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Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order. As you see, we have committee business from 3:30 to 4. We have a notice of motion on the table that says:

That the Standing Committee on the Status of Women request that the Minister of State for the Agency of the Status of Women appear before the Committee before December 3, 2009 on the subject of the Supplementary Estimates (B) 2009-10.

So that's a motion on the table.

Ms. Neville, would you like to speak to it?

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): I would just very briefly, Madam Chair. It's self-explanatory. I think it's important that we hear from the minister and see the minister every time there are estimates tabled in the House. Our primary responsibility as members of Parliament is to hold the executive branch accountable, and I'd like to hear from the minister.

The Chair: Good. Thank you.

Is there any discussion on this motion?

Yes, Ms. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I certainly don't disagree with my colleague, although the supplementary estimates, of course, were tabled a number of weeks ago. What I worry about, what concerns me, is that right now, when there are two dates and the minister is very busy with a number of events, I think it's perhaps a little late in the day to be bringing this kind of motion to the table regarding supplementary estimates.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion?

Yes, Ms. Hoepfner.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): I would agree with the spirit of the motion and the intent of the motion, but my concern is also the date. I'm just wondering if there's some way we can adjust that, because technically, really, there's one actual day that we're meeting between today and the date that you wanted the minister here. I think the idea is good; it's just the dates that I'm concerned about. I'm wondering if Ms. Neville might have some flexibility on that.

The Chair: Just for the information of the committee, the estimates must be reported back on December 7 at the latest, so we have between now and December 7 to get the minister to explain the estimates to this committee and to be accountable for that.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: When were the estimates tabled?

The Chair: They were tabled the 4th of November.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: So this might just be an opportunity missed, unfortunately.

The Chair: Now we'll hear from Ms. Neville and then Ms. Mathysen.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We asked the clerk some days before that if the minister could come. You were absent, Madam Chair. You were not well. I expressed an indication informally that I thought it was important that the minister be here for the estimates. I was told that we had to have a formal motion. I would have tabled it 10 days ago, and probably should have, but I have to say that there is nothing more important than how dollars are spent and how a department is managed. I appreciate that the minister is busy, but I think it's incumbent upon her to clear an hour for us.

• (1535)

The Chair: I would like to suggest, however, that the clerk does not have the authority to request a minister of the crown—

Hon. Anita Neville: I understand that.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Could I just ask a question? If I'm understanding you correctly, Ms. Neville, you were aware 10 days prior that if you wanted the minister to come—

Hon. Anita Neville: I should have put a motion in. I thought we could just put a general request in. The chair was away and it fell between the cracks.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Okay. I was concerned that—

The Chair: Sorry, Ms. Hoepfner, you have spoken. If you wish to speak again, put your name down.

Ms. Mathysen.

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

Just to remind the committee, quite some time ago, I requested that the minister be asked to attend committee so that we could discuss the gender budget issues that had come up. It was a considerable time ago, and I know the invitation has been extended. It would seem to me that given the fact that the minister did indicate she'd be happy to come at any time we wanted—I recall her saying she was very pleased to be at our committee—I think she could quite easily come to discuss gender budget analysis with us and to include in that a discussion of the supplementary estimates. Again, I come back to the fact that the request was made quite some time ago, and I think it would be a good thing to see the minister as soon as possible.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Wong.

Mrs. Alice Wong (Richmond, CPC): I would say that we probably should add a friendly amendment, such as “subject to her availability”, because this is just too short of a notice, especially if you want her to give us an explanation.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Neville, you'll have to respond to the request for a friendly amendment. I cannot respond to that.

Hon. Anita Neville: The only friendly amendment I will accept is “prior to December 7”. I think it's incumbent upon the minister to find an hour to come before the committee.

The Chair: The friendly amendment has been rejected.

Ms. Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Madam Chair, I need some information. When I started out, I sat on the Standing Committee on Health, and it was studying supplementary estimates in the House.

Couldn't we proceed in that manner? Is it only the Standing Committee on Health that can do that?

[English]

The Chair: It's my understanding, and I'm getting my advice here from the clerk, that it is up to the government to decide if it wishes to withdraw dealing with estimates at committee and they want to do it in a committee of the whole of the House. The government has not so decided.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: If the government determined that the supplementary estimates had to continue being studied in the committee, the minister would have to come and validate the budget. Is that correct?

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Boucher.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limouilou, CPC): I'm not opposed to the principle, but I think the notice period is short. Everyone knows that the minister has a full schedule. I'm only the Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women, and my schedule is already quite full. I imagine it's even worse for ministers. Don't

forget either that this week is the Week against Violence Against Women. The minister is meeting a large number of women's groups on the occasion.

[English]

The Chair: All right. If someone has something new to add other than that the time is too short, I will entertain their intervention. But if it is the same thing being repeated over and over, I think we should call for the motion.

Mr. Van Kesteren, do you have something new to add?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): It's not something new, but possibly just a compromise.

It's apparent that we have no problem. We agree that the minister should appear. We don't just want to embarrass her and present her with a motion that would imply she's not responding to our request. If we could have a preamble, something to the effect of “Notwithstanding the fact that there are two weeks left”—or a week left—“we duly request that the minister still make it possible to meet with this committee.”

I think something along those lines....

• (1540)

The Chair: You would have to ask Ms. Neville if she would entertain this. This is a friendly amendment, and if she doesn't, well then...

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Then we can't support—

The Chair: Madame Demers, do you have something new?

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Chair, it is difficult to provide this committee with anything new. However, I need more information on the supplementary estimates. I would like to know whether this supplementary amount granted through the Department of Canadian Heritage is intended for Status of Women Canada.

If the minister is not available, I wonder to what extent the people from Status of Women Canada could explain to us the supplementary estimates, which nevertheless total \$798,000, nearly \$1 million. That's a lot of money.

[English]

The Chair: Madame Demers has suggested that the department should come if the minister cannot.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: I don't mean to be stubborn, but I think it's incumbent upon the executive branch of government—the elected representatives—to come before the committee to defend their estimates. It's not a huge department. It's not preparing for the Department of Health or the immigration department or Foreign Affairs.

It's a relatively small agency of another department. I don't think it's an onerous responsibility.

The Chair: All right. Unless it's something new...

Ms. Hoepfner, do you have something absolutely new?

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Thank you.

I think all sides are trying to find a compromise. We cannot make up for the fact that this motion was not presented 10 days ago. We're trying to find a way to solve this, so I would ask Ms. Neville to keep that in mind. Ms. Demers had a good suggestion for a second choice. I think it would be fine to make that second choice clear, but we're trying to find a compromise here.

The Chair: For information, I would like to let the committee know it would be incumbent on the minister, since she cannot come, to send her officials. Ms. Neville has made it very clear that she wishes to ask the minister to come. I don't know if the minister can come. Everyone here is telling me that the minister can come. How do you know the minister cannot come until the motion is given to you?

So the request should go to the minister, and she can decide whether her department will come to present.

We have Ms. Zarac.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Considering that the minister mentioned in one of her previous appearances that she would be available to meet with the committee and that reviewing the estimates is an important job that has to be done in committee, I suggest that we show some flexibility. If the minister can't meet with us, we could hold a special committee meeting.

[English]

The Chair: Is that in the order of a friendly amendment for Ms. Neville to add?

If the minister cannot come to the usual meeting of the committee, will we have a specific meeting to meet the minister, Ms. Neville?

Hon. Anita Neville: I would be prepared to accept that.

The Chair: I'm not suggesting it, Madam; I'm just interpreting what Ms. Zarac is saying.

Hon. Anita Neville: I am prepared to agree to a meeting at her convenience.

The Chair: Shall we add what you're suggesting, Ms. Zarac? Do you want to put that in some sort of formal motion for us?

You could say that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women requests that the Minister of State appear before the committee on the subject, and the committee would be prepared to accommodate her availability.

We can talk about that, given that it's coming up to Christmas. There may be the odd glass of wine available, Madam Clerk.

So what we have is a friendly amendment.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Just a moment, please. You mentioned a glass of wine. The Chair had a snack with scotch. Could we women have one with dry martinis?

● (1545)

[English]

The Chair: That will be up to the committee to decide.

I'm going to read the amended friendly motion:

That the Committee request that the Minister of State (Status of Women Canada) appear before the Committee before December 7, 2009 on the subject of the Supplementary Estimates (B) 2009-2010 and that the Committee would be prepared to accommodate her availability.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Ms. Clerk, I want it noted in the minutes that that was unanimous. I really think it's a good thing when we can have a unanimous decision on something.

Now I understand there is another motion, Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: I submitted another motion. I do not have 48 hours' notice for it. If it were to be dealt with today, I understand it would require unanimous consent.

The Chair: I discussed this, as I do with the clerk when there is a question of protocol. The clerk has informed me that the item on the agenda is committee business, which is anything to do with the committee. So your motion is in order to be discussed now.

I did not think it was in order, but the clerk has so informed me.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Chair, a point of order.

I appreciate that we can be looking at the motion, given the ruling of the clerk, but I also have a motion on the table, so I'm just wondering about the order for discussion.

