following week is break week. When we come back after the break, everyone will have had a good long time to think about it.

I also believe that International Women's Day takes place during the week we come back, so we would celebrate International Women's Day and put the focus on the social media tagging that was indicated.

In the meetings that week, we should talk about the priorities. The budget comes out on March 22, so if we want to wait until then to finalize the priorities, what we could do at the meeting, once we have the list, is to at least narrow and identify early work and some witnesses we want to bring.

Go ahead, Ms. Sahota.

● (1640)

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** I don't think it's necessary to wait until the budget. There are tons of committees that are hard at work right now, and they're not sitting and waiting for March 22 and the budget to roll around.

Surely our committee can come up with at least a couple of priorities that we can get started on that are important to us and our committee. We should be able to choose the direction of our committee. Of course, from time to time there may be a reason to amend the direction we're taking or add some urgent matters we should look into. That can come afterward. At this point, we should set our agenda to some degree and get working, because we're wasting time otherwise.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Damoff.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I'm thinking along the same lines, but I do also think we need to narrow it down from 20. I think it's really important for us to deal with that list that's been circulated. We are looking at a long way away, but we could come up with some ideas and combine some items on that list, as I was saying, along with gender-based analysis. Maybe we could come back to that at the next meeting and have some proposals for studies that tie in everything that you're sending around. Then we could look at that and see where we want to set our priorities.

I do think we can get moving. If something comes up, whether it's in the budget or something that happens in the world, we can always take whatever we're working on and set it aside for six weeks or three weeks and make this other thing a high priority. We can always shift what we're doing and shelve something for a little while, but I do think we can start to move on some things.

The other one—and I don't know if this is on your list—is sexual harassment in the workplace. Is that on there?

**The Chair:** Yes. I have sexual harassment in the military, in the government, or in Canada Post, but I could broaden it if you want the workplace as a general theme.

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** Sure.

**The Chair:** Okay. We will send this list out. I'm not quite sure how you want to bring that back with your input. I'm not quite sure whether you just want to make lists of studies you'd like to do, whether you want to prioritize it within your individual parties, or whether you want to do the random vote thing.

Go ahead, Ms. Harder.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Thank you. I just want to make a couple of quick comments with regard to my colleagues over here.

I would agree with the notion that we can start a study sooner rather than later. We have the mandate letter that was given to the minister outlining the things to which she's been asked to give priority, so I believe it might be in the best interests of this committee to pick one of those items for us to also prioritize.

Again, I just feel that it is in the best interests of this committee to be of benefit to the overall national picture, rather than studying something that is perhaps in left field. I think that could gain some traction.

With that, I would put on the floor the proposal that we study something within this realm of violence against women. I would take Pam's suggestion with regard to broadening it beyond just social media and cyberbullying. We would want to make sure that we're not stepping on toes with regard to this other committee that's being formed, but we could take a complementary role.

I'm going to be a little bit bold right now. I'm wondering if, as a committee, we could come to some sort of consensus with regard to studying this topic, and then at another meeting define specifically what within that topic we would talk about. Could we get it that narrow today? Perhaps that's too bold.

**The Chair:** Could I have a show of consent to see who would be happy to do that?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** If it included violence in the lives of women and girls, I'd be happy to move on that.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Yes.

I guess that today I would be proposing a broad motion. Within the mandate letter, there are a total of seven things that the minister has been asked to prioritize, and one of the big ones is a comprehensive federal gender violence strategy and action plan.

I would be proposing to agree as a committee—being reminded that we have other opportunities for further studies at this committee—that this would be our first study under this topic. I'm not asking

us to specify the nature of that study; I'm simply asking to agree that it would be the general topic of study.

**The Chair:** Is that a motion?

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** That is a motion.

**The Chair:** I think Ms. Vandenberg wanted to speak, either to that motion or about something else.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Actually, I was going to make the same point. We have a list of 20-plus topics, many of which could fall under the umbrella of a larger topic.

In trying to determine all of the different subjects that this committee could potentially study for the coming years, it should be possible for us to find something that we perhaps all agree is the top priority or the top two priorities. We have a list of other things that we can consider going forward, but things will happen in the world as well, as was said.

I like the idea of starting with gender-based violence as a topic. I think we heard that in the minister's speech. It seems that there's agreement across the room on this point. I also raised the point previously that we have the Auditor General coming on gender-based analysis. I wonder if those two might not be low-hanging fruit that we could discuss first. Then we could go through the others and keep them on record to see what the next one would be.

