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Chair

The Honourable Hedy Fry

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.)): It's 8:45. I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we're undertaking at this committee a study of the cancellation of the mandatory long-form census and its impact on women's equality in Canada.

We have witnesses with us from Statistics Canada. Rosemary Bender is the assistant chief statistician, social health and labour studies. Jane Badets is director general, census subject matter, social and demographic statistics. Marc Hamel is director general, census management office.

We also have, from Status of Women Canada, Sébastien Goupil, executive director, gender-based analysis and strategic policy branch. Erin Leigh is senior policy analyst, gender-based analysis and strategic policy branch.

Welcome, and thank you very much for coming this morning. The usual procedure is that each group has 10 minutes, so you can decide how you will divide up your 10 minutes for the presentation. Then we will be open for questions and answers.

We will begin with Statistics Canada and Ms. Badets.

Ms. Jane Badets (Director General, Census Subject Matter, Social and Demographic Statistics, Statistics Canada): We want to thank the committee for inviting Statistics Canada to appear today.

I will be reading from a prepared text.

In regard to the 2011 census and the national household survey, I would point out that on June 26, 2010, the census questions were published in the *Canada Gazette* and included the same eight questions as the 2006 short-form census.

Statistics Canada was asked to provide options for a voluntary survey. The government selected the option to conduct the voluntary survey called the national household survey.

On August 21, 2010, the census content was amended in the *Canada Gazette*, with two questions on language being added.

Regarding the 2011 census, the implementation of the census is progressing as planned, with the printing of questionnaires. All field offices are open and recruitment is also progressing as planned. The census will be in May, with census day on May 10, and early enumeration for northern and remote communities will be conducted

in February and March of 2011. The same level of quality in past censuses will be produced, with an expected response rate of 98%. Tentative dissemination plans would see all census results released within 18 months of census day, with the first release of population and dwelling counts in February 2012.

In regard to the 2011 national household survey, which I'm going to refer to as the NHS, this will be the first time that Statistics Canada will conduct this voluntary survey. Statistics Canada will conduct and release the results of this survey applying the same methods and standards used in all of its surveys. The sample size for the NHS will be larger than that of the 2006 census long form: 4.5 million dwellings compared with the previously planned 2.9 million dwellings for a 2011 census long form. The NHS reference date of May 10 is the same as that for the census. The NHS will be conducted in the same timeframe as the census, with questionnaires targeted for delivery generally one month after the census. The NHS will make maximum use of the census infrastructure.

The implementation of the NHS is progressing as planned. The questionnaires are currently being printed, and tentative release plans would see the first release of results in early 2013.

Due to significant changes in methodology between the 2006 census long form and the national household survey, we anticipate that comparisons between the two data sources will be difficult. The extent to which this will be an issue will not be known until we have collected and evaluated the survey results. Statistics Canada is confident, however, that the survey will produce usable and useful information that will meet the needs of many users.

The content of the NHS includes most of the questions that were asked in the 2006 census long form, with some new questions added and modifications made to some other questions.

A question on unpaid work will not be asked in the NHS. Statistics Canada recognizes the importance of collecting data on unpaid work. This information was introduced to the census in 1996 and was introduced to various cycles of the general social survey, in particular to the time use cycles beginning in 1992.

The possibility of removing the unpaid work questions from the long-form census was raised in the 2011 content report released in July 2008. A series of highly focused consultations were undertaken in the summer and fall of 2008. These consultations specifically asked about retaining the unpaid work questions to better understand if there were specifically a policy, program, or legislative need for this information from the census, or if other data sources would be a better source of information on this important topic.

Based on feedback from these consultations, it appeared that little policy, analytic, or academic work had been produced from the unpaid work questions in the census. Further, there appeared to be little current use of the small area of data that could be produced from these questions in the census. Statistics Canada was advised that greater use was being made of the detailed set of questions available in the general social survey than of the census unpaid work questions.

Because of the vast amount of information collected through its 24-hour diary, the general social survey on time use, conducted in 2010, 2005, 1998, and 1992, is the most comprehensive and appropriate survey from which to obtain information about unpaid household activities. For example, the general social survey collects much more detailed information than would be found in the census. It contains additional information, such as about activities both inside and outside the home, simultaneous activities, and elder care. It features a time diary and episode files. The episodes of unpaid work, the time of day these activities are done, how many episodes there are in an average day, and the time spent on these activities can be examined.

● (0850)

In weighing the support to legislation, program and policy needs, data quality, respondent burden, and alternative data sources, the decision was made to not include the unpaid work questions in the 2009 census test questionnaire, the last large-scale test of the content for the 2011 census.

Statistics Canada recognizes the importance of data on unpaid work, which requires a detailed set of questions to capture the range of activities, both inside and outside the home, that could be considered to be unpaid household activities. Thus, this information would continue to be collected, on a five-year cycle, from the general social survey, which has proven to be an effective way to collect information required by data users, with results for the same reference period to be made available.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are you finished? That was very good. Thank you very much.

Now we move to Status of Women Canada. Who will be the speaker? Mr. Goupil, can you begin, please?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Goupil (Executive Director, Gender-Based Analysis and Strategic Policy Branch, Status of Women Canada): Thank you for the invitation to come and appear with the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to share with you the work of the Agency in

promoting equality for women, and women's full participation in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada.

In order to achieve this, Status of Women Canada is committed to drawing on data, information and analysis that can allow us to understand how far women have come, and what work still remains to be done to ensure women's equality and full participation.

Having high-quality, rigorous data on a range of issues related to diverse women's circumstances and experiences in Canadian society is essential to measuring progress and identifying areas of further change.

● (0855)

[English]

To this end, Status of Women Canada is providing financial support, in collaboration with other federal organizations, to Statistics Canada to publish the sixth edition of *Women in Canada*. This publication was launched in 1985 and has provided a comprehensive statistical portrait of women in the country every five years since. Electronic release of the publication will begin this December on a chapter-by-chapter basis for the next year. As with previous editions, Status of Women Canada is relying on the expertise in data collection and analysis at Statistics Canada to publish this publication.

[Translation]

The 12 chapters of *Women in Canada* provide invaluable information on a range of topics including women's health, education, economic well-being, paid work, family status and unpaid work, demographics, and women and the criminal justice system.

A central feature of the publication is to have chapters that look specifically at the situation of women from different groups including Aboriginal women, immigrant women, seniors, visible minority women, and women with a participation or activity limitation.

Women are not a homogenous group, and there are differences among women, and not just between women and men. This understanding is a core element of how we do our work, as Status of Women Canada wants to ensure that all women are making progress, and not just some.

[English]

Understanding that the intersection of women's gender with other aspects of their identity influences their scope for contributing to and benefiting from Canada's economic, social, and democratic landscape is critical to ensuring that women in all their diversity are making progress in society.

As well, this past June, the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women decided to update the 2006 *Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends* report, which is also produced by Statistics Canada. This report provides indicators of violence against women, including the prevalence and severity of violence against women, the impact of violence against women, the risk factors associated with violence against women, institutional and community-based responses, and victims' use of services.

Having a strong set of data that is gender disaggregated is also fundamental to fulfilling the government-wide commitment to performing and entrenching the practice of gender-based analysis, otherwise known as GBA. GBA is the process of examining a policy, program, or initiative for its impact on women and men in all their diversity. It provides a snapshot in time that captures the realities of women and men affected by a particular issue. Through systematic use of GBA, policy analysts, researchers, program officers, service providers, evaluators, and decision-makers alike are able to improve their work by being more responsive to the specific needs and circumstances of women and to attain better results for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Status of Women Canada provides the necessary leadership and support for the federal family to implement this analysis, and promotes the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data. This includes the collection of baseline data when there are information gaps. Gender-disaggregated baseline data has a critical role in challenging policy and program areas that are perceived as gender-neutral, and enabling gender-based analysis of areas where the gender considerations may seem less obvious.

Status of Women Canada is committed to making available and drawing upon relevant and rigorous data and analysis to inform our work. As data users, we regularly turn to our colleagues at Statistics Canada for guidance on the subject of which data sources best illuminate the circumstances of women in a variety of spheres.

