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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)): I want to welcome the minister and, as well, Anthony Housefather. It's lovely to have you on the committee today, Anthony.

Welcome to the 18th committee meeting of the Standing Committee on Status of Women.

The meeting today is taking place in our usual hybrid format pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. The webcast will always show the person speaking, rather than the entirety of the committee.

For members who are on Zoom, remember to mute your mike when you're not speaking.

Along with Minister Filomena Tassi, to talk to us we have, from the Department of Employment and Social Development, Barbara Moran, the acting assistant deputy minister, and Lori Straznicki, the executive director.

To begin, we'll give the minister five minutes, and then we'll go into our rounds of questions.

Ms. Tassi, you may start.

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour): Thanks, Madam Chair.

Good morning. It's fantastic to see each and every one of you. I want to begin by thanking you for the work you are doing.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging that I am participating from the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabe people, within the territory covered by the Upper Canada treaties as well as the Dish With One Spoon wampum agreement.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to appear today to speak about the progress we are making with respect to the implementation of the Pay Equity Act.

As you know, we introduced the Pay Equity Act as part of Bill C-86 in 2018.

[Translation]

The act represents a big step forward in our efforts to address the portion of the gender wage gap that is due to the undervaluation of women's work. Since it received royal assent in December 2018, we have been working hard to implement it.

[English]

As part of this process, we are developing the supporting regulations required to bring the act into force.

The draft pay equity regulations were pre-published in part I of the Canada Gazette in November 2020 for a 60-day comment period. The typical comment period is 30 days. The government opted to extend the comment period so that stakeholders had ample time, given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, to review the proposed regulations and to submit their feedback.

Pay equity is a legacy we will leave to future generations. We are being very careful to get it right.

Stakeholders were keen to provide comments on the proposed regulations. In fact, we received over 30 submissions from employers, unions, advocacy groups and individuals. At this time, we are carefully considering all the comments received in order to finalize the regulations. We should be seeing the new proactive pay equity regime come into force later this year.

Once it is in force, an employer will have three years to develop a pay equity plan and determine if employees are owed pay increases. This means that pay equity plans would be in place in 2024 in workplaces that become subject to the act the day it comes into force. Employees would immediately be owed any increases in compensation at that time as well.

I understand that at first glance three years may seem like a long time; however, I want to make a couple of points on this.

First and foremost, let us note that Canada is taking a leadership role in implementing this legislation. We firmly believe that this transformational legislation is the right thing to do as well as the smart thing to do.

Second, we must appreciate that this requires employers to understand assessments and compare the value of work, which includes factors such as skills, effort, responsibility and work conditions. This cannot be done overnight. This takes time if we want to get it right.

Third, given the current circumstances that we are in the midst of a pandemic, and businesses are shifting resources and priorities to address pressing needs, a little bit more time is required for them to adapt to the new requirements. This time will enable employers to establish their plans and put in the required time to get this right and to implement pay equity properly.

Moving forward with pay equity is a key priority for the Government of Canada. Pay equity is a significant change in how people are compensated for their work, and we all know that it's long overdue. The Pay Equity Act will help reduce the gender wage gap and bring our country a step closer to gender equality. However, achieving pay equity is a complex issue, and we must take the necessary steps to get it right.

I can assure you that while Canada continues to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, pay equity is a priority and a foundation stone for building back better. We are working together to create an economy where everyone can fulfill their full potential. Workers, employers and the Canadian economy will all benefit when women are paid for the full value of their work.

It would be my pleasure to answer any questions the committee may have.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1105)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Now we will go into our first round of questions of six minutes each, starting with Ms. Sahota.

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Minister, I'd like to thank you for finally appearing before our committee today considering the length of time it took and numerous reschedules.

Nonetheless, we're glad you're here to answer our questions about the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report entitled "Fiscal Analysis of Federal Pay Equity" and the implementation of the Pay Equity Act.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Excuse me, Madam Chair.

[English]

The interpreter can't hear the English and interpret in French.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Is this better? Can you hear me?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Stephanie Bond): Perhaps begin your question and we'll see.

Ms. Jag Sahota: I'll start over from the beginning.

This doesn't go toward my time, does it, Madam Chair?

The Chair: No, we'll be generous.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Thank you.

In budget 2018 and the 2018 fall economic statement, your government allotted money to pay for the new administrative framework for the act, yet no details were provided. According to the PBO, his office requested the documents that contained specific information on the number of employees by classification group and the composition, whether it's female dominated or male dominated.

The government refused to turn that information over, citing cabinet confidence because that type of information would have been presented to cabinet and/or cabinet committee when discussing this legislation.

However, considering it was just a dataset, the PBO used a simple example as to why he didn't believe the government's response. He said:

If you attach a Globe and Mail article to a memorandum to cabinet, of course it's a confidence of the Queen's Privy Council, a cabinet confidence. It doesn't mean that you have to take back all of the issues within that Globe and Mail or newspaper because somebody discussed a Globe and Mail article at cabinet.

The PBO was of the opinion that the type of information that he requested fell under that type of classification and did not believe that the information would have been damaging to the secrecy of cabinet deliberations.

Given the PBO's opinion that the information should have been open and accessible, can you please explain why your government felt that it needed to hide the information the PBO requested? Were you aware that by refusing to turn these documents over, you were preventing the PBO from being able to fulfill his legislative mandate?

• (1110)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: In the fall economic statement, there was a commitment of \$26.6 million over six years with \$5.8 million thereafter with respect to oversight and administrative costs.

With respect to the question that you are raising, it's my understanding that the request was made to the President of the Treasury Board. The President of the Treasury Board had indicated that the information would not be shared because of cabinet confidence. I take cabinet confidence very seriously. I know that was the reason. The information was not shared for that reason.

I'm not sure the request was made to our office—the labour department. I could turn to my officials for that, but I know that the President of the Treasury Board had indicated cabinet confidence as the reason.

I don't know if my officials want to add anything to that.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Can you talk to your colleagues and maybe release that information, or commit to releasing it?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: What I would say is this: cabinet confidence is critical.

I have great respect for cabinet confidence, and if it is declared that cabinet confidence prevails, then we have to have that, and information cannot be shared.

It would really undermine the way that we proceed. If my colleague is indicating that it is cabinet confidence, it's the very reason that underlines the reason that information is not shared, then I absolutely support that because I am a strong believer in cabinet confidence.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister, I am going to read the quote from the Parliamentary Budget Officer again, as to why he didn't believe the government's response. He said, "If you attach a Globe and Mail article to a memorandum to cabinet, of course it's a confidence of the Queen's Privy Council, a cabinet confidence. It doesn't mean that you have to take back all of the issues within that Globe and Mail or newspaper because somebody discussed a Globe and Mail article at cabinet."

That's what you seem to be saying, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer doesn't believe that.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: I think that the issue here is what is cabinet confidence?

I know that my colleague has indicated that the information that was requested fell into cabinet confidence.

There may be dispute as to what cabinet confidence is, this is what you're talking about. But I support my colleague in his assertion that this is cabinet confidence, and I'm a strong believer in adhering to cabinet confidence. We cannot release information that is going to undermine—

Ms. Jag Sahota: It's just data that he is looking for. Anyway let's go to the next question, as it seems like you're not going to answer my first question.

Because of your deliberate withholding of these documents, the PBO had to use alternative sources to estimate the costs of implementing the act, and estimated that it would start at \$477 million and with the additional employee benefit it would increase to \$621 million. However, as the PBO said in committee, the cost could be higher because of the lack of information, and only the government would be in a position to best inform us.

Minister, can you please tell us how much this piece of legislation will cost?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Let me begin by saying this is historic legislation.

We know that women receiving pay for work of equal value is something that our government strongly believes in, and we have taken a strong stance on this, and have continued to move on this legislation because it is long overdue.

We are looking forward to full implementation. We believe that all partners are on board for this, everyone wants to see this because we know it's not only the right thing to do—

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister—

Hon. Filomena Tassi: ...it's the smart thing to do.

So we are going to continue to move forward with this legislation.

Ms. Jag Sahota: That's not my question, Minister. If it is so historic, why are you hiding information from Canadians?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: There's no information that's being hidden.

As I said in the previous response, if cabinet confidence is what prevents the release of information, then we have to respect that.

Ms. Jag Sahota: I just asked you a simple question.

The Chair: We have to move on.

We're going to Ms. Sidhu.

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

Thank you for joining us today, Minister, and always being available, our third minister being available to us, showing that our committee is very important.

As someone who was a member of the pay equity committee that passed a recommendation in 2018, I'm proud of our committee's record on the transparency measures, and the pay equity legislation.

I think it is worth mentioning that our federal government has been the most proactive in history on the issue of pay equity after robust consultation with workers, stakeholders and employers.

Minister, you said the pay equity is our legacy, it's historic legislation.

My first question is about the legislation's impact on our economy.

Minister, how will the proactive pay equity regulations support the growth of the Canadian economy, and the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic?

