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Chair

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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• (1530)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP)): Good afternoon and welcome to the 25th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We are continuing our study on the economic leadership and prosperity of Canadian women.

I want to let the members and guests know that, since a vote will be held today and the bells will sound at 5:15 p.m., the first panel of witnesses will be here from 3:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m., and the second panel will be here from 4:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.. So by the time the bells ring, we will have had an opportunity to hear all the presentations and to discuss with the witnesses.

During the first hour, we are hearing from two Statistics Canada representatives. Joining us are Alison Hale, Director, Labour Statistics Division, and François Nault, Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division.

The two of you have 10 minutes for your presentation.

The floor is yours.

[English]

Ms. Alison Hale (Director, Labour Statistics Division, Statistics Canada): Merci.

I hope everybody has a copy of the presentation in front of them, because I'll walk you through it.

Good afternoon. We're very happy to be here. There is nothing Statistics Canada likes better than talking about the data.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you on a subject relevant to your study on economic leadership and prosperity of Canadian women.

In today's presentation we will be focusing on Canadian women in the labour market, providing information on some basic labour market indicators, including wage rates, union coverage, and the characteristics of self-employed women. Generally, except for one slide where it's indicated, all the information comes from the labour force survey.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Hale, can you tell us what the chart lines represent?

Ms. Alison Hale: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Alison Hale: Yes, I will point out what slide I'm talking about and provide explanations.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Ms. Alison Hale: I'm going to the second slide, which is basically gives a general overview of the participation of women in the labour force. The blue is the participation rate for men, and the red is the participation rate for women.

If you look at the women's participation rate, I'm sure it is not a surprise to the group.

[Translation]

The Chair: Sorry, but the document we have is in black and white, and we cannot distinguish between the line representing men and the one representing women.

[English]

Ms. Alison Hale: Okay.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Hale, you can simply tell us whether you are talking about the top or the bottom line.

Ms. Alison Hale: You want me to tell you whether the line is on top or at the bottom.

The Chair: For instance, you can tell us that the top line represents men, and so on.

Ms. Alison Hale: Okay.

The Chair: That will be a great help to us.

What I just said will not affect your floor time.

Go ahead.

[English]

Ms. Alison Hale: The line on top is the participation rate for men, and the line on the bottom is the participation rate for women.

If you look at it, because the interest of this group is on women, focusing in on the women, you can see that from the mid-1970s, which is when we had comparative data available, employment rose fairly steadily up until about the early 2000s. Since then it's been fairly stable at about 62% of women 15 years of age or over now in the labour market.

I'll go to the third slide.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Over what age?

Ms. Alison Hale: It's 15 years of age and over. So, generally, when we're looking at people in the labour market, we're looking at those 15 years of age and over, unless we say otherwise.

So here we wanted to look at women overall. This is, again, looking at employment rate. The top line is men. The bottom line is the women. So we're looking at the employment rate for men. Basically, we put a little circle to show what happened in the most recent recession. What you generally find for employment, often it will go down during a recession and then go back up.

What we saw in this most recent recession, for women, yes, the employment rate went down. It went down less than it did for men. So in that little circle you see a 3% drop for the men at the top line, and a 1% drop for women. So while yes, they both were impacted by the recession, it was less for women than men.

So now I'll focus more on women's characteristics themselves, and look at graph number four. Here I'm looking at all women 15 years of age and over. The top line is the proportion of women who are working full-time. The bottom line is all women who are working part-time. If you look at the top line, you can see that the proportion of women working full-time has been increasing fairly steadily. There are a few ebbs and flows with the economic cycle, but in general women working full-time has been increasing up until about 2006, and then it's flattened out at about 42% to 43% of all women working full-time. So we're not looking at just participation, but the population 15 years of age and over.

For working part-time, it's been fairly steady since about 1990. For about the last 20 years, 15% of all women worked part-time, which means less than 30 hours per week. About 75% of those women who worked part-time are working part-time by choice. About 25% of women who are working part-time are working part-time because they cannot find full-time work due to business conditions. There's no full-time work because of business conditions, or because they couldn't find work of over 30 hours.

The next slide, number five, I don't think will be news for the committee. Looking at wages by occupation, overall women have a lower wage than men in all occupational groups. These are the major occupational groups in Canada, in 2013. So the top bar in each graph is women. The bottom is men. Probably many members weren't part of the committee back in 2010, but we did do a presentation back then looking at the gender wage gap.

In general, these are just raw numbers comparing things, but if you control for those experiences in the labour market and the types of jobs, in general, even once you control for everything you observe, you'll find that women's wages are about 90% that of men, even when you control for years in the labour market, work experience, and different types of education as well.

The next slide is union coverage rate. This is something where there's been a switch between men and women. At about 2005, the lines overlap so the one that starts at the bottom on the left side is women, and the one that starts higher up but going down is the union coverage rate for men. Generally, the union coverage rate of men has been decreasing fairly steadily over time, whereas for women it's increased a bit more in the latter part of the last 10 years. That's because women tend to work in areas that have a higher rate of

unionization, in particular the public sector. So the public sector has over 70% of their employees unionized, versus 20% in the private sector. So the fact that women tend to be concentrated in education, health care, as well as public administration...they have a higher rate of unionization.

• (1535)

Turning to the graph on slide 7, men are shown in the top line and women in the bottom line. Here we're looking at the rate of self-employment: one in eight women were self-employed in 2013 compared with one in five men. So more men are self-employed than women.

It increased for women fairly steadily for awhile. It often tends to drop in an economic cycle, and then, depending on the economy, it will increase again. You saw an increase in the nineties. When the economy gets good, some people leave self-employment and go into a paid worker situation. It's been very steady since the late nineties that about 13% of women are self-employed.

We're zeroing in on the self-employed here because we thought this would be of interest to the committee. We found that in 2013 just over three-quarters of women entrepreneurs worked on their own with no help. That's the unincorporated. Basically, when we're looking at self-employed, they can be split into various categories. You have self-employed people with an incorporated business, with and without paid help, or an unincorporated business, with and without paid help.

Generally we find that 60% of self-employed women tend to be in that category of unincorporated business with no paid help. If you're looking at self-employed women with no paid help overall, it's about 76%, but for men it's about 64%. So there is a difference between the two.