As data users, not producers, and at this early stage in the decision, we are not in a position to comment on the impact of eliminating the long-form census, and would defer to our colleagues at Statistics Canada, and other data experts, on this matter.

We will continue to seek out advice on which data sources provide the most telling and rigorous information on the status of women. The information we use comes from a broad range of sources including, but not limited to the census, such as the labour force survey, the Canadian community health survey, the survey of labour and income dynamics, uniform crime reporting survey, the transition home survey, the victim services survey, the homicide survey, and more.

Status of Women Canada relies on data and analysis to understand how women are making progress, and to identify areas where further work is required.

Thank you again for inviting Status of Women Canada to appear before the committee.

• (0900)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much. Everyone is being very efficient this morning.

We will now begin our question and answer section. This is a seven-minute round. It means that the person asking the question and the person answering are included in that seven minutes. I will ask everyone to please be as succinct as they possibly can so we can get enough questions in.

Ms. Neville, for the Liberals.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much.

And thank you for being here this morning.

I have a number of questions I'd like to ask. As the chair has said, there are only seven minutes, so if your answers could be brief, I would appreciate it.

To Statistics Canada, you made the comment in your remarks that the usability of data will be questionable—my word—given the lack of a mandatory requirement to fill in the form. I'd like some expansion on that.

I'd also like to know a little bit about the consultation process. Who was consulted? I'm going to ask you, through the chair, if it would be possible to table the responses you have received on the consultation process, with some indication of where they came from. That would be very helpful and very useful to us.

I want to focus on question 33, which, as you're undoubtedly aware, is of significant concern to this committee and to many women we've talked to throughout the country.

Why was this removed? On what basis was it removed? Who was consulted on the removal of question 33? Why was only that question removed rather than refined? You've left questions on education and transportation that were expanded for clarification, but for some reason the decision to remove question 33 was made.

Why were questions 34 and 44 not kept, which also deal with unpaid work, particularly in light of a family business or a farm? What is the biggest difference between these two types of unpaid work that would lead to them being treated differently in 2011?

I'll stop there, but I've got more questions, if we have time.

The Chair: Ms. Badets.

Ms. Jane Badets: I'll just comment on the consultations to begin with. We do extensive consultations leading up to each census. We start about three or four years prior to the census and do consultations. We put out a consultation guide. It's on our website. It's quite a public process. We consult with key data users. That's for all of the content.

The space on the census questionnaire is limited. We have to weigh a number of factors: the need for the information, whether there's policy or legislative need; the respondent burden; data quality; costs and operational considerations; and alternative data sources.

So we went through that process, and we did have feedback on unpaid work. In particular, in the next step we went forward and did a series of very highly focused consultations specifically about unpaid work. You asked about whom we consulted on that. Certainly, we talked to the governments of our provinces and territories, as Statistics Canada does have territorial and provincial focal points. As well, we had a meeting with federal department managers from a number of departments with interests in the census information. We also did a follow-up and a specific call with provincial and territorial status of women offices, and that was organized by Status of Women Canada. Then also, as part of all of our consultations on the census, we talked to our advisory committees. We have a National Statistics Council, and particularly on this one there was an advisory committee on social conditions, which has advised us on gender work over time.

Then we also looked at the actual use of the unpaid work questions in the census. The need for information from small areas is really important in the census. What we heard back is that there was very, very little use of the census unpaid work questions but that there was a great deal of use of the general social survey questions, which are very extensive. The feedback we got and the advice we were given was that it was those questions from the general social survey that were providing the most comprehensive picture of unpaid household activities, for a number of reasons. It was also available in the same timeframe, and it was these questions from the general social survey that were being used.

So it was all of these considerations on the table that we looked at.

In terms of the other questions, we heard back that those questions were being used, the small area data, for example. There was, of course, quite a bit of use of the subsequent questions on education and labour, and there was a need for that information on the small area scale.

So those were the types of processes we went through. That was the information we got back.

I think that addresses those questions.

● (0905)

Hon. Anita Neville: I'm having a bit of trouble with that. In the response to question 33, we have heard from large numbers of individuals who use the data that they are going to be significantly hindered in their work by the removal of that question.

Did you get any of that feedback on that, and I'll go back to my original question and ask, can you table the results of your consultations? That's important.

Ms. Jane Badets: We can table it in terms of the organizations we consulted and some of the feedback we received, but we can't attribute the specific responses.

Hon. Anita Neville: That's fine.

But to go back to my question on question 33, I've heard, and I'm assuming other colleagues have heard, a significant response to the removal of question 33. It seems to me there is an inconsistency between what we're hearing and the consultations.

Ms. Jane Badets: Well, we don't deny that this is an important topic. We're fully aware of that, and we don't deny that information

on unpaid work is not needed; it is needed. But what we heard was that it was the data in the general social survey that users were using and that it was a much more comprehensive and richer set of information. It was more encompassing of all the—

Hon. Anita Neville: Even though that question was asked over a period of time and indicates a trend—

The Chair: I'm sorry, but we have to move on.

Monsieur Desnoyers.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

To Statistics Canada: as you are aware, last March, here in the House of Commons, we adopted a motion that states the following:

That this House highlight the importance of the so-called "invisible" unpaid work done by parents and caregivers on behalf of their children and aging family members by creating the "Invisible Work Day"...

On the one hand, we are adopting a motion, but on the other, we are abolishing the mandatory census and making it voluntary. A number of stakeholders, that you surely all know, mainly Aboriginal groups, universities and municipalities, recognize the importance of the data that was collected through that document. We risk losing data worth billions of dollars. Surely you know that, in both the provincial and federal economy, all the invisible unpaid work is worth billions of dollars. To my understanding, we are going to tell Canadians that we are now forgetting about this completely. This is what everyone is currently saying, and you're saying it too.

You seem to be saying that this data is now distributed through various surveys. But we are wondering about the relevance of what you said regarding the reliability of the data. How will we be able to establish a comparison with the information collected in the past? The information we get will be completely different because these elements will no longer be included in the questionnaire.

The next question is for Status of Women Canada. You do not question this, but you say that it is impossible for you to say at this point what the impact of losing this information would be on all the legislation that could possibly come into force and where this issue will have a major impact. That much is clear.

● (0910)

Ms. Rosemary Bender (Assistant Chief Statistician, Social, Health and Labour Statistics, Statistics Canada): I will answer your first question.

We recognize the importance of unpaid work, for sure. What's more, we have carried out a fairly thorough consultation. The message that we were given was still pretty clear. First, we were told that the data and the subject were very important. There is not the slightest doubt in that respect. However, users from several fields told us quite clearly that the data from the General Social Survey was most certainly the source of information that allowed them to do the studies and the work they needed to do.

As for the chronological series, we measured unpaid work a number of times as part of the General Social Survey. We still have a chronological series over a number of years that allows us—and users—to conduct the necessary studies.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: It is quite clear that a number of stakeholders are wondering about the loss of the information in the long-form census. You seem to be saying that there will be no problems and that we will have the data we need. But your colleagues at Status of Women Canada are not so sure. As I mentioned earlier, a number of stakeholders say the opposite of what you are saying. How do you respond to that?

Ms. Rosemary Bender: Reviewing the census content is always a fairly difficult task. Actually, we have very difficult choices to make. Whether it is this issue or any other, there are a large number of requests and many uses for the data, especially when...

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: But how will you be able to compare data that is going to be different? There was a mandatory questionnaire and now there is a voluntary one. On one hand, we have data of one type, and on the other, we have data that is completely different. Even with the checks that you did in three municipalities, we are given to understand that only the richest will fill out the questionnaire and that the less well-off will not. How will you obtain data that is as specific as you obtained in the past on the women and seniors in those groups? The data will not be as reliable.

Ms. Rosemary Bender: As for unpaid work, the general social survey is still a very reliable source with chronological data that will allow us to keep up with the subject. As for all the other subjects that will now come from the national household survey, which we use a different methodology for because it is now voluntary, we still don't know what the repercussions will be on the quality. We already know from a few surveys we have done that some sub-populations are likely to have fewer respondents.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: You don't know what the repercussions will be on the quality of the data or on the results you will have. So you are sort of in the same position as Status of Women Canada. You aren't sure about what the future holds.

