



## **Invisible Work Counts!**

**Recognizing the Invisible Work of Parents and Caregivers  
By Measuring It and Including It in Canada's GDP**

**Brief Submitted to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for Hearings on  
Women's Unpaid Work and Its Contribution to Society**

**Submitted by**

**The Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale (Afeas)  
And the Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work  
(Comité inter-associations pour la valorisation du travail invisible, CIAVTI)**



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## **Introduction**

The House of Commons Standing Committee of the Status of Women Canada was mandated:

- to undertake a study on women's unpaid work and the contribution made by the family and humanitarian tasks they perform for society (support and care of spouses, children, grandchildren, seniors, etc.);
- to report on the scope of their contribution, its economic and social value and the measures the federal government could take within its fields of jurisdiction respecting these activities; and
- to report its recommendations to the House of Commons and request that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

In this brief, we give a short description of the two presenting organizations followed by a quick backgrounder on the work of the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale (Afeas) on the issue of unpaid, so-called "invisible" work.

Next, we define invisible or unpaid work and describe the work performed within the family for loved ones—the work of mothers, fathers and caregivers. We do not deal with the humanitarian aspect of unpaid work, which is not broadly speaking our expertise even though our association's members are all volunteers.

In addition, we deal with the issue of unpaid work performed since the beginning of the coronavirus-19 pandemic, which has gained visibility because of the measures put in place but no meaningful recognition.

Then, we look at unpaid work in general, which, though essential, receives so little true recognition, around the globe and here at home.

To conclude, we make recommendations that the Government of Canada should implement expeditiously by the end of the pandemic to demonstrate a serious willingness to recognize unpaid work and those performing it for the benefit of Canadian society as a whole.

## **Presenting organizations**

This brief is submitted by the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale (Afeas) and the Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work (Comité inter-associations pour la valorisation du travail invisible, CIAVTI).

### **Afeas in brief**

The mission of Afeas, a dynamic and nimble feminist organization, is to promote and advocate for gender equality in all spheres of society. To do so, it gives women a voice to help them participate in the development of Quebec society.

Through collaborative education and social action, Afeas is helping to build a society based on the values of peace, equality, fairness, justice, respect and solidarity. Its goal is to help women achieve social, political and economic independence and so to fully participate in the democratic life of Quebec.

#### **Its membership and structure**

Afeas is a not-for-profit organization created in 1966 with the merger of two organizations: the Union Catholique des femmes rurales (UCFR) and the Cercles d'économie domestique (CED). In 2019, its membership comprises 7,000 Quebec women, with 200 Afeas chapters in 11 regional divisions.

Its grassroots structure, governed by a three-level board of directors, encourages members to express their opinions on social issues and their organization's policy directions. The efforts of its volunteer members have fuelled Afeas in fulfilling its mission for over 50 years.

#### **Its priority issues and accomplishments**

Ever since Afeas was founded, its essential role has been to advocate for gender equality in all spheres of society. As a result, it works on various issues affecting women in Quebec and in Canada. Over the years, Afeas has made progress, but the struggle is not over. It works on various issues, including:

- gender equality in all spheres of society;
- equal access to and participation in democratic institutions at all levels;
- recognition of women's unpaid work as mothers and caregivers;
- women's lifelong financial security, including during their retirement;
- access to education, pay equity, non-traditional jobs, and measures to support work/life balance; and
- access to measures to prevent and address violence against women and girls.

#### **Afeas partnerships**

Afeas is active in all levels of Quebec and Canadian society so that women will be equal to men in law and in practice. Through its pragmatic approach, it is a credible partner of government bodies and women's rights organizations. In order to advance its key issues, Afeas is a member of organizations and groups in Quebec, the rest of Canada and around the globe.

## **CIAVTI in brief**

Recognizing the value of invisible work is one of the keys to achieving equality between women and men and is an issue that has been central to the demands of Afeas since its foundation in 1966. In recent years, we have seen many other organizations working for this cause, but a lack of coordination is hindering progress.

That is why, with the financial support of the Quebec Status of Women Office (Secrétariat à la condition féminine), we created an Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work (Comité inter-associations pour la valorisation du travail invisible, CIAVTI) in early 2020 to work for genuine social transformation. The timing was particularly appropriate, with the coronavirus pandemic resulting in heightened media coverage of invisible work. Parents' and caregivers' additional workload was foregrounded by the lockdown and school and business closures.

### **Its members**

The members of the committee have varied policy directions. In addition to Afeas, the members are:

- Experts: Camille Robert (historian) and Nicole Demers (former BQ MP for Laval);
- Organizations: Collectif des femmes immigrantes du Québec (CFIQ), Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail (CIAFT), FamillePointQuébec, Agricultrices du Québec (AQ), Jeune chambre de commerce des femmes du Québec (JCCFQ), Oxfam-Québec, Réseau d'action pour l'égalité des femmes immigrées et racisées du Québec (RAFIQ), Regroupement des aidants naturels du Québec (RANQ), Réseau des Tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec (RTRGFQ), Réseau québécois en études féministes (RéQEF) and the Syndicat de professionnelles et professionnels du gouvernement du Québec (SPGQ).

### **Its objectives**

The main objectives of CIAVTI are the following:

- To highlight the economic and social value of invisible work;
- To make the issues surrounding invisible work better understood by the public, employers, public institutions and decision-makers; and
- To develop new solutions to balance the sharing of invisible tasks among women and men and the sharing of family, state and private sector responsibilities.

### **Its activities**

The committee's *Declaration of the Value of Invisible Work* appeared on Monday, September 7, 2020, on the bilingual website [travailinvisible.ca](http://travailinvisible.ca), where organizations and individuals can show their support for the Declaration and its demands.