In slide 9 we're zeroing in on the approximately one million women who were self-employed in 2013. Looking at the top ten occupations, in general most self-employed women tend to be in the service industry, at almost 90%. The largest group is made up of early childhood educators. If you combine that with babysitters, about 10% of women are either in child care or early child care education.

Slide 10 looks at those self-employed women with employees. These are women who are self-employed, they own a business, and they have their own employees. The portrait of the occupations does change when you start looking at this group. About 15% of this group are retail trade managers. They basically own their own business in the retail trade and have employees. That is by far the biggest group in that area.

• (1540)

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

[Translation]

Ms. Alison Hale: Do you want me to go to the end?

[English]

The Chair: I just have a question about page 12. I believe the taller block on that page would be for men, and the shorter block for women.

Ms. Alison Hale: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

I'm sure with all of this information in front of the members, they'll be able to ask questions regarding that.

Ms. Alison Hale: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

We will move on to questions from committee members.

Ms. Truppe, you have seven minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for being here today.

First, in one of your slides you were talking about how the union coverage rate is higher for women than for men.

Ms. Alison Hale: Right.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I think you said that about 70% of the women were in unionized positions over the men. Is that right?

Ms. Alison Hale: Well, no, actually the 70%....

Women are concentrated in the public sector, and in the public sector overall, it has a high unionization rate. I'm sorry if I wasn't—

Mrs. Susan Truppe: In the public sector it's 70%.

Ms. Alison Hale: Yes.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Why is there such a gap, then? I mean, if they're unionized—

Ms. Alison Hale: No. This is overall. Basically there are two things going on. There's where women tend to work, and more women overall work in the public sector, which is highly unionized. So it's two things combined that puts them together.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: So in in....

Sorry, go ahead.

Ms. Alison Hale: The public sector includes education, health care, and public administration, so there's a fairly high percentage of women in those industries, which tend to be highly unionized.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: So in the unionized positions that the women are in, I know you're saying there are probably more women in there than men.

Ms. Alison Hale: Yes.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: But for those positions that have men in them as well, the men and women....

Ms. Alison Hale: Yes.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I guess I'm wondering, are the women still paid less than the men in a unionized position?

● (1545)

Ms. Alison Hale: That would be something we'd have to look at separately.

That is always the challenge with the data. Normally if you control for things you can control, I know overall it doesn't make [Inaudible—Editor]. But there are differences by the industry. With things like unionization, you may see women make lower wages, but they make less overall. But if you control for things, the amount of years of experience they have in the work place and the type of occupation, they get very close together. I could see if we have other studies on that because there have been a number of studies on gender wage gaps that I could easily make available to the committee.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: I was just wondering because when we were talking about.... On one of your slides I think there was a gap in the wage. I was just curious because if it were unionized.... Not working for a union, I'm assuming that everybody starts at a certain level.

Ms. Alison Hale: But women do tend to be in different occupations than men where there are often different wage scales but if you control for everybody in the same group, you wouldn't expect to see a lot of difference.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Okay, thank you.

Then your other slide that I picked out here where you have one in eight women were self-employed in 2013....

Ms. Alison Hale: Yes.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: So there are more men than women self-employed. Are there any stats on why that is?

Ms. Alison Hale: Generally at Statistics Canada the information we have is observing what's going on. The why is harder to get at. Often it's either because of the.... Sometimes it's stabilities. We often see in an economic cycle that if there's an economic downturn, people will go into self-employment. When the economy goes up, they'll leave self-employment and go to paid work where there are more benefits and more stability.

But I don't know of any studies that's concentrated in that way.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Okay, thank you.

During the recent recession and then the increase in unemployment, I think on one of these slides it showed the women's rate of employment fell less steeply than the men.

Ms. Alison Hale: Right.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Would you say that the type of work in which the women were represented is maybe more stable during a recession?

Ms. Alison Hale: One thing we have noticed over time which started before the recession is the decrease in employment in manufacturing and there are more men than women in manufacturing. So some of that would be related to that as well.

It's a fairly complex picture of how you disentangle it but one of the factors is how the decrease in manufacturing impacted more men workers than women because women, as I said, are more in the public sector versus the private.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Because of the type of industry that they were in...

I understand that StatsCan is or was working with post-secondary educational institutions to capture a wide range of employment data. What knowledge gaps are you attempting to fill and how would this be helpful?

Ms. Alison Hale: One of the areas—it's not in my area of expertise—but I do know that we're building the data on post-secondary education, and one of the things we know we can do is to link that data with some of the information we have on salaries. Then you can see where people, based on their education, might be with their salary in say 10 years or 15 years down the road.

I don't know of any right now that are in progress but I know there have been previous studies with that sort of information. I could provide them to the committee if I can find any at Statistic Canada, but I know that sort of work is ongoing.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Sorry, did you say there have been some studies that were completed?

Ms. Alison Hale: I'd have to go back and look to see if I can find any from Stats Canada. I know there's a lot being done outside of Statistics Canada, that people are doing research, basically looking at things longitudinally. But I could go back and look for something at Stats Canada and forward it to the committee.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Okay, thank you.

Do you have any information or stats on the longevity of businesses or enterprises started by women.

Ms. Alison Hale: No, we don't have that information.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: So we don't know if they last a year, two years, or five years? There's nothing on that?

Ms. Alison Hale: No.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: What are some of the areas of the national household survey that are specific to women and men who work outside the home?

Ms. Alison Hale: Do you mean as self-employed? Basically the labour content of the national household survey is very similar to that in the monthly labour force survey, but of course there is a larger sample size, so you can look at it in more detail by specific occupations if there are specific occupations that are of interest. We have that broken down by male and female. I can easily provide information as to where exactly that information is if people want to look at it.

• (1550)

[Translation]

The Chair: That would be very much appreciated. You could send the information to the clerk. That way, we would obtain an answer to the questions asked by Ms. Truppe.

Ms. Ashton, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

Thank you very much, Ms. Hale and Mr. Nault, for joining us today and sharing the important work of Stats Canada with our committee.

I'm interested in the latter part of your graphs here, where you make reference to paid help and no paid help. I'm wondering if you could elaborate as to what that refers to.

Ms. Alison Hale: Basically, that's the concept of whether a woman who is self-employed has employees working for her or not. That's the difference, but it's also true of men. That's how we break down self-employment. There are two ways of breaking it down. One is whether it's an incorporated or unincorporated business, and even, within those, whether or not they have paid help.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Perfect. Okay. Thank you very much.

