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—
Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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• (1110)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP)): Order.

Thank you very much.

Welcome, Minister. It's a pleasure to see you here today. I know that the committee has many questions for you.

You have about ten minutes or so for your remarks, because I know that everyone has much to ask.

Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women)): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Committee members,

[Translation]

I am pleased to be here today.

[English]

First, I would like to take a moment to commend the standing committee on its recent work, including your studies on employment insurance and pay equity on behalf of Canadian women and women around the world. Given the number of meetings you have held and the studies you have undertaken, from my point of view and from my past experience sitting around this table, this committee still seems to be the busiest on the Hill.

I am pleased to be here today to outline for you the Government of Canada's priorities to advance equality for women and their full participation in the economic, social, and democratic life of our country. I am also here on the government's main estimates and the report on plans and priorities for Status of Women Canada.

Since coming into power, our government has made numerous positive changes to Status of Women Canada. These changes include the creation of two funds within the women's program, the women's partnership fund and the women's community fund. As well, to support the initiatives of the women's program, we increased funding to Status of Women Canada by 42%, bringing its current funding level to the highest level in Canada's history.

These positive changes were recently reviewed in the departmental performance report released this spring. In fact, the departmental performance report noted that the changes to the women's program had allowed Status of Women Canada to widen its reach and to have a more open and competitive funding program. The changes also saw a significant increase in the uptake of its funding and greater diversity among the funding recipients.

I was pleased that many of these changes have made a real difference in the lives of Canadian women from coast to coast to coast. The DPR noted that in 2007-2008, the number of organizations that had received funding from the women's program had increased by 69%. Of those organizations that were receiving funding, 41% had applied for funding for the very first time; as a result, in the last fiscal year alone, projects funded by the women's program directly benefited 100,000 Canadian women and indirectly benefited one million women.

The report also noted the many accomplishments Canadian women have made over the years. For example, since 1971 the number of women aged 15 and over with a university degree increased from 3% to 18%. In May 2008 women increased their labour force participation rate to 62.4%, a record high level of participation.

Canadian women are making important advances in Canadian society, and I am pleased with the important role Status of Women Canada is playing in improving women's participation in all aspects of Canadian life.

The report on plans and priorities further highlights the positive work of our government in addressing women's equality. It noted that my appointment as the first minister of state solely dedicated to the status of women will ensure that Status of Women Canada will not only have increased visibility but also a stronger voice. It also noted that our changes to Status of Women resulted in enhanced accountability on gender equality, a wider program reach, and an improved ability to develop strategic partnerships and leverage resources. I'm proud of our changes and I'm very proud of the positive response that our changes have garnered.

While our government has made progress in enhancing women's participation on a wide range of issues by developing supportive policies and measures to address critical challenges and by providing the resources to help deal with them, around this table we all know that there is more work to be done.

That is why the federal action plan for women is key for our government. I am currently wrapping up the consultation process, and engagement sessions are still taking place throughout the country on the plan's pillars of promoting economic security and prosperity for women, seeing an end to the violence against women, and encouraging women's democratic participation and leadership in key decision-making bodies. There will also, of course, be an aboriginal component in this action plan.

Our government recognizes the important role grassroots organizations are playing in providing support and services to Canadian women. That is why our increased funding and the greater number of groups receiving funding are so significant. Our government is supporting grassroots organizations across the country because they best understand the unique situations that women are faced with and they know the solutions for women in their areas.

Projects that Status of Women Canada is supporting will achieve concrete results, such as providing women with skills and training as well as developing culturally relevant tools to help organizations assist victims of violence from diverse communities and to help older women in rural communities to plan for their retirement.

•(1115)

Over the last year, through the women's partnership fund of Status of Women Canada, numerous partnerships have been created that I am very proud of. For example, Status of Women Canada has a partnership with Equal Voice, which I know you're familiar with. They will be engaging 5,800 young women and girls to take on leadership roles within their communities. I know that each of you recognizes the significance of this. I believe that at my request my staff has brought along some of the brochures for each of you.

Also, our partnership with WEConnect Canada will provide opportunities for women business owners to access supplier diversity in markets worldwide. This is something I became aware of when I was the secretary of state for trade, and I was very excited to have the opportunity when I came to Status of Women Canada to fulfill that goal. The partnership, also with CATA WIT, is one that will encourage young women's involvement in technology, and our partnership with the Association of Manitoba Chiefs will raise awareness around the issue of human trafficking and its impact on the aboriginal community. This is something I know Ms. Neville is supportive of.

In these times of economic uncertainty, the Government of Canada remains committed to advancing equality for women and their full participation in all aspects of Canadian life—social, economic, and democratic. I am also happy to tell the committee that we will be announcing a call for proposals under the women's community fund in the coming weeks.

I have also been very busy representing Canada internationally. Status of Women Canada plays an important part in representing Canada in international forums, and it has been a pleasure to be a part of that process.

In November, on behalf of the Government of Canada I signed on to the UNIFEM campaign to say no to violence. This is an international effort to raise awareness about the issue of violence against women.

In March I led the Canadian delegation to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. There, I had the opportunity to deliver the Canadian head of delegation speech. I also had several bilateral meetings with my counterparts from around the world, participated in round tables, and addressed the panel on women in Afghanistan. Speaking to colleagues around the table who attended with me, I appreciate your having been there.

In March I also had the opportunity to travel to Washington, where I met with Valerie Jarrett. Of course, Valerie is senior adviser and assistant to the President. She was also recently appointed chair of the White House Commission on Women and Girls, which is new. Ms. Jarrett and I discussed a number of issues of importance to women across our countries, but I have to say that it truly was an honour to have Ms. Jarrett commend Canada for our gender machinery in government and our leadership in having a cabinet minister solely dedicated to the status of women. I look forward to continuing discussions with her and further sharing of best practices. I will have some announcements on that in the future.

In April we also had our annual federal-provincial-territorial meeting. My counterparts and I had a very productive meeting, discussing issues of violence against women and aboriginal women. One issue we were all particularly interested in around the table was regarding the potential of women in non-traditional occupations, a topic that I understand this committee is hoping to study at some point. There is a huge potential for Canadian women to contribute to Canada's economy in non-traditional jobs.

I look forward to your report on this. I encourage you to study it and to look at specific industries that you would not have thought of in the past, such as the automotive sector, in which I know we don't see a strong representation of women. I think we could look to it as well, as we build for the future, and maybe at solar energy, and of course technology. Of course, it is your decision as a committee around this table to decide whether you would like to study it.

My provincial counterparts and I also joined together to commend the Prime Minister's stand on addressing the sharia law in Afghanistan. We had a unanimous decision to support the Prime Minister's position on this very important issue. I believe it is a testament to the Prime Minister and this government's commitment to women at home and around the world.

•(1120)

The release of the Auditor General's spring report earlier this month, and in particular its chapter on gender-based analysis, I'm sure was of great interest to every one of you around the table. I also look forward to tabling our government's response to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women's study entitled *Towards Gender Responsive Budgeting: Rising to the Challenge of Achieving Gender Equality* in the coming weeks.

The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of including gender-based analysis in the development and the assessment of policies and programs. Steps have been taken to implement gender-based analysis frameworks, and the government will continue to enhance the practice of GBA across all departments and agencies.

I feel it is important to highlight our government's commitment to this implementation of GBA. Since we formed a government in 2006, in the elements of the budget it is responsible for the Department of Finance has in fact conducted gender-based analysis. This process has continued in our recent economic action plan. Also, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, since 2007, in order to obtain funding from Treasury Board, Treasury Board submissions require evidence of gender-based analysis, which is something we put in place. In 2008 our government took further action, to ensure that all memoranda to cabinet included gender-based analysis. These are all very significant political decisions.

Currently, Status of Women Canada provides training to departments so that they can conduct gender-based analysis within their own department. The agency is also available to answer questions and provide directions on issues that are related to gender-based analysis.

In our economic action plan in Budget 2009, our government set out a plan that takes a very balanced approach to stimulate economic growth and restore confidence and support for all Canadians, including women and their families. The plan will benefit all women, including the most vulnerable and those who are hardest hit by the recession. By having an economic action plan that balances stimulus with support, our government is working to ensure that Canadian women and their families emerge from this current economic downturn faster and stronger.