The Chair: There is something to do again with bringing a motion, to revoke a motion that has been voted on already, and I think it requires unanimous consent for that motion to stand.

I was reading the new rules today in that big thick green book we got. I may have misinterpreted it, so I will ask the clerk to give me some advice on this in a minute when she comes to sit down.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I would suggest it's not a revoking, because if it is, indeed, a revoking of a motion—

The Chair: That had been voted on, a voted motion—

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: —then we had revoked a motion already in place.

The Chair: No one had registered any dissent to that original motion.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Excuse me, Madam Chair—

The Chair: How people voted was registered, but not the dissent on the motion being tabled. When the motion was tabled, there was nobody who said the motion had no right to be tabled at the time.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: So I guess the clerk was....

The Chair: Yes, the clerk will tell us about that.

We were talking about having read the new rules, and if there's a motion that had already been subjected to a vote, and a motion is requiring that that vote be overturned, you need unanimous consent of the committee to even bring the motion forward. Under the new rules, I read that.

Is that right? Is it not?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Angela Crandall): The motion is a new motion. They have decided on it, but basically she said notwithstanding the motion adopted on a certain date. So that, in effect, is discharging the previous motion, if the new motion is adopted. And because we were under committee business...

The Chair: It can come up.

The Clerk: It can come up.

The Chair: Okay.

What do we do in terms of the order of the two motions? Ms. Neville tabled hers.

Do you all have copies of Ms. McLeod's original motion?

Cathy, do you have a copy of it with you?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I'm sorry, I don't.

The Chair: I have a copy of the motion. I'll read it for you.

Notice of motion from Ms. McLeod:

That, notwithstanding the motion adopted by the Committee on Thursday, October 29, 2009, that the Committee prioritize the study on non-traditional work, and that the pension study be postponed until next year.

Did you wish me to read it in French, Monsieur Desnoyers? No?

• (1550)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Chair, I would appreciate it if you would read it in French. That way we can't be accused of not providing the French version.

The Chair: The motion reads as follows:

Que, nonobstant la motion qu'il a adoptée le jeudi 29 octobre 2009, le Comité accorde la priorité à l'étude des professions non traditionnelles, et que l'étude des pensions soit reportée à l'année prochaine.

[English]

Ms. McLeod, would you like to speak? If we don't have debate on the motion, we will call the vote.

Ms. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think if you recall at the very start of this year, we went through a really comprehensive and quite reasonable process to decide the focus of our committee. I was so pleased at that time, and I remember Madam Neville saying, "You know what? I think we could come to some conciliation, and perhaps we can do both studies

at once." I thought it was our committee really trying to work together and move down a really good path, in terms of our study, and trying to meet the priorities of all the groups. To me that was a highlight at the start of our committee. This was a really important subject, and I see that it was—

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: A point of order, Madam Chair. I'm sorry.

Are we in camera?

The Chair: No, the business of the committee is not necessarily in camera.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Thank you.

Sorry for the interruption.

The Chair: We're not in camera.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: We sort of chose to look at one subject only. That was not unanimously agreed to, but it was passed, so we chose to focus on one area.

Since that time, there are a few things that have come to light. One is certainly the release of the Liberal pink book, which really highlighted the importance of the work we are doing in terms of women in non-traditional occupations, and also understanding that the triennial review on pensions has taken place and has already been implemented in the economic recovery.

So from my perspective, in spite of the fact that we had shifted our focus slightly, given the release of your book and some new factors that came to light as we went through our pension study, it's really appropriate that we maybe shift our focus.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Is there any discussion on this motion?

Just for your information, though, because I would like the committee to make informed decisions, today we have some witnesses coming on pensions. The last hearing on pensions will take place next Tuesday.

It would seem to me that we're pretty far into finishing our pension debate anyway, or finishing with pension witnesses anyway, so this may or may not be moot, but let's go ahead and hear the discussion.

Madam Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

On November 3, a representative of the Department of Finance testified. I asked that witness at the time whether the work that we were doing would be useful to them in the context of their process of amending pension plans and so on. Mr. Forbes' response was very eloquent on that point:

Certainly the consultations of this committee and any committee are important for informing the work the department does. We have just gone through a tri-annual review with the Canada Pension Plan and the next round won't be done for three years. We have a budget-making process ongoing, though, and these are issues that come to the attention of the department. So the work of this committee and any other committee is of course useful to us in how we help to advise the minister.

So a process is currently ongoing. For that reason, Madam Chair, I will vote against the motion because we've been told that would help the minister make his decision and that he will meet with the ministers of the other provinces in Yellowknife in December.

•(1555)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Hoepfner.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Thank you very much.

I will be supporting this motion. It has been quite interesting over the last few weeks in my riding. I know we all represent different demographics and different people, but so many of the women I've been talking to, when I told them that we were doing this study, were so pleased and felt that it was so relevant.

The pension study is extremely relevant as well. It seems to me that the official said this information would be useful, but he didn't give a certain timeframe on that. So I think there's a timeframe we can work within.

My concern is, again, and I know I've said this several times, that it's so important that we represent all Canadian women. There are a lot of young women right now who might not be thinking about pensions, and maybe they should be, but they are looking at their future. They're looking at the decisions they're making. They're looking at university. Some of them are only in junior high and maybe they're thinking about the typical women's jobs. I think we have such a great opportunity and we need to take it. We don't know what's going to be coming up when we come back in January, what kind of other important issues will be before us. We have a chance to continue talking, even if it's just for a few sessions, on women in non-traditional roles.

I think we can inspire women. It was such a great study, and so far we've heard from very good witnesses. So I would be supporting this. I think our initial decision was a good one and we need to go back to looking at women in non-traditional roles.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen, and then Ms. Zarac.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Given the information you provided, inasmuch as we will be concluding the witness portion of our study on Tuesday, and the fact that Mr. Forbes, as Madame Demers pointed out, thought our work would be quite useful in regard to the budgeting process, it doesn't make sense to me that we would abandon a pension study now when we are so close to finishing. As significant as non-traditional work may be, I think we can easily pursue that in the new year.

In regard to Ms. Hoepfner's concern about young women not having access to good information, I would suggest as a teacher that some guidance departments in the secondary schools do quite a lot of work, and very good work, in regard to providing young women with information about the kinds of opportunities they may pursue. I'm at a loss to understand how it could be the least bit sensible for us to abandon a study that is almost complete.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Zarac.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I don't believe that continuing to give priority to the pension study in any way reflects the atmosphere of this committee. I think it is up to each of us to do our best. Whatever the subject, that is what we should do.

Furthermore, I'm not at all belittling the study on non-traditional occupations. Recently, moreover, I suggested a number of witnesses for the study, and I believe that should be a priority in 2010.

However, we are completing our study. As Ms. Demers said earlier, this is a study that will be very much appreciated by the Department of Finance. We are almost there. So we have to finish it, since we'll be starting the study on non-traditional occupations early in the new year.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Wong.

Mrs. Alice Wong: I was able to meet some post-secondary instructors just today, and we discussed the good studies we've been doing. They were very, very happy that we're looking at jobs of the future. So this is a very, very important study.

In my riding, a lot of young people, young women, were so excited when we started talking about this. I was talking to university professors and trainers, and they think that, yes, this is an excellent study because it goes all the way to post-secondary as well. You don't stop at grade 12; you go on in order to go into other non-traditional jobs, which require more than grade 12. That's why I'm supporting this motion.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have witnesses who are going to come to this committee. We've heard from Ms. McLeod, Ms. Hoepfner, and Ms. Wong that the reason this should be repeated is because the study on non-traditional work is of vital importance to women, etc., and we've heard from the other side that, indeed—as the finance department official, Mr. Forbes, had said—this is an important part to feed into the government's decision-making.

Unless anyone has anything new to add, other than those two, because we should really get on with the other business of the day...

●(1600)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Am I to assume, then, that we intend to have this completed? You said the last witness was coming out on Tuesday—

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: How many more meetings do we have after that? Three?

The Chair: We will then have December 3, 8, and 10. Of course, the draft report—and I was going to discuss that at the end—will be handed to everyone on December 2, so we could deal with the draft report on Thursday, December 3, and on Tuesday, December 8, and have the report ready to roll on December 10.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: So you think we're going to finish this thing?

The Chair: Yes. We're finishing it.

Now, Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair.

A few minutes ago I was criticized for bringing forward a motion on having the minister come at a late date. I would say to you that this motion has been on the table since November 3. There had been every opportunity for this motion to have been brought forward at an earlier date. I don't know the motivation for bringing it forward at the last minute, but I'm certainly questioning it. I think it's incumbent upon us to finish what we started.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Boucher, and then...

Mr. Van Kesteren, do you want to speak again, or have you already asked the question?

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I think we've come to...

The Chair: Ms. Boucher, do you want to speak, or do you wish to cede the time to Ms. McLeod?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: She speaks for me.

The Chair: Are you sure? This is in writing, eh, that she speaks for you?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: *Elle veut parler pour moi.*

The Chair: Ms. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you, Madam Chair.