But you haven't answered my question. What will you do to compare past information with new information that is not as specific as it was before?

Ms. Rosemary Bender: We are putting more procedures in place at a number of levels to properly control the consequences of an under-response from some groups. So far, we have high hopes that, for a number of uses, the data will be comparable and that we will still be able to conduct studies that will be very useful.

• (0915)

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: You just said that you have put or will put procedures in place. I'd like to know what these procedures are. Also, will there be—and this is for Status of Women Canada...

[English]

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers: I have only 30 seconds left.

Basically, at Status of Women Canada, you have done some questioning of the fact that you won't have specific data anymore,

and you won't have it because you won't be able to make a comparison. So how will you put in place programs that will meet the needs of women, seniors and people whose work is unpaid, a group that is largely female?

Mr. Sébastien Goupil: We are trying to use the most rigorous and relevant data possible. We are relying on the expertise of our colleagues at Statistics Canada to direct us to sources of data most likely to document the situation.

Right now, we are being told that the sources of data we are going to use will allow us to cover the issue of unpaid work, among others, in a much broader way. A chapter in the sixth edition of *Women in Canada* will cover this.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We go to Ms. McLeod for the Conservatives.

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

I have a couple of short questions, and then perhaps a longer one.

The first one is to Statistics Canada. Certainly we all recognize unpaid work as being important, but to truly understand equality of women in Canada, it looks as though we require a much more comprehensive process. You talked about creating 12 chapters and using labour force surveys, Canadian community health surveys, and surveys of labour. All of those, which are voluntary surveys but are considered reliable data, help you to understand how women are faring in Canada by taking a number of comprehensive sources together.

Is that accurate? Have the sources that you're using been created predominantly through a voluntary survey system?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Goupil: Yes, Status of Women Canada tries to understand the situation of all women in Canadian society, in all their diversity and in all regions. We know that women are not a homogenous group and that it is essential to consider the many aspects of the contributions of various groups of women to Canadian society. We also need to look at certain obstacles they face when they want to take full part in social, economic and democratic life. It is crucial to be able to grasp some of the differences that exist among the women in the various groups. As I mentioned, this is why the next edition of *Women in Canada* will include chapters on Aboriginal women, visible minority women, immigrant women, seniors and women with a participation or activity limitation.

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: My next questions are focused to Statistics Canada.

Is it accurate to say that all those surveys I just talked about—labour force, Canadian community, health surveys—are voluntary processes?

Ms. Jane Badets: All of those surveys are voluntary, except for the labour force survey, which is mandatory.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Do you deem those surveys to be providing quality data in terms of how we analyze what we're doing and where we're going?

Ms. Jane Badets: All the data released by Statistics Canada is of high quality and is very comprehensive.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: In order to truly understand, how long does it currently take the average individual to do either what was the long-form census or the household survey? How long does that take?

Mr. Marc Hamel (Director General, Census Management Office, Statistics Canada): I would say that for the average household, which is about two persons, it takes about 30 minutes.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: If we were to include all the questions, to really understand women, we would be lengthening this particular survey. If you include the sorts of sources Status of Women Canada used to release their 12 chapters, it would require a massive addition to the survey.

Ms. Jane Badets: Yes, well, it depends on what the user is looking for and what the research question is as well. Different survey vehicles provide different types of information. For example, on the general social survey, the time use diary is a very different vehicle or way to collect the information than, say, would be possible in the census.

A lot depends on what the survey is designed to provide as well. So you have different ways of collecting the information or different ways of posing the questions, or you ask a different set of questions. Each survey has an objective, and each survey has a reason to be designed the way it is.

• (0920)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: In terms of understanding, really, unpaid work, you have indicated that the general social survey is a very robust data source. It's a very comprehensive view. Can you talk a little more about that particular survey?

Ms. Jane Badets: Yes. In particular, the general social survey is a survey we do annually. And it is on different topics, such as, for example, families or victimization.

One of those cycles is the time use cycle, and that's conducted every five years. We started in 1992. The time use diary collects information on a 24-hour diary, so it's a little bit burdensome for respondents. We ask them what activities they're doing throughout the day and how much time they're spending on them. We ask about primary activities, and now we're starting to ask about secondary or simultaneous activities as well. For example, the GSS time use diary would capture someone making supper, but at the same time they're doing child care. That's the kind of information it collects, so you can look at the extent to which people are working on unpaid household activities, whether it's elder care, child care, volunteering, or looking after family members. And you can see over a 24-hour time period how much time they spent. That set of information is in that particular cycle.

As well, we ask sets of questions similar to what's asked in the census. But we ask about unpaid household activities, such as caring for seniors, not only inside the household but outside the home as well. That's why it's a more comprehensive set of information. It's just captures the whole range of household activities that can be undertaken by Canadians in any time period.

We've done that cycle every five years. We're just doing a cycle right now, in 2010, and we'll release the results in the spring of 2011. That's a fair bit of data with over 20 years of data.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: It would be fair to say that from the round tables and the consultation processes you've had, your researchers, your communities, tend to find that a very valuable data source, as opposed to perhaps one question in a...?

Ms. Jane Badets: Yes, based on the feedback we got, the GSS was being used more frequently.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now for the New Democratic Party, we'll have Ms. Mathysen.

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

Thank you very much for providing us with this background information, but I need some clarification.

I'd like to start with you, Monsieur Goupil.

You said that it was very important for Status of Women Canada to examine the progress women are or are not making in terms of equality. Can you tell me exactly where unpaid work of the type covered in question 33 in the 2006 questionnaire is discussed in the StatsCan publication *Women in Canada*?

You referenced that. Where is that exactly?

Mr. Sébastien Goupil: Unpaid work will be discussed in the chapter on family status and time use. So far we're still waiting to receive the data from the general social survey. StatsCan can speak to that. The data will be released later on. We haven't yet undertaken the discussion about the content of this chapter, but based on the discussions we've had with StatsCan, we will have a more comprehensive portrait than the previous edition of *Women in Canada*.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Are you talking about chapter 5 in that report? That chapter has only unpaid volunteer work and no other unpaid work. Pursuing that seems to be less than helpful, because we want to know the full gamut.

• (0925)

Ms. Erin Leigh (Senior Policy Analyst, Gender-Based Analysis and Strategic Policy Branch, Status of Women Canada): That's right. When we went to move ahead with producing the next edition of *Women in Canada*, we looked at the previous edition and used it as the basis for moving forward with the next edition. We consulted with our other colleagues in government, as well as with Statistics Canada, about whether the 2005 edition captures what we need to know.

Looking particularly at the unpaid work information, we also felt that the information could be improved and expanded upon, so in consultation with Statistics Canada we determined that the general social survey on time use, which is being collected right now, I believe, will have a much fuller picture of unpaid work captured in that chapter. As Sébastien said, it hasn't yet been consulted in full yet because the data aren't yet available to look at, but we will be expanding much more fully in the next edition.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Okay, but I have a concern about that.

Basically my understanding is that the long-form census gives you the wider framework. It provides solid indicators, something that is important in order to establish that sort of baseline, that framework. The GSS, because it's only a sample of 20,000, as compared to the far greater sampling of 25% of Canadians in the general census, can confirm or only help you to understand the data if it is in line with the larger census form. What you're relying on here is a smaller sample, and you don't know how reliable those data are until you can compare the data with the long-form census. That, I think, is of profound concern to all of us here.

Could you help me with that?

Ms. Erin Leigh: I would ask my colleagues at Statistics Canada to respond, because that's a very specific data question.

Ms. Rosemary Bender: In analyzing the data from the general social survey on unpaid work, the survey itself and the methodology do provide quite robust estimates on their own. We have, over time, done some analysis at a very high level between the results from the census and the results from the general social survey. There were consistencies, and they do hold together.

However, the analysis itself—the deep and rich analysis, including the high-level aggregates—can be produced through the general social survey. This is what is being recommended, or what is being used, as the primary source for analysis of unpaid work.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: When Ms. Badets began, you indicated that you didn't know what the end result would be and that there is still a huge question. If there is still a huge question, how do you know, without the long-form census, that the GSS data are giving you that deeper level of understanding that is so important if we're going to move the women's agenda along?