• (1115)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: There's no question that women's participation in the workforce is a win on all counts. When women are a part of the workforce, the economy grows stronger and economic gains are made. It's not just morally the right thing to do; it's the economically prudent thing to do.

Canadian women are among the world's most educated. Over the last 40 years, greater participation of women in the workforce has accounted for about one-third of Canada's economic growth. Canada could add an estimated \$150 billion to the economy in the next decade by taking steps for greater gender equality in the workforce, so economically there's no question that this is an advantage.

It's also an advantage to women, in terms of providing them with equal pay for work of equal value. Employers, at the end of the day, are going to benefit as well. There's going to be increased productivity, increased retention and, as I just mentioned, increased growth.

This legislation is a win-win. I'm very happy that it's our government that has moved forward with this legislation, and I look forward to its full implementation.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you, Minister.

Minister, some provinces have their own pay equity system. In Manitoba and the Maritimes, they cover the public sector. In Ontario and Quebec, they cover the public and private sectors.

Would you be able to comment on the lessons learned from the rollout in these provinces that explain why we would not want to rush this legislation?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: This is a very important point. This legislation is going to cover 1.32 million workers across this country.

As I said in my opening remarks, it is complex. We are moving forward. It talks about equal pay for work of equal value. It's not a situation where you're looking at crane drivers, male and female, and paying them the same amount of money. You're looking at different job classes and then trying to make a comparison. You're looking at the crane driver and the clerk. You're looking at the secretary and the caretaker or janitor.

This is a complicated and complex evaluation that needs to be done by employers. It is critical that we get it right, which is why, for example, we appointed the first pay equity commissioner, Ms. Jensen. I know she's been in front of this committee and has testified. Her work and that of her team is going to be invaluable, because it's going to support the employers that are going to be implementing this legislation.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

I know that our government is committed to ensuring effective implementation and enforcement of proactive pay equity for federally regulated workplaces.

Minister, what steps have already been taken to ensure pay equity is done the right way?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: This would go to the work that Ms. Jensen and her team are doing. This is about coming up with tools and supports for employers, so that when it comes time for them to prepare their pay equity plans, we are supporting them in a way that is going to make this successful.

As I have said, this is transformational legislation. This is going to impact generations to come. It is critical that we get this right, which is why Ms. Jensen's team is so important. They will be providing employers with the support and the tools they need, so that whichever approach they take in terms of the method of doing the calculations is supported, and they will be guided every step of the way. We have a very significant opportunity here, and it's critical that we get it right.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you, Minister.

As you have said—and all members of our committee would agree—Canadian women are among the world's highest educated, and education could be one of the greatest tools to increase labour participation and pay equity.

What further investment into education and training for our young women and girls do you believe is necessary to unlock this

economic potential, as Canada is set to begin its post-COVID economic recovery process?

• (1120)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: That's an excellent question, because what it demonstrates is that this is one part of a package. There are many layers to this.

At the end of the day, we want to ensure that women are supported every step of the way so that their full potential can be realized in the workforce. When we do that, the gains are going to be exponential. Not only do we have personal gain for a woman who is given the opportunity to fulfill her full potential, but there are also the impacts that we're going to feel across this country. I am very excited about that.

The Chair: That's your time.

[*Translation*]

We'll now go to Ms. Normandin.

Good morning, Ms. Normandin.

You have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Madam Minister, for being with us.

It's a pleasure to join your group at the last minute to ask a few questions. The first one is about the plan that employers are going to have to put in place. To do this, they'll need to establish job categories that will group positions according to certain criteria, such as similar duties or responsibilities, similar skill level, compensation or rate of pay, for instance.

I draw a parallel with bargaining units in the union world. When, for example, someone considers that they aren't part of the right bargaining unit, there's a process in place and that challenge can go to court. I'd like to know if there's something similar in this case.

What options are available to workers who consider themselves to be in the wrong category?

[*English*]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: This is an excellent question.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much for your question.

[English]

This is a part of ensuring that we get this right. What is required in workplaces is that employers, if there are 100 employees or more, or a union, if there are 10 to 99 employees with a union, have to set up a committee at the workplace. That committee will work together to ensure that this important work is done right. Issues such as what mechanism is going to be used, whether we are going to do an equal average or we are going to do the regressive line and how we will evaluate the conditions of the work or the value of the work are all part of this planning committee, and the pay equity commissioner will be there to support the work. She and her team are providing tools to the employer and the employee committees so that they can come together with a response that works. This is where the time is required, because, as I said before, you're comparing completely different occupations, and we want to ensure that the voices are heard so that we get that comparison right. The pay equity commissioner will oversee the implementation and the enforcement of the act, and she and her team will be there at all times to assist.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I'd like to pursue my question further.

I imagine it won't always be perfect and there won't always be an agreement between the committee and the employer, for example. There may be differences of opinion that can't be reconciled.

In cases like that, is there a mechanism in place to address the issue or, at the very least, to impose certain categorizations in a more coercive way?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: The hope, of course, is that these parties can come together and that they can reach an agreement, and this is why we are affording them the time in order to do the work. The pay equity commissioner will be giving them the tools, so it's not that they're going to sit around a table and not have any support. They will actually have tools in place that will help them with these evaluations. The idea is to provide them with all the supports that we can to get them to a place where agreement is made.

I will turn to my officials now to ask if there's anything that I have missed which might be part of the regulations, which could be added to my response.

• (1125)

Ms. Barbara Moran (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Labour Program, Policy, Dispute Resolution and International Affairs Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you, Minister.

What I would say is that you are exactly right. The pay equity commissioner is there to help support the parties in reaching consensus if they aren't able to.

I would actually turn to Lori Straznicky to see if she can add anything from the legislation itself that can provide greater details.

Ms. Lori Straznicky (Executive Director, Workplace and Labour Relations Policy Division, Labour Program, Department of Employment and Social Development): I'm happy to.

If there is a dispute between the parties at committee, then there are mechanisms for the parties to ask the pay equity commissioner and her team to provide them with dispute resolution services to help them work through the dispute and then come to a decision with the pay equity commissioner's support.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: So my understanding is correct, that there are other dispute resolution mechanisms that can be used, but there's no final forum when an agreement isn't reached.

Is that correct?

[English]

Ms. Lori Straznicky: The pay equity commissioner would be able to issue a decision if one was needed and the parties weren't able to arrive at an agreement through the alternate dispute resolution mechanism.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: That decision would have the force of law, as I understand it.

[English]

Ms. Lori Straznicky: It would be. Then questions of law could go to the human rights tribunal, if there were concerns there.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Great.

I'd like to ask you one last quick question. Employers have been given three years to come up with a plan. Why three years?

That can be very long for some companies and very short for others. There could have been a shorter time frame for small companies.

Why is it three years?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: I think that's the outside time. We are allowing companies three years to come up with this plan. As I have said, the reason for that is because of the complexity.

It doesn't stop agreements from being made and a plan prepared and posted earlier than that. I would say that, particularly with the pandemic, there have been many federally regulated employers and workers who have been hit very hard by this. This three years is important because it ensures that the supports are there and the time to do this right is available. It ensures that, at the end of the day, the plans that are posted are going to be wholesome plans that are reflective of the goal we are trying to reach, which is that women are going to be paid equally.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We're going to Ms. Mathysen now for six minutes.

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

Thank you to the minister and the departmental officials.

Clearly, there's a lot of frustration. It was only a few months ago that we were celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Pay equity was mentioned then. In 1977, equal pay for equal work was enshrined in the Canadian Human Rights Act. Then, of course, we had to wait until 2018 for legislation to be introduced on pay equity. We've now waited an additional three years for regulations to come into play. These were promised in January. When I asked the question in the House, we were told it would be later in the fall. You've repeated that again today.

You've also said that this is a moral and economic imperative. For me, this is a clear and continued violation of human rights. Women are not paid equally for work of equal value in those federally regulated workplaces.

When you say later in the fall, that vagueness is extremely unhelpful. Do you have any more of a specific date that you could provide this committee, that you know of, when we would actually stop violating those human rights?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Thanks, MP Mathyssen, for that question. I appreciate your passion on this.

From the outset, I have indicated the importance of getting this right. There is no question of our government's commitment to move forward on this. Because of the impact that this can have for future generations, it is critical that we get it right.

I challenge you in terms of the timing piece. The 2004 Bilson report came out. Since we took office, we had a special parliamentary committee on pay equity, which was in 2016. Following that, we had consultations. This is a file where consultations are important. We want to work collaboratively. We want to ensure that everyone has a say because it's critical that we get this right—

• (1130)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: You know, I can understand that absolutely—

Hon. Filomena Tassi: In 2018, we provided the consultation report, the “What We Heard Report”, and in 2018 we passed the legislation.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: I can understand that you want to be comprehensive, however, the laws are clear. We've known this information for a great deal of time. We've known for over 50 years now. Study after study doesn't help women get past this violation of human rights.