At this point, I am willing to withdraw the motion, but I do hope that in the future... You know, after we had spent the hard work coming up with a plan, it was terribly, terribly disappointing when we sort of shifted gears right in the middle. I hope in the future, when we spend the effort to determine what our plan is going to be, unless something absolutely critical comes along, that we'll stay with the plan. But I'll withdraw my motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: We need unanimous consent to withdraw your motion, Ms. McLeod.

Do we have unanimous consent?

We do. Good. Then the motion is withdrawn.

Now, we have another notice of motion on the table to deal with very quickly. It's the November 26, 2009, motion by Anita Neville:

Given the recent concerns expressed in media by the Vancouver Police Department and given the fact that the Vancouver Winter Olympics are only 78 days away; that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women recall those witnesses who appeared before the committee on June 11, 2009, and invite representatives from the Vancouver Police Department to determine that the measures and initiatives put in place to curtail human trafficking are adequate and appropriately funded; and to determine what further measures are required to ensure that the appropriate authorities are successful in curtailing human trafficking during the Vancouver Olympic Games.

Go ahead, please, Ms. Neville.

●(1605)

Hon. Anita Neville: Just very briefly, Madam Chair, this committee has been dealing with the issue, first, of human trafficking, but also, out of the original study on human trafficking, the issue of trafficking at the Olympic games. We've been following the progress. We've had representatives in, over the course of the last 18 months, to speak to it. The motion is self-explanatory. The Olympics are coming, and we're hearing conflicting reports on what is and is not being done in preparation for the Olympics. We're hearing on the ground that not enough is being done. The minister in fact said there are initiatives being taken. I think it's incumbent upon this committee to hold everybody to account to ensure that we can maximize the reduction of human trafficking.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Hoepfner.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: I was just thinking that because we are typically the kind of committee that has a very fulsome discussion on every motion, I don't think we're going to get this finished and give it the amount of time it needs. Is there any way we could do this on Tuesday so that we can give it the time it needs? I think we're all going to want to discuss it.

The Chair: I would like to speak to the fact that we have a very tight schedule on Tuesday next week because we are going to be discussing elements of the draft report so that we can get it the next day. I think we have two sets of people coming in. So there will not be very much time to discuss this, and I think we already allowed the motion to stand, so withdrawing the motion now would require unanimous consent of the committee.

I think the motion is standing and will be voted on according to how people have decided they want to vote on it.

We now have Ms. Wong. Were you going to repeat what Ms. Hoepfner said?

Can we pass? Was it the same thing?

Mrs. Alice Wong: No, no.

The Chair: Is it something new?

Mrs. Alice Wong: I just want to let you know that two or three months ago I made an announcement on behalf of the Minister of Immigration stating that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration had already empowered visa officers to stop, at their discretion, individuals they were expecting—for example, women who were exotic dancers—to apply for temporary work permits to get into the country. They have already—

The Chair: What does this have to do with the motion?

Mrs. Alice Wong: This is human trafficking. It may turn out to be human trafficking. Therefore, some measures have been taken. That's my first point.

My second point is that, by the same token, we said just a minute ago that we all agree that we have another study that has been waiting and waiting and waiting. Now, all of a sudden, we have something crucial come up and we say, "Oh yes, this is a good idea. Why don't we do it?" We have already passed the resolution that we need to do the other study, and now we have another study coming up. So I don't see the logic of this.

The Chair: Ms. Wong, this is not a request for a study. This is not a request based on what is happening with immigration. If you read the first line it says, "Given recent concerns expressed in the media by the Vancouver Police Department".

This is not by anyone else. This group met with witnesses from CBSA, Immigration Canada, the RCMP, etc., here on June 11 just for one meeting. They gave us a fulsome plan, which this whole committee was satisfied with. It was a good plan. You said what Immigration is doing, and all of that was in the plan. We all thought it was a good plan. We now hear that the Vancouver Police Department, and these are the police in the city where the Olympics are being held, are concerned.

As did Ms. Zarac, Ms. Neville is speaking to find out what they are concerned about, instead of taking it from a media report. So this is not a study. I just wanted to make it clear that I do not believe Ms. Neville is asking for a study. She's just asking for a double-checking on what we heard and what the police are saying and whether it's true. She's obviously trying to seek some sort of clarification.

Next is Madam Boucher, and then Madam Demers.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: No, that will be later.

[English]

The Chair: No?

Okay, good.

Madam Demers—not that I don't like to hear from you, Madam Boucher.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Chair, the people from the coalition of organizations that are ensuring there will be no sex traffic in Vancouver assured us that everything was going well and that everything would be operational in Vancouver. Now we discover that is not the case. Vancouver police say they do not communicate with that group, with the unit that has been put in place.

The unit put in place is doing nothing at this time. The Vancouver police force is doing nothing either. They don't have the means to do anything. I don't understand how we can stop people at the border between Seattle and Vancouver. However, what is happening for the people who are already in Canada, in Toronto, for example?

Prostitutes took part in a news report and said that their pimps were already getting organized for them to be in Vancouver. They also said that a number of other prostitutes from across Canada, prostitutes who work the streets, were getting organized to go to Vancouver. Those people won't be crossing any borders, and this will nevertheless be human trafficking on a large scale. We'll be dealing with a problem of human trafficking on a large scale. The Salvation Army has already established a place to help persons who will be in dangerous situations.

If the unit set up isn't able to do the job, that must be because there are deficiencies. We have to know what those deficiencies are in order to give it the resources to do its job right.

We're working hard on this matter. Ms. Smith has worked very hard on human trafficking. We shouldn't let that slip through the net. There are only 67 days left before the Olympic Games, which does not leave a lot of time to put an efficient system into place to ensure that there is no human trafficking in Vancouver. We have to be brought up to date.

•(1610)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I do support this. I do recall the meeting of June 11 and the assurances that were given. I would think, as Ms. Demers said, because of the concern the government has expressed, that Joy Smith has expressed, that it behooves us to pursue this, in light of what the media reports contain.

I'd also like to add that I would like to have the Salvation Army come to give us a sense of their concern and what they feel. Obviously, they've felt compelled to do something significant in regard to the number of women who will be trafficked in. I would like to hear their perspective as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

I'm going to call the vote on calling back these witnesses for one hearing.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Anita Neville: Madam Chair, could I raise something under the business, please?

The Chair: I'll have to suggest that this is the last piece of business.

Hon. Anita Neville: It's on a motion that's been passed, and I'm following up on it. On October 14 we asked the government to respond to the recommendations from the report on the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. We asked for that information, for an update on it and for a draft response to be sent to this committee. I'm just asking for follow-up, please.

The Chair: We tabled it in the House, so I think the government has, what, 90 days to respond? How long does it have?

A voice: It's 120 days for a report from the committee.

The Chair: It has 120 days to respond. I think there is time for the government to yet respond.

Now, let us move on. I think we've finished the orders of the day.

Quickly, before you go, I just want to let you know that on Tuesday we're going to be having the last witnesses. There are two of them, from the public service and the Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union.

After that, we could have a short piece of business. I think I would like Julie, the analyst, to tell you that she's going to give you all the information on Wednesday for you to look at so we can start going page by page on Thursday.

Now, having said that, given that we have Thursday, December 3, Tuesday, December 8, and hopefully, Thursday, December 10 to put this whole thing to bed, if the House rises on December 10, we may wish to discuss how we table our report and where. We may also need to bring in these witnesses.

I would ask the advice of this committee on how you see us filling that time and when we should bring in the witnesses. I would like to suggest it should be for no more than an hour, and it may be that we have to ask for some specific, short version of getting everybody to give us an update quickly, and then once they do, we can do a quick one-two on questions so we don't spend a heck of a lot of time and we just get the clarification we sought. I wanted to just remind you of the timelines, that's all.

Yes, Madam Boucher.

• (1615)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Madam Chair, could you tell me whether the committee will be sitting on December 10? I hope it will be sitting until Friday.

I put it to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. It might be interesting to meet for a little non-political Christmas get-together among friends, among committee members. We work very hard together for women. It seems to me it would be nice to meet together for an hour or an hour and a half. Do people agree with me?

[English]

The Chair: Is there agreement?

Madam Demers wishes to suggest that we serve martinis only? Is that your suggestion?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Do you want me to make you some little blue cookies?

[English]

The Chair: Do I get a consensus from the committee that this is a fine thing to do?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: That would be very nice.

The Chair: Okay, good.

Basically, as we've just passed this motion, the clerk will need time to contact the various people. I would hope it's not going to be next week on Tuesday, because it wouldn't give everyone time. But sometime—on Thursday, December 3, maybe—we could get this little group in for an hour.

What do you think? I don't know. I'm asking you.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Are you saying that it would be outside the regular committee time?

The Chair: No. We have three more sitting days: Thursday, December 3, December 8, and December 10.

What I would say is that if you're given your draft report on Wednesday, then on Thursday, December 3, we could start going page by page, paragraph by paragraph, to discuss it.

Sometime on Thursday or on Tuesday, December 8, or on Thursday, December 10, we're going to have to listen to this group of the CBSA, etc. Many of the people we'll be listening to are in Ottawa, but the Vancouver Police Department may have to come from Vancouver, obviously, so we need to give them a week or so's notice.