Ms. Jane Badets: With the GSS, we have collected that information consistently over about 20 years. That will be the way in which we look at it. We always release the GSS by looking at the consistency back with the past information we have collected. That will provide us with the information to know whether we collected it correctly.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Ms. Badets, you said that the consultation process was explicitly concerned with unpaid work. Are you saying that the consultation guide was focused on unpaid work in terms of the list of issues that StatsCan itself was concerned with? You were concerned as an organization with the issue of unpaid work; I'm wondering where this concern came from.

Ms. Jane Badets: In terms of the guide, as we always do going into consultations, the one in 2000 and each census look at all the content, so it wasn't just specifically this issue. There are other issues that we raise in the guide, so it's always re-looking at the census

content. Is it relevant? Is it producing high-quality information? Is it what users need?

We do that process for every census, and it was no different for the 2011 census.

• (0930)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Unpaid workers are part of the general—

Ms. Jane Badets: Yes. It was a broader look at the census and the content, and it was one issue that came up.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Could we have copies of the memos that led to this discussion in regard to the questions, and particularly to unpaid work? I think that might be helpful in order to understand how the process came about and how it was completed.

Is that possible, Madam Chair?

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Mathysen.

I would like to remind the witnesses that there are requests now for two sets of data. One is for Ms. Neville with regard to consultations, and now Ms. Mathysen has asked for copies of memos. Could you please send that information on to the clerk for us? Thank you very much.

We have 15 minutes left. If everyone is really good, that could give us two minutes each on a round of four people. That means you're going to have to be crisp and I'm going to have to cut you off, so there is that option.

What I would like to suggest is that we quickly go into a round of two minutes. No, we cannot do three, Ms. Neville, just two. Otherwise, we'll have our next lot of witnesses waiting.

Go ahead, Ms. Simson.

Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Thank you.

And I'd like to thank you all for appearing before the committee today.

I'd like to go back to Ms. Badets' opening remarks. I would like some clarification on what "highly focused" really means. "Highly focused" in my world means "very narrow", in terms of consultation.

How many organizations were consulted in terms of the use of question 33?

Ms. Jane Badets: I can't, off the top of my head, know that, and sometimes it's not necessarily that we were consulting specifically on unpaid work. When we start off the consultations, it's on all the content, so those comments may have come up as we were consulting on the entire census questionnaire.

In terms of "highly focused", it's just that we heard this back from a general feedback on consultations, so we took some more specific steps. As I said, there were a number of meetings or teleconferences with provincial and territorial governments and federal departments, and some—

Mrs. Michelle Simson: You also made mention of the time use surveys, which are in five-year cycles. Typically, how many of those surveys would be distributed in Canada?

Ms. Jane Badets: Are you referring to the sample size?

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Yes, exactly.

Ms. Jane Badets: I think the sample size is about 25,000.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: It's 25,000. How many would typically be getting the long form, the mandatory long form?

Mr. Marc Hamel: It's one in five dwellings in Canada. In 2011, there would have been approximately 2.9 million.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Essentially you're saying that we're giving up 2.9 million for 25,000 every five years. Would I be correct?

Ms. Jane Badets: What we're.... I guess—

Mrs. Michelle Simson: It is a time use survey—

Ms. Jane Badets: With the survey, though, you get a much richer set of information.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: But it's a time use survey. Time use is not necessarily the same thing as unpaid work.

The Chair: Ms. Simson, let's have a quick answer.

That's one of the reasons, Ms. Neville, that I decided on two minutes. It's because everyone goes over two minutes or whatever they're asked to do.

Go ahead quickly, Ms. Badets, if you can answer that.

Ms. Jane Badets: Okay.

Time use includes unpaid household activities, and we do specifically ask questions in that survey on unpaid work or unpaid household activities.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Brown is next, for the Conservatives.

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you very much.

This is just a comment to our presenters. I'd really like to get some definitions of "unpaid work", because in my household, if I decide to undertake a painting project in one of our bedrooms, to me it's a hobby; if my husband has to do it, it's definitely work. I look at that and say the definitions need to be a little more refined, because my definition doesn't meet the same definition as my husband's.

I have a question for you about changing data collection in other jurisdictions. What we're seeing around the world is an interest in many jurisdictions in changing how we are collecting our data. I was doing a little review on this in getting ready for this meeting, and I was interested to find that in Britain they're saying that data users want a greater range of statistics to be available more frequently to provide an accurate picture of population change. What you're saying is that in the provision of these 25,000 surveys that you're doing on an annual basis, we are getting much richer data that is going to be available on a more timely basis for the data users in providing them with information. Is that correct?

• (0935)

Mr. Marc Hamel: It's difficult to comment on the various sets of data that are collected internationally in different countries and the contexts for which these data are collected. In Britain, the example that you state, their census is collected on a 10-year basis. In Canada, it's collected on a five-year basis.

Ms. Lois Brown: I understand that, but what I'm saying is that the surveys that you're doing on an annual basis are going to give us the rich kind of data that people are looking for on a more timely basis. We see things changing in our world so quickly that—

The Chair: Ms. Brown, could you put your question, please? We're over two minutes now with your question.

Ms. Lois Brown: Well, it was more just a comment, Madam Chair, that you are providing the information that is necessary in society, on a timely basis, to the people who are looking for it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we go to Madame Brunelle, for the Bloc.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, everyone.

Mr. Goupil, just like this committee, Status of Women Canada focuses on equality between men and women. As we know, the equality of women is measured mainly by financial independence. It seems to me that not talking about unpaid work has a significant impact on the life of women, and this is a problem for me. I find this situation very serious. All we have to do is think about women who are single parents. They are the poorest people in our society. Informal caregivers often do unpaid work. And this is the woman's role. Also, some women work in family businesses.

How will you manage to further the status of women when you will no longer have reliable data on unpaid work?

Mr. Sébastien Goupil: I would just like to point out that Status of Women Canada has always been in favour of the idea of documenting unpaid work and has continuously recorded it. We recognize the importance of women's unpaid work and how valuable it is to the Canadian society as a whole. We strongly believe in the need to keep track of this work. These data allow us to understand the relationship between paid work and a wide range of other factors that have an impact on the participation and status of women in society, including their ability to do paid work, to get an education and so on.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: That is all very well, but where will you be getting the data from since that question will not be asked? Participation in the questionnaire will be voluntary. We could infer that less data will be available. That is what I mean.

Mr. Sébastien Goupil: As data users, we turn to the experts at Statistics Canada. As we said earlier, the sixth edition of *Women in Canada* will include a chapter on the issue of unpaid work, going into more depth than previous editions. We rely on Statistics Canada's expertise to be directed towards the appropriate data sources and to collect the most relevant, significant and rigorous data to document this situation.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: What I could suggest...

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Brunelle. I think we've gone over the two minutes now.

Now we'll go to Ms. Mathyssen, for the NDP.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again I need some clarification. There wasn't anything at all in the "2011 Census Content Consultation Guide" about unpaid work. It's well known that these data are very important to women's equality and that we need them. If unpaid work supposedly came up in feedback, what steps were taken to ensure that the data would be added, or were these closed consultations?

Ms. Rosemary Bender: The consultations that we conducted for the 2011 census were quite a broad and open process. We met with government officials at all levels of government, including federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal. We went across the country and met with an awful lot of local organizations as well, and there was an open invitation through our website, where consultation materials were displayed so that people could write in with their own feedback.

• (0940)

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: This was spontaneous. Without ever mentioning it, people just said, "Oh, unpaid work; we don't think we need a question on that."

Ms. Rosemary Bender: In our consultation materials, we did put forward certain issues that we had heard over the years. Consultation for the census and for our statistical program is an ongoing process. When we do our consultation reports, we highlight certain issues that have been mentioned over time, and over time, for the past couple of censuses, we have heard that far more data users generally went to the general social survey in support of all of the research and work related to unpaid work. It was the general social survey that was the main source of information, rather than the census of population.

We had been hearing this for a number of censuses, so this is why this item had a particular focus as we prepared for the 2011 census content.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Bender.

Before we move on and before I thank the witnesses, I have a question I would like to ask as chair.