Ahead of the 21st Invisible Work Day, Tuesday, April 6, 2021, online conferences will address unpaid work from a variety of angles: the mental burden, caregiving, immigrant women, the impact of the pandemic on awareness of invisible work, etc. Between March 8 and April 6, 2021, educational kits will be launched to address invisible work from four different angles: immigrant women, women farmers, caregivers, and women the world over. There will be four panels on each of those themes every week before those two key dates.

## Afeas and invisible work since 1966

Since its foundation in 1966, Afeas has been shedding light on the predicament of women in the home and the unpaid, or “invisible,” work they perform within the family. Given that the overwhelming majority of its members at the time were homemakers, few of them belonging to the paid workforce, they were concerned about their own and their daughters’ futures if nothing were to change, and feared that they would stay poor and dependent for the rest of their lives.

In 1968, in a brief<sup>1</sup> submitted to the Bird Commission, Afeas made the principle of invisible work a topic of discussion. Afeas’s aim was to better explain the vital role of women and the importance of helping them achieve full social and economic integration at every level. Subsequently, Afeas has trained its members to work with the appropriate bodies (governmental, professional, etc.) and the general public to raise awareness of what is at stake when the invisible work women do within the family and for loved ones is not recognized. At the same time, it identifies measures the government can take to eliminate discrimination against women.

Afeas has participated in a number of campaigns over the years that yielded victories for women and their families. Here are a few examples:

From 1974 to 1980, its work on behalf of women employees in family businesses led to legal and tax measures allowing them to become paid employees of the business and receive benefits.

In 1989, its demands led to the passage of the *Family Patrimony Act*, recognizing the economic value of the work done by women at home.

In 1997, the Quebec Family Policy created a network of publicly subsidized early childhood centres and a family allowance. On January 1, 2006, the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan, the third component of the policy, was finally introduced.

In 1998, 52,000 postcards were sent to the federal government in a postcard campaign that successfully sought to uphold the principle of individual income in the calculation of seniors’ benefits: a victory for women, who would thus not lose the program benefits they were entitled to because of their lack of financial resources.

In 2001, Afeas established the first Tuesday in April as Invisible Work Day to shed light on the work of those millions of people, so essential to families and society alike.

In 2004, the federal government introduced compassionate care benefits to support the work of caregivers providing end-of-life care. These benefits, while minimal at first, were increased over the years, and benefits for caregivers of children and/or adults were also introduced.

In 2020, Afeas participated in the consultations leading to the passage of Quebec’s Bill 56, which finally recognizes the importance of people who provide care for their loved ones. At the same time, Afeas is continuing to work steadily on the cause and has launched a campaign in support of the *Declaration of the Value of Invisible Work*.

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<sup>1</sup> Afeas, *Mémoire à la Commission d’enquête royale*, Montreal, Afeas, 1968, 44 p. For a summary of the brief, see Micheline Dumont and Louise Toupin, *La pensée féministe au Québec : anthologie 1900–1985*, Montreal, Remue-ménage, 2003, pp. 255–258.

## What do we mean by invisible work?

Unpaid work is said to be “invisible” because it is not appropriately valued within households and society and is not incorporated into any system of national accounts. Thus, it is not part of the money economy made up of the labour market, consumer spending, and the transactions of businesses and institutions. Part of this work, volunteerism, is a feature of the public or semi-public sphere, because volunteers replace people who would otherwise be paid employees. But unpaid, “invisible” work as we designate it herein, is directly related to the social roles of women in all patriarchal societies and as such pertains to the private sphere.

### Definition

Afeas and its Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work define invisible work as work performed for little or no pay, which includes:<sup>2</sup>

- **Work performed within the family.** Includes household chores and personal care such as shopping, laundry, cleaning, cooking, childcare, and all types of planning work, constituting mental burden. These tasks may also be done outside the family, for friends, neighbours or other community members;
- **Work performed by family caregivers.** Includes domestic duties and care, services and psychological support for family members (including children) who are ill, elderly or frail or who have special needs. The family caregiver role also includes planning work, constituting mental burden, and work constituting emotional labour. These tasks may also be done outside the family, for friends, neighbours or other community members;
- **Work performed for the family business** (farm, retail, etc.) or spouse's business (e.g., notarial, legal, dental offices);
- **Volunteer work** for organizations and/or institutions providing essential services to the public; and
- **Work performed as part of an unpaid internship.**

Even today, this work is still mostly done by women,<sup>3</sup> which penalizes them in their personal, professional, social and economic development, and increases their lifelong risk of economic precariousness and poverty. Taken for granted and unrecognized by relatives, society and political institutions, invisible work and its unequal distribution among women and men are the result of social and cultural norms from another era, marked by gender stereotypes. Women's pursuit of education and entry into the labour market has done little to challenge the division of labour within the household and family.

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<sup>2</sup> The above definition is taken from the Declaration of the Value of Invisible Work, [www.travailinvisible.ca](http://www.travailinvisible.ca).

<sup>3</sup> Women spend an average of 3 hours and 26 minutes per day doing housekeeping chores and men only 2 hours, according to Ricoch, Layla and Benoît Roumier, *In the past 11 years, less housekeeping and more Internet*. Insee – Division Conditions de vie des ménages, 2010 : <https://www.insee.fr/en/statistiques/1281051>, Accessed 14 April 2020. Per year, women work 523 hours more, or thirteen 40-hour weeks!

## Work performed within the family and for loved ones

For the purposes of this brief, we approach invisible or unpaid work from the perspective of mothers and fathers and caregivers, leaving aside volunteer work, unpaid work in the family business or the spouse's business, and unpaid internships.

### Work done by mothers and fathers

Traditionally, social roles between women and men have been socially determined and assimilated by girls and boys from an early age, first within the family and later in school. Traditionally, paid work has been the domain of men, and household work has been done by women.