When should we do that, and should we set a timeline for doing it so that we don't cut too much into dealing with our report?

Could it be an hour, and could we ask everyone to do a three-minute presentation on an update, because we had a full presentation on June 11? Perhaps we could ask the Vancouver Police to take five minutes to present to us, and then we could ask one round of questions and do it in an hour.

Is it possible?

When would you like to see that hour occur: on December 3 or December 8?

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: I think December 8 would give a little more time.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: December 8 allows more time to—

The Chair: Tuesday, December 8?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay, it will be Tuesday, December 8.

Do you think we can do this in one hour?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: *Ça prendrait une heure, ou peut-être une heure et demi.*

An hon. members: I wonder whether the minister is able to come.

The Chair: We have to finish our draft report, because we would want to table it. We may want to discuss then whether we want a press conference, after tabling our report, because I think this is a very important and salient issue, or whether other reports are going to be tabled as well as committee reports, etc.

We have three days to do this in. I just want to be sure.

Yes, Nicole?

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: I simply want to inform you that I will have to leave early on December 3.

[English]

The Chair: It's December 8 that we're suggesting.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: However, Madam Chair, I think that December 8 will be a little late to make recommendations. As a result of the meeting with the committee and Vancouver police officers, if we have any recommendations to make, it will be a little late to make them and to get any feedback on those recommendations since we will be leaving them the next day or the day after that. To get any feedback on those recommendations, we would therefore have to have at least five working days, so that we can get some feedback. If it was first thing on December 3, that would be perfect.

[English]

The Chair: You know, today is... On Tuesday, December 3, but you're not going to be here; you don't mind not being here.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: You're right, Madam Chair.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: There really wouldn't be a lot of time left. In addition, you have to leave.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): I'm going to be there.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You're not important. Nicole is the woman.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: I'm not important! That's discrimination against men. That will be in the blues.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[English]

The Chair: Can I get an okay on whether it's going to be December 3 or 8? Then let's move on.

• (1620)

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Let's say December 8. Who knows what's going to happen, but let's say the 8th.

The Chair: Monsieur Desnoyers.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: I'm not important, but I'm nevertheless going to ask a question.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: You know perfectly well that's not true.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: You mentioned that there was the Alliance, but did you mention the SEPB?

An hon. member: Yes.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Excellent. I understood correctly.

[English]

The Chair: That's okay. Now, do you think the third is too soon?

Why don't we see if we can get people to come? It's only the Vancouver Police that are new; the others are all here. So let's try for the 3rd, as Madam Demers suggested and as the clerk is suggesting to me, and hope they can come.

Ms. Angela Crandall: No, I'm suggesting the draft report on the 3rd.

The Chair: Then we bring in the people on the 8th. Okay. We've said on the 8th.

Who knows? The report may be so excellent that we may not take a long time discussing it.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Madam Chair, we've decided to go out there.

The Chair: We should go and do it in Vancouver? Okay, on Friday, December 11, we will all go to Vancouver. The committee will travel.

In fact, if it may be too late for the Vancouver Police to come, we could video conference them in.

Now that we've finished that, I will suspend while we await our witnesses.

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_____ (Pause) _____

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The Chair: The committee is now in session.

I want to thank Mr. Baldwin and Dr. McDonald for coming here today. As you know, the committee is discussing the issue of pensions. Actually, we're discussing pensions from the point of view of private, public, and unpaid work, people who have done unpaid work and what happens to them in their pensionable years.

We'll ask you each to present for 10 minutes. Feel free to present for under 10 minutes, if you wish. After that we will have a round of questioning from the members of the committee.

Given the order in which I have your names, Mr. Baldwin, will you begin, please?

Mr. Bob Baldwin (Consultant, As an Individual): I will.

Thank you very much. It's an honour to be here.

Having spoken with both the clerk and the analyst who is supporting your efforts, I thought it would be appropriate for me to address three questions today.

First, will the increased labour force participation of women affect their retirement income security?

I'm going to give short answers and then explain them.

The short answer to that question is yes, the change is already evident in data on incomes of older women, and there's much more to come. However, I will also forewarn you that it doesn't appear that there's any immediate prospect of establishing equality between the incomes of older men and older women.

The second question I'll speak to is whether there are gender-specific retirement income issues that the committee might note. My answer is yes, there are a number of issues to be addressed in all pillars of Canada's retirement income system.

Finally, are there important pension issues that are not gender-specific, but which will be very important to women? The answer is yes, there are some very serious problems facing the third pillar of Canada's retirement income system, and these are not gender-specific problems, but they will have an important impact on women.

I should say that I will use this term "gender-specific" to refer to both workplace pensions as well as registered retirement savings plans and the income that each of those institutions generates. I should warn you too that my presentation is oriented more towards identifying problems than it is to telling you what the right answer is to solve the problem.

First of all, let's talk about the increased labour force participation of women and current retirement income prospects of older women.

I have, by way of background to what I'm going to say now, prepared some tables, which the clerk has indicated she will have translated and circulated to you. If you don't catch all the numbers as I'm speaking, don't worry, they will catch up with you at some point.

I want to note that over the period between the early 1980s, which is the earliest period for which I was looking at income data, through to 1996, there was a stubborn stability in the ratio of women's income to men's among people over 65. The women's income seemed to be stuck at about 62% of men's income. Happily, between 1996 and 2006 that gap has closed slightly, but only slightly, so that by 2006 the average income of individual women over 65 was 68% of that of older men.

The second thing I'd note about incomes of older women compared with those of older men is that over that period from 1981 to 2006, the sources of women's income in old age changed. They changed in ways that made the sources look more like men's income, in the sense that income from the Canada and Quebec pension plans and third-pillar income grew faster than other sources of income.

At the beginning of the period, women were getting about 7% or 8% of their income from each of the Canada and Quebec pension plans and the third pillar. By the end of this period of observation, which is 2006, women were getting about 20% of their income from the Canada and Quebec pension plans and about 30% from workplace pensions. You can see that these two sources of income, which in effect reflect your working career, became more important over this period of time.

I would point out, though, that there's a bit of a difference in the period when these incomes grew. That is, most of the increase in income from the Canada and Quebec pension plans took place between 1981 and 1996. After that, it was a fairly stable portion of

older women's income that came from the Canada and Quebec pension plans. In the case of third-pillar income, which as I said includes workplace pensions and RRSPs, the income from that source was growing right through to the end of the period of observation, which is 2006.

•(1625)

The last thing I want to say is that if you look at income coming from the Canada Pension Plan, you notice that the number of female contributors compared to the number of male contributors grew over the whole period from 1966, when the plan was created, until 2006. Back in 1966, there was only one woman contributor for every two men. By 2006, there were 90% as many women contributors as there were men contributors. There was also a tendency towards equalization in retirement benefit payments to women versus men over that 40-year period. So at the start of the period, retirement benefits paid to women were only 64% of the benefits paid to men, and by the end of the period, it was up to 82%. The chief actuary, in his latest regular actuarial report on the Canada Pension Plan, predicts that those gaps will keep getting narrower, but you never reach equality, at least by 2050, which is the end of the timeframe assessed by the chief actuary.

Moving on to some gender-specific issues, I'm going to limit myself to some comments on old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. I'm going to talk about it in relation to the objective of eliminating poverty in old age.

There have been some quite comprehensive studies done of poverty among the elderly in Canada in the recent past. I'm thinking of two articles in particular in a recent edition of *Canadian Public Policy*: one prepared by Kevin Milligan and another prepared by Mike Veal. They both paint a picture of substantial decline in poverty rates among the elderly in Canada over the period from the late 1970s to the early 2000s.

In fact, Canada now has one of the lowest rates of elderly poverty in the high-income part of the world. But there are two things. One is that there are some subsets of the elderly population with noticeably higher rates of poverty than the elderly population as a whole. One of those population subsets is single elderly women, especially people who are widowed or divorced. Further research on the widowed part of that story has also been done in a Statistics Canada study by Bernard and Li, which you may want your staff to have a look at.

I'll add with regard to the low rates of poverty that there are some real debates about how to define and how to measure poverty. These debates are actually quite important in looking at the situation of the elderly poor, because the incomes of the elderly poor are much more strongly concentrated near the low-income lines than is true of the non-elderly population. So if you move those lines even a small amount, you start moving significant numbers of the elderly from one side of the line to the other. You may want to be sensitive to that, because you may get conflicting testimony on what portion of the elderly population has an income below the poverty line.

Looking ahead, there are a couple of policy issues you may want to think about. One is that through old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, we offer minimum income guarantees to elderly couples and elderly singles. It is striking that the guarantee to elderly couples is 1.6 times the guarantee made to elderly singles. Usually when people are trying to equilibrate incomes between couples and singles, the factor that is used to equilibrate them is 1.4, not 1.6, which is to say we're making a somewhat stronger commitment to elderly couples, it would seem, than to the single elderly. So you may want to think about that especially in relation to the problem of single elderly poverty rates.