You say that you believe, and that you've heard from people, that doing the general social survey will give you the kinds of data you require, and Status of Women Canada has suggested that they will be depending on Statistics Canada for good information on unpaid work. Given that your general social survey looks at metropolitan areas, how are you going to understand the difference between rural and urban, given that your sample size is 25,000 and that it's a telephone survey? There are many people now who do not utilize telephones in the same way. How are you going to be able to get that information? That's my first question.

Second, we know that the issue of unpaid work came about when Canada brought it forward in 1995 at the Beijing conference. Canada has been pushing very hard for unpaid work questions to be put into general statistics in many countries of the world; therefore, how are

we meeting our United Nations and CIDA obligations when we do not ask questions on unpaid work in our Statistics Canada survey?

Ms. Jane Badets: In regard to the general social survey, we can and do produce quite a bit of detailed information even with that smaller sample. As we've found, it was being used in a lot of reports, so it's still robust.

Yes, it is a smaller sample, and we will not get the same level of information that we would with a larger sample. Still, what we heard back was that it was still the data source that was being used because it was giving the more detailed indicators or measures. It was meeting most of the needs.

The Chair: Would you comment on the diversity issue and the rural and urban issue, Ms. Badets?

Ms. Jane Badets: Rural and urban information we can, to some extent, produce from the GSS. It just depends on the amount of data required or the detail of the analysis. We still produce estimates on rural and urban—maybe not for every province, but we still do that from the GSS. We can still produce that information.

The Chair: What about the United Nations and CIDA obligations?

Ms. Jane Badets: Statistics Canada is still providing that information. It does so through the general social survey, so I don't....

The Chair: Thank you. You've answered my question. Thanks very much.

Now I want to thank the witnesses, because we have another group of witnesses coming on. I want to thank you very much for coming.

We will have a suspension for about a minute while we wait for this change of witnesses to occur.

Thank you.

• (0940)

(Pause)

• (0945)

The Chair: Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this committee is undertaking a study of the cancellation of the mandatory long-form census and its impact on women's equality in Canada.

I'd like to welcome: Ivan Fellegi, former head of Statistics Canada; the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale, with Céline Duval, president, and Madeleine Bourget, vice-president; and the Canadian Federation of University Women, with Samantha Spady, communications coordinator, and Robin Jackson, executive director.

The rules are simple. I know that Mr. Fellegi knows them by now. You have 10 minutes as a group, so you can decide how you divide up your 10 minutes. After your 10-minute presentation, we will begin a question and answer section. Because we have only an hour in which to undertake this, I will give you a two-minute signal so that you can tighten up your presentation, know what to leave out at the end, and get a sense of where you're going.

I shall begin with Mr. Fellegi.

Welcome, Mr. Fellegi. It's nice to see you again.

Dr. Ivan Fellegi (Former Chief Statistician of Canada, Statistics Canada, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair. It's good to be here. I'm very pleased that I've been invited.

I'll be talking about the national household survey. My views on that issue are well known. I just want to say why I've chosen what I have to say.

First of all, it is because of the certainty of serious biases affecting the resulting data. The percentage response rate to the traditional long-form census was in the mid- to high nineties. Statistics Canada's working assumption about the response rate to the voluntary national household survey is 50%.

This would not matter much if the lost responses were evenly distributed over all population groups, but we know this is not the case. Past experience from Canada and elsewhere shows that underprivileged groups, such as aboriginal people, new immigrants, visible minorities, and, generally, people with low incomes, will respond at a disproportionately low rate—and no extra sampling will compensate for this disproportion.

But these are not the only people likely to be under-counted. Youths generally are likely to be under-counted. So will working mothers with serious time pressures on them, and others about whom we can only speculate.

In fact, this is precisely the main problem. Bias is so pernicious because, in the overwhelming number of cases, neither its magnitude nor even its direction can be ascertained. Statistics Canada states—and they are right—that the results will be useful for “many purposes”. The trouble is that we don't know now, and we will not know after the survey, what are the cases for which they are safe to use and what are the ones for which they are not.

This leads me to my second point. Since we know that the data can be seriously biased, but we will not know which data are affected and by how much, we will regrettably, but quite appropriately, be suspicious of them all. That will be a tragic outcome, because up until now we were able to focus on the substantive issues of policy, having taken the data for granted. Following the national household survey, we can spend just as much time arguing about the data as we can debating the issues of concern.

Coming to my last point, with a 50% response rate, biases of five to ten percentage points can easily distort any estimate, which is serious enough if you want to know the number of people in a certain group, but it can be devastating when our focus is on how the number changed over the last five years.

Indeed, human populations evolve slowly. A change of two to three percentage points over five years is often regarded as major. But clearly, if the bias can be two to four times as big—that is, five to ten percentage points—the real change can be grossly under- or overestimated. Not only will we be in doubt about the magnitude of the estimated change, but even its direction can be reversed by the bias.

To give you a relevant example, I have no idea how, after 2011, we will estimate the change over the last five years in the earning differential between women and men doing similar work and having similar qualifications. The same applies to estimates of the change in

the education gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal groups, whether we are getting more or less successful in economically integrating our new immigrants, and so on.

The issues are significant, and I am concerned about the passing time.

Thank you for your attention.

• (0950)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Fellegi.

Now we'll go to the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale.

Madam Duval.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Céline Duval (President, Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale): Good morning.

Last July, immediately after the Canadian government had announced its intention to remove the obligation for Canadians to fill out the long-form census questionnaire in 2011, AFEAS, like stakeholders from the scientific, municipal and business circles, protested against this underhanded decision.

In August, during the annual meeting of the association, 450 women representing the 12,000 members of AFEAS in Quebec felt compelled once more to express their complete dissatisfaction with the decision that threatens to deprive organizations like ours of reliable data for supporting their action plans and demands for equality between men and women.

This summer, there was a real outcry in Quebec against this measure. The Coalition québécoise pour l'avenir du recensement was born. AFEAS is one of the members together with organizations from all areas: politics, university, research, think tanks, demography, genealogy, the francophonie, business, teaching, history, municipal administration. The Quebec government has even adopted a motion opposed to removing this obligation. Similar opposition was encountered across Canada. This summer, the Canoe website reported that more than 360 groups, including the leading statisticians in the country, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Canadian Medical Association, university researchers and the Anglican Church, asked the government to reverse its decision.

Removing the obligation to fill out a long-form questionnaire will deprive all sectors of our organization of valid and solid data. No voluntary survey can yield results as reliable as a mandatory census questionnaire. The Chief Statistician said so himself when he resigned:

I want to take this opportunity to comment on a technical statistical issue... the question of whether a voluntary survey can become a substitute for a mandatory census. It cannot.

A voluntary survey will produce skewed, unreliable and unrepresentative data that will make it impossible for us to compare it with data from previous years.

The long-form census provided solid statistics that allowed women's groups to conduct gender-based analyses on education, family, work and income. These types of analyses are vital to developing sound action plans in order to eliminate inequalities.

AFEAS is particularly concerned about the fact that statistics on invisible work will no longer be available. In fact, all questions on unpaid work, or so-called invisible work, from the new long-form census were withdrawn. AFEAS had only succeeded in getting questions aimed at measuring this invisible work, especially work done for children or loved ones with reduced independence, as part of the long form for the last three censuses, in 1996, 2001 and 2006. The data compiled allowed us to measure the quantity of work, especially the way in which it was divided between men and women. Our analyses along with supporting statistics have shown that the economy relies to a large degree on this invisible work, which keeps the social and family life together allowing individuals to have paid jobs. The work-family balance is a fundamental issue.

How can eliminating these questions be justified when last April, the Parliament of Canada unanimously adopted a motion declaring the first Tuesday in April the Invisible Work Day? As a result, Canada became the first country in the world to create this day. How can this work be recognized if we cannot measure it?

● (0955)

From now on, it will be difficult for Canada to say that it respects the Beijing Declaration that it signed in 1995 at the World Conference on Women, stating that it was convinced of the following:

Equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women, and a harmonious partnership between them are critical to their well-being and that of their families as well as to the consolidation of democracy...

How can we share something that we refuse to measure?