Since the 1970s, however, women have increased their levels of education and entered the labour market. In Canada, the gender gap in labour force participation has fallen considerably, from 32% in 1976 to 9% in 2017. This shift has affected the distribution of household tasks between opposite-sex partners, but there are still inequalities.<sup>4</sup>

Although there has been an improvement in the division of household tasks, Statistics Canada notes that this division remains gendered. Its 2017 survey reveals that this division varies by partners' labour force participation and by certain sociodemographic characteristics, such as type of union and age group.<sup>5</sup>

This survey reveals the following division of tasks within the family:

- Doing the dishes (50%), grocery shopping (49%), and organizing the household's social life (49%) were most often shared equally in married or common-law couples;
- Laundry (61%) and meal preparation (56%) were most often done by women; and
- Outdoor work and repairs (78%) were most often done by men.

The division of some household tasks varies by labour force participation of the spouses or partners.

Household tasks	Man is sole provider	Both the man and the woman work
Meal preparation	26% equally	38% equally
Laundry	64% by women	55% by women
Bookkeeping and bill payments	48% by men	31% by men

According to the same study, the type of union and age group affect how some tasks are shared between men and women.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada, *Family Matters: Sharing housework among couples in Canada: Who does what?* - 2017 General Social Survey on the family – household organization and decision-making: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200219/dq200219e-eng.htm>, Accessed 02.02.2021.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



Among persons aged 20 and older in a couple, one-quarter of women were more likely to look after the laundry, housework and preparing meals. Married women (27%) were more likely to take care of these tasks than women in a common-law relationship (19%).

For these same three tasks, 11% reported that these tasks were shared equally by men and women. However, persons aged 20 to 64 in a couple (12%) were twice as likely to share these three tasks as those aged 65 and older (6%).

For Quebec alone, in 2015, 88.7% of women aged 15 or older and 80.7% of men in the same age group report taking part in household activities.<sup>7</sup> Not only are more women doing unpaid work in the family, but they are working more hours per day: 3 hours and 29 minutes for women and 2 hours and 27 minutes for men, making for a difference of 1 hour and 2 minutes per day. For parents of children under four years of age, the gap is wider: 5 hours and 20 minutes for mothers and 4 hours and 56 minutes for fathers, a difference of 1 hour and 24 minutes per day.<sup>8</sup>

The competing claims about women's and men's time use have different implications regarding gender inequality in society. If women and men have altered their allocation of time doing paid and unpaid work in the direction of convergence, it is suggestive of progress toward gender equality. Conversely, if women's greater allocation of time to paid work has not led to a significant redistribution of unpaid work to men, it is suggestive of continued enactments of the traditional gendered division of labour on a daily basis and, therefore, a "stalled" gender revolution.<sup>9</sup>

### **Caregivers' work**

Though the role of caregivers receives less recognition in the workforce compared with the contribution of mothers and fathers, it is nevertheless very demanding and is set to become more so as the Canadian population ages over the coming decades.

In 2012, according to Carers Canada,<sup>10</sup> 8.1 million Canadians were carers, or 1 in 4 Canadians aged 15 and over. Of these, 54% were women and 46% were men; 50% were between 45 and 65 years of age, in their most important career years. It must also be added that these caregivers provided 70–80% of the care in eldercare centres.

In Quebec in 2012, 25% of the population aged 15 and over, or approximately 1,675,700 people, were caregivers; of that number, approximately 965,700 were women and 710,000 were men.<sup>11</sup> Clearly more women than men provide care and spend longer each day helping their loved ones.<sup>12</sup> In the same year, 28.6% of women and 21.4% of men aged 15 years and older spent time performing caregiving tasks. The gap is most striking among 45- to 64-year-olds; in this age group, 39.7% of women and 29.9% of men acted as caregivers. The number of caregiving hours varies by

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<sup>7</sup> Council on the Status of Women, *Portrait des Québécoises - Éditions 2018*, Quebec City, CSF, p. 37 [https://csf.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Portrait\\_quebecoises.pdf](https://csf.gouv.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Portrait_quebecoises.pdf) Accessed 02.02.2021.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Moyser, Melissa, Ph. D., and Amanda Burlock, *Time use: Total work burden, unpaid work, and leisure*, Ottawa, Statistics Canada, July 30, 2018: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/54931-eng.htm>, Accessed 03.02.2021.

<sup>10</sup> Carers Canada, Carer Facts, <https://www.carerscanada.ca/carer-facts/#top>, Accessed 05.02.2021.

<sup>11</sup> Chantal Lecours, "Portrait des proches aidants et les conséquences de leurs responsabilités d'aidant," Institut de la statistique du Québec : coup d'œil sociodémographique," No. 43, November 2015, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Council on the Status of Women *Portrait des Québécoises - Éditions 2018*, op. cit., p. 38.

gender; 51.0% of female caregivers spend four or more hours per day caregiving, compared to 38.2% of male caregivers.

In 2007, Canadians aged 45 and older provided 15.5 billion hours of care, which is 10 times the hours of paid care provided that year.<sup>13</sup> This care carries considerable monetary value, which governments and institutions must be cognizant of.

The most recent estimate places the market replacement value of unpaid care work by Canadian caregivers ages 45 and older caring for adult ages 65 and older at between \$25 billion to \$26 billion in 2009, representing as much as 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) that year. ... In 2012, the mostly modest amount of care provided by individual caregivers represented the equivalent of the work of 1.2 million full-time employees at a time when the entire Canadian labour force numbered fewer than 18 million.<sup>14</sup>

And what about the financial implications for caregivers? There are three types of implications:<sup>15</sup>

**Cost of providing care:** In 2012, 81% of women and 86% of men caregivers provided up to 10 hours of care per week. To this must be added the 10% of women and 7% of men providing more than 20 hours of care per week. Furthermore, some common care tasks, such as commuting to provide care, care management, monitoring and social support, are not included in the calculation of care hours.