The other thing that is very important going forward is what kinds of adjustments will be made to old age security and GIS in the future. I say this because those programs are price indexed. Generally speaking, price indexing is a good thing. Over the last 25 years or more, average wages have not grown in relation to prices, so old age security and GIS have also maintained not only their purchasing power but also their value compared to average wages and salaries. The chief actuary is expecting that labour markets will tighten up under the demographic circumstances we're facing in the future, and I think he's right. Real wage growth is likely to begin. If that's true, then OAS and GIS will start falling compared to average wages, and they will likely fall in relation to poverty rates.

• (1630)

The Chair: Mr. Baldwin, I'm going to give you 30 seconds to wrap up, please.

Mr. Bob Baldwin: Okay.

Lastly, the big issue that is not gender-specific that I think you want to be concerned about is the declining portion of the workforce that participates in workplace pensions. There are now almost equal portions of women workers and men workers belonging to these plans. They are a very important source of income. But participation in them has been declining since the late 1970s for a variety of reasons that have not yet shown up in third-pillar income data, but will start showing up for reasons we could get into in Q and A. The way we respond to that will be very important for the retirement income prospects of all elderly, including all elderly women.

I'll stop there, Madam Chair, and take questions.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Baldwin.

Dr. McDonald.

Dr. Lynn McDonald (Professor, Faculty of Social Work, Director of the Institute for Life Course and Aging, University of Toronto): Thank you for inviting me. I'm just going to make four points, and my colleague has already made at least two of them.

The first point I want to make is that the inequality in the labour force is totally reflected in CPP/QPP, in RPPs, and RRSPs, and in savings, and until such time as that issue is addressed, probably in labour market policy, there will continue to be a gap between men's and women's pensions.

I would also add that one of the factors we have to keep thinking about is that women still have babies. Yes, women have the child dropout clause, but what the most recent research is showing is that

when women come back into the labour force, they do not get back into the same job they had. They are further down on the ladder when they come back. Oftentimes, they may come back just part time because that's the only kind of work they can get. It's not always guaranteed.

The second point I want to make is a rather important point, and that is on the decline in the prevalence and stability of marriage, and that is to say that marriage rates are down and divorce rates are up. Single, female-led families are on the rise. There is a huge increase in cohabitation and common-law relationships. All of this translates into women not having the legal and fiscal protection of marriage, which they have had for some time.

There is a very large change, and this is being reflected even in the first wave of baby boom women. The problem with this is, as they say in academia, that women are always one man away from poverty. This is quite true, when I go to my third point, which is.... We've talked about unattached women. I would like to say that unattached women—you refer to them as single women—make up 38% of the older population over age 65. It's 38%, and 14% of them live in poverty.

Who is carrying the burden of this poverty is an interesting question. When we break down the categories, there are single women, there are widowed women, there are divorced women, and there are separated women. The women who are carrying the burden of poverty in this country are the divorced and separated women.

If I just give you one quick example, if you take divorced women and put them in the male bottom quintile, which would be 20% for men, 43% of divorced women have the same salary, so it gives you some idea.

I want to also add to that women from visible minorities and aboriginal women. Aboriginal women are the most dependent on our public pension system in this country and they are the poorest of the poor of the poor. The visible minority women are the second poorest of the poor, with a rate of about 25% who live below LICO.

The fourth point I want to make is about caregiving. Women are double caregivers, and they are serial caregivers. In other words, one in five baby boom women are caregiving, just for starters—five million people. The problem is that 17% of them are what we call the famous “sandwich generation”. When that's over, then they serially go on to look after their husband's parents, their husband, and so on and so forth. The caregiving issue never ends. It's not quite as short and small as we think it is.

There's a huge issue attached to this that nobody has even thought about, and that point is, what happens when the caregiving is over? What the latest research is showing, in the U.S., in Canada, in OECD countries, is that through the caregiving process, women are forced into early retirement, and it's retirement by stealth because they don't think they're going to retire. So what happens is when the caregiving is over, which could be up to 10 years, they then try to go back into the labour force. Their human capital has deteriorated, they have wasted or used all their savings to live, and they can barely afford to even go out to look for a job. Then they face age discrimination because they're an older worker, and who wants an older worker?

I would say we need to look at pensions to cover, maybe not the first point, because I think it's a labour market issue, but the other points. I think we need to look at doing something about the allowance for women who are divorced and separated. I think we need to look at the sponsorship agreement and make some changes for older women there. I'm thinking of expanding GIS, but I won't say any more.

Is that it?

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I will begin with the questions. This is a seven-minute question session, and the seven minutes include both the questions and the answers. So if you want a lot of questions to come to you, then you need to give crisp answers.

I just wanted to say before we begin that I do love the phrase "serial caregivers". It really depicts what women do from the moment they give birth until... That's an extraordinary phrase. We might borrow it for our report.

Ms. Zarac.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome, Mr. Baldwin and Ms. McDonald.

Mr. Baldwin, you said you weren't offering any solutions but rather pointing out problems. I hope you nevertheless have your ideas on the subject—you've studied such a long time—because we're looking for solutions.

You mentioned the upcoming situation. You also said that, from 1980 to 1996, the incomes of women 65 and over represented 62% of those of men and, from 1996 to 2006, only 68% of men's incomes. The difference isn't great.

And yet, based on my personal experience, the years from 1980 to 1996 were years in which women stopped working in order to take care of their children, whereas, from 1996 to 2006, we more commonly saw women stopping for a period of time, taking parental leave and then going back to the labour market.

However, incomes didn't increase much all the same. How do you explain that?

[English]

Mr. Bob Baldwin: First of all, one of the things to remember about the data I gave you on the current elderly is that they don't

include any of the baby boom generation. The most recent age cohort you would look at would be people born in 1941, I think it is. Right? So we haven't really begun to catch up with the effect of the baby boom.

On the solution side, I realize that in editing myself at the end, the one thing I did leave out is that I think you should pay a lot of attention to the role of old age security in the retirement income system. It tends to get overlooked in these discussions, but it's very important in creating a base of non-income-tested income that is not directly linked to labour force participation. So I'll just leave that thought with you.

The other thing is that, in the third pillar, we are probably relying far too heavily on individual employers to serve as platforms for delivering retirement income. They're not effective platforms because most of them don't have the scale expertise to run a decent pension plan. Most of them will die before their employees do—that is, the companies will die, not the people.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: We saw that with Nortel, a company that gave a lot. To take the example of Nortel, let's say that it was a big company in which employees placed their trust. And yet they now find themselves without a pension.

What action should be taken to protect pensions in the event of bankruptcy or...?

[English]

Mr. Bob Baldwin: I won't and can't speak in detail about Nortel. What I will say—

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: —in general?

• (1645)

[English]

Mr. Bob Baldwin: —is that with regard to the registered pension plan, the participants will take a haircut on their benefits, but they will get benefits.

Part of the problem in the Nortel situation and in a surprising number of private sector situations is that promises are made with respect to retirement outside the framework of a formal, pre-funded pension plan. And all of these non-funded benefits are at risk when the employer goes down.

Having said that, I think it just strengthens a Nortel-type situation. It makes a case for strengthening funding rules, but it also makes a case for separating the method of delivering retirement income from individual employers.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Earlier you mentioned that the statistics did not include baby boomers, and you mentioned in your presentation that there were still changes to come. Is that what you took into consideration? What changes could we expect to see in future?

[English]

Mr. Bob Baldwin: For example, if we look at the history of the Canada Pension Plan, back in the early days of the plan, the number of female contributors was less than 50% of the number of male contributors. We're now up to a situation where there are equal numbers of male and female contributors, which means that somewhere down the road there's going to be... Well, in fact, the numbers are in the tables the clerk will give you. You'll see that by 2015, I think, the number of new retirement benefits under the Canada Pension Plan will be.... There will be just as many women getting new benefits as men. In fact, even now there are more women receiving CPP retirement benefits than there are men. And that's not because of the equal inflow; it's because women stay in receipt of retirement benefits longer than men do. But even the newly initiated benefits will equalize by around 2015.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: However, Ms. McDonald and Mr. Baldwin—you said this earlier—women are the most vulnerable because they provide care. Can we nevertheless expect changes?

We know that women are more educated than they used to be. They should necessarily have better salaries. However, women will still bear children and take care of seniors. What can we really expect? Will they still be the most vulnerable persons?

[English]

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I think they will. I'm absolutely certain they will, because it doesn't look as if the inequality in the labour market, which I've talked about, is ending. Women make 70¢ on the dollar.

Some women will do better than others. Married women make 70¢ on the dollar. Single women never married make 93¢ on the dollar. That group of women will do extremely well in the baby boom generation, but I still think the inequality will persist. I don't know why the pension system has to make up for what is an issue in the labour market. I'm not sure how you solve that problem.

Mr. Bob Baldwin: For me, that's part of the reason why old age security is so important.

The other thought I have is that we talk about widows and widowers, and it is such a common part of the experience of older women that you spend a period of time on your own; it's a much more common experience for older women than for older men. It's part of the reason too that I'm interested in the issue of the guarantees we offer to singles versus couples, which is within our capacity to do something about. The underlying problem is a labour market problem, and it's hard to build the corrective into programs like CPP and into the third pillar, which is why I go to OAS.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Baldwin.