Depriving organizations of reliable data that allow them to support their arguments in all sectors is the same as muzzling or destroying their work of assessing Canadians' needs.

Non-profit organizations like AFEAS need reliable data and objectives to understand problems well and to be able to change mindsets and policies. Statistics Canada must have the means to publish such data and make them available.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Duval.

Now I will go Ms. Jackson or Ms. Spady.

Ms. Robin Jackson (Executive Director, Canadian Federation of University Women): It's Ms. Jackson first.

The Chair: Good. I will give you five minutes.

Ms. Robin Jackson: Thank you very much.

The Canadian Federation of University Women is a non-partisan, voluntary, self-funded organization of close to 10,000 members—

women university graduates, students, and associate members in 113 clubs across Canada—that works to improve the status of women and human rights, education, social justice, and peace.

CFUW holds special consultative status with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and belongs to the education sector of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. CFUW is the largest of the 67 affiliates of the International Federation of University Women.

CFUW calls on committee members to support the reinstatement of the mandatory long-form census. The mandatory long-form census is a critical tool to monitor the status of women and to formulate policy to advance women's equality. CFUW calls for the inclusion of census questions on unpaid work. CFUW members are aware that the mandatory long-form census is a critical tool for governments, agencies, and civil society to monitor and understand what is happening in Canadian society.

The gendered impacts are especially important to emphasize. All of the markers of how women are faring will be less reliable and impossible to track and measure from previous years if the mandatory long-form census is cancelled. The lack of reliable information will severely reduce the amount of effective research and gender analysis. Both are crucial in order to address gender inequality.

CFUW is concerned that we will lose a tool to measure and track women's equality. Statistics have told us the story of women's inequality in Canada. We know what gains have been made and where there is still much work to be done. For example, using information from Statistics Canada, we know that twice as many women as men become victims of spousal violence, or 61% for females compared to 32% for males. The same analysis found that almost four times as many women as men were killed by a current or former spouse.

We know that 81% of single-parent households are headed by a woman. Of these households, the poverty rate for single mothers under 65 is 42.4%, compared to 19.3% of single fathers in the same group. We know that a lot has been done to reduce the poverty of seniors in general, but that poverty for single senior women is persistent, and these women are twice as likely as are senior men to be impoverished.

Because of reliable and accurate statistics, we know that poverty in Canada is gendered. Of the nearly four million people in Canada who live below the low-income cut-off after tax, 54% are women.

Using this information, women's organizations such as CFUW and others monitor and report on how women are doing and put forward policy solutions to the problems we find. This data is also used to measure the efficacy of initiatives and programs to combat poverty, barriers to full participation in the workplace, and violence, and to determine how they can be improved. It is obvious from the preceding statistics that women are more likely than are men to experience violence and poverty, and it is imperative that we know by how much and know which segments of society and which regions are affected.

Once this data is no longer of the same quality and can no longer be compared to data for previous years, data critical to addressing gender inequality will be lost.

Using the parliamentary testimony of former chief statisticians of Statistics Canada, Dr. Munir Sheikh and Dr. Ivan Fellegi, and briefs from the Statistical Society of Canada and the National Statistics Council, we have concluded that the changes will undoubtedly affect both the quality of data collected and the ability to compare data from one year to the next due to the inherent bias of voluntary participation.

In his July 27, 2010, testimony to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, Dr. Fellegi alerted the committee that “they”—that is, the census after the change from mandatory to voluntary participation—“really become unusable for purposes of making comparisons in terms of what has happened since the last census”.

- (1000)

In this meeting, Dr. Fellegi and Dr. Sheikh also discussed how the existing voluntary surveys would be less reliable because they would not be able to test them against the census data.

CFUW cannot support the cancellation of the mandatory long form, as it makes census data unusable. Comparisons from year to year are the cornerstone of monitoring and working for progress of women's equality.

- (1005)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Jackson.

You have four minutes, Ms. Spady.

Ms. Samantha Spady (Advocacy and Communications Coordinator, Canadian Federation of University Women): Thank you.

CFUW believes unpaid work must be quantified and valued. CFUW has supported measures to quantify the value of unpaid work to the economy and to take account of this contribution to economic productivity in policy decisions.

However, the removal of question 33 in the 2006 census, which is about unpaid work, is a step backwards. Using census data, it has been calculated that women do two-thirds of unpaid work, accounting for around 30% to 45% of Canada's gross domestic product. This contribution is significant, and with unpaid work including care work involving children and elders, this is an important figure to monitor.

Given the aging population and no current commitments for increased numbers of child care spaces, women will continue to take on the majority of care work in this country. Elder care in particular has been shown to have negative effects on the financial health of women and also on the mental and physical health of women. Without information on this issue, we will not be able to understand the effects and consequences of unpaid work on women.

The removal of the question on unpaid work creates a barrier to the ability to monitor and to value the contribution of unpaid voluntary and care work. CFUW proposes that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women recommend the reinstatement of the mandatory long-form census and the inclusion of the question on unpaid work for the 2011 census.

These changes, if not reversed, will have a detrimental effect on the capacity of governments at all levels and of civil society to respond to and track changes to women's lives as they relate to policy decisions. As a result of these changes, we will no longer be able to compare census data to past years' results, making comparison and tracking of both progress and regression futile.

To improve the information available on time use, CFUW recommends that the following be included in the 2011 census: questions on unpaid work; questions on care of the disabled; and the expansion of the numbers on elder care that can be reported in census questions. To respond and adapt to the changes in demographics and women's lives, we must have the information to do so. If we cannot trust or compare this information, working towards women's equality will be a difficult pursuit.

As an equality-seeking organization, CFUW encourages the government to reverse this decision, on the basis that the impacts on gender are too great to ignore. As inequality persists, we must continue to have information to understand how to overcome it. Without the statistics that tell the story, we will have nothing except unreported and unaddressed inequality.

Thank you.

The Chair: Now we're going to move to the question and answer component. This is a seven-minute round. Those seven minutes include questions and answers. I think we're only going to be able to have one round in this group, because we do have some private members' business to do here.

I'll start with Ms. Neville for the Liberals.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to try to share my time with my colleague.

I have a number of questions, but I want to thank all of you for being here today.

Mr. Fellegi, I know that in your role as chief statistician you were instrumental in promoting in the statistics the agenda of women's unpaid work, gender equality, and violence against women, and we all thank you for those efforts.

I have two questions. We heard from Statistics Canada at the end of their presentation just before this. I think I have the quote correct. They say they will not get the same data but will meet the usability requirements. I would welcome your comment on that, which is of considerable concern.

My other questions are to all three groups. The consultation guide, as I understand it, did not mention unpaid work in any way. On the unpaid work, as I understand it, the issue came not from public consultations but largely from private consultations that were held. I'm curious to know whether women's groups got any notice from Statistics Canada, in any way, on the issue of unpaid work and the fact that the removal of question 33 was under consideration, because it seems that it was not part of the overall consultation process. I'll open that up to you.

Dr. Fellegi.

•(1010)

Dr. Ivan Fellegi: Thank you, and thank you for your compliments.

I do indeed have two daughters and three granddaughters, and I'm well-motivated.

Hon. Anita Neville: That makes a difference.

Dr. Ivan Fellegi: The question about usability.... As I mentioned in my opening comments, Statistics Canada said—and I absolutely implicitly trust them—that it will meet many user needs. There's no question about that. The trouble is we won't know which ones and to what extent, because bias is unknowable. They accept in some special circumstances.... Well, there is some independent data against which I won't verify, but that's rarely the case.

So that's the fundamental problem and that's what really causes my concern.

As much as it affects data on the status of anything, whatever it is—we mean aboriginals, immigrants, youth, the construction industry, whatever—it affects infinitely more changes. Because there is a new method proposed to be introduced in 2011, which is a voluntary survey with about half the expected response rate of the compulsory one, we will have even relatively minor biases hide the estimated changes. So the estimated changes of whatever—whether it's status of women, or aboriginals, or immigrants, or youth, whatever—will be really doubtful.

My last point is again—I made it in my opening comment—that doubt is pernicious, because it will shift the debate from the underlying issues to whether the data can be trusted for this purpose. That's what I'm really concerned about. The next five years will be spent debating the data as opposed to the underlying issues they are supposed to reveal.