But while it is important to celebrate progress towards equality for women and their full participation in Canadian society, we have to reflect on the challenges and the barriers that still remain. We have to consider the future steps to achieving equality for all women in all aspects of their lives. I can assure you that our government will continue to focus where the need is the greatest, so that we can make a concrete difference in the lives of women. We will continue to invest in projects that touch women directly and impact their lives in key areas.

Thank you very much, committee members.

I look forward to your questions.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you, Minister. We appreciate your remarks.

Now we have a seven-minute round, beginning with Ms. Neville.

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

I want to thank you, Minister Guergis, for attending today. I'm pleased that you were able to come. As you are aware, we've submitted a number of requests, and I'm glad you're here today.

Your remarks, for me, have generated many more questions than I had anticipated. I'm going to try to go through them fairly quickly.

You referred to the call for proposals for the community partnership fund as coming. It's now some months into the fiscal year, and I don't know when the call is coming, but I am concerned. We know that the dollars were not fully committed last year. I'm wondering how your department plans to process them so that the moneys can be used and put out this year.

I have a question on the partnerships program. When a partnership program is announced, is it necessary to have the commitments by the partners in place before your funding to the partnership program is given out? I'm concerned about the logistics of that.

Briefly, I'm putting my questions out, and you can take the time to answer them.

The AG's report on gender-based analysis, quite clearly, we all know was very unsatisfactory. She didn't quite put it this way, but the system is basically a mess. She highlighted a number of departments. Some were better than others; Transport Canada, we know, failed the test; she didn't touch on others. What will you be doing with the other departments there?

You referred to the provincial meeting. I have had conversations with some who were there, and I know that one of the overriding issues was the whole issue of early learning and child care. I wonder whether you could speak to that.

I will ask one more and then I'll come back, if I have more time.

I have a list now of all of the proposals. I have gone through them fairly carefully. Some of them are splendid; some of them, in my mind, are highly questionable; and some of them seem to have a great deal of similarity between them. What I'm interested in is how you determine, in your assessment of proposals, what is within federal and what is within provincial jurisdiction.

I'll stop there and then come back, if there is time.

• (1125)

Hon. Helena Guergis: I think I got all those questions down.

First, I think you might have been referring to the community fund and not the partnership fund in your first question.

Hon. Anita Neville: I was referring to the community originally, and then the partnership fund. I'm sorry.

Hon. Helena Guergis: There was, we all know, a delay in the approval process for the last community fund because of the election, and I intend to have a call for proposals within the next couple of weeks. I don't know what further to give you on that, except that we are about to make another call for proposals.

You suggested that there was some delay in funding and so on. There was no delay in funding, so I don't really know what you're talking about.

Hon. Anita Neville: All of the funding was not used for the community fund, and I appreciate—

Hon. Helena Guergis: No, the funding was used for the community fund, and there was some money used for the partnership.

I can have someone speak more directly on the finances for you, and we have them here. I believe that last year and this year what we did was roll the money over into the next year. So the money was available for us to utilize last year, and then there will be more money that we moved over to the next as well.

I can have someone come and answer your question better than that—

Hon. Anita Neville: I would like to know about it, because we see a \$5 million shortfall.

Hon. Helena Guergis: There are no shortfalls. The money gets carried over and it gets spent.

Also, keep in mind that what is important, Ms. Neville, is that when we do projects, sometimes they are for two and three years, so we also book the money for the following years, and we recognize that we have to make sure that money is booked for the next year.

Hon. Anita Neville: My concern about the community funds, though, is that it is late in the year now to get the call for proposals out. I don't know what your timeline will be for those proposals to come in to you, but I am concerned that we know the criteria for the community fund and that we know that the dollars will be getting out the door.

Hon. Helena Guergis: Well, I can tell you they will.

Hon. Anita Neville: We'll be watching.

Hon. Helena Guergis: I'm sure you will.

With respect to partnerships, they do take a lot more time, because they try to leverage other resources—

Hon. Anita Neville: I'm aware of that.

Hon. Helena Guergis: —and they must have the partners in place. And that's important. So they do take considerable more time.

Hon. Anita Neville: Do they have to be in place before the money is committed by you?

Hon. Helena Guergis: That's the goal. Yes, that's the goal, to have the money in place and the commitments, so they can be approved. That is the focus; that's the goal.

Hon. Anita Neville: Is that the reality?

Hon. Helena Guergis: Yes, for the majority of them, that's what my understanding is and what my answers to your questions have been. And they've been a yes.

With respect to gender-based analysis, is it perfect? No, it's not.

Hon. Anita Neville: It's far from perfect, yes.

Hon. Helena Guergis: We still have a long way to go. But, Ms. Neville, I think you recognize that we made some political decisions, which I outlined in my opening remarks, that your government could have done very easily in eleven years, but you didn't.

Hon. Anita Neville: You know, that's a little—

Hon. Helena Guergis: Yes, so you're going to have to give some recognition. You could have implemented gender-based analysis as part of the budget process and the tax measures in the budget process, but you didn't do it. We did it.

You could have said that Treasury Board has to require evidence of gender-based analysis—

Hon. Anita Neville: And we did.

Hon. Helena Guergis: But no, you didn't.

Hon. Anita Neville: We did.

Hon. Helena Guergis: No, you did not, Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: I'm not getting into a political argument with you, Minister.

Hon. Helena Guergis: And the third, having a memorandum to cabinet—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): I would like you to be positive, please.

•(1130)

Hon. Helena Guergis: —was our direction, again, as a government.

So we have made significant progress in less than three years, far more than your government did.

Do we still have more to do? Yes, we acknowledge that, and we accept that, and we appreciate the work of the Auditor General. And you can rest assured, because of my own knowledge, background, and experience in gender-based analysis, I will continue to work on it and see us succeed.

And keep in mind, as I go through my action plan wrap-up, that I do include that as part of my consultation process on how we can improve that.

Remind me again what your third question was.

Hon. Anita Neville: I was asking about the provincial meeting.

I also want to know, before you finish on the recommendations on CEDAW, what you have been doing as it relates....

Do I have time?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): No, I'm sorry. Perhaps the minister could come back and answer that.

Now it's time for Madame Demers.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Good morning, Minister. Thank you for being here this morning. I know that it is never a walk in the park, because we are always looking for as many answers as possible in a short amount of time. That is not always easy. I will begin with a positive remark, Minister, you know me, I am a positive woman.

Last week, we unanimously adopted a motion calling on Status of Women Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to mandate Statistics Canada to evaluate and calculate unpaid work, or invisible work, as it did in its general social survey in 1992. I was happy to see that everyone supported the motion and thought it was a good idea.

When do you intend to ask Statistics Canada to undertake this survey, so that we can identify invisible work done by women and determine what it is worth, so that we can have an idea of the real value of the work women do and what proportion of our GDP that represents? This includes men as well, because some of them also do invisible work. There are male colleagues with us here this morning; I will not leave them out.

Minister, the last time that you appeared before us, I talked about a specific issue: the CIAFT. That organization was asking for funding to be able to help women who wanted to do non-traditional work. The project had been proposed under Status of Women Canada programs, and you had kindly agreed to review the matter. That is why we sent it on to your office. I assume that it has been looked at by your deputy ministers and the people in charge of such studies.

Since March 5, it has gone back to your office for approval. Unfortunately, despite several calls, considerable follow-up, a response has not yet been provided. The people in charge of the organization are in despair and wonder if they will ever benefit from the funding, which is very important for women. I want to clarify that my action will not win me any votes. The organization is not in my riding. I am taking action in accordance with my convictions: we must help as many women as possible.

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: With reference to your second question, I can assure you that the project did receive the attention that was required by our officials.

It was submitted under the partnership fund, and my understanding is that they no longer wanted to pursue it under the partnership fund. I explained earlier how sometimes it takes a long time to find the partners and to leverage the resources that are needed. Sometimes it can take six months to develop the partnership.

They actually pulled away and decided not to pursue it under the partnership fund, but they had indicated that they would present the proposal under the women's community fund when our call for proposals comes out.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: I think that the bid you are referring to should come out within the next few weeks.