**Impact on paid work:** In 2012, 44% of employed caregivers missed an average of between 8 and 9 days of work over a 12-month period because of their care responsibilities. Studies show absenteeism, reduced working hours,<sup>16</sup> job loss or early retirement, and refusal of promotion or relocation among caregivers who must give priority to their care responsibilities.

**Personal Expenses:** These expenses, occasioned by the care provided to the person being cared for, include, in particular, home renovations, transportation, medication, care items (cushions, waterproof mattress covers, disposable diapers, etc.) and funeral expenses. For example, 80% of caregivers aged 45 and over estimate that they have spent up to \$6,000 per year; 17% between \$6,000 and \$24,000; and 3% \$24,000 or more. Collectively, caregivers spent approximately \$12.6 million on the care they provided in 2012.

These financial implications for caregivers are a source of stress and impoverishment for many of them, especially when the situation continues over a longer period of time or when the health of the person being cared for worsens. Stress and poverty can be harmful to caregivers' physical and psychological health.

What financial assistance measures are available to caregivers to offset the financial losses and costs of caregiving? To provide no more than a snapshot, the main measures currently in place are non-

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<sup>13</sup> FAST, Janet. 2015. *Caregiving for Older Adults with Disabilities: Present costs, Future Challenges*. IRPP Study 58. Montréal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 6-11.

<sup>16</sup> Council on the Status of Women, *Portrait - Les proches aidantes et les proches aidants - Analyse différenciée selon les sexes*. Québec City, March 2018. p. 50. In Québec, just under 15% of female caregivers report that they have had to reduce their work hours because of their responsibilities to their loved one(s).

refundable caregiver tax credits, compassionate care benefits, adult caregiver benefits and childcaregiver benefits.

We received data from 2015 to 2020 related to claims for family caregiver benefits and compassionate care benefits under the **Employment Insurance Benefits** program.

With respect to *family caregiver benefits*, over five years, the program accepted 52,659 applications across Canada, or approximately 10,532 applications per year; for Quebec alone, 10,925 applications, or 2,185 per year. The program paid an average weekly amount of \$463 for an average duration of 12 weeks (maximum of 15 weeks for an adult and 35 weeks for a child) per application.

With respect to *compassionate care benefits*, over five years, the program accepted 41,275 applications across Canada, or approximately 8,255 applications per year; for Quebec alone, 6,152 applications, or 1,230 per year. The program paid a weekly amount of \$463 for an average duration of 12 weeks (maximum of 26 weeks) per application.

In practice, very few caregivers take advantage of the programs designed for them. Thus, little use is made of respite services, government programs and tax credits.<sup>17</sup> Given the number of caregivers in 2012, 8.1 million in Canada and 1,675,000 in Quebec alone (25% of the population in both cases), we see that very few people apply for benefits or are accepted, even though employment insurance data covers the period from 2015 to 2020. The causes raised repeatedly by caregivers are the lack of knowledge of existing measures, restrictive criteria (end-of-life or serious illness), the waiting period, the difficulty of having the document signed by a medical doctor, etc. Government measures do not take into consideration chronic illnesses such as autism and multiple sclerosis, while “end-of-life” is imprecisely defined.

As for **tax credits**, the fact that they are non-refundable means that they are no help to a great many caregivers, as they do not pay taxes. For example, caregivers living with a low-income person with a disability (\$20,001 or less per year) were eligible for the Canada Caregiver Credit.<sup>18</sup> In some cases, the spouse of the caregiver is able to take advantage of the tax credit, but not the caregiver herself. Yet the caregiver herself is doing the bulk if not all the work for the person cared for. These tax credits are therefore of no use to numerous caregivers.

As for *reimbursement measures*, they are often very specific and difficult to find when they exist at all. Hence, they are also difficult to apply for.

## **Invisible work during a pandemic**

The seventh of April 2020 was the 20th Invisible Work Day; this Afeas initiative, begun in 2001, is timelier than ever. In fact, since the beginning of the current health

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<sup>17</sup> Council on the Status of Women, *Une personne sur quatre est en situation de proche aidance au Québec*, Press release, April 22, 2018. <https://csf.gouv.qc.ca/article/2018/04/22/une-personne-sur-quatre-est-en-situation-de-proche-aidance-au-quebec/>, Accessed 11.02.2021.

<sup>18</sup> Council on the Status of Women, *Portrait - Les proches aidantes et les proches aidants – Analyse différenciée selon les sexes*, op. cit., p. 53. This information is for 2017; the new caregiver credit does not appear to have a cohabitation requirement <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/topics/about-your-tax-return/tax-return/completing-a-tax-return/deductions-credits-expenses/canada-caregiver-amount.html>, Accessed 15.02.2021. We were not able to analyze it for this brief.

crisis, a number of voices—those of the Prime Minister but also of organizations and feminists—have been emphasizing the essential role of invisible work in the fight against COVID-19. The contribution of caregivers, parents and volunteers has indeed been foregrounded by the crisis, but there are thousands of people toiling away unrecognized every day, year in and year out.<sup>19</sup> [Translation]

Since March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic has forced governments to confine persons aged 70 and over to their homes, then schoolchildren, and eventually to close non-essential businesses. Overnight, parents had to improvise different ways to shop, to teach children and teenagers at home and keep them busy, and where possible to care for frail, home-bound loved ones. They had to do this while continuing their paid employment through telework or as essential workers outside the home, if in fact they did not become unemployed. On top of everything else and most important of all, everyone had to avoid becoming infected or infecting others. Gradually, columnists and organizations began pointing out that an additional burden, heavier than normal and for which no one was prepared, had just fallen on women's shoulders.