It's not necessarily having to plan out and do straw polls and say we're going to do this, not this, and then this, but seeing what we can all come to a consensus on right here.

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Malcolmson.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Can I ask for clarity on the motion? Was it the gender-based violence strategy and action plan as is described in the mandate letter?

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Yes, that's right. Sorry. I move:

That the Committee agree to undertake a study under the broad umbrella of violence against women, pursuant to the Minister's mandate to create a national gender violence study, and that the Committee agree to meet at a later date to detail this study.

I would make that motion today to do a study under that broad umbrella, and at the next meeting or a later date we would specify what that study would be within this umbrella.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Fraser.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** I think that in the spirit of agreement, we should look at gender-based violence as a topic of study at committee.

However, being a bit of a procedure nut myself, I like the idea of formulating a work plan that says the committee shall undertake a study of gender-based violence, or housing, or whatever, and list the four or five topics. Then, when we review some of the suggestions that have been made, I think it would be convenient to turn our minds to how much time we actually have.

I fear that if we highlight one priority now without considering the others, we may go too far down one path to the exclusion of other important agenda items. Certainly I think that this belongs on the list, but it would be my personal preference at the next meeting to address a single motion that includes the multiple items that we would study while we have the time.

**The Chair:** This motion on the table just says that we're going to take on a study under the broad umbrella of gender-based violence strategy. There would be follow-up actions that would go on between now and the next meeting, where you'd bring back four or five topics under that umbrella. We would then agree, as a committee, that those are the four or five, and there would be a motion to study them.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Sorry, I may have miscommunicated. I was viewing the broad umbrella as one of a few topics that the committee may choose to study, rather than saying that we're going to tackle this one issue to the exclusion of others.

If I could make a suggestion, it would be that at the beginning of the next meeting, we could entertain a single motion—which we could even circulate following today's meeting and following an opportunity to review the list—that says these are the few items we're going to tackle before a certain date, or something like that.

I'm a little fearful that if we highlight one priority and charge down that path, we might miss the opportunity to study other items that we might raise at our next meeting that would be of great importance as well.

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

Go ahead, Ms. Malcolmson.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** On a point of order, I believe a motion's on the floor, though, right?

**The Chair:** Correct. The existing motion will either be withdrawn or voted on, for sure.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Thanks.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** In terms of points of order, don't we need 48 hours' notice for a motion, and doesn't it have to be bilingual?

**The Chair:** As long as it's for the committee meeting and it's relevant to the discussion, apparently we don't. I'm trusting my clerk on this one.

All right. The motion is on the floor that we would take a study under the broad umbrella of gender-based violence strategy.

All in favour of doing that—

• (1650)

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Sorry, Madam Chair, but I think there was still debate on the motion.

**The Chair:** Was there more discussion?

**Ms. Pam Damoff:** I just think we're doing this on the fly. My gut says I would rather do it when we're a little bit more prepared to have something in a substantive motion.

I will not be supporting the motion, and it's not because I don't support the study, because I do. I just think we're trying to draft some of this stuff on the fly when there's no need to. It would probably be helpful to have the Auditor General come to our next meeting. We have a break week. We can compile our thoughts, compile the list, and come up with something that's actually substantive and include some options. We can maybe take little pieces from a couple of ideas that come forward.

I'm just hesitant to commit to something on the fly when there isn't the need to.

**The Chair:** Ms. Sahota.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Is it possible to table this motion until the next meeting rather than vote against it or for it right now? Maybe we will agree at the beginning of the next meeting, or maybe there can be an amendment made and we can include some more topics within that mandate.

**The Chair:** That is an option for the mover.

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** At this point in time, I would be happy to table the motion. That would allow for some further thought and further dialogue. That's not a problem.

**The Chair:** Okay. Excellent.

As I see it, then, the path forward is that the list will come to you, in two languages, with all the things that are possible to work on. You'll take a look at that list. You'll think about this motion that's coming back, and about how you want to amend that motion in terms of what we really want to work on. Meanwhile, we'll have the Auditor General's GBA report on Thursday, and the discussion about estimates will happen.

Ms. Malcolmson.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Do we not have to vote to table the motion?

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

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** No?

**The Chair:** Well, the clerk says we have unanimous consent, but just to be formal, let's say it: all in favour of tabling the motion?

(Motion allowed to stand)

**The Chair:** We will table the motion. Very good.

I like you keeping me in line on points of order. That's a good thing.

Thank you very much for your time today. You will see these lists, and we will see you on Thursday at 3:30 p.m.

The meeting is adjourned.





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