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: They took away their partnership. They pulled it back and decided not to proceed.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: They already had all the partners they needed to support the project. The Government of Quebec and several other partners had agreed to support the project if Status of Women Canada supported it as well.

•(1135)

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: The group indicated to us that they no longer wished to pursue funding through the partnership. They don't want to do it through the partnership. That's their decision to make, but they said they will present it under the community fund. That's their decision to make, and I look forward to receiving it through the community fund.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you.

What about the first question, Minister?

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: It talked about the motion that was passed unanimously around the table on—

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: May 6, Minister.

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: Was it unpaid work?

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: My question dealt with invisible work.

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: Yes, that's right. We all do it, and so much of it, don't we?

Data on unpaid work and the consequences of caregiving on caregivers, as I think you know, were collected and examined in the 2005 and 2007 general social surveys by Statistics Canada. As well, in recognition of women's broader role in Canadian society, the government had decided to put in place a number of initiatives and programs to support women, including the universal child care benefit and increases to the national child benefit supplement and the compassionate care benefit.

In the 2009 budget the government also committed to establishing an expert panel to consult Canadians on how best to provide maternity and parental benefits for the self-employed. I recognize there is much more to do. I know all of us around the table, all parties, had supported the motion, but we will work with our federal partners, with Minister Finley at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and with Statistics Canada to develop an action plan that will address the remaining challenges to see what we can do going forward.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: It is not really about seeing what we can do, but obtaining real statistics. What you are talking about does not give us the real statistics we need to fully understand the impacts and the value of invisible work carried out by women and men.

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: Statistics Canada has been doing a lot of data-gathering. They look at the social trends, including unpaid work. They've been doing that since 1985, and I will continue to work with Minister Finley to see that we can continue to have them do that.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: The last time that Statistics Canada undertook an in-depth study on invisible work was in 1992. A similar study had been done in 1985, following the request from Nairobi. Another study was conducted in 1992, but it has not been repeated since.

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: All right. Well, my information indicates that data on caregiving and caregivers were collected and examined in the 2005 and 2007 general social surveys by Statistics Canada. I'll check into that.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): It is now time for Ms. Hoepfner.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

[English]

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here with us. You're right; we've been doing a lot of work. You mentioned in your earlier comments the work that this committee has been doing. We have been doing a lot of work, and it's nice to have you here and to be able to ask you some questions.

I want to go back to something you mentioned regarding the representation you've been doing abroad on behalf of Canada. Relatively speaking, Canadian women are doing very well. We have work to do, but we are doing very well. We are more highly educated than ever before; we're earning more money than ever before. When we look abroad and see women's rights really being trampled on in so many countries, all of us here would like to see change.

So I'm wondering. When you are representing Canada—you mentioned the UN, OAS, APEC—can you tell the committee what kind of work you've been doing and also what kind of impact you think it has, that Canada, for the first time, has a minister who is solely responsible for the status of women? We're the first government to do that. We're doing gender-based analysis; we've taken action on equitable compensation for women; we are taking steps that I believe provide real leadership on a global level.

Is that something that you're seeing when you represent Canada abroad? What kind of feedback are you getting from other countries?

• (1140)

Hon. Helena Guergis: Thank you very much for your question.

Being the first minister solely dedicated to status of women is something that really piques the interest even of ministers across the country, but internationally definitely. They think this is something that's significant. As I mentioned in my opening remarks with respect to Ms. Garrett, appointed by President Obama, they were very interested and excited about that. They liked the machinery we have in Status of Women Canada, which they don't have, and are looking to us as an example and looking for us to share some best practices and advice across borders on how we can work closer together on issues that affect North American women.

The position for me, I think, is really an exciting opportunity to share what Canada has to offer. On the gender-based analysis side, we are still looked to as a leader as well, in terms of what we provide, and the advice, and working with other countries, and showing them how to introduce gender-based analysis into their own policy development processes. Of course, there are some challenges, because some governments don't have the capacity to do that, so having experts like Canadian officials there is key.

I'll try not to repeat some of the things that I have been doing internationally, but I was, again, really proud to sign on to UNIFEM's campaign. I'm not sure whether you're familiar with it, but it is the campaign to say no violence, and it builds on Canada's

work with UNIFEM. I met with UNIFEM and the key officials there, the executive director.

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, in March, was an incredible opportunity to network with a number of women internationally: heading that delegation, and of course in the number of panels that I participated in.

One that I don't think I mentioned in my earlier remarks was the International Development Research Centre's side event, which was on decentralization, women's political representation, and access to public services. I participated in that and in an interactive expert panel on gender perspectives on the financial crisis. I also had the chance to intervene on the panel, as I mentioned, discussing Afghan women, an issue I am particularly passionate about. We were all thrilled, because we had an opportunity to meet five Afghan women who told us about their personal stories. I can tell you that in the room, I was the only minister there to give an intervention, and Canada and our contribution was recognized by the Afghan women on the panel. It was acknowledged for what Canada is doing for them.

I also engaged in a number of bilateral meetings with my counterparts from other nations, including Barbados, Australia, the United States, New Zealand. In a lot of those conversations, I was asking them whether they're doing gender-based analysis, wondered what stage they're at, and whether they can provide any advice on how we might be able to share best practices or, maybe even better, our processes in Canada. Perhaps they're ahead of us, but I'm finding that Canada is still very much a leader, and they're looking to me and asking me for advice on how they can improve theirs.

Again, my trip to Washington was a fantastic experience, an opportunity to develop a very positive relationship. There are some initiatives that I still can't tell you. I think the last time I was at committee there were some things I couldn't tell you but can tell you now, about the reconnect on the supplier diversity opportunities. We have the U.K., we have China and India actually now coming on board for supplier diversity, which increases the database and the network and the market access for Canadian businesswomen now, because Canadian businesswomen are a part of that process.

So those are some of the things we're doing on an international level. It's very much a moving experience, and I'm very proud of how Canada is received.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Thank you very much. That's all I have.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): All right. There's still a minute and a half.

Ms. Brown, do you have a question?

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here.

I'm sitting in. I'm not regularly part of this committee, but I'm pleased to be here.

I'm a woman who has been in non-traditional roles. I was doing a music degree, but I worked for an engineering company full-time while I was doing it. I worked in the drafting office, which was very non-traditional, and in that time I had to do a great deal of work with construction companies, learning how to do quantity take-offs for bids. Since that time, I've been self-employed for most of my adult life in some non-traditional roles. I would be very happy to be part of those discussions in the future, because I think I can bring to that discussion some of my experiences.

Minister, you talked earlier about the discussions you were having in the federal, provincial, and territorial meetings. Ms. Neville got started on this question but ran out of time. Could you tell the committee what those discussions entailed? Were you seeing and hearing of women in those discussions who were filling non-traditional roles? Could you just elaborate on that discussion?

• (1145)

Hon. Helena Guergis: Thanks very much. I'm not sure whether you're a regular member, but welcome.

Thank you for your question. It was a really great opportunity for all the ministers responsible for women's issues to come together around the table. There was one man, and he was outstanding. We call him our honorary female. These were very talented, dedicated ministers, all of them, with a lot of experience in non-traditional roles as well. There was a lot of interest around the table in having a more in-depth conversation and discussion about what we could do as governments to encourage and provide more opportunities and access to these roles that are not traditionally held by women.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you, Minister. We are out of time. Thank you.

I have some questions on behalf of the NDP caucus. I too thank you for being here.

In the 2009-10 estimates, the overall budget for operating costs has increased. However, the budget for "strategic policy analysis, planning and development" has been cut significantly, by nearly one-third. It goes from \$2,462,000 down to \$1,729,000. We have that in the charts that we were provided. This line item, Minister, is very important, because it supports other departments for strategic policy development and gender-based analysis. I would like you to respond: why this cut, and how are you going to meet the obligations as set out under policy development and GBA?

Hon. Helena Guergis: I'm going to ask my official to address that one.

Mrs. Cindy Paquette (Director, Corporate Services Directorate, Status of Women Canada): I'm Cindy Paquette, with Status of Women Canada, corporate services.

There was no cut made to the policy section. Last year we had to take the internal services and pro-rate them over the two main business lines, which were the women's program and policy. This year we were asked to separate them out and to put a separate line in for internal services. So there was no cut; it was just the way we were asked to set out the information differently this year. The team is the same size it was last year.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): I understand that there is this overall increase in funding and that it is for this new line item,

internal services; you've mentioned this. Could you explain what the goal was behind introducing it? What is it, exactly?