“That the lockdown weighed heavier on the shoulders of women than men is not just an impression,” [translation] says Rachel Chagnon, professor and director of the Institut de recherches et d'études féministes, UQAM.<sup>20</sup>

Early on, the pandemic highlighted glaring gender inequalities, especially for racialized and immigrant women. It also highlighted the work of people providing essential services, who continued to work to keep society running and care for the ill. Eighty percent of health care workers are female, the majority of caregivers are women, and the education sector is also heavily dependent on female workers. Simone de Beauvoir was right when she said that all it takes is a political, economic or religious crisis to imperil women's rights. But we could not have imagined that it would be a health crisis that would turn back the clock for women in Quebec, the rest of Canada and around the globe.

Since the crisis hit, our focus has been squarely on the risks faced by these Quebec women who are so essential to our lives and on their sacrifices and dedication. I say Quebec women because it is important to remember that 80% of health care workers are female. While half of all doctors are men, 90% of nurses and nursing assistants, and 80% of orderlies, are women... Not only are the majority of caregivers women, but they spend on average more time with the people they support... The front line during the coronavirus pandemic has been mostly composed of women.<sup>21</sup> [Translation]

So what has life been like for women since the beginning of the pandemic? Lockdowns and closures of daycares, schools and shops, working essential jobs, teleworking or unemployment, health and distancing measures and the fear of infecting their loved ones: what ongoing impact has all this had on women? Although it has been mostly women at the forefront since the beginning of the pandemic, they are excluded from most of the decision-making, even though the day-to-day decisions directly affect them.

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<sup>19</sup> TREMBLAY, H  l  ne, “Le travail invisible au temps du coronavirus,” *Afeas website* - Open letter published April 14, 2020 <https://www.afeas.qc.ca/nouvelles/lettre-ouverte-le-travail-invisible-au-temps-du-coronavirus/> Accessed 14.04.2020.

<sup>20</sup> BOUTROS, Magdaline, “Le poids du huis-clos sur les femmes,” *Le Devoir*, March 28, 2020: <https://www.ledevoir.com/societe/575966/le-poids-du-huis-clos-sur-les-femmes> (Accessed 14.05.2020).

<sup>21</sup> NICOLAS,   milie, “Nos anges gardiens,” *Le Devoir*, March 19, 2020: <https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/chroniques/575245/nos-anges-gardiens> (Accessed 14.05.2020).

If we want to talk about the people who are now on the “front line,” these people are mostly women. I would like to see that better reflected in the vocabulary used in press conferences and articles.<sup>22</sup> [Translation]

In this global war against the coronavirus, it is women who are called to the front line, it is women who carry on their invisible work. ... **But a major problem remains.** While women are on the front lines in this crisis, they are excluded from the decision-making process. Men making decisions among themselves has never been more problematic.<sup>23</sup> [Translation]

## **The situation of mothers and fathers**

Parents are facing new challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of schools and daycares has added to the daily unpaid workload, even when schools are partially reopened. A recent study by Statistics Canada sheds some light on the situation,<sup>24</sup> albeit partially, since it is limited to “respondents who were living with a spouse or partner at the time of the survey, and who reported performing any one of five parental tasks during the pandemic: playing with children or taking part in leisure activities with them; putting children to bed or seeing that they go to bed; homeschooling or helping children with homework; staying at home with the children; and taking children to or from school or day care.”<sup>25</sup>

Although limited in terms of respondents and tasks, this study demonstrates that employment status and work location affect the division of tasks. When men are unemployed or working from home, tasks appear to be more equally shared than when men were working outside the home. In addition, when women are unemployed or working from home, they report that parenting falls mainly on them and that tasks are less equally shared. The study also revealed that the burden of home schooling is primarily borne by women, regardless of whether they are teleworking, unemployed or working outside the home, and that this is recognized by both men and women. “While vaccines may have started being distributed, the pandemic is not over yet. There are still no in-person classes, and another surge of COVID-19 cases could lead to further school closures. In her study, Karine Leclerc notes that ‘as such, there may be an on-going demand on parents, in particular mothers.’”<sup>26</sup>

According to the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW), women remain the main providers of unpaid work within the family, even if they continue to work outside the home during the pandemic. If the work has moved home, they are responsible for juggling two jobs, childcare and paid work, 24/7. For some families there may be some sharing of tasks with a

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<sup>22</sup> “Plaidoyer pour la reconnaissance du travail des femmes,” Column by Françoise David, *Radio-Canada Première*, April 7, 2020: <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/premiere/emissions/penelope/segments/chronique/164539/femme-feminisme-sante-infirmiere-travailleuse-sociale> (Accessed 14.05.2020).

<sup>23</sup> L’R des centres de femmes du Québec, “Il aura fallu une pandémie pour comprendre la valeur de notre travail,” March 23, 2020: <https://rcentres.qc.ca/2020/03/23/il-aura-fallu-une-pandemie-pour-comprendre-la-valeur-de-notre-travail/>, (Accessed 14.05.2020).