One of the things we're looking at in this committee is barriers to the economic prosperity of women. We've heard from a number of our witnesses that one of the key challenges women face is the lack of child care and the fact that either it keeps women from accessing training or it keeps them from getting on with their careers or it interrupts the careers they have. One thing we want is to better understand how much of their day women spend doing things like child care or home care or caring for their parents or whatever, which I understand, of course, is known as unpaid work. I'm wondering if you can tell us if you have statistics on that specific area.

Ms. Alison Hale: I'll pass to Mr. Nault.

Mr. François Nault (Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada): My division is responsible for the General Social Survey. One of the cycles that are part of that program is called a time-use survey. We're asking a representative sample of Canadians to fill out a 24-hour diary in which they note all the time they spend on all the activities they do. That's a key source of information to capture unpaid work.

The last time we did it was in 2010. We're going to redo it in 2015.

With respect to your question, the average amount of time that women spend daily on housework was four hours and 15 minutes in 2010, compared to three hours and 42 minutes for men.

So we do have detailed information on how much time is spent on housework and other unpaid work.

Ms. Niki Ashton: So housework would include child care?

Mr. François Nault: Yes. It would include child care, elder care, other dependent care, all the cooking, the housework, and so forth.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I appreciate the work you're doing on this front, because it's clear we need the statistics to understand what women's days look like and the barriers they face. I'm wondering, knowing that the long-form census is no longer mandatory, if you feel the understanding of women's lives and women's days, including unpaid work, will be hampered as a result?

Mr. François Nault: The issue is not so much that the long form has become a voluntary survey. The issue is that there was a very extensive analysis of the use of the census data, and there was a question in 2001 and 2006 on unpaid work, but when all things are considered, it takes a lot of questions and probing to really understand all the complexities of unpaid work.

The census is not the best vehicle to capture that information. The best vehicle to capture that information, I think, is the General Social Survey time-use survey with that diary. We cannot impose on all Canadians to fill a 24-hour diary that is necessary to understand all the aspects of unpaid work.

We do have the information—I think very detailed information—on those from the general social survey. It's probably the best way to capture that information.

• (1555)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Our committee is concerned about how we can make concrete recommendations. Perhaps your statistics would be more secure if we had a mandatory way to have Canadians fill in a 24-hour survey.

Or I can just leave it there.

We want to make evidence-based decisions, but obviously, if it's a voluntary kind of situation, then it's problematic for us to say “these are the kinds of things that need to be done”.

I'm wondering, in terms of your focus on first nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, how much of your work in gathering statistics in these communities is gendered, and what, perhaps broad conclusions—given the little amount of time we have left—you could draw based on the realities you see amongst indigenous women.

Mr. François Nault: For most, if not all, of our surveys, we do collect gender, so we can always compare the situation of men and women, including aboriginal women.

In 2012 we did the Aboriginal Peoples Survey again, for the fourth time, so we have a breadth of information on aboriginal people and aboriginal women.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Were there any key challenges that might connect with barriers, in terms of prosperity, that come to mind based on that?

Mr. François Nault: Well, if you refer to access to child care, certainly aboriginal women are also—I would have to check—probably facing the same issue. Aboriginals in general tend to have more children at a younger age, so it can be a barrier to participation in the workplace, and also to completing their education. I haven't brought those statistics with me, but it certainly makes sense.

There are issues for aboriginal men as well in completing education. I think the education for aboriginal women is improving more rapidly than for aboriginal men.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: If you could send us a report or a link specifically on the situation of aboriginal women that could enlighten the committee on this issue, we would very much appreciate it.

Mr. François Nault: The notes you have distributed mention a document titled Women in Canada, which contains a whole chapter on aboriginal women.

The Chair: We will refer to it. Thank you very much for that information, Mr. Nault.

I will now yield the floor to Ms. O'Neill Gordon for seven minutes.

[*English*]

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

I want to welcome our witnesses here this afternoon. Thank you for your great presentation. You've given us lots of information in your presentation already.

I just want to say, coming from the education system as well, that I agree that there would be more women working in the public sector, and we would have been highly unionized. But in New Brunswick, I can guarantee you that man or woman, we would be paid the same and it would be based on our qualifications and our years of teaching. So there would be no difference between a man or woman working as a teacher. We would be qualified, and we'd all get the same pay. I imagine it would be the same with the health-care workers. I was thinking of that when we were talking about it.

Now, as is expected, lots of information is gathered from different departments, and you would see that in your field, of course. I'm wondering how labour ministers at all levels of government make use of this labour information that is gathered.

Ms. Alison Hale: Well, generally every department has their own users. What we try to ensure is that there's equal access to the data. With basically every program, it's up to every user to decide what information they have use.... I know that labour market data is used at all levels of government to make decisions about various programs.

I probably couldn't give you exactly who does what with what.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: No.

Is this information that's provided always reflective of both genders, or is it just males or women?

• (1600)

Ms. Alison Hale: Generally, I would say we know that for a huge proportion, if not all, of our statistics, most people do want it broken down by gender. This is why it's one of the key variables we make sure we have on all our household surveys, because we know there is an interest in looking at those two groups separately.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Mr. Nault, you mentioned how the housework is broken down.

I think you said there was four and a half hours of unpaid work. Could that also include senior citizens and senior care as well?

Mr. François Nault: Yes.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: It's for both, is that right?

Mr. François Nault: Yes.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Is there much done in that area?

Mr. François Nault: Do you mean a match?

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Are there many women going into this area of working with seniors?

Mr. François Nault: What I was referring to was really unpaid work, unpaid help.

Of course, there is paid help and there are, I think, more women taking care of seniors. Either paid or unpaid, I think women take on a higher burden of supporting or caregiving.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: They're working at being caregivers anyway, in either field.

Do you have any statistics on unpaid work amongst women in the workplace, for both single-parent and dual-parent families?

Mr. François Nault: Yes, the survey allows distinction between both, absolutely.

We can definitely look at the differences in unpaid work or housework, whether or not the women are in a couple household or a single household.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: What does it tell us about the women's workloads in those fields?

Mr. François Nault: I don't have the stats in front of me.

It's a good question and I'm sure I can look for that.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: You may not have information right in your hands about the longevity but in your opinion, from what you see on a daily basis, would you say there's more business or enterprises that are started by women or by men?

Ms. Alison Hale: I wouldn't hazard a guess. It would be a guess on my part.