Mrs. Cindy Paquette: Treasury Board has a definition of internal services. It is all the corporate functions—the human resources, the finance, the IM/IT, the administration, records management, communications services, management, audit and evaluation, accommodation. It's all of the common things that every department has, and they're called internal services.

I can provide you the full definition from Treasury Board, if you'd like.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Yes. That would be very helpful.

Page 5-3 of our notes indicates an increase in grant funding. Where do you plan to focus the increased funding? Does the government have new initiatives in mind in regard to that funding?

Hon. Helena Guergis: Under the community fund and the partnership fund in the past, since I've been the minister and prior to that, we've had a strong focus on the three pillars. Although they're announced as three pillars for the action plan for women, a lot of the granting and funding of projects has been in line with economic security and increasing women's prosperity. There's a focus on ending violence against women and also seeing women in leadership roles.

All of these vary in their different levels. I think all of us around the table recognize, using economic security as an example, that you'll see women at different levels. Some women have not even been able to write their own cheques or be a part of that normal budgeting process in the home. There are projects out there that help them go through that process, should they find themselves in a situation in which they need to know how to do it. They may be single, for a number of reasons. There are also those who are by far more advanced.

An example would be, say, in the business communities: a businesswoman runs a small or medium-sized enterprise and she has been in business for some time, so that she has a little more financial literacy, but then she's also looking for more than what she has, in terms of accountability and accounting practices and knowing what further steps she can take by way of even market access. It varies at all the different levels.

That's why we reach out to the grassroots organizations and the communities on the ground: we believe that they are best suited. They know what's going on in those communities in the community of people and women they're dealing with, so they develop projects that are tailored to those different levels of women.

The same would go for leadership, in terms of political aspirations or increasing political literacy, but also leadership within their own community and being more active and being a part of the normal, everyday things that go on in the community. There are projects to support that aspect as well.

• (1150)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathyssen): Thank you.

I'd like to come back to Ms. Neville's question about CEDAW. Canada has been asked to respond to two of its recommendations, on the accountability of the federal government to set standards to implement CEDAW towards vulnerable women and of course on violence against aboriginal women, and that's within a one-year timeframe.

How will Status of Women Canada respond to these two recommendations in its planned activities and programs? What efforts are being made to address the two recommendations, and how will SWC endeavour to respond to other recommendations put forth by the CEDAW committee?

Hon. Helena Guergis: Part of it is the ongoing process that I am undertaking in concluding the action plan. Then, of course, there are the three pillars, and there is a conversation about CEDAW. You can't develop the action plan without talking about CEDAW. At my federal-provincial meeting I had an opportunity to raise the provincial responsibilities that come along with CEDAW, ensuring that all my counterparts are aware of their responsibilities. In fact, I had a chart made to identify which areas were involved and where the overlaps were.

For my part through Status of Women Canada, there are projects and organizations such as FAFIA that we are funding to educate Canadian women on CEDAW and what their rights are and what needs to be done. That's part of the process and part of one of the responsibilities that we're required to do with CEDAW.

With respect to violence against aboriginal women, again that will be part of the action plan. You are familiar with Sisters in Spirit, which is a significant research project as well as an education tool and an awareness tool. What we're doing with it, which I think needs to be recognized, is make a commitment to develop SIS 2.

We still have almost a year left in research gathering. We'll take what we have already and work towards the rest of the five-year program and use all of that research in the development of what Sisters in Spirit 2 will be. The Native Women's Association of Canada is playing a key role as to how they would like to see the next phase of SIS 2 play out. I can't give you all of the announcements now, but I can assure you that part of the development of the action plan is including these conversations. There will be some actionable items on those areas.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathyssen): Thank you.

Now we are quite short of time, as we were late starting. With the committee's indulgence, could we have a quick two-minute round for each?

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

I'm going to be very quick, because my colleague Mr. Wilfert has a question.

Madam Minister, I'm not here to engage in political debate, and I'm not at an all-candidates forum. I'm just trying to find out what's going on in the department. I have the Auditor General's report here. I would commend to you her introduction, and particularly the last paragraph on GBA, which states that they found that very few departments that performed gender-based analysis can show the analysis was used in designing public policy. It goes on from there. That's a real concern.

You focused your remarks significantly on your international efforts. I was at the UN, as part of the Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation, and I was upset and embarrassed that Canadian women were standing outside the United Nations protesting your appearance and Canada's role in looking after the interests of women. So I just put that on the table as a balance to it.

My colleague has a question on the international arena.

Hon. Helena Guergis: Okay. First of all—

• (1155)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Can I just put this on the table, Minister?

Hon. Helena Guergis: I'm going to answer Ms. Neville first, if that's okay.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: We've only got two minutes.

Hon. Helena Guergis: I know.

Quickly, first of all, it was not true what you just said, Ms. Neville. There were no protests against my representation, or Canada being there, or anything we were doing at the UN. There was some conversation about pay equity, and I've already told you many times that you're more than welcome to call and speak with the other ministers if you'd like to discuss that. You are studying it around the table. I think you're misrepresenting what conversations did go on there, and I think that's unfortunate.

With respect to GBA, what also needs to be recognized here is that there is a very strong element of cabinet confidentiality. Certain documents cannot be shared with the Auditor General, and she acknowledged that in the report. So that is one of the reasons why some evidence cannot be shown. We cannot show cabinet documents in the details they are expecting we would, to show and demonstrate that gender-based analysis has been done. You can't show those things, and I think you know that.

Go ahead, please.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathyssen): We're very short of time.

If Mr. Wilfert will put his question, the minister can respond.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, with regard to the sharia law in Afghanistan, one of our six main objectives is the enhancement of women, and certainly through the justice system. We have someone embedded in the Ministry of Justice there. Clearly, the ball was dropped when that law was to be adopted by the Afghan government. My question is, with the whole-of-government approach, do you or your department have anything to do with the enhancement of our policy in Afghanistan? If you do, what is it? If you don't, why don't you? I guess we could have that in writing.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you very much.

Now, for two minutes, Madame Boucher.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good morning, Minister. We are pleased to have you with us today. I know that you are doing a great deal of work for women and that you believe in it. We have discussed it. You believe very strongly in the equality of women. You believe strongly that women can be women of decision. A great deal of progress has been made.

Minister, funding has been increased and we recently announced several partnerships. We are very pleased with that, especially since women's groups in the field are very receptive to these partnerships. Could you give committee members some information about the Partnership Fund for Women as well as some of the partnerships it supports?

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: Okay, sure, absolutely.

The one that I touched on a little bit, WEConnect Canada, is a project called "Opening Doors to Corporate Markets". It's an education training, coaching, and mentoring program. We've put more than \$600,000 in to help support this network that already exists, and create market access for small-business women. It's something that's gone on in the U.K., and it means that 5% of corporations and their purchasing is guaranteed to go to women and women-owned businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises. Now that Canada is a part of that, we have access to the database that's in the U.K. and then vice versa. I had mentioned that China and India were going to be part of that. It exists in the United States as well.

This is something that's been going on in the United States for many, many years. Corporations actually go to small-business women. There's even an example in my own riding where a woman has a maple syrup product and she wanted to be able to have market access, to put it on the grocery store shelf, even in another nation. Usually it can cost you \$25,000 to put one item on the shelf. These fees are waived and the women are given opportunities. They still have to sell their product like any other business does, but the corporations make a commitment that 5% of their new purchases will go to small and medium-sized enterprises. Look at them; they're finding incredible opportunities there. So that's one of them.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you, Minister. I'm sorry, I know it's very short.

Madame Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Minister, there is some confusion about the matter I mentioned, the CIAFT. The person in charge of the organization is still eagerly awaiting your response. That person has never had any contact with your office nor with anyone who works for you, and she has never withdrawn from the file.

Minister, this file has been on your desk since March 5, and I would appreciate your sending out a response as quickly as possible.

• (1200)

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: Thank you, Nicole.

I can tell you what I already told you, and I'll give you my commitment that if what I've been told is not the truth, I find that unacceptable. I find it unacceptable, and I will look into it and personally let you know.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Can you look into it quickly, Minister?