<sup>24</sup> LECLERC, Karine, “Caring for their children: Impacts of COVID-19 on parents,” in the series *StatCan COVID-19: Data to Insights for a Better Canada*, Statistics Canada, December 14, 2020, Catalogue no. 45280001, 8 p.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> MORASSE, Marie-Ève, “COVID-19 – L’école à la maison, surtout l’affaire des femmes, révèle une étude,” *La Presse+*, December 15, 2020: <https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/education/2020-12-15/covid-19/l-ecole-a-la-maison-surtout-l-affaire-des-femmes-revele-une-etude.php?fbclid=IwAR2yQF07mzoTSMReUsLxmDxQvLYSYU8PZXK7vEcHC77yPauEyKPVV1rLVvw>, Accessed 12.02.2021.

partner, but within single-parent families, the women must juggle childcare and paid work on their own.<sup>27</sup>

Between April 14 and 23, 2020, the Coalition pour la conciliation famille-travail-études (CCFTÉ) published a survey to identify the varying realities experienced by families.<sup>28</sup> “This pandemic has locked down entire families for weeks at a time, without any structuring tools or measures to help them balance work/school and family life.”<sup>29</sup> [translation] Analysis of the results of this survey shows that:

- Three quarters of the respondents benefited from measures offered by their manager or educational institution, but 26% did not receive any accommodation or any lighter work or study load.
- Of the respondents, 39% mentioned a reduction of work time so that they could have a better work/study and family life balance, with no loss of pay.
- Forty-four percent of parents working in essential services did not have access to childcare and 25% found it difficult to balance work or school with child-related responsibilities.
- Telework, considered as a measure to facilitate that balance, has its attendant difficulties in the absence of collective measures such as access to daycare services or work organization (including ergonomics and the necessary tools).
- The measures with the most deleterious impact on balance are the closure of early childhood education services; working at home or virtual classes; and the lack of a quiet place to concentrate.
- The most popular accommodations are flexible work or study schedules; flexibility in terms of requested deliverables; and reduced work or study time, with no loss of pay or penalties in terms of loans and bursaries.

The Quebec Council on the Status of Women (Conseil du statut de la femme, CSF) has published numerous articles since the beginning of the pandemic to reflect various aspects—the economy, family, health and society—of the lives of women and their families. On family/work balance, the CSF notes that:

A number of experts are worried that the current crisis will lead to declining numbers of women in the labour market. Indeed, who will continue to care for children if childcare spaces are limited and schools remain closed for protracted periods? According to Professor Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay, some women may be forced to stay at home if sectors where they are over-represented, such as services, are slow to recover economically or if there is limited support for families. This

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<sup>27</sup> CRIAW, Women in Canada and COVID-19, Statement published April 6, 2020: <https://www.criaw-icref.ca/en/news/enonce--les-femmes-au-canada-et-covid-19-81>, Accessed 20.04.2020.

<sup>28</sup> PINEL, Julie (Centrale des syndicats du Québec, CSQ), Kimmyanne Brown (Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail, CIAFT) and Isabelle Darisse (Syndicat de professionnelles et professionnels du gouvernement du Québec, SPGQ), “*Questionnaire sur la conciliation famille-travail-études en temps de pandémie – Présentation des résultats*,” In-house survey, CCFTÉ, 48 p.: <https://ccfte.org/resultats-du-questionnaire/>, Accessed 20.05.2020. The replies to the survey came from 603 individuals, 83% of whom were women.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 7.



situation could lead them into what she calls the “poverty trap,” which is the difficulty of returning to work after time away.<sup>30</sup> [Translation]

Women's return to the home has also had the effect of increasing unpaid work, which they bear the brunt of, as the sharing that had begun to take place between women and men is in danger of a sharp setback.

### **The situation of caregivers**

In the April 2020 survey conducted by the Coalition pour la conciliation famille-travail-études, more than 34% of respondents who were family caregivers identified the fact that they could not visit their loved ones in long-term care homes and residences as a major issue. For caregivers who are also parents, the closure of schools and childcare facilities makes it more difficult to balance family, work and school and the provision of care to their loved ones who need help.<sup>31</sup>

In terms of economic measures, it was not until the fall of 2020 that caregivers were able to take advantage of the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB) that was introduced to help them during the pandemic. Employment Insurance program data shows that 327,550 Canadians applied for the CRCB between September 27, 2020, and February 7, 2021, for a total of \$1.34 billion.<sup>32</sup> That is not much considering the potential number of people with the role of caregiver in 2020 and 2021 and how much money this free caregiving work saved the government.

Little quantitative information could be found on the situation of family caregivers during the pandemic, except to show their distress, especially during the first lockdown when they could not help and support their often elderly relatives in public or private institutions. We have seen stories of caregivers outside the residences trying to communicate with their loved ones, of care staff trying to connect the two through technology or by telephone, stories of people dying lonely and abandoned, with no one to care for them, for lack of staff. Then came the authorization of short visits when the person was dying, with visitors wearing full protective equipment, which was necessary but created distance at a time when it is essential and natural to be physically close.

Caregivers caring for a person living with them or providing care to the person in their own home have become doubly invisible, overshadowed by the stories of people living in long-term care homes and private residences. However, it is in the homes of relatives requiring care that these people work every day, with 80% of the elderly living in their own homes or with their caregivers.<sup>33</sup> There is a need to take stock of all the work of these caregivers and the impact of the pandemic on them and the loved ones they help.

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<sup>30</sup> Council on the Status of Women, “*La conciliation famille-travail en temps de pandémie*,” CSF, May 28, 2020: <https://csf.gouv.qc.ca/article/publicationsnum/les-femmes-et-la-pandemie/famille/la-conciliation-travail-famille-en-temps-de-pandemie/>, Accessed 04.06.2020.

<sup>31</sup> PINEL, Julie (CSQ), Kimmyanne Brown (CIAFT) and Isabelle Darisse (SPGQ), “*Questionnaire sur la conciliation famille-travail-études en temps de pandémie – Présentation des résultats*,” op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Data from the Employment Insurance Program, documented submitted by Mélanie Perroux of RANQ, February 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Quebec Department of Families, *La famille en valeur : plan d'action gouvernemental pour contrer la maltraitance envers les personnes âgées 2017-2022*, Quebec City, Quebec Department of Families, 2016, p. 18. Data estimated for the entire province of Quebec by the Department of Health and Social Services in March and July 2015. With the majority of people 65 years and older (86%) living at home, 70–80% of personal care and services to seniors are provided by families, usually by women.