We don't have information as to the gender of people starting businesses.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Okay, that's fine.

Thank you.

The Chair: That's good. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. McKay, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Chair.

I have three questions about page 12 of your brief.

You chose median employment income as opposed to average employment income. The first question, is there a significant difference between the two? Why did you chose median as opposed to average income? What do you think is behind the difference?

The second question has to do with the wages and salaries graph, where it shows a big gap, in the order of \$10,000 between men and women. Yet, among the self-employed, the gap is significantly narrowed. I was wondering what your explanation was for both the issue of average and median income, and also the significance of the disproportionality of the gap.

Intuitively, you would have said there's a gap, so why isn't it a big gap on both wages and salaries, and a big gap on self-employment? Or why isn't it a small gap on self-employment and a small gap on wages and salaries?

Ms. Alison Hale: I'll cover the median versus the average. For those who aren't familiar with the median, that's the point where 50% of the population is making more than that, and 50% are making less. It's right in the middle of the distribution.

We've moved to that in income because we find a few very high values will throw off the average, so when we really want to compare we tend to look at medians. But there's still a difference between the average income between men and women as well.

Hon. John McKay: Is it in the same proportionality as we see for median? Is the average gap in the same proportionality as the median gap?

Ms. Alison Hale: It's different. I'd have to look at it in more detail, but for instance, the average wages and salary for men is about \$50,000 versus \$34,000 for women.

• (1605)

Hon. John McKay: That's a significant difference then.

Ms. Alison Hale: In both cases they're different.

You were asking about the difference between the median wages and salary versus median self employment income. It's a relative measure. Relatively, the difference is fairly close. One was slightly more than 40%, the other was about 45%.

Hon. John McKay: Of the self-employed?

Ms. Alison Hale: Yes. It looks big, but it's just because the relative numbers are different.

When I compare the difference on the average, the percentage difference between men and women is very similar; it's just that the numbers are different because of the scale.

Hon. John McKay: Okay. So average numbers and median numbers on wages are relatively similar. Do I have that?

Ms. Alison Hale: Well, men make more—

Hon. John McKay: In percentage terms or—

Ms. Alison Hale: Yes, in percentage terms they're slightly different. Based on that, it looks like there may be a few more men who have higher incomes. But I could pass along some information on the income distribution thing, because that's where the National Household Survey could really be drilled into to look at it in more detail and to see if there are differences.

But, again, one of the things one has to be careful with when looking at wages is that the labour market activity of women is often different from men, because until something changes, we're still child-bearing.

Hon. John McKay: The other observation you made is that women are more often unionized—

Ms. Alison Hale: Yes.

Hon. John McKay: —than are men, and unions are there to protect wages. One would have thought, apples to apples, that there would be a closer relationship, by virtue of unionization, between men and women.

Ms. Alison Hale: Yes. That's where you'd have to go that next step further in analysis and look only at unionized work. But that gets away from, of course, the self-employed. We're again talking about the employees and looking at women versus men in the same job, with the same amount of experience, and the same type of employer.

Hon. John McKay: But the trend line would be interesting to see, if you will, whether the disproportionate unionization of female workers is contributing to the narrowing of the average/median wage gap.

Ms. Alison Hale: Yes, there are a lot of factors all in there—

Hon. John McKay: Yes, I raised that.

Ms. Alison Hale: As you're pointing out, it's time to extricate those.

Hon. John McKay: I'm not on this committee, but I would have thought that's an interesting thing to find out.

Going to page 2, the participation rate of women has stabilized in recent years. If you go back to 2006, the gap seems to have been narrowing, and then it just seems to flatline, then falls parallel. Is there any particular reason for that?

Ms. Alison Hale: One thing to keep in mind with participation rate also is with the aging population. As people age, they come out of the labour market. We may be entering into a period where that is changing, but—

Hon. John McKay: That's overall true?

Ms. Alison Hale: That's overall, yes.

Hon. John McKay: But, presumably, that would mean that fewer men are participating in employment. My generation would be the ones who would be coming out of the workforce.

Some of my constituents would like that happening sooner rather than later in my case.

Ms. Alison Hale: That's always one of the challenges in statistics, trying to understand what the difference is in participation rate. When it comes down to it, women are still the ones who go on maternity leave and have children, so that does impact some women's participation, and there are different choices for different groups. But the “why” is not something we tend to cover in our surveys.

Hon. John McKay: But it would be a reasonable projection that this participation rate that you've observed roughly over the last decade is going to maintain itself in percentage terms. This is as good or as bad, as the case may be, as it's going to get.

• (1610)

Ms. Alison Hale: Asking a statistician about projections is one of those things where, when we do a projection, we have to look at

what our your assumptions are and if they are valid. I really couldn't speculate on what it would look like.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to thank our guests, Ms. Hale and Mr. Nault.

We will suspend the sitting for a few minutes, so that our other guests can settle in.

• _____ (Pause) _____

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• (1615)

The Chair: Good afternoon, everyone. We are resuming the meeting.

I want to welcome Robyn Benson, National President, Executive Office, Public Service Alliance of Canada, as well as Seema Lamba, Human Rights Program Officer, Membership Programs Branch.

Ladies, you have 10 minutes for your presentation.

[*English*]

Ms. Robyn Benson (National President, Executive Office, Public Service Alliance of Canada): Good afternoon, and thank you to the committee for inviting the PSAC to appear here today. I will speak briefly on several key issues that affect both women in the public service and women in general.

Women have made gains in the federal public service but there are still gaps in their representation. One of the reasons for these gains is the federal Employment Equity Act. Federal departments and agencies are required to have an employment equity plan that not only addresses representation gaps but also barriers to women in the workplace. These employers are also subject to employment equity audits by the Canadian Human Rights Commission. The problem is that the Treasury Board Secretariat is dropping its central oversight role and is turning it over to individual departments and agencies. This makes it more difficult to monitor what's happening. The secretariat's annual report now contains the bare minimum instead of an in-depth analysis.

There is also a significant gap in the data available with respect to the breakdown of racialized women, aboriginal women, women with disabilities, and women from the LGBT community. These women experience additional barriers and challenges in employment. We believe the government's 20,000 job cuts may be disproportionately affecting these groups of women. However, the lack of data makes it difficult to analyze the impact of the cuts.