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: Absolutely, yes, I will.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: I will get back to you on that. Thank you very much, Minister.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): There is still one minute for the Bloc.

Does Monsieur Guimond have a question?

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Good afternoon Minister. I have a question about the Community Fund for Women, that you will be announcing shortly. When will organizations be able to apply for funding?

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: I will have that ready within the next two to three weeks; the call will go out, so organizations across the country can put their applications in. I suspect, because there's such a big interest and an understanding now that we have increased the funding and that there is more opportunity, that we'll receive probably more applications than we'll be able to fund. But we'll do the best we can with the resources we have.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Guimond: How much of the Community Fund for Women has been allocated to Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Helena Guergis: It's an all-across-the-country fund, and we take the applications and those that meet the criteria—my officials go through it all and bring those proposals to me, those that have met the criteria, for my approval—I go through them line by line.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Merci.

Very quickly, Minister, in the 2009-2010 report on plans and priorities you indicate departments will be targeted to increase policy effectiveness in addressing women's issues and gender equality, to sustain the capacity of these departments to apply GBA, and to increase the integration of women's issues when formulating their policies and programs.

How will you identify which departments will be targeted? Have these departments already been identified based on the Auditor General's report on GBA? And how will you measure progress towards achieving these results? How will the departments report on their progress so you can ascertain the level?

Hon. Helena Guergis: For gender-based analysis, for my role as the minister responsible and now around the table, you can rest assured that I do raise the flag and I ask the question through every policy conversation we have, where applicable, where gender-based analysis has been done. So this is something that is always an opportunity for me, which was not something that was always the same opportunity because you had so many different portfolios and different things to manage. So I do that at the cabinet committee table, and in addition to that we've realized, through the Auditor General's report and even through my own analysis and looking at gender-based analysis, that there does need to be some improvement made. I see we need to recognize what is the best stage to do gender-based analysis, and that's a conversation I'm continuing to have with my colleagues.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Veterans Affairs and Transport Canada did not fare well in the Auditor General's report. Will you be looking at them, discussing with those ministers?

Hon. Helena Guergis: I'll work with my colleagues, obviously, all of them around the table, but if you'd like to speak specifically with those ministers about gender-based analysis, you would have to speak directly with them about their departments.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you, Minister.

Madam O'Neill-Gordon.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome, Minister. We're happy to have you with us here today. We certainly realize what a busy schedule you have and are appreciative that you can take time to be with us.

I'm also pleased to hear you mention in your remarks that work is continuing on the action plan for women. I'm wondering—and I just have a short time—if you can briefly speak with more detail on the action plan as to how things are going in your consultations with it.

Hon. Helena Guergis: Sure.

Coming into this, as I said in the past, there hadn't been a lot of work done on the action plan, which I thought was good and bad because it gave me an opportunity to take hold of it from the very beginning and take ownership of it. I've enjoyed that process. We are coming to a conclusion. There will be one more aggressive round of consultations for Canadian women and Canadian organizations.

I have met with a number of Canadian women and had a conversation about what they'd like to see, from a federal perspective of what we can do in terms of the three pillars. They agree with the

three pillars. They like the focus of economic security, ending violence against women—actually when I came in to this that pillar was called women's security and I made a decision to call it ending violence against women—and of course the one on leadership roles.

Even with my federal-provincial counterparts there has been significant support for the three pillars that's in line with the work they're doing provincially. I'd like to tell you more about it in depth, but I can't. But we are getting close. I'm very excited about the opportunity and what we'll be able to accomplish with this action plan.

• (1205)

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon: Thank you.

I really know that Canadian women can be so proud to have you as an example for other countries and to realize the work you're doing on our behalf. I want to thank you again.

Hon. Helena Guergis: Thanks very much, Tilly.

I can say, though, that every woman who's elected to this House is a role model. I know you agree with that.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon: I certainly agree with that too, of course.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you very much.

Thank you, Minister.

There has been a request from the committee. The researchers have prepared a number of quite excellent questions, and unfortunately we weren't able to get to those questions. I believe you had a response to question three and question five. In addition to Mr. Wilfert's question, could you please respond to these in writing? The committee would appreciate that very much.

Hon. Helena Guergis: Sure.

Thanks very much.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you, and thank you for being here.

We're going to move into the next round, if the folks from Statistics Canada would please come forward.

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_____ (Pause) _____

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The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Before we start, I believe Ms. Neville had a question she wished to ask.

• (1210)

Hon. Anita Neville: I did, Madam Chair.

I neglected this, and others perhaps didn't think about it. We had asked the minister for information when she was here on February 12. We put forward a motion at committee asking for this information. Nothing is happening. I wonder whether, through you or perhaps through the parliamentary secretary, it could be conveyed to the minister that we're waiting for this information. It's many months later.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you, Ms. Neville. We will, through the clerk, put the question to the minister with regard to when we can expect that. You're quite right, we have been waiting and we do need that information.

Thank you very much to Statistics Canada. We welcome Ms. Bender, Ms. Badets, and Ms. Williams. Thank you for coming. You have ten minutes, and then we'll proceed to questions.

Ms. Jane Badets (Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada): Thank you. I'd like to thank the committee for inviting Statistics Canada here today to make a presentation from the data we collect on the labour market conditions of men and women in Canada.

I have with me my colleague Rosemary Bender, director general of the social and demographic statistics branch. I'm the director of the social and aboriginal statistics division of Statistics Canada. Also with us is Cara Williams, who is the chief of our social analysis and research section.

You have a presentation in front of you, and I'm going to walk you through it. I'll indicate which slide I'm on. We're going to show you some numbers and go carefully through them to provide you with some sense of those numbers.

First I will present information on the educational situation of men and women in Canada, as that's an important factor when we consider the labour market outcomes of women and men. Then I will present information on labour market trends for women and men in Canada over time. We particularly want to focus on average hourly wages of women and men, their employment situation in terms of employment rates and how they have changed over time, and their average earnings.

We'd be pleased to answer your questions at the end of the presentation.

The graph on page 3 shows the educational attainment of men and women as of the 2006 census. In terms of post-secondary education, a slightly higher proportion of women have university degrees and college certificates than men. On the other hand, men are more likely to have trade certificates.

The graph on page 4 shows the major fields of study of men and women post-secondary graduates, as of the 2006 census. As you can see, there are differences in the fields of study between men and women. Men were more likely to graduate from engineering, architecture, and applied sciences such as mathematics, computer sciences, and physical and life sciences than are women. On the other hand, women were more likely to be graduating from the health sciences, business management, public administration, education, and the social sciences, including law.

Fields of study have an impact on the types of occupations individuals work in and on their wages and earnings. Graph number 5 shows the average hourly wages for men and women working full-time over time, 1997 to 2008, regardless of their occupation. As you can see, the average hourly rates of both men and women have gradually increased over time, with men earning slightly more than women on average. In 1997, women working full-time earned an average of \$14.86 per hour, and men earned around \$18 per hour. In 2008, the average hourly earnings for women working full-time were

almost \$21 and for men \$24. So the gap between men and women's average hourly wages has remained relatively the same over these 11 years.

The graph on page 6 shows how the average hourly wage ratio varies by certain occupations. Of course, at Statistics Canada we collect a vast amount of data on this, but I'm selecting a few occupations to provide an indication of some key trends. For the three occupations in this grouping, we can see that the female-to-male wage ratios have increased over the period. This means that the difference between average hourly wages of women and men has decreased.

For example, in the health-related occupations—that's the blue line on the graph—women earned 91% of what men earned in 1997. This has increased such that women's wages were about 4% higher than those of men in more recent years. In the natural and applied science occupations—that's the yellow line on the graph—women's average hourly earnings were 88% of those of their male counterparts, up from 85% in 1997. In business, finance, and administrative occupations—the red line on the graph—women's average hourly wages were 85% of those of men, and that's up from 83% in 1997.

The largest difference in hourly wages between women and men was in occupations related to primary industries, manufacturing, and processing, where women's average hourly wages were about 70% of those of men in 2008.

● (1215)

The graph on page 7 shows the employment rate of men and women over time, from 1976 to 2008. As you can see, women's employment rates have been steadily increasing since 1976, while men's employment rates have been decreasing slightly, gradually narrowing the gap between men's and women's employment rates over time.

