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Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio



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• (1545)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 72 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. I'm going to skip the majority of this since we all know what's going on. I'm just going to ask anyone to raise their hand on committee business.

Leah, do you happen to have committee business today? Fantastic.

All right, Leah, you have the floor.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I want to put a motion on the table in regard to the Winnipeg city police's failure to submit documents as requested by committee.

This is just as way of backgrounder and maybe Danielle can participate in this because she's done most of the work on it, predominately. Danielle, our wonderful clerk, has tried on several occasions to get the information that the Winnipeg city police agreed to submit to committee, without success. In fact, the last time, she was told to submit an access to information request.

I'm reading about the Standing Orders for committees:

The Standing Orders state that standing committees have the power to order the production of papers and records.... In carrying out their responsibility to conduct studies and inquiries, standing committees often have to rely on a wide array of papers to aid them in their work....

Committees usually obtain such papers simply by requesting them from their authors or owners. If a request is denied, however, and the standing committee believes that specific papers are essential to its work, it can use its power to order the production of papers by passing a motion to that effect. The motion usually orders the person to whom it is directed to provide the committee with the papers in question by a particular date or deadline.

I want to just remind the committee that the Winnipeg city police actually did agree to provide this information.

I have circulated the motion ahead of the meeting. The Liberal Party offered a suggestion to change submitting it to the House to doing a news release.

The Chair: Leah, can you read your motion, so that we have it on record?

Thank you.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Sure, no problem.

The motion reads as follows: "That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1), the clerk inform the Winnipeg Police Services that the committee sends for a copy of the following records, to be provided by 5:00 p.m. (EDT) on Monday, June, 12, 2023:

"According to a CBC article on March 23, 2023, in Winnipeg alone, 9,315 people have gone missing. Out of all those cases, a) how many were indigenous; b) how many were indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people; c) how many were safety returned to the family; d) and how many HR hours were spent investigating missing cases involving indigenous people...; and that should the Winnipeg Police Services fail to meet the deadline, the committee will" issue a news release.

I think this information is really pertinent to the study for a couple of reasons, which is why—

The Chair: Leah, I just want to double-check here for a second. There is a different piece here. I just want to ensure.... Are you reading the amended motion?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Yes.

The Chair: Fantastic. Okay, that's for everybody's recommendation. She is reading the amended motion, not the one that was originally put forward.

Go ahead. Carry on.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I think it's really critical because Winnipeg has been identified as ground zero for murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. We have high rates of trafficking.

In fact in my very own community, down the street in a place called Air Canada Park, there are reports that young girls that are still in child welfare are being trafficked out of the park.

I think this information is pertinent to this study. Certainly the Winnipeg city police, when they testified for this study, agreed to submit this information. This is exactly what I requested and the response was that they agreed to submit the information.

I'm requesting support for this motion. I think it's important, particularly in light of the high number of missing and murdered cases that have occurred in Winnipeg to date.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Leah.

Sonia, you have your hand up. Go ahead.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank MP Gazan for bringing this forward. It is a heartbreaking issue. I'm supportive of the motion to encourage them to send the documents immediately. This way we can provide a timely message to the Winnipeg Police Service about the deadline.

We can improve the news release during Monday's meeting, if we can Madam Chair.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Andréanne.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

We have a lot of work to do in the next hour. I hope we can get everything done.

With regard to my colleague Ms. Gazan's motion, I would like to begin by saying that, like everyone else, I have a great deal of sympathy for the victims. It is a horrible case.

However, it is difficult to get involved in the work of organizations that fall under provincial or municipal jurisdiction. Accountability for provincial or municipal organizations outside Ottawa's jurisdiction is a difficult area. There is also the matter of the deadline set out in the motion, which we find difficult to meet, if not completely unreasonable.

Because of this deadline and what Ottawa can do to interfere in something that does not concern it, although I am very sensitive to this issue, I will vote against the motion.

• (1550)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Are there any other questions or comments?

We're looking at an amendment.

Oh, I'm sorry. Leah. Go ahead.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Yes, I'd like to respond to that.

I would like to clarify that. I asked the Winnipeg city police, in our committee, to provide that information. They agreed to do that, meaning that they made a commitment to the committee to provide that information. That's of great importance. This isn't about jurisdiction; this is about a study for which the Winnipeg city police agreed to submit information to the committee.

We have had recently in Winnipeg.... If we're going to deal with and talk about human trafficking, actually we know in the study that it crosses jurisdiction. Women are often taken from one jurisdiction to another. They can end up in any province or territory.

We had scathing reports about women who have gone missing in our community. I think it's critical that we have this information so that we can develop systems that protect women. This is what the study is about—particularly women, girls and gender-diverse folks from being trafficked or exploited. I'll leave it there.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Seeing no other hands, all those in favour of this motion as amended?

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

The Chair: The motion carries.

On the instruction to our analysts and the clerk, what we will be doing is putting together this letter. Then we'll ensure, on that media, that a copy is seen by all members before it's signed off and released.

Are there any other questions?

Seeing none, let's get into our sports report.

Oh, golly. As everybody turns to their sports report, I'm going to remind everybody that we need to suspend. We are now going from being in public to in camera. Please get back on ASAP. Thank you.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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