I'm sorry, but we're going to have move on; it's over seven minutes. Perhaps you can hold the thought, Dr. McDonald, and come up with it later.

Madame Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. McDonald, Mr. Baldwin, thank you for being with us this afternoon.

Mr. Baldwin, you said something that somewhat surprised me, that we won't have achieved pension income equality between men and women by 2050. That's quite a serious manner. We know that more women currently belong to a public sector pension plan. I was wondering where the deficiencies are.

Last week we also learned that all money had to be withdrawn from an RRIF by the age of 90. Every week, I go and celebrate birthdays of 100 years or more with women who have achieved that venerable age. However, very few men reach that advanced age. If you withdraw all your money at 90, what do you live on between 90 and 105, or even 108? How can you offset that shortfall?

As regards natural caregivers, someone suggested applying the same equation solely for women who take care of children until the age of seven. They can receive a credit for pension plan contributions. Could women who take care of an aging parent, a sick spouse or a sick child enjoy the same conditions, and for seven years as well? Would that be beneficial, in your opinion? I think these measures would be readily applicable because the process for that is already established.

Money from RRSPs is also a subject of concern for me. Currently, seniors can accumulate maximum employment income of \$3,500 a year without being penalized with respect to the Guaranteed Income Supplement or pension income. Those people therefore have \$3,500 more in their pockets and do not pay any more tax. However, those who withdraw \$3,500 from their RRSPs must pay tax on that amount, which is normal, but that \$3,500 is added to their income, which has the effect of moving them to another tax bracket. Those people then lose all their programs, the Guaranteed Income Supplement and the other programs to which they are entitled. And yet, a simple amendment to section 13 of the Old Age Security Act would make it possible to make a change of the same order of magnitude—\$3,500:\$3,500, that doesn't change—and to grant an exemption as in the case of working people. For a person who works very hard to set money aside but who is penalized relative to another person who has not saved, what is the point of investing money in an RRSP?

With respect to the Guaranteed Income Supplement, a couple receives more money than a single person, as you've already said, Mr. Baldwin. However, if the husband dies, the survivor benefit is immediately reduced to the amount granted to single persons, without the slightest transition. No consideration is given to the fact that that person had a higher income when she was living as a couple. The change after the husband's death is very quick. She then receives only part of the previous amount and winds up in a state of considerable poverty.

Do you have any idea of what we could do about that? Are the options I've proposed desirable, or do we need something more?

• (1650)

[English]

Mr. Bob Baldwin: First of all on the question of why equality and amounts of retirement income will not be achieved through CPP, it all relates to Dr. McDonald's point about earnings differences prior to retirement. The chief actuary projects women's CPP benefits getting up to 84% of the men's level by 2050, but that's the end of that story.

Concerning the caregiver, you're right that it would be possible to exempt periods of caregiving. I presume that one needs a non-obtrusive administrative routine to figure out when people are caregiving and when they're not, but if you can overcome that problem, you could probably do it.

Having to draw down your RRSP accumulations by age 90 is a case of just not having caught up with the evolution of changing mortality. Indeed, I was going to mention, in the unedited version of my comments, that there are a number of things we don't know about RRSPs and defined contribution plans. One of them is that we don't know what actual experience people have drawing them down on their own. We don't know whether people run out of money before they reach the end of their lives or whether they're actually being too cautious. It's one of those important things that we should know more about and don't, especially since there are more of these arrangements in place.

Finally, I think your comments on the tax-back rate under GIS are very important, not only in terms of the incentives people have to save before retirement, but incentives people have to work after they're retired, if they're on low income. It's also an area wherein you have a real tension between what you might want to do for fiscal reasons and what you might want to do to have a good benefit design. You relieve those problems, of course, if you boost OAS and scale back GIS, but then you have a lot more money flowing through your public accounts, and that creates problems of its own. So you have a real dilemma here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. McDonald, did you want to answer? I think you have 30 seconds in which to do so.

Dr. Lynn McDonald: The exempt period could be expanded, and I think the current government has been looking at that. I also think that taking a look at the allowance may be a way to go, because it's biased towards marital status. Also, the call has been made for a universal caregiving program. Again, does the pension system solve this, or do we do something broader? I think the two policies should work together, if that happens.

I would say that women put in \$25 billion into the Canadian economy in one year through caregiving. They're making a huge contribution, and it's going to get much bigger as our population ages. We all know that 85 and up is the portion that is going to grow. The baby boom women are going to be caregivers; there's no question.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we go to Ms. Hoepfner.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

There are so many issues and it's such a complex topic that I'm trying to break it up into segments. I'm going to try to do that, and you can tell me whether I'm on the right track or maybe that I'm being too black and white.

I think we have an issue right now with senior women, many of whom are widows living under the poverty line. I would like you, Mr. Baldwin, first of all, to very briefly comment. You started to explain that we ought to be careful when we talk about the poverty line. You mentioned something about some women being below the poverty line, but the line...

Do you remember that comment? Can you very quickly expand on it?

Mr. Bob Baldwin: There are a number of different definitions of poverty lines around. Lynn has been citing ones used most frequently by Statistics Canada—low-income cutoffs. There are also low-income measures, or LIMs; there are market basket measures.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Exactly. So there are many different—

Mr. Bob Baldwin: And as you choose one versus the other, you move a lot of people.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: One might not be in poverty and one might be. I think we all know right now that there are a lot of senior women who've stayed home and raised their children. They were thinking there would be enough in their husband's pension and somehow it would just be taken care of. I think the fact is that women are a lot more educated now.

We had a professor testify that things have changed quite drastically in the last 10 years, so we have a problem right now with senior women—many of whom are widows—who need help. I don't think the pension program necessarily today can help them unless we create one that is more like a social program, where we could increase benefits and it would become more of a social program. But I think we also want to look forward and consider how we make sure women in the future have an adequate pension.

Some of the things you refer to... Here's what I can't get my head around. Many of those things are life choices. Sometimes, for example, staying home with the child definitely is a choice for a woman. She decides she wants to do it. When they make that decision, maybe she and her husband say, because they're not having her income, what they will do is reduce his income by contributing to a spousal RRSP, or they might put money away. They make a conscious decision to stay home. How do we then recognize the value they are placing and the value they are giving to our society by staying home, but at the same time not take away from people who say they won't stay home and will put their children in child care? Now we're taking their tax money, their tax dollars, and giving it to the woman who stays home.

Do you follow what I'm saying? I'm going to change it now. Another life choice is divorce. There are so many different examples of why people would get a divorce, but many times it is a choice, and it really does cost a lot of money. There's the financial implication. Again, we have individuals who are paying their taxes and working hard and all those things, and maybe they don't get a divorce, but now we're using their income to help supplement people who have gotten a divorce.

I'm wondering how we look at women right now who are under the poverty line, who are widows. They need our help, so that's one part of it. Maybe that's the OAS, which you referred to, Mr. Baldwin. But looking forward, how do we not punish and make people pay for other people's decisions, whether it's staying home to raise their children or getting a divorce?

Dr. Lynn McDonald: Do you have the answer?

Mr. Bob Baldwin: It's easier in a way to give a theoretical answer, which is that you squeeze the income stream for the two people out of what the employed partner has set aside for retirement. Rather than have a survivor benefit delivered through a cross-subsidy to all plan members, you in effect say that the income stream—normally that of the male spouse—has to be sufficient to cover both lives. You then try to eliminate the cross-subsidy that way.

One of the problems in the divorce situation is that even if you split the assets out by one formula or other at the time of divorce, the labour market experience of the divorced wife after the divorce may not be comparable to that of the divorced man. So you end up with an unequal situation. I would say, too, that to some extent—and while I appreciate your thinking that as we look to the future we want mechanisms that involve a limited degree of cross-subsidization—you've thought about it primarily with respect to taxpayers. I would remind you, though, that these things also happen inside private arrangements. There are always limits to them.

For example, you're in a workplace pension plan that has a survivor benefit built into it. Single participants in the plan subsidize married participants, generally speaking. People with short life expectancy subsidize people with long life expectancy. Granted, there are tolerances—beyond which you theoretically and practically don't want to go—but I would just say that within certain bounds, people seem willing to put up with this.

I think the short answer to your question is that you have to get two streams of income out of one accumulation.

• (1700)

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Maybe you—

The Chair: I just wanted to tell you that you have about a minute and a half to ask and to answer.

I don't know if Ms. McDonald will have a comment as well.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Okay, thanks.

Maybe that's where other forms of preparing for pension come into play, and where we can educate all Canadians, whether they are stay-at-home moms or divorced women, that there are mechanisms, whether it's RRSPs or the new tax free savings account. There are other ways.

I think if we look in other countries, we see they aren't just depending on pension plans. They're depending on private savings and private planning as well. Are you finding that is also something that might be lacking, the actual financial education and people's awareness?

Dr. Lynn McDonald: It's good that you asked.

Monica Townson, who I know was here earlier, ran focus groups right across this country with older women about their pensions. She did not ask about legal issues, which I think would have been a really helpful thing to do too. She basically concluded—and she has a lovely little book about it—that women don't have a clue. And they really don't.

That's not being rude; it's—

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Is it getting better, though? We're hearing it's getting better.