In 2008, women's employment rate was 59%, compared with 67% for men. That's a difference of eight percentage points. In contrast, in 1976, that difference was about 31 percentage points. Women's employment rate was 42% in 1976, compared with 73% for men.

The graph on page 8 shows the part-time rate of women and men as a percentage of total employment. That's again over the same period of time, 1976 to 2008. While employment rates have increased for women, women are more likely to work part-time than men.

In 2008, for example, about a quarter, 26%, of employed women were working part-time, compared with 11% of men. There has been a decline since 1976 in the difference between men and women working part-time, mostly as a result of a higher proportion of men working part-time. Women were also more likely to work part-time for non-economic reasons; for example, for care of children. They were also more likely to be temporary employees—that is, employees with a fixed employment term—and on average to have fewer years of work experience than men, as they are more likely to take time away from the labour market for family formation and family responsibilities. All of these factors affect average earnings.

The final graph, on page 9, shows the female-to-male earnings ratio, which is the black line, calculated for all earners as well as for full-time, full year workers, which is the red line. The earning ratio illustrates how the difference between women's and men's earnings changes over time. Data show, and I've certainly spoken about this, that the labour market situation for women is different from that for men. For example, I've spoken about women being more likely to work part-time, to work fewer hours, to have on average fewer years of work experience, and being more likely to be working in certain types of occupations, such as retail and services, than men. All of these factors, and often they're interrelated, have an impact on average earnings of women relative to the earnings of men.

On average, women earn less than men, as can be seen by the graph; however the earnings ratio has increased since 1997, narrowing the gap between what women earned relative to men. Among full year, full-time workers, for example, women earned 68% of what men earned in 1997. By 2006, women working full year, full-time earned 72% of what men working full year, full-time earned.

That concludes my presentation. There have been some improvements in both female-to-male relative earnings and average hourly wages over time, but a gap still exists; there are differences still existing between women and men. There are a number of factors, and I've talked about them, that help explain these differences. For example, women are more likely than men to work fewer hours, to work part-time, and to have fewer years of work experience.

Thank you.

• (1220)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you very much. That was very efficient.

Now we'll go to Madame Zarac for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Thank you for your presentation. According to the figures, there are more women in the labour market and more women who are educated. Nevertheless, they still earn less than men do. Clearly, there is inequity.

Statistics Canada must examine the figures and do some analyses. I suppose that you have reached the same conclusion as me, that there is clearly inequity. The committee has examined the statistics and believes that indices should be added in order to better evaluate the situation.

You examine statistics regularly, but do you also look at the reasons for this inequity?

[*English*]

Ms. Jane Badets: As you've mentioned, it is a complex situation. There are many factors, and we pointed out some of them. We certainly have done a little bit more research in trying to understand the interrelationships of these different factors. For example, we know that women work in different types of occupations and in different types of industries. They're more likely to work part time and to work fewer hours. All of that is interrelated. We try to understand that and interaction of those factors, and the extent to which their interactions explain those differences.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lise Zarac: I understand that it is highly complex, but clearly pay inequity is not, given the delays you just mentioned. While women work in different areas from men, the fact remains that there is not equal pay for work of equal value. The figures clearly show that.

Is Statistics Canada responsible for breaking down the figures to a larger extent? At the end of the day, you are giving us tools to find solutions. Your statistics are very important. They are tools for us.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender (Director General, Census Subject Matter, Social and Demographic Statistics, Statistics Canada): Based on the statistics that we have, we can do a considerable amount of analysis in an attempt to explain the differences in pay. I think that we have covered the major reasons for that, statistically speaking, here this morning. It can be explained for the most part because of the overall difference there is between salaries received by men and women.

Apart from that, we provide data to analysts outside Statistics Canada, to decision-makers and to researchers in the public arena, so that they can use the statistics to try and understand and better explain the factors beyond the statistics.

Our role is to clearly define the statistics and the reasons that may explain the differences from an analytical perspective based on the characteristics that we measure. We leave the rest to the users of the data and to leaders in the public arena.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: I understand that statistics should be based on a sufficiently long period of time, but is there a procedure that we must follow to add new indicators? What would be the process to follow in cases where researchers or analysts want you to make some additions?

Let me repeat myself: this is really important. Obviously, your reports show that there is inequity. We must work harder to find solutions.

What is your procedure? Would you be favourable to adding indicators? If so, what process should be followed to do this?

•(1225)

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: We are able to carry out studies over time, and we carry them out. We make repeated investigations, such as social investigations or the census. With that information, we can see how things evolve and see whether the difference between men and women is decreasing or increasing. We can also see the specific fields in which important improvements or changes are happening. We can do this, not only on an ad hoc basis, but also over time.

Moreover, thanks to consultation with data users, we can, through our investigations, try to add more questions or to obtain information that could perhaps add something to our knowledge of the obstacles to employment or on experiences, or what have you.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: You mentioned seasonal users. This is important, because we can interpret figures almost at will.

Do you have the capability of working with data users?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: First, we work very closely with the users when we define our statistical programs. We define the questions and we define what we will measure, and we do this in close collaboration with the main users of our data. Once this is done, we publish our data.

After that, we also work together with the users to make sure that they clearly understand the scope of our data and that they adequately interpret the concepts and data definitions that we provide.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Beside the understanding of the concepts, do you give your approval to the reports that they produce?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: We distribute the data as we collect it. Afterward, it is up to the users to use the data in their own way.

Mrs. Lise Zarac: Sometimes it is a little bit dangerous because, as I said before, figures can be interpreted at will.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: We really make sure that the data is available for all users, with a good understanding of the concepts and the definitions. This gives everyone access to data. This data is not accompanied with interpretation, these are statistics, facts that we have gathered, and that we publish and share with all the users who want to utilize them to really understand the situation. Thus, there is no interpretation as such, it basically consists of data and statistics.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you.

Mr. Guimond.

Mr. Claude Guimond: Thank you, Madam Vice-Chair.

Good afternoon, ladies. Thank you for your very interesting presentation. I can confirm that your studies are accurate. I am the father of three school girls. They have good potential and they should attain very high levels of education. Thus, your study confirms what is happening in my family, and I am very proud of it.

Quite a few MPs and quite a few people from the rest of Canada find that we, Quebecers, are irritating, because we are different from other Canadians in many respects. You stated in your studies that employment income increased in Quebec due to the pay equity regulations that we have implemented, especially in the public sector, since 2006.

In your opinion, what was the impact of the pay equity regulations on the overall economy in Quebec?

[English]

Ms. Jane Badets: I have to say that we have not looked into that. Perhaps other parts of Statistics Canada have looked into it, but we don't have that information on hand with us today.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Guimond: Perhaps I could ask you another question in the same vein. What advances have women made on the job market due to the fact that they have a higher level of education? What concrete advancement have they made due to the fact that they have a better education?

•(1230)

[English]

Ms. Jane Badets: We certainly know that in some of the professional occupations, such as health, business, and finance, there have been gains in terms of hourly wages. That's shown on slide 6. We certainly know that the higher the level of education, the higher the employment rate is among women. There have been gains, and we see those over time.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Guimond: In what fields of activity has the fact that women have more education than men been the most concretely visible? Are there any concrete fields of activity?

[English]

Ms. Cara Williams (Chief, Social Analysis and Research, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada): When we look at health occupations, as Jane has mentioned, we see that the ratio between men and women has increased, meaning that there has been a decline in impact for health occupations. Women's average hourly earnings are higher than those of men. Their ratio has also improved in management occupations. The ratio has gone from 78% to 82% in 2008, meaning that women earn about 82% of what men working full-time earn. That's up from 78% in 1997. In business and finance, women have also made improvements. They now earn 85% of what a man working full-time earns.

There are a number of occupations related to those with higher levels of education for which the gap has declined between women's and men's earnings.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Guimond: All right, thank you.

Regarding my first question, about the difference in Quebec and the rest of Canada due to the pay equity issue, I would like to know if you have any data on the impact that this has had on the Quebec economy. If so, we would like to have that data, please.