In 2009 Treasury Board began a review of all its existing human resources policies affecting federal public service workers. This isn't a positive development. Right now these policies spell out in detail the employer's obligations and they're mandatory: deputy heads and managers must comply with them. Some of the policies cover workplace day care centres, duty to accommodate, employment equity, and telework. The policy review will replace over 60 specific policies with one or two broad ones. They will eliminate many of the current obligations.

The accommodation, employment equity, and child care policies address fundamental human rights. If they're reduced to a few lines hidden in an omnibus policy we believe they will be ineffective. Even now, inconsistencies in practice exist.

It's clear the government is using the policy review to step back from its obligations that have supported women in their work and careers. This will have a direct impact on women's prosperity.

One immediate concern is the workplace child care policy, which was first implemented in 1991. The policy led to the creation of a dozen workplace child care centres across the country. They were given start-up budgets; rent subsidies; and non-profit, bilingual services geared to meet accessibility needs. On-site child care works for both parents and employers and contributes to recruiting and retaining employees, particularly women. Now Treasury Board has pulled its rental subsidy at two local workplace centres. The Tupper Tots Day Care Center was forced to move, and the relocation affected 50 children. Negotiations are continuing for the Tunney's day care.

Making child care more expensive and less convenient goes directly against initiatives aimed at increasing women's prosperity and participation in leadership roles. In the larger context, more than 70% of mothers in Canada are employed working women. Although the gender gap has narrowed significantly for leaders, this is not the case for women with young children. Without available and affordable child care women take time off work. This has the potential to slow opportunities for advancement, including for senior leadership positions.

Women who withdraw from the workplace are also financially penalized in salary increases, seniority benefits, and their pensions. Expensive child care costs can take up a large part of a woman's earnings. In contrast, province-wide affordable child care in Quebec has balanced the scales. The affect on women has been significant. It has contributed to a marked increase in women's participation in the workforce.

Many child care services operate along regular business hours, creating an additional barrier. As a recent PSAC human rights complaint shows, irregular child care is all but non-existent in Canada. That makes it difficult for women with children to devote themselves to leadership. Women who can't work irregular hours due to child care restrictions are much less likely to occupy management and higher paying positions. Ultimately, the lack of available child care and the lack of affordable child care hold women back.

• (1620)

We believe that unionized workplaces make the difference for women. Women with collective agreements have a lower pay gap with men. They have access to benefits such as flexible work arrangements; paid leave for family related responsibilities, medical or personal needs; sick and vacation leave; paid maternity and parental leave; duty to accommodate; and provisions to help balance work and family care. These benefits haven't come easily. They've been gained through hard bargaining, strikes, and through the courts. All these provisions help make workplaces women friendly and family friendly, and they help women become leaders by reducing work-life conflict.

One of them, pay equity, is a proactive measure that addresses wage gaps based on gender and has a direct impact on women's prosperity. It's no accident that women in the federal public sector, especially those in administrative positions, are paid more than many women performing similar work in other sectors. PSAC has worked hard for decades to make the pay equity provisions of the Canadian Human Rights Act a reality for our members.

But as you know, there has been another step back. In 2009, Bill C-10 enacted the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act. In spite of its name, this law undermines pay equity. Pay equity was designed to redress the affects of the market on women's pay. The new law does the reverse, and it restricts women's capacity to claim and obtain pay equity. Unions are not allowed to encourage or work with their members to seek protection from pay equity violations. They can even be heavily fined for doing so. Pay equity is a way to overcome obstacles to women's prosperity. The new law is just another barrier for women to overcome.

In these three areas, we're making the following recommendations: first, safeguard employment equity and other policies that support women; second, fully fund a national child care program; and third, scrap the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act and replace it with a real, proactive pay equity law. We need to stop attempts to destroy what women have achieved and take these necessary steps forward.

I thank you for the opportunity to be here today, and we'll certainly be very pleased to answer any questions that you have. It should be noted that we'll be sending the committee a more detailed written submission very soon. It's currently in translation. As soon as it comes out, we will send it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Ms. Ambler, you have the floor for seven minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you, Madame Chair.

Thank you for being here and for your presentation.

There's been a lot of talk in this study about mentorship and women advancing economically if they have mentors or champions in their field. Does PSAC, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, support any type of mentorship among its members, formal or informal? Do you agree this is important, and then do you agree that it's important whether or not you do it?

Ms. Robyn Benson: I'll start, and certainly Seema can continue if need be.

We agree with mentorship. Certainly, from a union perspective with our members, we mentor our leadership. We have courses. We provide education, etc. When I was in the workplace, mentorship for leadership roles was rarely seen and more specifically, for women.

Many years ago a committee was going to be struck to promote and mentor women into leadership. It certainly didn't promote what one would have thought it would, so I'm not sure they continue to have it in the workplace, but I would suggest we should be looking at it.

Seema.

• (1625)

Ms. Seema Lamba (Human Rights Program Officer, Membership Programs Branch, Public Service Alliance of Canada): The federal public sector actually has champions and committees for three of the four equity groups: aboriginals, persons with disabilities, and racialized or visible minorities, as they're called.

One of the things we are recommending in our more detailed submissions is that there should be champions and committees for women as well, although that's not ideal, and we have some criticisms of that system. A champion would be a deputy head, and then they would have committees of different people within different departments and they could connect with their workers. That's where the discussions about mentorship should happen.

Secondly, employment equity also plays a factor in this. When you look at employment equity, you look at the barriers that are facing the equity groups, like women, and then you enact an initiative that would remove that barrier. One of them could be the fact that there are cultural biases and attitudinal biases that come in, such that men are picked over women to be promoted and given more opportunities. You could try to remove that by having a specific initiative around mentorship.

Ms. Robyn Benson: I'll just add something, because as I said, many years ago there was a committee. It received a lot of lip service, but there was nothing concrete. As Seema said, there are three committees currently, so the fourth would bode well for the Treasury Board.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: The three would be aboriginal, people with disabilities, and—

Ms. Robyn Benson: —racially visible.

Ms. Seema Lamba: Or visible minorities, as they're called.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: —visible minorities. And what was the fourth one you mentioned?

Ms. Robyn Benson: It would be women.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Okay. I have it.

Ms. Seema Lamba: There are only four equity groups under the Employment Equity Act.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thank you.

Stats Canada just told us that when all factors are controlled for in full-time work, women earn 90% of what men earn.

I believe you have about 180,000 members.

Ms. Robyn Benson: Yes.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: How many are women versus how many men? Is it about even?