Employers now have three years to draft plans. There's an additional potential five years. This means that pay equity could actually potentially take until 2029-30. This is significant. This doesn't just have an impact on an individual's paycheque or month-to-month salary. This actually has longer term consequences. We saw that the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association filed their complaints in 1992 and it took almost 30 years to rectify. They're still dealing with these cases. In a lot of the cases, the estates of these women are being awarded back pay because they've died in the meantime.

Could you tell this committee what your government's plans are to rectify this injustice and to take into account the long-term impacts for women on their pensions and on their benefits? What are you going to do to reduce the long-term costs because of your continual delays?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Our government has moved forward on pay equity legislation because we believe in it strongly.

In terms of the timing of this, we've been acting on this from the beginning. As I said, the House of Commons had the special committee in 2016. We consulted, we did a “What We Heard Report”. In the same year, we presented the legislation and passed the legislation. What you are saying in terms of the future of women, that is about to change in terms of economy.

We are now going to put fair compensation in the pockets of women, and yes, it's going to increase their pensions, their benefits are going to be increased. This is what makes this so transformational.

We are the government that moved forward in this regard, and I am very happy about that.

Legislation was passed in 2018. We are in the midst of a pandemic, and notwithstanding that, we are still moving forward. Why? It's because we believe so strongly in this legislation, and we will continue to advocate.

This is one piece, among many, in terms of how our government is moving forward to ensure that women in the workplace are supported.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: And yet, it's still extremely slow. It could be much faster, and it could be done with far more efficacy.

Ultimately, as both a legislator and an employer, this is again about human rights, and that has been known for a great deal of time, and there's been such slow progress. I love sloths, they are adorable, but the speed at which they move is painful, and this is actually costing women a great deal of money.

Going forward, I'm quite grateful to see that there is movement. However, I'd like to address another issue as well. For most employees who are eligible to receive this pay equity adjustment that will be seen as of the posting of pay equity plans, could you talk to this committee about whether there any plans to pay retroactively this adjustment because of the length, again, of time that it's taking.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: I completely disagree with you on the timing piece.

Again, it's transformative legislation. We have acted on this since 2015. We continue to move forward and we're going to get this right.

In terms of timing, employers have three years.

If the plan is posted before, then that's when the clock starts to run and the amounts are due.

With respect to the extra time, those are—

The Chair: I'm sorry, that's your time.

We're going to move on now to our second round of questions, starting with Ms. Sahota for five minutes.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister, I'm just going to build on what my colleague, MP Mathysen, said.

The PBO report mentioned that in some instances there was a short-change of \$3.00 an hour. Over their lifetime, this significantly impacts their pension, as was confirmed by the PBO.

Considering this bill was passed in 2018—three years ago—and the coming into force is still another three years away, if this were to come into force this year, this means for six years women have been making \$6,000 less a year, for a total of \$36,000.

Again, Minister, this was your government's legislation. How comfortable are you that women will be treated as “less than” their male counterparts under your watch?

• (1135)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: With all due respect, MP Sahota, we are moving forward on this so that women are compensated as fairly and equally as are men.

We have been working on this from the very beginning.

In terms of the timing piece, in three years, yes, there is additional time for companies that have more than 1% to pay to employees, but when that time runs out, the money is still owed. They're just given the extra time.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister—

Hon. Filomena Tassi: This is important because this is also about job creation and preservation, and we want to ensure that companies have the—

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister, you're not answering my question—

Hon. Filomena Tassi: opportunity—

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister—

Hon. Filomena Tassi: to ensure that employers have the ability—

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister—

Hon. Filomena Tassi: [*Inaudible-Editor*]

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister, I'm going to ask you another question. Maybe you can answer that.

The Pay Equity Act was passed in 2018, and was a piece of government legislation, meaning before it was tabled there would have been discussions with cabinet, cabinet committees and departmental officials.

One would have also thought that this would also have meant that the government would have been fully prepared for implementing the new law.

That's not to mention, as my colleague from the Bloc pointed out, that Quebec has had a provincial law on the books since 1996, meaning the federal government didn't need to necessarily reinvent the wheel.

When I asked the PBO if this should have been done sooner, he said:

It was the government's own legislation, so they knew this was coming. I'm convinced they could have drafted and implemented regulations more quickly and had an earlier coming into force. Why that was not the case, I don't know.

Minister, why was it that it took so long? We are now over three years since the legislation passed. Was it because it's easier to say you were standing up for women in the workforce than to actually do something?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Again, I disagree with your comment and the accusation that it's taken a long time. We have been working on this—

Ms. Jag Sahota: That's what the PBO says.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: —from the beginning.

Let me say this. I think that, when Ms. Jensen came and explained to this committee the complexity of ensuring that this legislation is implemented in a way that is going to make a difference for generations to come, you can appreciate the level of work that has gone into this. We had a special parliamentary committee. In fact, our chair sat on it. MP Sidhu sat on that committee as well, I know. That information was taken, because we don't want to rush this. This is an opportunity—

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister—

Hon. Filomena Tassi: —that we have that is going to impact generations to come, so the commitment is to get it right.

Ms. Jag Sahota: We also know that there was no commissioner until about 10 months ago. What do you have to say about that?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: No, in fact, the pay equity commissioner was appointed in 2019. Her appointment was renewed in October, and she and her team have been working very hard on compiling the tools that are needed. I have had discussions with her, and she is doing a fantastic job and is preparing the tools and the supports that are needed to ensure that employers are going to have the ability to implement this in a successful way, and that's exactly what we want.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Madam Chair, do I have time or not?

The Chair: You have twenty seconds.

Ms. Jag Sahota: I'll give you a chance to answer my previous question. Do you know how much this piece of legislation will cost?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: I think I've given the testimony already in terms of the oversight, and it's \$5 million. The administrative cost is \$9 million. The FES designated \$26.6 million over six years. Women, at the end of the day, are going to benefit from this, and not only women—

Ms. Jag Sahota: You keep on saying it—

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Sidhu.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Let the minister answer that, with due respect. We all want to listen.

The Chair: It's the end of her time, so we're coming to you now, and you can ask the same question, if you would like, Ms. Sidhu.

You have five minutes.

• (1140)

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): It's my turn.

The Chair: Oh, Ms. Zahid, okay.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Thank you, Chair.

I will give a big thank you to the minister and officials for appearing before the committee. Thank you for all of the work that you are doing on this important issue.

I'm really proud to be part of a government that recognizes the importance of equal pay for work of equal value.

We started this work when we came into power in 2015, whereas no work had been done by the previous government on pay equity. The colleagues from the NDP and the Conservative Party voted against Bill C-86 on pay equity back in 2018.

Thank you, Minister, for all the work that has been done in the last few years on this.

We understand that pay equity standards are not yet found in many businesses, though many are working towards that. We know that this needs to change as we work collectively towards practices that are more equitable.

Minister, can you please speak to the benefits for the employers of transitioning to meet pay equity standards? How can employers evaluate their practices and business cultures today on their path to achieving greater equity in the workplace?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: I think we have to recognize the importance of supporting employers as we take these significant steps and encourage consultations to take place so that this is successful. A collaborative approach is the best approach. I believe that this provides an opportunity for employers to demonstrate their commitment to gender equality.

Now, do they need the tools? Of course they need the tools, and that's why the work of the commissioner and her team is going to be so important. It's going to foster diversity in the workplace. It's going to increase productivity. It's going to increase retention, and it's going to increase women's participation in the workforce. At the end of the day, we know the importance of that for the economy. Women's greater participation in the workforce is absolutely going to strengthen the economy. For women themselves, it's going to increase self-esteem. It is going to increase retirement savings. It is

going to increase benefits. It is going to increase pensions. All these things are about to take place because of the transformative legislation that we are bringing about.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: The implementation of this legislation will ensure that women in Canada will be able to count on equal pay for work of equal value, which is long overdue for many women. We know that this inequality has had real effects on their careers, their livelihoods, and their mental well-being. As we are trying to navigate through this pandemic, we have seen that it has impacted women more than men. For full recovery, we need to have a “she-recovery”.

Minister, can you please speak to how pay equity will impact particularly senior women, women of colour and minority women in Canada? In those cases, the gap is even higher as compared to men. Many of them have been impacted the most by the lack of pay equity. Can you please speak to how it will help them?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Yes. We use the figure of 89¢. This is generally the figure that we use: 89¢ is what a woman is earning per dollar compared to a man. As Ms. Bezanson pointed out in her testimony, that gap is even greater when you start looking at intersectionality and at how other layers come into force here: seniors, racialized women, indigenous women and women with disabilities. I think the figure Ms. Bezanson used was actually 54¢ per dollar.

This legislation is going to change that. This legislation is going to make that pay equal for all women in the federally regulated sector that this applies to. In addition, I think it's important to talk about the work that our government has done to further support women, and that is pay transparency—

• (1145)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Minister. That is the end of her question time.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Larouche, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): To begin, I'd like to thank my colleague from Saint-Jean, who replaced me at a moment's notice.

I've followed the discussions a little. There was a lot of discussion about the distinctiveness of Quebec and the fact that Quebec already has that. There was also talk about the three-year deadline.