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

Dr. Ivan Fellegi: I cannot answer your second question because I really wasn't involved in the discussions leading up to the decision by this government to include or not include some questions.

Hon. Anita Neville: I think the others there might be able to.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Fellegi.

Would anyone else...? Ms. Jackson, would you?

Ms. Robin Jackson: I've been on the job for four months, but I just consulted with Sam, and it appears we don't think we were consulted on this matter.

The Chair: You were not consulted.

Ms. Robin Jackson: No.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Duval, you were not consulted either.

Ms. Céline Duval: No.

The Chair: Thank you.

Perhaps we could go to Ms. Simson now. Ms. Simson, you have three minutes only.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for appearing here today.

My question is for Dr. Fellegi. Because of your history with Statistics Canada.... When we signed on to this to include unpaid work, question 33, in 1995, it was included in the census in 1996. According to the notes we got, the decision was a cabinet decision that essentially overruled Statistics Canada's advice on this matter.

Do you have any knowledge of why Statistics Canada was maybe advising not to include that question in the first place?

Dr. Ivan Fellegi: I really don't have any more detailed recollection that occurred. I'm not dodging the question. I really don't dodge questions. I just simply don't remember what was recommended and what was actually the decision.

I know what the decision of the government was, but I don't remember what was recommended and why. So I'm afraid I really cannot answer. I didn't expect this question and I wasn't prepared for it. I apologize.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: No, I apologize. I didn't get a chance to ask the last witnesses this particular question.

We heard from previous witnesses today that the GSS has questions or themes relating to time use surveys on five-year cycles. I made the point that time use isn't the same as unpaid work, as far as I'm concerned, because you can use time walking.

The general social survey will reach 25,000 people, as opposed to the mandatory long-form census, which was 2.9 million Canadians. How badly is that going to skew all the numbers as we go forward, in your opinion?

•(1015)

Dr. Ivan Fellegi: Well, let me just go back. I can comment about the GSS, because actually I was the father of it. I initiated it when I became chief statistician because I found that generally our social statistics were woefully underdeveloped, and in a way the general social survey was really a poor person's answer to the paucity of social information generally. Instead of devoting the survey to any single topic—whether it's education, or family, or health, or immigration, or whatever social issue—we decided to try to include a rotating program. Once every five years we would come back to the same topics.

That was the first decision: to try to spread it as widely as possible.

Second, we could afford only a relatively small sample size. We were hoping that the interest generated by the GSS data would result in more sponsors coming forward, putting their money on the table, and saying, “We want this information; can you do A, B, and C?” To some extent that worked, but not nearly sufficiently.

The GSS was really as much a teaser as it was an attempt to answer every question. At the same time, it has answered a lot of questions, and it has resulted in extremely interesting and useful analysis, but a survey is typically an inter-censal indicator; most of the time the census provides the detailed picture once every five years. They are complementary in their roles, and that complementary aspect works very well between the GSS and the long form.

Mrs. Michelle Simson: Thank you, Dr. Fellegi.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now I'll go to Madame Brunelle, from the Bloc.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, Mr. Fellegi. You are being quoted at great length today. Your data is recognized. You are saying some interesting things, including the fact that underprivileged groups do not answer the questions. But, in my opinion, with the voluntary questionnaire, the short-form questionnaire, they will answer them even less. So the results will be distorted.

You are saying that the data could be skewed, but we would like to know which data and to what extent. We will find out later, in a few years.

We are just wondering. In your opinion, why have we decided to opt for the voluntary short-form questionnaire? Is the government really saving money, or, as AFEAS said, are organizations rather being deprived of reliable data that would allow them to move forward with their demands?

[*English*]

Dr. Ivan Fellegi: I cannot, of course, speculate. I wasn't there, and even if I had been there, I wouldn't be allowed to speculate about why the decision was made, so I am in no position.

I can make two comments, though, on your question.

First, it certainly wasn't to save money, because my understanding is that this exercise ends up costing \$30 million more and results in a great deal less usable data. It certainly was not to save money.

The other little point I want to make is that, as you mentioned, we might find out years from now whether the data are biased. I'm afraid we might not find out even then, because bias is inherently not knowable. Some bias we will know, because there will be contradictory information from independent sources, but much of the bias will be hidden. That's just in the nature of bias.

•(1020)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Since governments change, the long-form questionnaire could come back with questions on unpaid work too. There would then be sort of a gap between the collected data and the new results. Could we then conduct accurate studies showing the change in data or would we always be stuck with this hole, this period of a few years during which our data were not reliable, even non-existent?

[*English*]

Dr. Ivan Fellegi: With your permission, being a long-term public servant and really, truly, non-political, I would not comment on the political side of the question. But it is quite appropriate for the government to determine the content of the census, and whichever government is in power has and will determine the content.

When I spoke out about the voluntary long-form census, it was not about whether or not the government has the right to decide what should get in the census, but whether it is inappropriate for any government to tell Statistics Canada how to do a survey, because that is a technical issue, and there is a long tradition, including United Nations resolutions, about the technical side of statistics having to be free of government interference. That is the only issue on which I spoke out. I am in total agreement with the tradition and the law that governments determine the content of the census. A political judgment goes into it, and that is entirely appropriate.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Do I still have time?

[*English*]

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Thank you. That will allow me to talk to Ms. Duval.

I would also like to recognize Ms. Jackson for her work. In my view, the fact that university women are willing to help other women is a great commitment.

I would like to congratulate AFEAS on all its efforts to achieve equality between men and women. We are very concerned today. As we know, equality between men and women includes women's financial independence.

Ms. Duval, by thinking about all the statistics on unpaid work, about all the work that you did, we could say that not being able to access these statistics would be a major loss. We only have to think about children and caregivers. Women do two-thirds of this work. Caregivers' work will increase because of the aging population.

How do you plan on moving the major issue of unpaid work forward?

Ms. Céline Duval: As part of the latest statistics in Quebec, experts estimate the contribution of women to home care at 130 million hours per year or about \$5 billion in home care for the elderly. Women provide 80% of this care. But without a census, we will not know what will come of the situation in five years. The statistics we currently have are from the last census. They tell us that 80% of people who have an unrecognized, invisible job are women. That is a significant proportion.

What can we do as an organization? We are an organization dedicated to raising awareness, which is why we try to change the way people think, including the way politicians think. That is why we are here today.

This work is much more than doing laundry and cleaning. It has to do with providing care and medication, making appointments and learning the proper techniques to help people. That is well beyond what we used to call domestic labour. By discharging many people from hospitals, we force people who stay home to acquire knowledge that does not come naturally. That is why AFEAS does not use the neutral word “caregiver”, we specify the gender. Learning all those techniques does not actually come as naturally as we might think.

• (1025)

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now I will go to Madame Boucher for the Conservatives.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Good morning, everyone. Thank you for coming to meet with us today.

As you know, the debate about whether it is better to use a long-form or short-form questionnaire, mandatory or voluntary, is not new. As a woman and single mother of two grown-up girls, I was sometimes bothered by some of the questions. But that's just my personal opinion.

I have a letter here, which is not from the governing party, but from people who asked themselves the same question. It is written in English and addressed to the former Minister of Industry, Mr. Bernier. I am going to read you an excerpt:

[English]

Dear Minister Bernier:

I have received a few letters of complaint from constituents concerning the length and detail of the 2006 census.

They are primarily concerned with the great detail of personal information they are required to fill out and therefore potential invasion of privacy.

[Translation]

We did not write that. A number of MPs asked themselves those questions.

This summer, when the government decided to have a voluntary census, some people called me because they didn't understand the difference between census and survey. We know that it is possible to get data from surveys. In fact, we often receive surveys at home, and you know as well as I do that we can get data from sources other than a census. For some people, a census is often just a way to find out where you come from and who you are.

I have a question for you. There were questions in the 2006 census that were marked as mandatory or voluntary. For example, if we want to know whether an individual studied a language other than the one spoken at home, is that a mandatory or voluntary question?