## Around the globe

More and more vulnerable workers on the front lines, increased domestic and family violence, abortion rights violations...” [Translation] (In an interview) Françoise Girard, President of the International Women’s Health Coalition, explains the effects of the pandemic on women’s health and rights around the globe. Girard hopes that the COVID- 19 crisis will provide an opportunity to raise awareness that will lead to a rethinking of social safety nets and social welfare in many countries to make them truly fair.<sup>34</sup> [Translation]

Some analyses on the international front clearly show the extra burden of unpaid work on women around the globe. In its brief entitled “*Women’s economic empowerment and the care economy in the ECE region: The impact of economic and social policies during the COVID-19 response and recovery*,” the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) states that:

The measures that were implemented to slow the spread of the pandemic have increased the overall amount of unpaid care work. They have, at the same time, led to increased attention for the volume and recognition of the importance of unpaid care work in public and political discourses. The pandemic response led to a redistribution of care work, from institutions to private households, i.e. from paid to unpaid care work. It is open for further investigation to what extent there has been a redistribution of unpaid care work between women and men, but most of the increase appears to have been shouldered by women.<sup>35</sup>

The United Nations (UN) states that women must be the drivers of economic recovery and resilience during COVID-19 and beyond: “Women contribute 37 per cent of the global GDP... Deploying women’s full potential is critical to economic recovery.”<sup>36</sup>

Worldwide, women spend 4.1 hours/day on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to 1.7 hours/day for men. Women’s unpaid contributions to health care alone equate to 2.35% of global GDP, or the equivalent of US\$1.5 trillion. When women’s contribution to all types of care (not just health care) is considered, this figure rises to US\$11 trillion,<sup>37</sup> or the equivalent of 9% of global GDP.

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- <sup>34</sup> Women’s Rights and Jean-Sébastien Girard, “COVID-19 et droits des femmes dans le monde,” Interview with Françoise Girard, *Radio-Canada Première*, April 27, 2020: <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/premiere/emissions/penelope/segments/entrevue/167058/femmes-droits-violence-egalite-sexe-covid-19>, Accessed 14.05.2020. For information purposes, the Council on the Status of Women has published a series of articles on the impact of the pandemic in several countries around the globe: Council on the Status of Women, *Vues d’ailleurs*, CSF, Articles published between June 16 and July 16, 2020: <https://csf.gouv.qc.ca/article/publicationsnum/les-femmes-et-la-pandemie/vues-dailleurs/>, Accessed 14.02.2021.
- <sup>35</sup> UNECE, “Women’s economic empowerment and the care economy in the ECE region: The impact of economic and social policies during the COVID-19 response and recovery,” *COVID-19 RESPONSE – UNECE Policy Brief on Gender No 1*, December 2020: <https://unece.org/gender/publications/policy-brief-gender-no-1-womens-economic-empowerment-and-care-economy-ece>, Accessed 04.02.2021.
- <sup>36</sup> UN WOMEN, *Women as drivers of economic recovery and resilience during COVID-19 and beyond - Statement by UN Women and Women 20 (W20) to G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors*, published July 14, 2020: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/7/statement-joint-w20-women-during-covid-19-and-beyond>, Accessed 20.07.2020.
- <sup>37</sup> UN WOMEN, “COVID-19 and the Care Economy: Immediate Action and Structural Transformation for a Gender-responsive Recovery,” *COVID-19 RESPONSE – Policy Brief No 16*: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-covid-19-and-the-care-economy-en.pdf?la=en&vs=2835>, Accessed 14.02.2021.



The poverty rate for women was projected by UN Women to decrease between 2019 and 2021, but projections now point to an increase of 9.1% due to the pandemic and its fallout.<sup>38</sup>

To monitor the situation across the world, UN Women created a new tool, the *COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker*, to analyze government response through a gender lens. In September 2020, analyses showed that the measures adopted in countries throughout the world grossly neglected women's needs.<sup>39</sup> This tracker analyzes 2,500 measures through a gender equality lens, across 206 countries and territories and in three areas: violence against women and girls, provision of unpaid care, and women's economic security. Only 25 countries (12%) have introduced measures that cover all three areas, "less than one-third of countries (60 in total) taking action to support unpaid care and strengthen care services for children, older persons or persons with disabilities."<sup>40</sup> Europe has the most measures in place to support unpaid care services, accounting for 72% of all measures introduced in this area. "The findings suggest that even where countries have adopted an impressive number of gender-sensitive measures, these will only be effective if they are adequately financed and sustained over time."<sup>41</sup>

## **Invisible work, essential but receiving far too little recognition!**

As early as 1970, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, also known as the "Bird Commission," analyzed unpaid work, particularly by women, in the home and the workplace. It emphasized the lack of information on unpaid work and its non-inclusion in the Gross National Product (GNP).

### Chapter 2 – Women in the Canadian Economy – Part B - Unpaid Work<sup>42</sup>

57. More goods and services are produced without pay in the home than anywhere else and most of this production is carried out by women. Women in the labour force spend a significant proportion of their time on household duties. And over half of the adult female population, roughly comparable to 45 per cent of the paid labour force, are employed full-time in the care of their families and homes.

61. The Gross National Product, as measured, fails to reflect a large proportion of women's work, the full-time production of goods and services by over one-third of the adult population. In terms of hours spent in production, the omission may have even greater significance. More than one expert has estimated that the number of hours spent every year in household functions alone is greater than the number worked in industry.