[English]

Ms. Jane Badets: I guess, as you see on slide 6, we would be able to produce that information for Quebec, to see how the female-to-male hourly wage ratio in different sectors—by industries, or in particular we've looked at occupations—has changed over time. That is something that would be available from our data; you could look at it.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Guimond: Thank you.

I do not know if my colleague—

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Chair, do we have any time left?

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): You have about two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you very much Madam Chair.

Thank you very much, ladies.

You showed us the table illustrating the share of total employment that part-time work represents. In previous studies, Statistics Canada said that most women, nearly 90% of them, were working on a part-time basis by choice. Do you think that your studies might be biased because the questions that you put are not specific enough?

Thus, witnesses have told us that if they worked on a part-time basis, it was not really by choice but rather because there was no transportation, no child care service, etc. They decided not to work because they had no other choice. Do you think that by putting more specific questions, you could succeed in giving us a better picture, a more adequate and a more real picture of the status of the women who are working at part-time jobs?

[English]

Ms. Cara Williams: When women work voluntarily part-time, on the labour force survey there are follow-up questions. It asks what the reasons were for the voluntary part-time and whether it was for care of family. So you can look beyond just the voluntary and involuntary; you can look at more details for the voluntary part-time. It's definitely possible, but we don't have that information here today.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Very well. Thank you very much.

Let me come back to the previous question. The minister was asked, a bit earlier, that a more complete study be done on the invisible work done by men and women. This has not been done since 1992.

Do you think that you will be able to carry out this study, if Status of Women Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada ask you to do it?

•(1235)

[English]

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: Statistics Canada produces estimates of the value of unpaid household work. These estimates are used to identify the productive activities that are not covered in the current estimate of gross national product. Statistics Canada last measured

the value of unpaid household work in 1995, for the reference year 1992. This program does not have ongoing funding, and work is conducted when its measurement is considered a priority and resources are identified. If Madam Chair allows me, I could elaborate a bit more on what this entails.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Perhaps there will be an opportunity later; we need to move on. But before we do, just as a reminder, if you could please provide the data on the effects of the pay equity settlement on the Quebec economy, we would appreciate it very much.

Madame O'Neill-Gordon.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm sharing my time with Ms. Brown.

Welcome, ladies. Thank you very much for taking time to be with us this afternoon.

First of all, as we know, more and more focus is being placed on pay equity. I'm just thinking that back in 2004, I think it was, the pay equity task report that came out commented on joint responsibilities of the unions and the employers to ensure that there was in fact equitable compensation. How does this legislation ensure that employees and employers are held accountable for providing an equitable compensation regime?

Ms. Jane Badets: What Statistics Canada can do is provide the data on a number of aspects concerning it. What we've done today is present you information, for example, on hourly wages for different occupations by gender, and you can disaggregate it a lot more in terms of full-time, full year, or part-time. The information is there; we provide lots of information. There's lots of information on our website, for example, by gender, on the economic and labour market conditions of men and women. Our role is to provide that information to inform discussions such as this.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon: But is it not true that equitable pay is negotiated, most times, within unions and at times of negotiations?

Ms. Jane Badets: That I don't know. Our role is to provide the building blocks, the data out there to show the information. We have rates of unionization, and I think we would probably have some, certainly, on our labour market—I'm not sure about the labour force survey, but on the extent to which workers are unionized across Canada. There are lots of ways to disaggregate this information and inform discussions such as this.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Ms. Brown.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for your presentation, ladies.

As a woman who has spent a great deal of my adult life self-employed, I understand that the pay I receive is based on the merit of the service I provide to my clients. I'm looking at "business management and public administration", from which it would appear to me that in your field of study on number 4 of the script you've given us, women have made a great deal of progress in that area.

I guess my question is whether you have conducted any studies on women in business and on what kind of salary potential they have. Are there any statistics we can work on? I know many women who are in business for themselves who are exceptionally successful, and I'm wondering whether you have any accumulated data on this.

Ms. Cara Williams: We have information on self-employment for women. We know that women are almost as likely as men to be self-employed; however, the type of self-employment they have is quite different. For example, women are less likely to have employees when they're self-employed. They're a kind of one-person show when they do it, and therefore their wages are slightly lower than those of men who are self-employed.

•(1240)

Ms. Lois Brown: Yet I would suspect that many women and many of the women I know who are self-employed are what would have been considered a cottage industry. Many of them work out of their homes, where they have a home office, so the reflection in their wages may be offset by the fact that they are able to use tax considerations for the expenses of using their home. Has that kind of analysis been done?

Ms. Cara Williams: We just look at either their total income or their average hourly earnings or wages. We haven't looked at the data when we look at tax files to see how much is written off—

Ms. Lois Brown: However, that may really skew the numbers, wouldn't you think?

Ms. Cara Williams: It's one of the things you always have to take into consideration whenever you examine self-employment at all. It's the same with farm incomes; it's hard to compare with employees' income.

Ms. Lois Brown: Yet I would suggest that there are even spouses of some of the members of Parliament who are running farms or running industries now because their spouse is otherwise occupied and they have taken over the role that may have traditionally been looked on as the purview of the male, and they are exceptionally successful in it.

I would suggest that perhaps some work needs to be done in collecting that data, because many women I know who are self-employed are exceptionally successful. I would suggest that my riding reflects much of that; in Newmarket—Aurora there are many women who are part of our chambers of commerce and who are very successful entrepreneurs and doing very well. It's very exciting to see.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you.

The Conservative caucus has one minute.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: I have quite a few questions.

First of all, I'm very glad to see that the gap is narrowing, and from what I understand the statistics are showing, this is due in part to the types of work that women choose to do, the fact that they choose part-time work over full-time.

What I'm wondering is, because we want to look at the federal compensation act.... We've had some union representatives who are very unhappy with the fact that we have asked unions to take some responsibility at the onset of negotiating contracts. We want them to take some responsibility, along with the employer, for making sure that compensation is equitable. Are you finding from any of your studies that pay inequity happens because of peer discrimination, or is this changing because employers are better educated and employers are realizing that it's well worth paying women for the work they do, because they do a great job and they want to keep these women working? Are there any kinds of statistics on that?

Ms. Cara Williams: What we do know is that we can explain about 50% of the difference in earnings through observable factors, variables that we collect. Those would include, for example, years of experience. Women tend to have about 3.1 fewer years of experience. Even the kind of experience they have is very different. It's often part-time part-year or part-time full-year, whereas men's is full-year full-time. So we know that we can explain some of the difference that way.

We also know that the types of occupations make a difference. That can account for about 5% of the difference. Unionization rates are slightly lower for women. That can make up another 1% of that difference. But for 50% of that difference, we don't know. That is from unobservable factors.

One thing we didn't look at for that study was that when women work full-time, they often work fewer hours than men do. You're comparing full-time workers, but women, for example, work about 600 fewer hours per year than men do, even when you're looking at full-time workers.

So there are many things wrapped up in it, but we figure that we can explain about 50% of the gap, and the other 50% is caused by unexplainable variables, or at least variables that we didn't have.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Could we just ask—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you. You're at eight and a half minutes. You're way over.

•(1245)

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Could we have that in writing?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Oh, yes, certainly. Could we have that in writing, then?

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Thank you. That's all I was asking.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Okay.

Thank you very much for being here.

I assume that you're familiar with the Zhang report and its findings. On page 6 of that report, the author discusses employer discrimination against mothers. I wonder if you've done any studies to pursue that. It seems like a very serious situation for young women. Is there any data? Have you collected any information in regard to that to assess the level of discrimination as suggested by the report?

Ms. Jane Badets: I think we've said all along that there are a number of factors, and often these factors are interrelated, such as working part-time or working fewer hours, as well as the occupations and industries involved. That is what our research has looked at. That is what we have in our database. We have not asked a question, for example, on discrimination in some of these data sets, so we would not be able to determine that at all.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Okay.

In the course of your research, have you been able to determine the wage gap between women with children and women without children? For example, in Quebec, the cost of day care is subsidized. Does there seem to be a suggestion, then, first of all, about the wage gap and its depth and how subsidized day care may in fact close the gap?

Ms. Cara Williams: We do have information on the wage gap between women with children and women without children, and there is indeed a wage gap between them. I don't have the numbers with me, but we did a study a couple of months ago that examined that.