What support could your department offer to private companies or the government to achieve effective implementation and even aim to reduce delays?

I understand that we're in a pandemic situation and that times are difficult. However, because of the pandemic, women need it more than ever. How could we speed up the process and provide better support? How could your department help?

[English]

Hon. Filomena Tassi: I will respond, and then I will let my officials speak if they have anything to add.

This is where the pay equity commissioner is so important. It is to help provide employers with the tools they need in order to come up with a pay equity plan as quickly as possible, but as thoroughly as possible. It involves the establishment of committees in certain instances, so we want those groups to work collaboratively together to come up with this plan. We are providing the support of the pay equity commissioner.

Barb, do you have anything to add to that?

Ms. Barbara Moran: Thanks, Minister. I would just add that the time frame was developed, as you said, to allow time for the development of the committees and so on.

As for what the pay equity commissioner is doing, she is actively developing a whole range of different educational tools and supports. In particular, there are some supports that are under development for some of the medium-sized and smaller businesses to help support them in preparing this. Undertaking a pay equity plan is exceptionally complex. Through your timeline, they will really need to be able to do a full job of it.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Larouche, you have 30 seconds left.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Okay.

I've already mentioned that this pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women and that the employment sector has been much more affected. The financial situation of women, particularly senior women, is precarious. Our duty is to remember that women have been penalized for too long compared to men, for equal work.

Believe me, all I want right now is for this bill to move forward. I refute the Liberals' suggestion that the Bloc doesn't want to move this forward—

The Chair: You're out of time, Ms. Larouche.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: We're with you and want the legislation to be applied quickly.

[English]

The Chair: Now we're going to Ms. Mathysen for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Interestingly, it was mentioned that New Democrats and Conservatives voted against this legislation. I would like to note that it was in an omnibus bill of 900 pages—a budget implementation bill—where there were simply too many things that we couldn't support. I think that those points are potentially forgotten by Liberals, but not by the NDP.

I'd like to get back to a question that I didn't really receive answer to. Because of all the delays and because of the slow-moving legislation, is your government looking into or prepared to provide any sort of back pay or retroactive pay on the pay equity adjust-

ments that should be received by women through this legislation once plans are created?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: With all due respect, we've been moving forward with this legislation from the beginning, with respect to the pay equity special committee and the consultations. It's critical we get this right.

I understand that everybody wants this implemented yesterday, but we have an opportunity here that we have to seize. We are seizing it. We are going to get it right because our kids and our grand-kids are going to have the benefits of the legislation we are passing.

In terms of your question specifically, companies have three years to come up with a plan with their committees and post those plans. If they come up with those plans before and the plan is approved, that's when the payment starts. If they require extra time, the payment still runs at the three-year mark.

If the cost is significant for that company, it gives that company time to ensure that they can pay those funds, but those funds would be retroactive to the date of the three-year mark. This is about preserving those jobs. We don't want jobs to be lost in this. We want to ensure that women have more opportunities and more jobs.

That's the timing piece.

• (1150)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: The responsibility will fall on companies, but not on the government because of potential delays or the lack of movement on the regulations that were supposed to happen back in January.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: I don't understand the point about it falling on companies.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Ultimately, if you're talking about any sort of retroactive pay or adjustment, it's when they have those plans in place, but there's no responsibility upon the government for any kind of retroactive pay because of the delays of the regulations coming into force.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: The government's responsibility as the commissioner—

The Chair: That's the end of your time. I'm sorry.

Now we're going to go to Ms. Sahota for five minutes.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister, I'm just going to build on what my colleague, Ms. Mathysen, was talking about.

I asked you this before. With the six years that this law's been taking, every woman has lost about \$36,000 to date. Not only are they losing that amount, but there is also pension loss. What do you have to say about that?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: With all due respect, it's unfortunate that the previous government didn't implement this.

Ms. Jag Sahota: This government's not moving on this.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: We are moving on it.

Ms. Jag Sahota: In the past three years, not much has happened.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: I'll repeat myself. We have moved forward on this for the past three years. We've established a special committee that built on the Bilson report. We did consultations through the "What We Heard Report". We published that. We then moved forward with legislation in 2018.

We're in the midst of a pandemic and we're moving forward on proactive pay equity legislation because we believe in it and because we know it's going to be transformational for women. I'm wishing and hoping that the Conservatives will support us as we move forward.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister, you've been elected since 2015. That's six years.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: I've explained to you what we've done. We've built on the Bilson report. We had a special committee. Madam Chair was on that committee. MP Sidhu was on that committee. All parties were represented. They had the opportunity to provide a report. They did provide that report. This is important and it is critical that we get it right.

We needed that information. We needed that consultation period. We have been moving forward on this legislation since we took office. We are happy that we are now going to see full implementation, which is going to mean transformational change for women across this country.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister, don't you think women need more financial security during the pandemic?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Absolutely, so look at the things that we have implemented as a result. Pay transparency: that's going to shorten the wage gap. What does that mean? It means for women again another layer: paid fairly for the work they're doing. On skills training and investments in skills training, I've sat around tables that are all filled with women, and what are they all doing? They got to fulfill a dream of being in a profession, a trade—

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister, I'm going to quote what the PBO told me when he appeared before the committee. He said:

It was the government's own legislation, so they knew this was coming. I'm convinced they could have drafted and implemented regulations more quickly and had an earlier coming into force.

As to why this wasn't done, he said, "I don't know." The PBO is saying that he doesn't know why the government is not moving. You haven't even provided the information he requested. You've answered none of the questions I asked today.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: MP Sahota, I'm sorry you feel that way. I think I'm answering the questions you're asking very clearly. We have moved forward. You have a difference of opinion—

Ms. Jag Sahota: I have a question—

Hon. Filomena Tassi: We don't want to rush it. We want to make sure we get it right. We can't fail women this way.

Ms. Jag Sahota: Minister, you're failing women anyway, by not moving fast enough. I think I'm not the only one of the opinion that you're moving too slowly and you're failing women. Ms. Mathysen has said that, and some of my other colleagues believe the same.

If you're telling me that you're answering my questions, then I'm going to repeat the same question for a third time. Minister, can you

tell me how much this piece of legislation will cost? I know what numbers you've already provided. I just need to know the ballpark.

• (1155)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: With respect to women, let me say this. It's not only this piece of legislation and the cost. You talk about the cost. What is the cost of inaction? What is the cost of doing nothing? Our children and our grandchildren will have to bear that, and the economy loses out. This is why our government has moved forward on so many measures: pay transparency, skills training, Bill C-65, an Employment Equity Act review, child care—

Ms. Jag Sahota: Can I get an answer, please? Can I get an answer to my question?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: I will just say that I respect your opinion and appreciate your opinion, but I have to strongly disagree with what you are alleging in some of the things that you have said, and I am delighted that we are moving forward.

Ms. Jag Sahota: I've taken some of these quotes from the PBO.

The Chair: That's the end of your time. I'm sorry.

We will go now to Ms. Dhillon for five minutes.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Thank you, Minister Tassi. It's very nice to see you here.

We're hearing a lot about how this legislation should be rushed through. After waiting years and decades, do you not believe that if we're going to do it, we should do it right, and not in a way that will make us go backwards? If there are errors, they are going to cause even more delays and more disadvantages for women in the long run. Can you please speak to this?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: MP Dhillon, I agree a hundred per cent. We have an opportunity before us that is significant. It is incumbent upon us to get this absolutely right, which is why the engagement, the support of the pay equity commissioner, the consultations...and we will get this right. I have full confidence that this legislation is going to create change, that women are going to benefit for generations to come—our daughters, our granddaughters—and it's extremely important that we seize this opportunity.

We are the government that did move forward with this because we recognized the importance, and I actually believe that employers are with us. They now have the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to gender equality and we are going to work together to implement this transformational legislation, and we can all feel very proud about that.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Thank you very much.

I'd like to build on that a bit. You've mentioned many times—and it's the truth—that the pay equity commissioner is very important and that undertaking a pay equity plan is very complex. Can you speak a bit to this complexity and why it's prudent to take the time to put in comprehensive planification so that we can make sure things are done correctly? Why is it complex?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: This is the root, I think, of the differences of opinion. The complexity, I am hoping...that Ms. Jensen, when she gave her testimony, there was a greater appreciation.

Again, we are not talking about comparing two jobs that are the same. We're talking about taking jobs that by nature are completely different, and applying criteria to those jobs to determine what the pay should be. What is equal work of equal value? This comparator is complex. This comparator is getting information, bringing forward information and studying it in terms of the conditions of work, in terms of the value of the work. Then there are exemptions, such as seniority or specific programs. In addition to that, you have to determine which criteria, which formula, you will use. Two different formulas are presented, and you have to understand what those formulas are. If those formulas don't work, you have to opt for another formula.

This is not straightforward in terms of “we can do it overnight”. It is incumbent upon us...and I take this very seriously. We have to get this right. This is an opportunity that is a lifetime opportunity, and we are going to put the resources there in order to get it right.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Thank you very much, Minister.