Ms. Robyn Benson: No, for PSAC and with respect to our Treasury Board and agencies, we're 60% women.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Among your members, is there a wage gap between men and women, and if so, to what do you attribute the difference?

Ms. Robyn Benson: In some areas there is not a wage gap, because we won a pay equity complaint. It took many years—I think it was 15 years or more—and we won it through the courts. So certainly as I said in my remarks, there are some areas, the administrative areas, in which those individuals would make more than other sectors would, due in part to the pay equity win.

Seema, do you want to add to that?

Ms. Seema Lamba: I was going to give you some statistics. If you look at the Treasury Board's annual employment equity report, they actually have a table that describes it by wage.

I did a really quick comparison. I think something like 44% of women make less than, maybe, \$59,999, compared to the percentage of all employees who make less than that, which is something like 30 or 34. So there are some differences overall. It's very difficult for us to determine the numbers for our membership itself.

I can actually give you some general numbers for women as to how many are unionized and how many aren't, if you're interested.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Who aren't what...?

Ms. Seema Lamba: That's for women who are unionized and women who are not unionized—

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Oh, I see.

Ms. Seema Lamba: —because there is a wage gap. Thirty-three per cent of women are unionized. The Canadian Labour Congress did this study, based on Statistics Canada 2012 data, I believe.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Yes.

Ms. Seema Lamba: It actually shows that unionized women earn \$6.65 more per hour than women not in a union. As a result, they figured out that \$552.5 million per week goes into women's pockets to be used for other things.

The average wage for a unionized woman is \$26.32. The average wage for women without a union is \$19.16.

What is significant is that unionized women make 84% of what men make, and non-unionized women make 70% of what men make in similar settings.

So there is a significant wage gap.

• (1630)

Mrs. Stella Ambler: More women are unionized because more women are in the public sector. That's a broad, general statement. Would you agree with it? I think that's what we heard from Stats Canada. I'm just wondering—

Ms. Seema Lamba: That is what they said.

Ms. Robyn Benson: Yes, well that might be what they said, but we have probably about 120,000 or so that would be in Treasury Board agencies, and 60% of those individuals were women. But I can't speak for the rest of the workforce—

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Right.

Ms. Robyn Benson:—within that armed forces, RCMP, etc., that would be government, if you will.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Sellah, did you want to share your floor time?

Ms. Ashton, over to you.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton: First off, I'd like to thank you very much for coming today and thank you very much for making very clear recommendations to our committee.

I have a couple of quick questions and then I'll ask my colleague to continue. We're looking at the barriers to women's prosperity in the country. We heard from Kate McInturff from the CCPA, who did a study of communities, cities, that found that where there was a high number of women working in the public sector and high unionization among women, these were better cities for women to live in. Would you agree that unionization and public sector opportunities for women are key factors in enhancing the prosperity of women?

Ms. Seema Lamba: Well, unionization does, for sure, because it's just the basic fact that they have somebody there to represent them, whether they're experiencing harassment or discrimination, which can actually prevent them from prospering because they leave the workforce if they're experiencing that. So they can actually have certain workplace issues resolved through unionization, and prosper. As well, it's whatever is negotiated, those working conditions and benefits like pensions or whatever. So, for sure.

Ms. Niki Ashton: We know there's a dearth of advocacy voices on women's issues as a result of government cuts over the last few years. We know PSAC is one of the few voices that is speaking out on women's issues and advocating more broadly. I'm wondering if you could share a few of the initiatives that you've been fighting for recently in terms of women's rights and women, broadly, in our country.

Ms. Robyn Benson: Well, certainly from our perspective, our number one issue right now is child care and universal child care. The reality is that our young women workers are having a very difficult time. We had to go to the court, and it was the Johnstone case. I'm not sure which court it was, but we certainly won at it. But this particular young woman is a CBSA employee who worked variable shifts, and what she asked her employer for was a shift, a constant shift. It didn't matter when it was, but she wanted a constant shift so that she could get child care, and the employer refused. And so, of course, we represented her, as did others.

I think it's ironic that we speak about women today coming into the workforce, and here we are in 2014—and I'm now a grandmother—and there still isn't universal child care. When I started in 1980 I was looking for child care and now I have grandchildren who need

child care. So us at PSAC, it's certainly a cause that we're speaking up about.

Ms. Seema Lamba: Along with that, one of the things we're quite concerned about—talking about cuts—is the cuts to the Status of Women, where 12 of the 16 offices have been closed. That was a place where funding was given for advocacy groups, but also research. So it's really important to have that back again, to be able to figure out what the barriers are. There were certain organizations that were actually looking at the very issue of women and leadership, which I can give you examples of. So they need to be funded properly so they can do the study and then be able to make that presentation. That's one of the things that's important for us: to get that money back in

As well as just internally with Treasury Board, in workplaces you must have good policies. Employment equity is also very important. That's also a priority, just internally, because women have made gains in the federal public sector. They are representative and they are making it at the executive level. But it's been because of these really strong factors or mechanisms in the workplace, and now they're beginning to be eroded, and that's what we are concerned about as well.

● (1635)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Sellah, go ahead.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): I want to begin by thanking the two witnesses for participating in our study on the economic prosperity and leadership of Canadian women.

According to the United Nations 2012 human development index, inequalities in Canada have increased. We ranked 15th, behind countries such as Iceland, Denmark and Slovenia. According to the World Economic Forum's annual report for 2012, Canada slipped from the 18th to the 21st position in one year, falling behind the Philippines, Latvia, Cuba and Nicaragua. That report ranks countries based on gender inequality data in terms of economic situation, access to education, health care and women's participation in politics.

I would like you to explain to us why Canada has been falling behind on the international stage over the past few years.

Is this regression due to politics, budget cuts, programs that have not been renewed? What are your thoughts on this?

[*English*]

Ms. Seema Lamba: Yes, we think it is the cuts.

Even with some of the changes to the eligibility age, for example, for old age security or CPP—from 67 to 65—we know that women are often the poorest and they leave the workforce. Sometimes they don't have workplace pensions so this is what they rely on as a good chunk of their income. Now if the qualifying age has gone from 65 to 67 that would increase poverty.

The changes to EI, for example, also affect women disproportionately, because more women are in part-time work as well. I was looking for the statistics about how many women are actually able to access EI and it's a very low number. I'm thinking the percentage is in the 30s.