We didn't look at it at the provincial level to find out whether \$7-a-day day care had any impact on it. It was looked at on the national level.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Okay. You said you did a study. Would that be available? Could you provide that information to the committee, please?

Ms. Cara Williams: Absolutely.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): I'd appreciate that, because I think there's information to be mined from this.

Now, you said that you look at Canadian statistics primarily. Have you any information about wage gaps between women with children and childless women in other countries where there is publicly funded child care? Have you done any of that comparative analysis to determine exactly where we stand in this country?

Ms. Jane Badets: There is none that I know of.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): There is none at all? Would you know where we could find that kind of information?

Ms. Jane Badets: I don't know. We'd have to talk to some of our colleagues at Statistics Canada to see what they would know, and see if they are maybe working with other colleagues in other countries using similar sorts of data that we have. A lot of our data has come from the labour force survey, and other countries do conduct similar sorts of surveys, so I'd have to check back with those colleagues.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): If that kind of information were available, I would very much appreciate seeing it. I think it would give us a bit of a broader sense of what happens to women with and without children. I would be interested to know what other countries are doing.

Statistics Canada reported that as of 2002-03, 54% of Canadian children six months to five years of age received care from someone other than a parent. If women with children are shown in almost every category to be paid lower wages than their childless counterparts, and certainly than men, their income would obviously be further compromised because of the costs incurred for child care.

So in terms of women with one child—we'll use that as the basis—do you have any information on what impact it has on their gross or net salary if child care is subsidized? Compare the unsubsidized versus the subsidized, in other words.

● (1250)

Ms. Jane Badets: I don't know if I have it linked up with child care, but we have some recent research that shows some earning differences between women with and without children. The results of that survey show that women with children earn about 12% less than women without children.

We also know that certainly the more time women take off, with the long career interruptions for motherhood, there is an impact on earnings in the longer term. We do know, though, that women entering motherhood later, after age 30, had higher incomes, I think, than women who had their children before 30.

Those are just some of the highlights of the research that has been done at Statistics Canada.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): So it wouldn't be too much of a stretch to say, when we're looking at the fact that women with children earn 12% less, that the added cost of child care is quite a burden for them. It conceivably could create quite a burden for them.

Ms. Jane Badets: Well, we've presented the data. That's for those to decide on the....

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Yes, to glean that.

I'm almost out of time, and we need to do some other work in the committee. I want to test to see if we can stay longer, if everyone is willing to go to a three-minute round.

An hon. member: We have to stick with our time schedule.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): All right.

Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville: Do I have time?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): You have three minutes.

Hon. Anita Neville: I perhaps won't need three minutes.

I was struck by your answer to Ms. Hoepfner's question, and was interested in the 600 hours less that you said women work. Have you done an in-depth analysis on why that is?

It was 600 less per month, is that right?

Ms. Cara Williams: That was per year.

Hon. Anita Neville: Yes, per year, of course.

Why is it less? Is it the nature of the employment?

Ms. Cara Williams: We don't actually know why it is; we just know that women....

We categorize "full-time"—it's a Statistics Canada construct—as 30 hours or more. That's what we consider to be full-time in the labour force survey, and indeed when we look at the labour market in general. So 30 hours or more is what we call full-time work.

The latest LFS numbers show that in April of this year, a woman worked about 37.9 hours per week and a man worked 43.9 hours per week. That's as of April. Over a period of a year, all of that, of course, adds up. But we don't know why they're working less.

Hon. Anita Neville: Anecdotally, the young women I know are working very hard, doing long hours. They're probably putting in 10-hour and 12-hour days. So I'm a little bit surprised by that figure.

Do you intend to do any kind of analysis on it, based on age, region of the country, or whatever defining characteristics you look at? Because I'm quite surprised by that figure.

Ms. Jane Badets: Certainly it would be possible. There are certainly rich sources of information on this. It is an issue that probably needs a little bit more looking into to explain it. We have the information available.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Madame Demers.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Ms. Boucher.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I have a question that is nagging me and I will put it to you. We want to have an overall picture of the status of women. When you enter statistics in data bases, are there any questions that deal only with women? For instance, I am thinking about the 600 hours per year that Ms. Neville and Ms. Hoepfner mentioned. Do you ask why women work 600 hours less than men? Why do more women work on a part-time basis than men? A number of people say that it is by choice, which is true, but do we know why? Do we put specific questions to women to obtain data that reflect the real situation?

• (1255)

[English]

Ms. Jane Badets: Certainly on the part-time, I'm not sure that we asked a question about choice. Rather, we asked in a very objective way why they are working part-time. So it could be for child care, personal reasons, going to school, or if they weren't able to find full employment. So we can disaggregate that a lot more.

In terms of the hours, I think again there is a vast amount of data we could have different questions about. You could look at that, disaggregate it, and understand it better. We haven't had the opportunity to do that for this committee, but it's there and the information is available.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: So, you do a sampling by putting general questions, but you never put any specific questions about the reasons

that would lead me to choose to work on a part-time basis, which would help us to get a clear idea of the true situation. It might be because I have to take care of children, of the groceries or of other things. Now, these questions are not being put. We have an overall picture, but it is not focused. That is what I understand.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: In our surveys, we ask for the reasons why a person is working on a part-time basis. Is it because of child care or is it because of studies? Is it because she was not able to find a full-time job? We put these questions very objectively. We have quite an extensive data bank that can be used for this kind of study.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: At least, we know that you are putting specific questions.

I have another question.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): You are out of time.

Ms. Demers.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Williams, your specific field of interest is social and aboriginal statistics. Could you give us some statistics on the degree of education of aboriginal women, the place they occupy in the labour market, and as self-employed workers? It is important to know the differences between aboriginal and non-aboriginal women who are working independently, and to find out if there is much difference in their incomes. We also must know what the wages are on the regular job market, so as to have a better idea of their situation. Aboriginal women are a specific group that we can address, but there are also immigrant women, more broadly speaking.

[English]

Ms. Jane Badets: Certainly we have all of that information, particularly from the census. In the census, which we conduct every five years, we certainly have extensive information on their labour market conditions. We pulled some out on this in terms of education, and we certainly could look at self-employment and earnings. We also identify the aboriginal population in many ways—that is part of my expertise—and immigrants. So you can slice and dice the data in many different ways. We have immigrants, non-immigrants, recent immigrants, and visible minorities. All of that is possible and is collected by us.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Could you send us those documents, Ms. Badets?

Ms. Bender, could you send us the documents on the 1992 study on invisible work?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: Certainly.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): You have one minute, Madame Brown.

Ms. Lois Brown: Yes, I'll make it really quick.

This is a follow-up, Ms. Demers, to your question about aboriginal women.

With the statistics you are compiling there, would it be worth while to look at the ability for aboriginal women to have their own assets, particularly in matrimonial property? Would that make the opportunity available for aboriginal women to be more successful in the future? Is that something you've looked at? Are there any statistics to support that at this point in time?

• (1300)

Ms. Jane Badets: Certainly we have a number of different data sources on aboriginal women and men. Not only do we have the census, which I've mentioned, and the labour force survey.... A lot of the data we showed you today is from the labour force survey, and we've started to identify aboriginal in there as well, so that gives you a vast amount of information.

And then we have a special survey we conduct, called the aboriginal peoples survey, and we do ask general questions, as we've talked about here, in terms of their employment situation but also in terms of their unique situation as aboriginal. I don't know about the particular question you've asked. That's not one I know offhand. But

there are a number of ways and there's a rich source of information we could look at.

Ms. Lois Brown: I ask this because to date aboriginal women have not had access to real property. So if that is going to change the balance of power for aboriginal women to be successful, I think that would be an interesting statistic to know.

Ms. Jane Badets: Generally we have it on measures of employment rates, or unemployment, or self-employment, or income and household income. So all of that can be looked at in different ways.

Ms. Lois Brown: Sure, but if a person has access to assets, then they have the right to go to a bank and borrow, because they have real property they can show as a real asset. I'd be interested to know any information you can come up with on that. That would be helpful.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Irene Mathysen): Thank you very much. Of course we would appreciate that.

I thank you for being here today, and we will prevail upon the government to provide that funding you need in order to create the statistics and information that would be of benefit to all of us.

Thank you very much.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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