When it comes to the pay equity commissioner, you've testified that there are tools being put in place to facilitate the work of the pay equity commissioner. Can you please talk to us a little bit about this?

Just in case I run out of time, I will ask my second question. It's about something you said that was very interesting. You were about to tell us what work our government has done, other than supporting pay equity, when you ran out of time. Can you tell us what other work our government has done?

• (1200)

Hon. Filomena Tassi: This work is extremely important. You don't fix it with one piece of legislation. You fix it with a holistic approach. This committee knows that more than any other in terms of women.

Look what we have done for supporting women in the workforce. There's pay transparency to tighten the wage gap for the four groups, women being one of the groups included. There's skills training, making significant investments so that if I want to be a welder or I want to be a framer, I'll be given that opportunity. I've sat around tables with women who have had these opportunities opened to them because of the investments this government has made. I can tell you that they have gotten a second lease on life. They are over the moon. They are able to fulfill their dreams.

There's Bill C-65, the Employment Equity Act review, the commitments to child care—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Minister. We are at the end of our time.

I really want to thank you for coming and for enlightening us about what's happening with pay equity.

Thank you as well to the members of the department.

We will suspend briefly while we do sound checks for our next panel on unpaid work.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Thank you, all. Have a great day.

• (1200) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1200)

The Chair: Welcome to our panel on unpaid work.

We're delighted to have with us Dr. Kate Bezanson and Camille Robert.

Welcome. We will give each of you five minutes to begin.

We'll start with you, Dr. Bezanson.

• (1205)

Dr. Kate Bezanson (Associate Professor and Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Brock University, As an Individual): Thank you so much.

Good afternoon, and thanks to the committee for this opportunity.

I bring greetings from Niagara, Ontario, the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabe peoples. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish With One Spoon wampum agreement.

In addition to offering gratitude and recognition for the land, I have taken in pandemic to also acknowledging care. Many in this virtual room have someone just off-screen who requires care, attention and support, or are able to be here because someone else is providing care, attention and support. Care work—its glories, challenges, limits and consequences—has been starkly revealed in the pandemic, and how we understand and support it is our subject today.

My name is Kate Bezanson. I'm an associate professor of sociology and associate dean of social sciences at Brock University. My areas of expertise are in social and family policy, constitutional law, political economy and social reproduction, or what is sometimes also called “care” or “care work”.

As you have heard from colleagues testifying to this and the gendered impacts of COVID meetings, there is a deep and usually gendered connection between care responsibilities and labour market attachment, advancement, outcomes and risks of poverty. In Canada, outside of Quebec, we largely have a dual-earner/female-carer model of reconciling work and care. Our relatively weak and uncoordinated pre-pandemic family policy contributed to the care vulnerabilities we see in the pandemic.

To address Canada's very first she-cession, among the most important policy tools is building a national system of early childhood education and care, and coordinating it with revisions to maternity and parental leaves. I hope that we can talk about both, and of course about social reproduction and care generally, but I'll focus on child care, given the time constraints.

There is a strong consensus that child care is the magic lever to address Canada's care crisis, to avert a gender-regressive economic recovery, to spur sustained economic growth and to enhance gender equality. This consensus extends more widely than ever before, with chambers of commerce, banks, civil society and international organizations calling for investments in child care.

Earlier this week, the Governor of the Bank of Canada indicated that investing in child care was a step to avert what he termed "economic scarring from the pandemic". The federal government has affirmed its commitment to long-term, Canada-wide system building, and that the time to do so is now.

Getting the outcomes that will support economic recovery and yield the promised economic and gender equality returns rests on, of course, a number of variables, including, first, addressing what I call "postal code social policy"; and second, committing to good policy design.

Canada faces the prospect of uneven labour market engagement capacity in which women in provinces and territories that currently have more mature child care systems can more readily recover, while others may falter or regress. This postal code social policy means that where Canadians live will be a determining factor in how and to what extent they and their respective economies recover. The economic consequences of this unevenness touch all levels of government, and the political risks of inaction on child care are shared across jurisdictions. Simply, if women's labour market position does not recover, the economy can't rebound, and that immense risk doesn't respect borders.

Of course, design matters to outcomes. Federal investments in child care, absent a vision for system building, can contribute to inaccessible, unaffordable, variable quality and inequality-enhancing child care delivery at provincial and territorial levels, using fiscal room on weak policy choices and extending child care patchworks.

The approach that should be followed can be summarized in a handy three-word mantra: fund the services. Federal funding should be directly provided to provinces and territories where the investment will grow and develop a quality child care system. There are no shortcuts. While there are competing visions of family policy—and family policy is politically fraught terrain—system development does not include cash for care, tax credits or vouchers that stimulate a low-wage, female, precarious child care labour market.

In every crisis, Canada has reimagined its federation. Pandemic federalism has demonstrated a renewed understanding of the fragility and resiliency of our federation and its shared values. Building strong and comprehensive family policy ensures a future that is better insulated against social and economic shocks. The federal government has indicated it's ready to fund what is required to build a system, and broad multisectoral support for a national child care system has never before been so robust. The time is, indeed, now.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Robert, you have the floor for five minutes.

• (1210)

Ms. Camille Robert (Historian, As an Individual): I would like to thank the members of the committee for having me here today.

My name is Camille Robert. I'm a doctoral student and history lecturer at the Université du Québec à Montréal. I've done research on the history of feminist mobilization for the recognition of housework.

[*English*]

The Chair: Excuse me.

Ms. Hutchings.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.): The translation is not working, Madam Chair.

Now it is.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Robert, you may speak in French. We have interpretation.

The Chair: You may continue.

Ms. Camille Robert: Is the interpretation working?

Good.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Still, I invite you to speak in French. You're from the Université du Québec à Montréal. So, we're happy to hear what you have to say. The interpretation service is for your use as well.

Ms. Camille Robert: I've done research on the history of feminist mobilization for the recognition of housework in Quebec. I also co-authored, with researcher Louise Toupin, a collective work on the invisible work of women today.

We've worked with activists and intellectuals from a variety of backgrounds. Each of them has made a contribution with a goal of proposing concrete courses of action. I've also delivered conferences and workshops, and participated in consultations with unions, organizations and community groups over the past few years. This has led to several conversations at the ground level.

My presentation today draws on these research experiences, which have been enriched by perspectives of other women I've met. I want to point that out.

It was probably from the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, the Bird commission, which released its report in 1970, that the Canadian government became more formally interested in women's unpaid work. It was seen as a barrier to their full integration into the labour market. Because of their household workload, there were significant inequalities between men and women in terms of pay, advancement and promotion, both in the public and private sectors. To remedy this, some of the Commission's recommendations were implemented, for example, the first maternity leave granted under unemployment insurance in 1971.

Other commission recommendations have yet to be implemented or are in the works, such as the creation of a public child care system at the federal level, the deconstruction of sexist stereotypes in education, or the granting of a personal pension to housewives under the Canada pension plan or the Quebec pension plan.

For feminist groups, from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s, three avenues were considered for the recognition of women's invisible work: wages for housework, socialization of services and government reforms. I can come back to each of these proposals during the question period. They are still important and can be used to understand the approaches favoured in the past.

In my research, I found that women's unpaid work has gradually been left as a political issue since the second half of the 1980s, as more and more women entered the labour market.

However, a number of problems have been left unresolved, including the impossibility of reconciling family, education and work, while women remain primarily responsible for raising and caring for children and the vulnerable people around them; the devaluation of traditionally female jobs, which are linked to the qualities generally expected of women in the private sphere; reducing the division of family tasks and responsibilities between spouses to a matter of individual arrangements—arrangements that would be determined based on individual preferences, rather than as a division based on gender, class, race and so on; and increasing inequality among women, with the growing use of migrant, immigrant and racialized workers to bridge the gap in “care”. I can come back to this concept later.

It must be said that, in crises such as the one we are currently experiencing with COVID-19, all these problems are exacerbated. Mothers telework while home-schooling their children, or racialized women find themselves on the front lines in seniors' residences and become ill due to the lack of personal protective equipment or the movement of staff between institutions, a situation that is particularly serious in Quebec.

All of this leads us to ask what changes need to be implemented so that women's invisible and unpaid work is more widely recognized. In terms of approaches to take, I would like to share with you a few points from the conclusion of our book *Travail invisible*.

To begin with, government, employers and even some social movements tend to view issues related to invisible work as a series of separate, detached issues, and therefore tend to consider piecemeal solutions.

However, if we are to implement concrete changes, it is imperative to understand the practice of invisible work in its entirety. This includes both labour law and labour relations, migration policies, education, family policies, funding of public services, accessibility of child care, the right to housing and government benefits, among others.

● (1215)

I'll give you a case in point. A young mother, at the end of her maternity leave, leaves a good unionized full-time job to go to a part-time job because she can't find a day care space. This woman also assumes responsibilities, for example, as a caregiver to her mother who is losing her independence, doesn't receive free home care services and can't afford a room in a private seniors' residence. This woman may return to work and then hire a live-in caregiver to care for her child and her mother, who may have moved in with her.