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I don't think this generation is. I think we need to focus a whole lot of education right now on legal and pension issues, because they go together. The boomer women are obviously better educated and the rest of it, but who's going to drop three kids and go read a website about what their CPP looks like? Nobody. We need to find another way to get to people, a much more effective way. These are educable people, but we need to find a really good way to do it. That would be my view.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

And now, Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

Thank you very much for bringing your expertise to this.

I want to give Professor McDonald a chance to respond to some of what Ms. Hoepfner talked about, because in asking the question, it seems to me we're talking about poverty. We're talking about primarily women who are in a situation where they haven't a choice. They are low income. They have been caregivers. They're certainly not going to have a \$5,000 tax free savings account.

I'd like your comment on that in terms of this notion of choices. It seems to me that is a rather affluent group of people as compared to the group we're talking about.

Dr. Lynn McDonald: Yes. There is what we call involuntary retirement, or forced retirement, and 25% of Canadians are basically forced into retirement, for a variety of reasons.

Poor health is the largest reason. Caregiving is the third reason. With caregiving, like health, there's not much you can do about it. Somebody has to pick up the pieces. The research has clearly shown in Great Britain and the United States, using longitudinal data, that eight years after the caregiving was over, 27% of older women were in poverty, way below the poverty line.

These women had no choice. Stop and think for five minutes: you've lost a spouse, your skills are rusty, you're older, you have to go back into the labour force, and you are going to be discriminated against because you're an older woman. I'm sure you'll agree with me. And there's no question, you're not going to make the wages that your male colleague is. So it's not always choice. Many times there is no choice—trust me. We have too many poor women.

• (1705)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Do you have any idea what the Canadian statistic is? You said it was 27% for Americans, and in Britain—

Dr. Lynn McDonald: We're doing a study right now and we're using the general social survey, which looked at Canadians 45 years of age and over. We're looking at what happens after the caregiving is over. We've run some initial analyses, and we're finding that for women who retire to caregive, compared to women who retired for other reasons, the caregiving women's incomes are, on average, about \$4,000 less than the women who didn't have to caregive. So it has an impact, a huge impact.

The dropout period isn't long enough to get rid of that period. They had children, and then they did this, and maybe they took care of their husband, who knows?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Yes.

I'd like to pursue this forced retirement issue. We know that the CPP has this flexible retirement provision. If you retire at age 60—

Dr. Lynn McDonald: You take a reduction.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: —you take a 5% reduction. Or if you retire later, on the other end, you get a reward of an additional 5%. The government is currently looking at increasing the penalty at the early retirement age to 6% and the incentive at the other end to 7%, but it seems to me that when we're talking about a forced retirement, this is perhaps not a very effective way to reduce poverty, particularly among women.

Dr. Lynn McDonald: That's a really good point.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: So is there a way of making sure that we don't fall into this trap?

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I think we really need to look at whole issue in more depth. We don't have enough good research on involuntary retirement, in most countries, because we don't even want to think about it. But 25% of Canadians, according to our GSS, were forced to retire for reasons of poor health, unemployment, early retirement packages that mask the fact that we're throwing you out, and caregiving. So if we can identify them, there should be a clause somewhere where we can pick up people who face that situation, because they didn't have a choice.

If you lose your job, you lose your job. You go on unemployment insurance, and then what? Older people, and older women, aren't as unemployed; the rate isn't as high. But they last longer in unemployment. So what do you do?

We need to look at ways to deal with that group of people. You can make clauses. You have the ability to do it, actually.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

I assume my time is up.

The Chair: No, you have time. You have two more minutes.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you very much.

Witnesses have come to the committee and they've talked about a pension plan, or making contributions on behalf of women who are in a situation where they don't work in the outside workforce and they can't accumulate that all-important CPP. Apparently, France, Germany, Sweden, and Austria have such a plan in place where they're making a contribution equal to 60% of the maximal insurable earnings. I'm wondering, is this something that you would support as a proposal? Is this something we should look at here, and if so, who should make the contribution? The spouse? Government? Who should make that contribution?

Dr. Lynn McDonald: The contribution rate is getting pretty high, so...poor government. I think government owes it to Canadian women for what they do for this nation, like raising children, contributing \$25 billion a year just through caregiving. I think it's the least they could do.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: It's an important statistic, that \$25 billion. In terms of our GDP, it's a remarkable contribution.

Dr. Lynn McDonald: It's more than older volunteers, which is \$14 billion.

• (1710)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: In January, just so you know, the Government of Canada is going to give profitable corporations an additional \$1.5 billion in tax cuts. So when you say "poor government", perhaps we're not as poor as all of that.

Dr. Lynn McDonald: Absolutely. I totally agree with you.

If you want that document, it's by Hollander, Lou & Chapel, and they have estimated the low end is \$24 billion and the high end is \$25 billion for what we do.

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

The Chair: Thank you.

Lise.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. McDonald, I agree with you: the system must not punish people. Some don't have the choice. The important thing is to be fair to all Canadians. For people who provide care, I was wondering whether, in your studies, you had looked at the costs that a long-term stay in an institution represent for an elderly person.

[English]

Dr. Lynn McDonald: No, I don't know the exact figures, but I also know of another really fine piece of research done by Chapel as well, comparing the cost of putting someone in an institution and keeping them in the community. Up until a certain threshold, it's way cheaper to keep someone in the community than to put them in an institution. When you start to require oxygen, when your chronic illnesses reach, like, five, which is a very serious, complex level, that's when people do require going into an institution, because it costs more to deliver that at home. But there's a huge window where we could keep way more people in the community.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Would the idea be to transfer money, that is to say to invest less in institutions for seniors and to promote home care to a greater degree?

[English]

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I see that as a really important possibility. One of the problems with our health care system is it is geared to acute care. Most illness in this country today is chronic care. We need to change our health care system to focus on the chronic care, and those are the people who live in community. Eighty per cent of older people have some chronic condition, but they could remain in the community, and nobody is putting money into that.

That's not true. Ontario did because they have an Aging in Place program. Yes, money could be removed from there.

I will point out to you that the proportion of people in institutions in this country has not changed over 20 years; it's 7%. It has never changed, and I don't think it will change. If you look at who's in them now, they're the very sick. It's not hard to get beds in many provinces, although in some it is difficult.

So I do think the money could be used more effectively. It would help reduce... We have people in institutions who shouldn't be there and we have people in the community who should be in an institution. It has not been a perfect system.

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: You talked about women who were totally unaware of certain things. We recently learned on the committee that some women, once they were widowed, were not even entitled to their husbands' pensions because they had been bequeathed to someone else. I quite agree with you on that.

Some witnesses also told us that Canadians were in general not economists and that it was hard to plan for a long-term pension. I know there can be a number of answers to that question, but I would like to know who you think is responsible for these matters when people come to the end of their lives?

[English]

Dr. Lynn McDonald: Who is responsible for it?

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: We aren't economists. I've taken a retirement preparation course. I can tell you that all the participants were somewhat surprised at the incomes they would have. No one had planned for their retirement. I don't think this problem only affects women.

Do you think we should sensitize or educate people on the subject?

[English]

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I think the workplace has some responsibility because they have set up different programs. I know lots of retirement planners... The programs in the past haven't been that helpful. I think we need to look at a more holistic approach. It's not just about, you're going to get \$6, you're going to have all this time, you're going to have all kinds of other things... You have legal issues here that you haven't even thought about.

I do think that most companies do set up these programs and they do pay for them. I just think they need to do a more thorough type of training program and I think they need to start way sooner. Just say, you've got to do it. Every two weeks the University of Toronto wants me to retire—here's what your income is...

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Thank you, Dr. McDonald.

I'm going to ask you a question, and I don't know if it's fair to ask you this because I think Mr. Baldwin would probably be better suited, but—

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I can't do pensions. I'm not a pension expert.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: My question is probably social as well.

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I like the social part.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: It's social justice.

We've been skirting around the fact that government has a responsibility. I think first and foremost we must focus on women and children, the most vulnerable in society, especially those who are older, and younger children. We need to make sure that we take care of those who are marginalized. We all agree with that.

But what we don't agree on is who should pay for this and how we should pay for this. I'm going to bring up what I think is another inequity in society that has developed in just the last little bit. We talk about the fact that men have better pension plans, and that's true; we discuss those issues and the reasons. What about the fact that the majority of pensions accumulating today come from the public purse? Do we need to start examining that if we talk about equity? I'm talking about MPs' pensions as well. The money that comes from the public purse that provides for a better living—and God bless them, we all want those things—is going to provide for a better livelihood for those fortunate enough to work in the public system. Does that become fair game? Do we start looking at that too when the well runs a little bit dry?

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I would. Absolutely.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Is that something we had better start talking about?

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I think you need to talk about it. Maybe you need to talk about how it's a perfect example of how good it could be, or maybe it's a little fat. We have no resources, supposedly, and I'm starting to think that maybe we really have to target more to people who really need it. Universalism is fabulous, but the truth of the matter is that when we get down to brass tacks about who needs to be protected in our society, it's the people who are poor, and there are lots of them.