With the changes, it's going to be harder because now they have to commute farther and take lower jobs. That's going to contribute to bringing it down because, if they have child care, they can't commute longer. So these kinds of changes don't take into account a gender lens when they are being implemented. Those are some examples.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Young, the floor is yours for seven minutes.

[English]

Mr. Terence Young: Thank you.

I'm still waiting for you to call me madam again. You don't do it anymore, so I'm very happy about that. Thank you.

I was under the impression that the federal civil service was actually a really good place to work and that for equality of opportunity for women it was one of the best organizations in Canada.

Is that not true?

Ms. Seema Lamba: I'm just looking in here because I actually have the rates of harassment and discrimination.

Mr. Terence Young: No, no. I'm talking about equality of opportunity in the workplace and prosperity for women.

Ms. Seema Lamba: If you look at the employment equity annual report it would show the representation gap at the executive level. That would be where you would have—

Mr. Terence Young: I mean compared to other organizations in Canada, private companies, and other governments.

Ms. Robyn Benson: I think we would disagree with you. Certainly what we have right now is—

Mr. Terence Young: Could you tell me an organization that has better opportunities for women—

Ms. Robyn Benson: I will tell you right now that this government is in the midst of downsizing. Over 20,000 positions have been cut—

Mr. Terence Young: Excuse me.

You're getting off topic, please. This is my time—

Ms. Robyn Benson: Yes, and I'm just trying to explain to you about—

[Translation]

The Chair: Pardon me, Mr. Young, but perhaps you could give the witness time to answer.

• (1640)

[English]

Mr. Terence Young: Yes, but Madam Chair, I only have so much time and I want to get some answers to some questions. I would like to have the questions that I asked answered. We've heard about the downsizing, etc. I listened very carefully to your presentation. I'm saying, overall, I'm very interested in the answer. I thought the federal civil service was a really good place for women to work, for opportunity in the workplace.

If that's not true, what organization is better?

Ms. Robyn Benson: Okay.

As a woman who has 35 years with the federal government, I will tell you what we experience, overall. There is harassment in the workplace. There is undue stress in the workplace. This government, through Treasury Board, is now looking at mental health issues within the workplace. I'm not saying—

Mr. Terence Young: But they exist in all workplaces don't they?

Ms. Robyn Benson: I would assume they do, sir, but I'm telling what information I have from my membership with respect to the undue stress, the downsizing that is putting more work onto them. It is predominantly a female s workforce that is now, for the most part, in the sandwich generation, I would suggest to you. So those who have 25-plus years' experience are still looking after children at home and now elderly parents.

Mr. Terence Young: Thank you. I realize all those facts, etc., but I'm saying that compared to other organizations, the rules and the procedures, and the rights of workers that are in place, I've always thought the federal government was one of the best places for a woman to work in. Is that not true?

Ms. Seema Lamba: I'm just going to give you some statistics from a 2011 Public Service Employee Survey, where women responded—

Mr. Terence Young: No, thank you. That doesn't help me.

I'm saying compared to other organizations, other governments, or other private sector companies. We've heard from private sector operators, for example, the lady who ran Lululemon, of all the accommodations they had made for women in the workplace. They don't have meetings before 9 in the morning. They don't have meetings after 4 o'clock in the afternoon. They have 16% bonuses for people in the middle-pay group, which we thought were really good and would really assist women in prosperity, which is what the subject of this investigation is.

You're telling us what you're unhappy with in the federal workplace. I've been at Bell Canada when we cut 10,000 employees in three years, so I know what that's like.

But I'm saying that, overall, in the structure, and in the rules, in the processes, in the rights of workers, in the things you have bargained for, isn't the federal workplace a good place to work for women; in fact, better than almost any other?

Ms. Robyn Benson: I guess then we will have to agree to disagree because your own employee survey says it is not—

Mr. Terence Young: I'm asking a question.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Point of order.

Mr. Terence Young: Can you please tell me other organizations or governments—

Ms. Robyn Benson: No, sir, I cannot—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Young, Ms. Benson, just a moment please. A point of order has been raised.

Ms. Ashton, the clock has been stopped, so your time will not be cut short.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton: I'm disturbed by this kind of attitude, I mean, it's badgering of witnesses.

Mr. Terence Young: I wasn't badgering anyone—

Ms. Niki Ashton: If Mr. Young is not hearing the answers he wants to get, that's not the witness's problem, and I'm concerned about how that kind of attitude reflects on the way this committee usually treats witnesses, which is with significant respect.

Mr. Terence Young: I'm concerned about the condescension that this member has for the House and this committee for other members—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: One moment, Mr. Young.

Thank you, Ms. Ashton.

Mr. Young, did you want to say something to me?

[*English*]

Did you have something you want to ask me?

Mr. Terence Young: How much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have about three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Please go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Terence Young: I don't want to flog a dead horse. I'm simply trying to get an answer to a question.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Young, I asked that you move on to another question, whether you have received an answer or not.

[*English*]

Mr. Terence Young: I haven't got the answer to my question at all.

I've worked in the province of Ontario. I've worked for Bell Canada for 14 years. I've worked in small companies, medium-sized companies, and I always thought that the federal public service was a good place to work, that with the work you do, and the work the

government does, it's a good place for a woman to work. It may not be the best, but overall there are fair processes.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Young, I have to interrupt you.

Mrs. Sellah, go ahead.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: I understand that my colleague would like an answer, but I remind him that, on our side, we don't harass witnesses to obtain answers to our questions. We don't always get an answer, but we are satisfied with whatever the witnesses are willing to say.

[*English*]

Mr. Terence Young: I remember asking.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Sellah.

Mr. Young, you can now ask the witnesses your question.

[*English*]

Mr. Terence Young: I know that at PSAC you do studies of the rights and benefits of employees compared to other organizations. How does the federal civil service rate, when you do those studies, on the benefits, and the rights, and the working conditions, and the opportunities for women in the workplace compared to other organizations?

How does the federal public civil service rate in comparison?

● (1645)

Ms. Robyn Benson: Sir, I would suggest to you that we have, in the past, and will continue to do so, negotiate fair and equitable collective agreements, but we also have to listen to our membership when 28% believe they have been denied opportunities for career advancement.

This is from surveys that have been done, and so, yes, we have collective agreements, and, yes, we expect managers to uphold those collective agreements, and we're proud of those collective agreements, and will continue to negotiate enhancements.