This situation is rather commonplace, but I think it shows how different forms of invisible, paid and unpaid work of women can be intertwined.

So decision-makers need to develop a vision in public policy—

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. That's the end of the time we have for you.

We are going to begin our rounds of questions for six minutes, starting with Alice Wong.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to both witnesses. I apologize for the technical challenges. These days we are all zoomed out, and so is our equipment. I think it's about time I had a new one.

I want to thank both witnesses for joining us this morning—morning in British Columbia, but of course afternoon in other parts of our great nation.

I have glanced through the International Labour Organization's report, which is 526 pages. Of course, I'm not quoting all of it, so don't worry about that. I would like to quote one line at least. "Care work, both paid and unpaid, is at the heart of humanity in our societies. Economies depend on care work to survive and thrive."

I think this is a good quote to start this last session of our five days of studies.

Why should we also look at the global scenario? It's not unique to Canada. It's all over the world now. We are looking at a much wider scope, in which unpaid carers can enjoy the rewards of care provision without paying social and economic penalties.

In your presentations, both of you mentioned that many family caregivers—we call them informal family caregivers—lose their productivity. This is especially the case when they are well educated and have well-paid jobs, yet they have to give up their jobs to go into part-time work so they can fulfill their caregiving responsibilities.

I would like to ask both of you what role you think the employer can play in making their employees who are caregivers more productive, but allowing them more support and also creating a working environment in which the other colleagues understand that if they are absent it's not because they are lazy. Very often their colleagues will say, "You're taking leave again, and I'm doing your job."

I would like one of you to shed light on this part.

Dr. Kate Bezanson: Of course, it's always important to centre our conversation on unpaid care in a global context. We know, of course, that the work of care—the work of social reproduction and the daily and generational production and reproduction of the population—is the stuff that keeps everything else going. It's the architecture that makes all of our market interactions and all of our aspirations possible.

Your question about the role for employers is a good one. Of course, there isn't one magic role for employers, because we have employment situations that are varying sizes, varying scales, varying locations and so on.

I can give a few examples of what is useful. Certainly, we know—and there's a theme to what I'm going to say—that supporting and speaking loudly in support of a child care system is of huge benefit to families with young children.

However, what we also see at the employer level is that employers can play a big role in both supporting caregivers and creating a culture where care is shared. One question that often comes up is how we can encourage fathers, for example, to take more paid leave and to take more time for caregiving. It can start at the very first conversation a prospective parent has with his or her employer or HR department, where that employer assumes they will take the maximum amount of leave.

• (1220)

The conversation is not then that the person seeking to take, for example, parental leave or leave to care feels that they have to negotiate the smallest amount possible, but the conversation begins with assuming the maximum amount and creating a culture where

care is shared among employees. That can go some good distance in beginning to shift those kinds of gender norms in households and care work.

Another thing is being cautious about working from home and flexibility. Sometimes it has not worked out super well for women. The lack of face time and the lack of opportunities for the kinds of conversations that would lead to promotion tend not to be necessarily evenly shared, so there are some gender cautions there as well.

Hon. Alice Wong: My next question covers a wider scope, coming back to our own country.

In what ways are specific groups of women, such as women living with disabilities, indigenous women, or immigrant, refugee and newcomer women, affected by the unpaid work and care responsibilities in particular?

That is a huge question, so both of you can pick and choose which area you'd like to comment on.

Thank you.

The Chair: Camille.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Camille Robert: I'll answer the first question to start.

Access to child care is fundamental to employment and child care responsibilities.

On the employer side, there is the whole issue of flexibility. It seems to me that over the last few decades this flexibility has been done in a one-way fashion to benefit employers. Employment has become very precarious. Conversely, employers haven't adapted well to the growing presence of women in the labour market. As a result, it's often up to women to shoulder family responsibilities, even if it means taking part-time and lower-paying jobs.

I also think it's necessary overall to—

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay. That's the end of our time for that question.

Mr. Serré.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses, who have given us some good information today.

My first question is for Dr. Bezanson.

Dr. Bezanson, you talked about fathers and the culture of shared parental leave. For my part, I have already mentioned to the committee the challenges I faced when my daughters were born in 1994 and 1997. I still took a short parental leave, even though I wasn't entitled to it.

Can you talk about what our federal government has done recently with respect to shared parental leave?

Do you have any other recommendations for us so that we can make a difference in this regard and ensure that child care is shared within couples?

Dr. Kate Bezanson: Thank you for the question.

If I may, I'll answer in English.

Mr. Marc Serré: Go ahead.

[English]

Dr. Kate Bezanson: There has been some really important progress at the federal level in terms of changes to the parental and maternity leave regime. Since 2018, there has been the introduction of an additional "use it or lose it" second caregiver leave that was made available. Drawing from the experience of Quebec, that can be a really important incentive at the very early stages of couples becoming parents in thinking about how we distribute the work of care. We know that up until the point when couples become parents the distribution of unpaid work tends to be more equal in households. This completely changes when couples become parents and when people get locked into gender roles and gendered responsibilities. Therefore, that has been an important step.

There are some challenges with that. One of them is that both parents have to qualify for EI leave to be able to take advantage of that, so it's not a stand-alone second caregiver or paternity leave. If I was to say what changes we could make to the parental and maternity leave regime in Canada, we only need to look to the Quebec parental insurance plan. It covers far more people, it's much more generous, it has much greater uptake, and it has also transformed the gender division in caregiver leave.

For lots of reasons, including being more generous and including many more mothers, especially, in leave programs, I think we can look to Quebec in both child care and parental leave for some good examples.

• (1225)

Mr. Marc Serré: Excellent. That leads to my second question, Ms. Bezanson. I was a school board trustee in the early 2000s when French school boards set up day cares, especially for second language. It was really important for that.

The system we have in Ontario, with the quality of the education versus what we've heard in Quebec, when you look at the affordability... you have two elements here. Some opposition parties are looking at universality for affordability, but they're not necessarily focused on the quality.

How does that tie into the consultation we're doing for the pan-Canada secretariat, to ensure we move forward on both of these elements in co-operation with the provinces? Can you expand, please?

Dr. Kate Bezanson: I would say that there are three elements. We think about it as a three-legged stool in child care. You have to attend to affordability, quality and access all at the same time. If you push too hard on one, you sacrifice the others. We focus a lot of affordability, and there are good reasons. It's ridiculously expensive. In Ontario, an infant spot in Toronto costs about \$1,700 a month. If you compare, if you were to go across the bridge—if you're in Ottawa, you would go to Gatineau—it's about \$180 a month. We see a real variation.

I understand the real focus on affordability, but a hyper focus on affordability denudes those other two legs of their heft. I'll give you one way to understand this that I find helpful. If we just focus on affordability, I could give you \$6,000 and you could go out and try to find care. What you would probably have to do is find the cheapest care available. It doesn't build a system and it would stimulate low-wage female employment. The emphasis on affordability is good but it doesn't build the system, it doesn't attend to quality and it doesn't deal with access. I can give you \$6,000, but you can't buy something that doesn't exist.

Mr. Marc Serré: When you look at the role that the federal government should play...because you mentioned earlier that the federal government should give money to the provinces. Can you expand on that? What kinds of standards should we have linked to that?

Dr. Kate Bezanson: As you know, we live in a vexingly wonderful, decentralized federation and one of the huge benefits of Canada's decentralized federation is that we have the opportunity for experimentation at the subnational level, at the provincial and territorial level. We have a huge amount to draw from in terms of excellence and challenges in delivery.

The federal government has indicated it would like to take a substantial role in increasing the amount of spending to provinces and territories to build a system. What we need to do, therefore, at the very first instance, is work with the provinces and territories to scale and talk about the best practices that we have seen. We have some very good examples. Quebec is one that is very often pointed to, for very good reasons. B.C. is doing some incredible work with its \$10-a-day child care pilot. Newfoundland has been doing some great work, as have P.E.I. and Nova Scotia. We have great experience in the country. What we need to be doing when we're talking about building a system to address that unevenness is to be scaling that up, but also thinking about it as a model where, as I said, we fund the services in child care. That bypasses a lot of the conversation in the policy nexus—

• (1230)

The Chair: I'm sorry, that's the end of your time on that question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Excellent.

Ms. Larouche, the next six minutes are yours.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

To begin, I'd like to thank both the witnesses, Dr. Bezanson and Ms. Robert, for their very informative testimony on invisible work.

Dr. Bezanson, thank you for highlighting Quebec's unique situation with regard to parental leave and child care services.

We have clearly understood that there is a direct link between the assistance provided to women and their access to the labour market. Better division of labour also means better sharing of parental leave. We may have an opportunity to come back to that.

My first question is for you, Ms. Robert.

You opened the door to three issues: wages, socialization and government reform. You said that you would come back to these points, so I'd like to hear more about them.

Ms. Camille Robert: These issues were discussed extensively in the 1970s and 1980s.