Can we tell the difference? Do most people who answer know whether the answers to these questions are mandatory or voluntary? I, Sylvie Boucher, would personally—not as an MP, but as a woman—decline to answer some of the questions, not because I do not want to fill out the census, but because I feel my privacy is being invaded. But I am very comfortable with the new questionnaire. I have a copy of the new 2011 census here. As human beings, we are actually always afraid when something new comes along.

How can we know if these data will be useful or not? To my knowledge, people often feel obligated to answer if it is mandatory. But if it is voluntary, how can we know that people won't answer the questions?

Ms. Céline Duval: Would you like me to answer?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Yes, please. That is why I am asking you the question, Madam.

Ms. Céline Duval: We are sure that a segment of the population will not answer because those people are not sufficiently knowledgeable. Let's call them “illiterate”, shall we? So they will not fill out the form.

Immigrants will not necessarily answer if the form is not in their language or if there is no translation with the questionnaire.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: So you are saying that, even if it is mandatory, there won't be more people answering it.

Ms. Céline Duval: They will answer, because when it is mandatory, there is someone who will help them to fill out the form.

I've already been involved in the census, and, when someone is not able to fill out the form, we provide volunteers to help them.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Oh, really?

Ms. Céline Duval: Yes. I was a volunteer myself, so I know that it's being done. It is possible that we might find it long at first. It is true that there is a big difference between eight questions and 80 or so questions. That does not take the same amount of time.

But we must often pay people to do the public or social surveys. So a non-profit organization where funding was cut—including the \$100,000 by Status of Women Canada last year—cannot afford to conduct a survey.

•(1030)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: All right.

By the way, there are not just eight questions, but there are a lot more in the 2011 form.

Ms. Céline Duval: But we haven't seen the 2011 form, have we?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: I have it right here.

It is interesting to hear you say that, when the form is mandatory, someone will help people to fill it out.

Ms. Céline Duval: Yes.

Ms. Sylvie Boucher: So, if someone wants to fill it out, not because it is mandatory, but because it is private and they want to answer, there won't be anyone to help them to fill it out?

Ms. Céline Duval: I don't understand your question.

Ms. Sylvie Boucher: In fact, if someone really wants to fill out the census, they will find someone to help them and it would be the same thing as if it were mandatory.

You are saying, and I agree with you, that some people in minority communities will not answer or did not answer the questions because they were either illiterate or they had another reason. So I feel that, if someone really wants to answer the questions, they will still find a way.

Ms. Céline Duval: Although people are willing to do it, they are constantly running around and have all sorts of other things to do. So imagine if they received an envelope with the word “voluntary” on it. But if it is mandatory, they will take it as such.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: All right. You are from AFEAS. So you can do a test. I did it myself at some point. I do a lot of volunteering. One day, we put up a notice on a bulletin board that we wanted people to read. When we put “do not read”, no one read it, but when we removed those words, everyone was in front of the bulletin board reading it.

I would personally not answer some of the questions because I find them intrusive. There are things that should be out in the open, but some should stay private.

You're telling us that, when participation is mandatory, people can get help, but when it is voluntary, they throw out the questionnaire. I don't think I agree with you.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry. We have gone well over seven minutes here, so I'm going to have to move on.

Ms. Mathysen, for the New Democratic Party, please.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you for being here.

I have a number of questions, and I'll try to be succinct. It's interesting, this whole business of the long form being invasive and

intruding on privacy. Ms. Jennifer Stoddart, who is the Privacy Commissioner, said that over the last 20 years, she's received 50 complaints about the census. She couldn't break them down in terms of long form or short form. That's 50 complaints over 20 years.

This is an opinion: would you say that people are concerned about an invasion of privacy generally, or is this a specious argument?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Céline Duval: People are not concerned about that. If we tell them that they must fill out the questionnaire because it will help them and make their needs known in order to better address them, they will do it. If we tell them to fill it out, but that we don't know what it will be used for, they will not care as much. It is different if they really know why they're filling it out.

I still don't believe that it is an invasion of privacy. If someone does not answer question 33 because they don't find it appropriate, but they answer all the other questions, data will still be collected for all those other questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Dr. Fellegi, you had your hand up.

Dr. Ivan Fellegi: I have just two quick points.

If something is judged to be invasive, the government shouldn't approve that question for the census. That's a decision of the government. If the government believes some questions are privacy-invasive, let's take them off the long form. That's the first point.

The second point is about whether or not voluntary surveys are more likely to be responded to or not. We don't need to speculate; there is hard, empirical evidence that voluntary surveys have a vastly lower response rate. The long-form census had a response rate in the mid-90% range, and Statistics Canada's working assumption about the replacement survey is 50%. In everybody's experience around the world—the statistical societies have all written to the government expressing their view that this will render the long-form data much less usable, and for some purposes probably not usable at all.

•(1035)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

It's interesting that chapter 11 of the 2011 census consultation report says that 30% of comments were negative with regard to question 33, and 30% were positive, saying it was essential data. The whole issue comes down to question 33.

In the last three censuses, only one question has ever been dropped. Now this furor is focused on question 33. What is so upsetting about question 33, the question about unpaid work, that it has to be expunged?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Céline Duval: It's just that it is the only question providing us with statistics on unpaid work. Question 33 should be called “Household Work” from now on instead of “Household Activities”.

Someone used the expression “go walking” earlier, but, if that means getting a sick person some fresh air and, by doing so, helping them on a psychological level, it is still work. Many aspects of this responsibility are work. But it is not recognized as such, and as long as that's the case, similar paid work will be affected. If we recognize that work being done at home is in fact work, we could agree to pay or recognize domestic employees more. We will increasingly recognize the work of people working in daycares and the work of everyone doing what a good mother should do at home by taking good care of her children.

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: *Merci.*

I want to talk to Ms. Jackson. You talked about the fact that we see poverty among senior women as persistent. We have evidence of that. This committee has had a number of studies in regard to the economic security of senior women. We have discovered that because they have had sporadic work or unpaid work, the CPP they receive is very low and OAS and GIS put them well below the low-income line.

We are in the midst of a study in regard to non-traditional work. One of the issues that came up in that study was that Statistics Canada evaluated that women dropped out of apprenticeship programs more often, not because of financial reasons or a better job offer but because of family responsibilities—in other words, unpaid work.

It seems that this is pivotal in terms of how, if we're going to address the reality of poverty among senior women in the future, we have to have this information.

I wonder if you could comment on that.

Ms. Samantha Spady: I'm going to comment for Robin.

That's exactly the case. You look at the numbers of women who had single-parent households and then the amount of unpaid work, and the burden of this unpaid work responsibility ends up putting them in a more impoverished place in their elder years.

It's not just child care. A lot of women are now in the generation where they're taking care of their children as well as their parents. If you look at the emerging long-term care crisis in this country, this is going to be extremely important to monitor. There will be effects for women who have to leave their work earlier to take care of aging parents or spouses requiring long-term care, that either it is unaffordable or they want to do it but there's no support for them.

• (1040)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I have one last question. I hope I can get—

The Chair: Sorry, Irene, you can't get that in. I'm sorry, you're all done.

This is the end of our question and answer segment. I want to thank our witnesses for coming.

Before the witnesses leave, though, I would like to ask one quick question of Mr. Fellegi.

Over all of the years you have been at Statistics Canada, and since, what percentage of people have refused to answer the mandatory long-form census? That's the first question.

The second question is, what has happened to those people who have refused? What are their penalties? Did they do jail time? Did they have any huge number of penalties added to them? Can you answer that question in terms of percentage a year?

Thank you.

Dr. Ivan Fellegi: The number who have refused over the years has been infinitesimally small. I don't know what it is. I just don't remember anymore, and I apologize. After every census, it was 100 to 150, something of that order. Of those, a careful selection of who will be prosecuted is made by the Department of Justice. Typically, with very few exceptions, those prosecutions were successful—it was never a jail term, never ever—and the resulting fines were in the order of \$100, \$150, \$200, something like that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fellegi.

Ms. Lois Brown: A point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes?

Ms. Lois Brown: There have never been any prosecutions of anybody who has not filled out the census, and nobody has gone to jail, so effectively it has been voluntary.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Brown.

Thank you very much to the witnesses. I want to thank you for taking the time.

We need to have about a minute's suspension so that we can go in camera, please.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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