We can pretend how wonderful our pension is. It's still not wonderful. There are still problems.

I think we need to look at the programs for civil servants. It's a joke that lots of people make fun of. They say, I need a government job; that's all I want, because I'm going to get a good pension.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Wealth is generated through the private sector, and if the private sector can't afford those things, then—

Dr. Lynn McDonald: They often use the government to pay for their unemployment. They shut down for a month, and the government pays.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I have another question, and it's a curious question.

You stated that it seems that in different areas of society there's more hardship. I'm going to give you an example.

My mother passed away two years ago, and she was 87 years old. She lived in her own home. She's a prime example. She raised 10 kids and she never entered the workforce. My father was self-employed and didn't have a public pension. He received CPP, etc., so she was one of these we would call marginalized. Mind you, she had lots of kids who made sure that she was always looked after, but I can tell you today that she lived pretty well on what the government gave her. She was a very independent woman.

Now, why is that? Why is it that in some segments of society it's ample and in others we see poverty? Is there an explanation?

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I can only talk to these two latest research projects that we've done. What we found is very fascinating.

It's wonderful that you came from a family with 10 people, because those 10 kids helped out. Kids help out in various ways. One of the ways they help us is with money, or purchasing, or driving, or shopping. They do all kinds of stuff. I know that's a fact, but some families have children, adult children, who absolutely do not care for their older parents and don't care what happens to them. We have seen that in this particular study over and over. We're quite stumped. We need to do a random, stratified sample to make sure this isn't just a one-off. We are finding that there are really helpful families and that there are really horrible families that don't care about their mothers. We've interviewed about 300 people, and we're finding more on the negative side.

Your family is special. Your family made do. It was a family event, whereas in some places women are just dumped, and we're going to find... Fewer children are being born now. Your family is a very rare event; 1.2 children is what we're looking at now.

• (1720)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I believe it's 1.7.

Dr. Lynn McDonald: Well, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. McDonald.

I'm going to move now to Mr. Desnoyers.

I will just say that we have made note that one of the recommendations that's going to come out of this committee is that we should encourage families to have at least 10 children.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. McDonald, I think a bit the way you do. We have come to a turning point where a major societal choice is necessary. In our lives as parliamentarians, we have often made important societal choices. I'm thinking of Quebec, among others, when the decision was made to put child care centres and parental leave in place. There were indeed costs associated with that, but those issues were important for society. Steps had to be taken in that direction.

Today, a number of stakeholders have come to tell us a lot of things that you've said about women. It's not necessarily what we wanted to hear, but that's part of our reality. That's what life is today. It's much more individual than collective. My grandmother had 21 children. The house was always full. One brought a ham, another a roast. That's no longer the case today. When you have a family of two and both die, the mother often winds up with major financial problems. She is ultimately alone in society. That's also a fact.

The committee is looking for a way to solve the problems women are currently facing. This is not a new issue; these problems have accumulated over the years. However, the situation has changed. Women now occupy a significant place in society. But we must nevertheless attack all existing inequalities.

Women definitely depend on public pension plans. That's obvious. A number of stakeholders have told us that we must make substantial amendments to existing plans. In Quebec, talks have been started with the QPP. In Canada, it's the CPP. A number of people are even suggesting doubling the replacement rate. It's currently 25%. They're proposing to double it to 50%. Many are even suggesting putting a public fixed-benefit plan in place.

I would like to hear what you have to say on the subject, on the idea that the government should take a significant position on this point.

[English]

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I can't answer that. I'm not a pension expert; I'm a retirement expert.

The defined pension plans are far better than defined contribution plans, so that may be one way to go. I have read all the transcripts and all the suggestions that have been made, and I realize that was one of them. I don't think companies will entertain the CPP/QPP doubling of what you call the payroll tax. You might be able to raise it a little bit.

I'm all for the OAS and the GIS being greatly expanded, especially the GIS, because that still helps target more to the really poor people. I keep going on about the allowance. The allowance could be used in a number of different ways, if you had the will, I think.

That's the best I can say. As I said, I'm not a detailed pension expert. It's probably good that I'm almost the last person here, because this is about the moral economy for women. I think you have all the facts; it is a question of the moral issue and the political will. There's a great book called *Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women are Worth*. What are women worth to our Canadian society? The argument is that we are contributing to the economy in a big way and that it will get bigger.

You people are the experts on that issue.

• (1725)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: I have perhaps a final question. It will only take a minute.

Many people have talked about a pension summit that would address—I think this is important—inequalities between men and women. What do you think of that? It would be a major summit at which the main stakeholders in our society would be seated around the table to look at where we stand in this area and to make a societal choice.

[English]

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I saw that earlier in the transcripts and thought, what a great idea. All people are getting is basically what's on the front page of *The Globe and Mail*, which is not the whole picture. There are no women in the picture.

I think a summit that brought everybody to the table, including the corporations and the partners, and involved them in the process would be a way first to get it on the agenda. It needs to be on the agenda. Then, the networking of people, working together rather than doing just this or just that, would be really important—the public, the media—and that would start the ball rolling. It has died. We have the great pension debate.

Bob and I are old buddies from way back. He can tell you the history in a nanosecond. It is time for the summit.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McDonald.

Now I will go to Ms. Mathysen.

We are coming to the end of this, and I would like to just ask one small question before we leave.

Ms. Mathysen, it's your turn.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I'll be very brief. I think Mr. Desnoyers asked the most important question, and you answered it. But I'm going to allow you to indulge your sociologist side.

I'd like you to talk about the social cost of our lack of care. Our entire society will have to pay a price, I would say, if we tolerate poverty among seniors.

Dr. Lynn McDonald: One thing that comes to mind, which nobody has mentioned around here, is the cost of elder abuse and what we are doing to older people. There is a huge initiative on the part of this government, which is excellent. When the seniors benefit was proposed, for example, my first thought was that here was a perfect situation for elder abuse in which women do not have the power, and the ultimate power is to be beaten up. We don't know the extent of elder abuse in this country, but we're about to know very shortly because of HRSDC. We're actually doing the research for them. It is a serious issue, particularly in institutions, that people need to think about a lot.

That is part of the poverty issue. They will say that elder abuse cuts across, abuse cuts across, etc. But the problem is that when you're poor, life is a lot tougher. That is one of the big issues about poverty.

Then there's nutrition. You want people to eat well and you want them to be healthy and you want active aging. You are not going to have active aging if you're eating Kraft Dinner every day. The health factor involving poverty is huge, in terms of what you eat.

Do you think medical care in this country is free? Well, it isn't really free. Some people can barely pay for some of their drugs.

It goes on and on. Poverty is the worst enemy of this society, and as Canadians, we should do better.

The Chair: Thank you.

Cathy, you have a quickie.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: To me what has been interesting, and this follows up a little on the question of social justice, is our talking about OAS and GIS. I remember someone who was getting unemployment insurance—maternity leave—who said, "It's very nice, but I really don't need it. But it's there for me, so I'll take it." If we're trying to create some level, you have 10% who are the richest, and you have 10%, or whatever the ratios are...

That's another way. Do we restructure this? That OAS will mean nothing to some of those people at the top end of the scale, but—

• (1730)

Dr. Lynn McDonald: It will be clawed right back.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: —it means a whole lot to...

Anyway, it's just a comment that no one has brought up in testimony. I'm sure you would be supportive of it, from hearing your passion.

Dr. Lynn McDonald: Yes, I would be.

The Chair: I want to ask a quick question.

You came up with an interesting statistic: that women who do caregiving, or what I like to call unpaid work, are worth \$25 billion to Canadian GDP. I have a real concern for those women. I saw them when I was a physician. These are the women who, if they and their husbands divorce... Let's imagine they were married, because we know that a lot of these women tend to be much older now. If their husbands divorced them, if they got some CPP at that time, they no longer have it, because it was only a small amount, and especially if that person remarried, then they don't get any more survivor benefits.

And yet, if they have done... This is something that Canada brought to the United Nations way back in 1998, when I was the minister for women's equality. The United Nations have now picked up Canada's idea and are working on it in many countries. They've estimated trillions of dollars worth of unpaid work. These are the poorest women at the end of the day. How do we...?

You said an important thing about value. I would have liked us to talk about that; we haven't talked a lot about it. These women have fallen smack between the cracks. What is it we do to value the work? We value that unpaid work when we pay an early learning child care

worker, when we pay a home care worker, when we pay a geriatric nurse. We do all of those things, and yet these women have nothing for that work. There is no value for that work, because the woman did it at home because she had to, because nobody else was there to do it. She's left poor at the end of her days, and is the sickest—because poverty is the greatest determinant of health—and costs the system a lot of money in health care and all of those other things.

How does society help her to be a lot more independent by valuing that work? I would love to have heard somebody come up with something on that, because that's a big issue that I feel we don't consider.

Do you have anything to say on that?

Dr. Lynn McDonald: I agree with you: pay women what they're worth.

The Chair: Thanks.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Madam Chair, I wonder if our dear clerk would be able to get hold of that research that Professor McDonald referenced.

The Chair: Yes. I think the analyst wrote it down.

Will somebody make a motion to adjourn?

An hon. member: I so move.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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