All of these debates were somewhat put aside, but the idea of a wage for housework was also of interest to researcher Louise Toupin, who wrote a book in French that has been translated into English, on the demand for pay for housework. This claim is extremely interesting because it provided for a salary to be paid to the homemaker, male or female.

This claim has been somewhat set aside, but measures such as CERB have nevertheless given us a glimpse of what it might look like to pay people for [*Technical Difficulties*]. Although this measure was intended to replace a salary, staying home still gave many families and many women a boost, in particular.

The issue of socialization concerns all the services that have been set up independently by users. For example, in Quebec, in the 1970s, before the early childhood centres were created, there were popular day cares. The idea was to give resources to the communities so that they could take charge of care services themselves. I think that's a very interesting idea.

Finally, there were several suggestions on the issue of reforms, such as including homemakers in the labour force and providing old age benefits to people who have been at home in an attempt to reduce poverty at the end of life or in the event of divorce, for example. It was also suggested to facilitate the recognition of women's job skills when they re-enter the labour market after having children.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of ideas were proposed by organizations, unions and women's groups.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: These are inspiring measures.

You also talked about the disparity between women. In order to try to overcome some of the care that is difficult to provide as a woman, because there are too many tasks, women have to seek help themselves, which creates even more disparity.

How could you measure this? Are there statistics or data on this for Quebec and Canada?

Ms. Camille Robert: I think this manifests itself in several different ways. For example, I am getting ready to go back to work, but there's no room at the early childhood centre. The Quebec child care system is highly idealized, but in reality there is very little room. You may never even get one, even if you sign up for the waiting lists.

Here's another example. The woman who's going to look after my daughter at the day care is a racialized woman, an immigrant. She lost her job as a math teacher because of Bill 21 in Quebec. When we look at the divisions between women, we see that it also shows up in home care, residential care, child care, and education.

I don't have specific data, but it's a growing trend that we're seeing and that we need to keep in mind. In fact, I believe that the simple approach of allowing women to enter the labour market is aimed at women who are particularly privileged, and this must not be done by delegating this work to other women. On the contrary, I think that this must be done through greater government support, public services, and the re-funding of home care and child care. It's important to keep this in mind.

I'd like to conclude my remarks by inviting you to take a gender-based approach from an intersectional perspective, and therefore always keep in mind that this care work should not be delegated to other women so that only some women can be empowered.

• (1235)

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: You talk about the gender-based analysis plus—or GBA+—approach that could help the government get a better sense of the impact of the measures it's putting in place. In your opinion, this hasn't been sufficiently advanced at this time.

I'd like to hear from Dr. Bezanson or Ms. Robert about GBA+.

How important is it to apply this approach when implementing a new measure, a new law or a new standard, in order to be able to measure the impact that this may have on women?

[English]

Dr. Kate Bezanson: I am a huge proponent of GBA+. I think that the kind of gender results framework that Canada has now implemented is a really important way of benchmarking and looking at our progress and our regression over time. Canada was a real world leader, especially in the 1990s, in measuring, valuing and tracking unpaid care, certainly in gender-based analysis. We have sort of returned to that place of prominence.

I think that using the GBA+ lens is important at all stages. It's obviously really important when we're thinking about a new legislative schema or a new statutory approach. We're thinking about policy rollout. It's also really—

The Chair: I'm sorry. That's end of the time for that question.

We're going now to Ms. Mathysen for six minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is something we've discussed a lot in this committee, as child care is obviously such a huge part of women's work and women's lives.

I was interested to go back to the idea of the three-pronged approach that you were speaking about, Ms. Bezanson.

We've seen that the government has announced a commitment to the national child care secretariat—we haven't seen the actual dollars yet; I think it was just announced—which is what child care advocates and stakeholders have been asking for, absolutely, in terms of that one piece. However, there are the other two. The piecemeal approach that has been continued has a lot to do with consistency of funding.

Could you comment on the impacts of that underfunding of a piecemeal system and what that has done? I know that the national advocacy groups have called for \$2.5 billion immediately just to stabilize the child care sector and then an additional \$10 billion over the next four years to be able to do the work and provide those spaces.

That money hasn't appeared. Could you talk about the impacts of that?

Dr. Kate Bezanson: Sure. That's a really good question.

I am among those who have been speaking quite loudly about the need for a federal secretariat, in part because child care needs a home in order for the policy area to be executed and for us to reach the kinds of aspirations that many in this conversation have around the equity and the gender equality outcomes that a child care system can deliver.

You're absolutely right in your diagnosis that the last year has been devastating for the child care sector. We've seen centres close across the country for lots of reasons, including because child care is not really a system across Canada. It's rather sort of a patchwork market.

We know that, for example, education is going to be there next year for our kids because education is a right of every child and a responsibility of every province and territory. Because child care is a

market it enjoys no such protection, so we've seen in the pandemic that the sector itself has been really fragile.

There have been some investments. I'm thinking about the safe restart monies that went to a number of sectors in various provinces, including to child care. In my conversations with the child care sector, they reported that things like the wage subsidy, as with other small employers, have been really important in keeping them afloat, but those are going to end and this pandemic is going to continue.

If the stock of child care is not available and if we are coming out of the pandemic with less than we had going into it, we're putting ourselves in all of the kinds of disadvantages that have been well canvassed at this committee.

● (1240)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: One thing that the stakeholders and the sector have also been calling for is the enshrinement into law by legislation, for the universality and the affordability of an act, much like the Canada Health Act. When you were talking about postal code social policy, ultimately the enshrinement of a piece of legislation to ensure that child care is provided universally is key.

When we talk about those monies like safe restart agreements and so on, I was talking to a lot of folks in my riding who provide child care. They thought they could use the wage subsidy or some of the monies that were provided by the federal government through the provinces to pay their employees, but a lot of it was so project-based that they actually had to pay that money back. Now they're in desperate need because they don't know how...and they've had to have such cuts. They're in worse circumstances than they were before.

What would that enactment look like? How would that benefit?

Dr. Kate Bezanson: These are very good questions.

I would say that I am aware that the NDP, I believe in the mid- or late 2000s, proposed a private member's bill that essentially speaks to this, creating a child care act with a similarity to the principles of the Canada Health Act.

I think legislation is a really important expression of how we protect and value particular policy areas. I know that Quebec also has a legislative enshrinement and it also speaks about the rights of children to particular kinds of care. There are a lot of reasons to do that.

I also have wondered about the kind of invisibility of child care in our federal spending packages. We have the Canada social transfer. We have the Canada health transfer. Child care, historically, was delivered through the social transfer, and it now comes through bilateral negotiations with provinces.

Would it make a difference, also, to give it that kind of visibility and have a Canada child care transfer in addition to a legislative schema that could give it the kind of visibility that would also protect it, at least symbolically? That's something to think about.

I know that so many child care deliverers in regulated home bases and in centres have struggled mightily in the pandemic. I think that, moving forward, we need to look at those three legs of the stool and think about how we fund services so that we can address areas like fee caps so that parents aren't paying as much; so that we can address funding of the workforce, which is wages, one of the key drivers of costs in child care; and also—

The Chair: I feel so bad about continually cutting you off when you're saying wonderful things, but it's my job as chair.

Right now we're going into our second round of questions, with Ms. Shin for five minutes.

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Thank you so much.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for speaking with us today. You shared some very valuable information and thoughts.

Historically, the caregiving role that women have had has obviously impacted their accessibility to more options for employment. We've heard that female jobs are devalued and a lot of women's work is unpaid and invisible. Publicly funded child care was an option that you have both presented, and we've heard it often.

We've also heard often that there are some cultures that don't want to send their children to publicly funded care centres. What kinds of ways could the federal government assist in providing those kinds of options for families where culturally they would rather have family members, like grandparents, take care of their children?

Dr. Kate Bezanson: That's an interesting question. That was not one of the ones I've prepared for, so I appreciate it.

Certainly I think that when we're thinking about family policy, it's one of the hardest areas to navigate because we all live it very intimately. It's very personal. When we think about policy design we have to think about how we create policies that give people great options between equally excellent choices.

My view would be, if we're thinking about how we support caregivers, the biggest impact is in building a system that is accessible and affordable to those who wish to use it. Absolutely, nobody is speaking about any kind of compulsory child care.

For many families, a grandparent, an aunt or a family member providing care is absolutely important, viable and the best choice for that family. We want to support that.

I think in some ways we do bolster that through other means, especially by enhancing things like the Canada child benefit, which

has been a dramatic anti-poverty strategy, but has also been put to significant use in caregiving.

I feel that Camille is here, and I am talking too much.

• (1245)

The Chair: Go ahead, Camille.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Camille Robert: I think it goes back to the issue of choice and accessibility. Of course, families have to have a choice.

I was with a group yesterday, and we discussed children with disabilities. The benefits given to families to care for these children are much lower than the amounts allocated when children are taken into care outside the home.

As long as young children are at home, the government must provide funds to these families so that there is no significant economic impact. However, this choice mustn't be imposed. The Harper government had already proposed allocating money to families who decided to keep their children at home rather than send them to day care. It can also be a trap, because for many families, particularly those with several children, the idea of keeping them at home can become an economic choice, particularly in provinces where fees are quite high.