Mr. Terence Young: Thank you very much. I realize you're not going to give me an answer to my question. You're not going to say that the federal civil service is a pretty good place to work for women because I know it is, and the facts show that it is.

We heard from Stats Canada that the gap is closing between the participation rate of women in the workplace, but it seems like it's levelled off at about 65% versus men, and it looks like about 72%.

Can you explain why, by any chance?

Ms. Seema Lamba: Actually, I'd have to look into that. We can get back to you on that. Right now, I...

Mr. Terence Young: In the recent recession, the employment rate fell less steeply for women and we were advised by Stats Canada that it was probably related to the loss of manufacturing jobs, which were good paying jobs but were more often held by men.

So, I'm going to another slide they gave us that has interesting information. Women have a lower wage than men in all occupational groups, which is very interesting. But they said that, adjusted for experience, etc., women are still paid 90% of what men are. Is it true in the federal civil service and at PSAC that, adjusted for experience, men get paid 10% more than women, among your members?

Ms. Robyn Benson: We did, as you well know.

Mr. Terence Young: I mean now.

Ms. Robyn Benson: There are still some groups, and we can get back to you with exactly which groups that....

Mr. Terence Young: Those are your members. Why do you let that go on?

Ms. Robyn Benson: We file pay equity complaints of which we just settled four or five last year, sir. We just settled the one that was outstanding for 30 years with Canada Post. So, it's all about when the government will settle with us. That is when we will be able to rectify the situation.

Mr. Terence Young: Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much. That was all the time we had for this question.

I now yield the floor to Mr. McKay for seven minutes.

[English]

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

Your main concern is trying to get day care right across the country. That's your number one take away, child care?

Ms. Robyn Benson: I wouldn't say it's our number one take away, but I certainly look at women being promoted within the federal government and the agencies, and one of the things we consider to be a barrier is the absence of a universal child care system. So, yes, it's a barrier that we see.

Hon. John McKay: All I'm just trying to say is that this is pretty darn important to you.

Ms. Robyn Benson: Yes.

Hon. John McKay: You use Quebec as the example, and the argument you made was that it enhances the participation of women in the workforce in Quebec. The rest of Canada doesn't have universal child care. So, presumably there should be some difference in the participation rate of women who work in Quebec and women who work in the rest of Canada. So, I'm curious, is that true? Or, is that not true? Is there some statistical proof of that?

Ms. Seema Lamba: The information that we have, what we do know, is that when Quebec instituted their child care there was quite a bit of an increase of women participating in the workplace. What we do know now is that seven out of 10 kids in Quebec under five have access to publicly-regulated spaces, which is a big difference in the type of child care that you get because they have early learning and they've got standards.

Hon. John McKay: I don't dispute that. But if you institute early child care and you have a bump in participation—and there is historical record now probably in excess of 10 years—you should see a difference between female participation rates in Quebec and female participation rates in the rest of the country.

• (1650)

Ms. Seema Lamba: Yes.

Hon. John McKay: Is that true? I don't know.

Ms. Seema Lamba: There is some difference, but I'm going to be honest, it isn't a significant difference if that's what you're looking for. There are some differences province by province, and there would be different reasons for it. We can get back to you on that if you want.

Hon. John McKay: Putting aside the benefits of day care for kids and all that sort of stuff, that seems to me to be a pretty significant issue. If in fact the preference is to make it as easy as possible for women to participate in the workforce, you would have thought that by now you'd be able to see a statistically significant gap between the participation rates of women in Quebec and the participation rates of women in the rest of Canada.

Ms. Seema Lamba: We can get back to you on that, if you're interested.

Hon. John McKay: Okay. So you don't have—

Ms. Robyn Benson: We certainly don't have the statistics here, but I would imagine that it wouldn't be that difficult to research. We'll put it into our brief.

Hon. John McKay: Chair, I obviously don't belong to this committee, but it seems to me that's a pretty interesting piece of data, to know whether there is that, because it's a pretty significant debate in this country.

The second thing that kind of caught my ear was something you said about Bill C-10, that a union cannot...I took it as "represent" your membership in pay equity cases.

Could you explain that to me, please?

Ms. Robyn Benson: The changes that took place now have dictated, if you will, that unions can no longer represent their members in a pay equity complaint. Should we counsel or should we try to represent them, then it's a \$10,000 fine.

What the PSECA says is that they want unions to negotiate pay equity at the table. Well, it's not something that you negotiate, because you certainly don't give up pay equity for something else. When you go to the negotiating table, you go there with some give and take. Pay equity is not an issue that would ever be negotiated. We disagree with that.

But PSECA does clearly say that if we are to represent our members, then the fine is \$10,000.

Hon. John McKay: Is that \$10,000 period, \$10,000 per day, or...?

Ms. Seema Lamba: It's \$50,000, but I forget whether it's a day or...

Ms. Robyn Benson: I'm sorry, it is \$50,000.

I should have known that.

Hon. John McKay: Are you fined if that representation takes place outside of normal bargaining?

Ms. Robyn Benson: I can tell you what happened before PSECA. For example, PSAC filed a pay equity complaint 30 years ago for Canada Post. It's the most recent one, and it was just accomplished last year. We represented that all the way through, through all of the courts.

If that were to take place now, if we as the PSAC filed the pay equity complaint, we would receive a fine. It clearly articulates that we are not to represent. What they want now is for it to be negotiated versus done via pay equity complaint, if you will, through the courts.

Hon. John McKay: So in effect the access to legal recourse for pay equity has been cut off by Bill C-10.

Ms. Seema Lamba: An individual can file a pay equity complaint, which is actually pretty much impossible. The reason unions file pay equity cases is that it takes a lot of resources and analysis and expertise to do it. For an individual to do it, it will be very, very difficult.

Hon. John McKay: What about an individual in the form of a class action?

Ms. Seema Lamba: I'm not sure whether or not that process would allow that; I'm not sure.

Hon. John McKay: Are there a number of outstanding pay equity claims going unrepresented at this point, or uninitiated?

• (1655)

Ms. Seema Lamba: I don't know.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

After consultation with the members and since our previous guests had a certain amount of time at their disposal, I will end the meeting.

Thank you very much, Ms. Benson and Ms. Lamba. I also want to thank the members of the committee.

We will reconvene on Tuesday, May 26, at 3:30 p.m., in the same room, to discuss our report on eating disorders.

I wish you all a good week in your ridings.

The meeting is adjourned.

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