The door needs to be opened to this possibility, by always offering the choice of whether or not to keep children at home.

[*English*]

Ms. Nelly Shin: Thank you so much for that response.

My next question has to do with racialized women who are often hired as care workers, especially with what you mentioned about the pandemic creating challenges that put them in not very good predicaments.

What are some of your suggestions and comments on how we could provide more support for those kinds of women in those situations?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Camille Robert: In Quebec, many racialized women, especially Black women, many of whom were refugees, worked in private residences for seniors.

I believe that improving employment conditions in these sectors is fundamental. Currently, it's mainly racialized women, who sometimes have precarious immigration status, who are in these jobs, precisely because white women or women with Canadian citizenship no longer want to work in these jobs because they're too hard.

On the one hand, employment conditions must be transformed. On the other hand, there needs to be more investment in public services, which offer more secure, better unionized jobs—

The Chair: Excuse me, but your time is up.

[*English*]

Now we're going to Ms. Zahid for five minutes.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: I think it's me, Madam Chair, if you don't mind.

The Chair: No problem. You just keep me guessing today. It's fine.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: All right, thank you.

Thanks to both our witnesses for this exciting conversation today.

I'm going to ask you each two questions and you each have two minutes to answer.

We've spoken a lot about a system model. How could we, as the federal government, ensure accountability with a system in working with the provinces and territories?

Dr. Bezanson, I loved your postal code social policy analogy.

I'm delighted to be part of a government that does put the GBA lens on everything, and I'm one who speaks about a rural lens. I'm from a very large rural riding. My riding is bigger than Switzerland, with 200 beautiful, tiny towns.

To get to the child care issue, with your knowledge and experience on child care, what recommendations do you give to ensure that a Canada-wide system not only works across the different provinces and territories, but also works in different types of communities, from the big urban centres to the really rural, really small communities, because it's different in those small communities?

Those two questions are for you both, and whoever wants can go first.

• (1250)

Dr. Kate Bezanson: Certainly we live in a tremendous, varied federation that has really dense urban centres and vast, more rural areas.

On your first question about a system model, of course, in any area of social policy, we want to have benchmarks. We want to have tracking. We want to be paying attention to how we are assessing, reassessing and striving, and nowhere is this more important than when we think about our smallest humans.

We often use language of accountability, which tends to be used more in relation to the financial side of the ledger. If we're talking about accountability for spending and investments, we also have to transform that a little bit to think about those kinds of shared goals, shared benchmarks, shared access to child care services, affordability of services, expansion of services and the attention of those services to the kind of communities they are serving.

One thing is very interesting, and my colleague Susan Prentice has written about it in Manitoba. Child care is a really big labour market booster and economic development mechanism for rural communities—this is also true of long-term care—so there are some economic development strategies that really are well served by child care.

We have to think about developing a national strategy and also think about really high-quality, home-based child care delivery that's regulated and that can attend to the transportation issues, needs and choices of those in rural communities.

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: I'll go over to you, Madam Robert.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Camille Robert: Thank you for the question.

I'm less familiar with provincial accountability, so I won't comment on that. However, I think your point about access to services, particularly in rural settings, is fundamental.

There are serious problems with access to child care in many remote regions in Quebec. I'm not talking about early childhood centres, public day care centres, but private or family day care centres. They are extremely difficult to access.

Sometimes children enrolled before they've even been born won't have a place until they're 24 months old. In this case, mothers will very often have to take unpaid leave to stay at home with their children and will have to postpone their return to the labour market.

I don't have any specific recommendations, but I think the issue you've raised is extremely important.

[*English*]

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: Okay. I'm sure I have a couple of seconds left.

Again, in your professional experience, are you finding that the younger generations of families are showing progress on sharing responsibility? How can we engage more men on this issue and encourage more men to participate in addressing this whole gender inequality related to unpaid work, especially home care work?

The Chair: You have 15 seconds

[Translation]

Ms. Camille Robert: As Dr. Bezanson pointed out, paternity leave is fundamental to promoting men's involvement in the family. Many studies have shown that the earlier men get involved in their children's lives, the greater their involvement in family life later on.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Larouche, you have the floor.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Once again, I would like to thank both witnesses for being here today.

You bring fascinating insights on unpaid work.

I'd like to come back to something we saw during the pandemic and that Ms. Robert raised, which is that women from abroad came to lend a hand in the long-term care facilities. In fact, I would like to highlight the Bloc Qu b cois' work to speed up recognition of their status as guardian angels who help seniors. Once again, we need to strike a balance, because we must ensure that it doesn't become a form of disparity among women themselves, as we have heard. At the same time, many of these women saw it as a great opportunity to come here and establish themselves in our country.

• (1255)

Ms. Camille Robert: Our collective work, *Travail invisible*, has a very interesting chapter by Sonia Ben Soltane, a professor at the University of Ottawa. She talks about the journey of immigrant women. Those who come here are mostly from North Africa and Haiti. For them, it's an opportunity to improve their situation. However, we have to wonder what choices are available to them.

Typically, immigrant women will prioritize their spouse's professional advancement as soon as they arrive here. Sonia Ben Soltane pointed this out. They will mostly go for work as caregivers, which requires little training and helps them to integrate very quickly into the working world and get a stable income.

So I think it also has to do with the immigration model and the choices available to these women once they arrive in Canada or Quebec.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: So it's really a matter of providing them with better guidance.

In conclusion, I'd like you both to answer my question in one sentence. We talk a lot about unpaid work, but sometimes we get the feeling we don't have enough data. Groups like AF AS are putting two ideas forward: first, to start a national day to raise awareness of unpaid work, and second, to include the income from unpaid work in the GDP in order to put a figure on it.

How significant could that be in helping all those who do unpaid work?

Ms. Camille Robert: It's important, because it puts the matter out in the spotlight, but these forms of recognition remain quite symbolic. We absolutely need to have forms of financial recognition in addition to that and we must improve funding for public services to really give women and families a choice.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Ms. Bezanson, in one sentence...

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Madame Larouche.

Ms. Mathysen, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Actually, I'll pick up on what you were just saying in terms of how we value care work and work typically done by women, that female idea of work.

There has been a lot of pressure on the federal government to bring in a federal minimum wage. I know that a lot of this depends on each different province, but providing that kind of leadership could potentially help to solidify it. Actually, \$15 an hour isn't even really a livable wage anymore. I think we really need to go beyond that, but to have that sort of set.... Maybe you could talk about that.

Again, when we talk about labour law, it is typically provincial, but there certainly is the Canada Labour Code. Are there any provisions that you were talking about when you were discussing this more fulsome idea of how we look at unpaid care? It comes from a labour law standard or changes, and it comes from the provision of affordable housing. Certainly, New Democrats believe in those universal ideas of programming that help with those everyday costs. Could you talk a bit about some of that, Ms. Robert?

[Translation]

Ms. Camille Robert: I'm sorry, I missed the last part of what you said.

Could you quickly repeat the question, please?

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: We're looking at those national programs and we're looking at changes in labour law. What would you prescribe on a federal level? I know they're mainly provincial, but I'm thinking in terms of those changes in labour law, livable income, federal minimum wages and that sort of thing.

[Translation]

Ms. Camille Robert: What I have observed, basically, is that the unequal division of labour in the family has a lot to do with wage inequality. For example, when families are deciding to take parental leave or send children to daycare, they are often guided by financial issues. Those issues are themselves linked to issues of wage inequality.

I feel that, if we want to see invisible and unpaid work shared in families, it is particularly important to look at the labour market.

Another thing—

[English]

The Chair: Very good. That's the end of your time.

Ms. Hutchings, do you have a point of order?

Ms. Gudie Hutchings: It's just a comment, Madam Chair, for the witnesses.

This has been an exciting conversation, and I want you to know that if you're ready, willing and able, we would love to have written testimony from you if you feel you didn't have a chance to answer any of the questions. You can submit it to the clerk and we can include it in our review. Thank you so much.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1300)

The Chair: Absolutely. That's a very good point.

To our witnesses today, thank you. Your testimony was excellent, as was said.

Committee members, before we wrap up, I want to let you know that on March 9 we have a panel on unpaid work. Then we have an hour of committee business to consider the motions that we have and the drafting instructions for the analysts. On March 11 we have the minister for the status of women on the supplements, and maybe even the estimates if they come forward. Your dissenting report opinions for COVID-19 have to be submitted by March 12.

I see that we're at the end of our time. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adjourn?

Very good. Then we shall adjourn.

Enjoy your break week, and we'll see you all—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Excuse me, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Ms. Larouche, go ahead.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: With respect to the three motions I put forward, we agreed to extend the meeting by 15 minutes to discuss them, either today or after the break. As I understand it, it was decided to extend the meeting after the break, again with a view to being able to—

The Chair: Yes, we decided not to have the second discussion at the March 9 meeting so we can consider the three motions and the instructions for the reports.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: All right.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Have a great week, everyone.

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