### Summary

167. So far we have dealt only with the position of women in specific areas of unpaid production of goods and services. But what is the broader picture? Is it the choice of women that they carry the burden of unpaid production or are there outside forces that leave them

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<sup>38</sup> UN Women, *COVID-19 will widen poverty gap between women and men, new UN Women and UNDP data shows*, Press release, September 2, 2020: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/8/press-release-covid-19-will-widen-poverty-gap-between-women-and-men>, Accessed 05.09.2020.

<sup>39</sup> UN Women, *Only one in eight countries worldwide have measures in place to protect women against social and economic impacts, new data shows*, Press release, September 28, 2020: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/9/press-release-launch-of-covid-19-global-gender-response-tracker>, Accessed 04.10.2020.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> *Report of The Royal Commission on The Status of Women in Canada*, Report submitted to the Governor General in Council, Ottawa, September 28, 1970, pp. 35 to 59: <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pco-bcp/commissions-ef/bird1970-fra/bird1970-part1-eng.pdf>, Accessed 12.02.2021.

little alternative? These are vital questions for, if the rights of women as individuals are to be respected, they must share in deciding what their role will be.

Although the position of Canadian women has changed significantly over the past 50 years, on the issue of unpaid work, the information is still not complete (hours, direct and indirect costs, impact on society and on women's physical, psychological and financial health), and the value of their work still does not show up in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) alongside paid economic activities.

## **Internationally**

The struggle for the recognition of invisible work has also been carried on at the global level since the United Nations (UN) held an international conference on the status of women in Mexico City in 1975. Afeas engaged in this struggle as part of the Canadian delegation and member countries addressed the vital issue of women's work within the family. At the UN world conferences on women that followed—in Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985, Beijing in 1995, and at the UN General Assembly follow-up special session in New York in 2000—Afeas continued its information and awareness-raising work both within the Canadian and Quebec delegations and at the Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO) Forum. Through these conferences, UN member countries, including Canada, committed to measuring and accounting for women's unpaid work in their countries and to including it in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in order to highlight the value of this work in relation to other economic activities.<sup>43</sup>

On the basis of estimates by member countries, the United Nations estimated in 1995 that the annual value of the **unpaid work of women and girls world-wide was US\$11 trillion.**

### **Some 25 years later**

On August 22, 2019, in the run-up to the Biarritz Summit, Oxfam set out seven issues that the G7 must act on to end inequality between women and men. On workplace disparities, Oxfam states:<sup>44</sup>

These disparities are largely caused by the fact that the responsibility of unpaid care work continues to fall mostly on women. This is especially true in Japan and Italy, where women spend, respectively, almost 5 times and almost 3 times more time on unpaid care work than men – compared to 1.5 times more in Germany and Canada. In Japan, more than 1 million women left their job to dedicate themselves to childcare in 2017, compared to 13,000 men. In the United States, a lack of legislation makes it especially difficult for both mothers and fathers to combine childbearing with work: it is one of the very few countries in the world that has no statutory paid parental leave for employees.

In January 2020, on the eve of the World Economic Forum in Davos, a new Oxfam report revealed that the world's 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than the 4.6 billion people who make up 60% of the planet's population.<sup>45</sup> In the report entitled *Time to care*,<sup>46</sup> Oxfam shows how much unpaid work women and girls still do today.

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<sup>43</sup> Excerpt from: CORNELLIER, H  l  ne, "Le travail invisible,   a compte    l'Afeas depuis 1966," in Camille ROBERT and Louise TOUPIN, directors, *Le travail invisible – Portraits d'une lutte f  ministe inachev  e*,   ditions du remue-m  nage, Montr  al, 2018, pp. 47 to 59.

<sup>44</sup> Oxfam, *The G7's deadly sins – How the G7 is fuelling the inequality crisis*, Oxfam Policy Paper, August 22, 2019, p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> Oxfam-Qu  bec, January 19, 2020. *Les milliardaires du monde se partagent plus de richesses que 4,6 milliards de personnes*, Press release, January 19, 2020: <https://oxfam.qc.ca/inegalites-partage-richesse/>, Accessed 14 April 2020.

12.5 billion hours = number of hours spent on **housekeeping chores every day** by women and girls around the world.

US\$10,800 billion = value of **women's domestic work every year around the world**. This is 3 times the size of the tech industry.

Between 1995 and 2020, there was little change in the monetary value of the unpaid work of women and girls around the globe. Although there is some sharing of tasks in caring for children or frail loved ones, particularly in Quebec and Canada as a whole, such is not the case in many countries around the globe that are patterned after traditional societies.

## **In Canada**

This unpaid, “invisible” work does, however, allow many organizations and institutions, as well as the Canadian and Quebec governments, to operate while minimizing their costs. Volunteer work enables numerous organizations to save significant amounts in unpaid salaries, whether for humanitarian organizations, the care of sick or frail relatives that would otherwise be provided by the State, homework assistance that eases the burden on the education system, outings with residents of long-term care homes, etc. Beyond the savings, without this work, many services to users and communities would simply not exist, and entire sectors of the economy would collapse. Accordingly, this work, like that of commercial and institutional activities, has economic value that should be counted in Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In 1992, to meet its international commitments, Canada began accounting for and valuing the unpaid work of Canadians and incorporating it into satellite accounts in parallel to Canada's national accounts. That year, Statistics Canada estimated the value of unpaid work to be equivalent to 34 to 54% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or between \$235 and \$374 billion (volunteer work included).<sup>47</sup> In 2016 dollars, the value of unpaid work represented between \$689 and \$1,089 billion (still 34% to 54% of GDP).<sup>48</sup>

To give a more concrete example, in 1992, the unpaid work of a mother staying home with her children full time could be valued at between \$24,351 and \$30,025 for the year.<sup>49</sup> In 2016 dollars, this same work would be worth between \$37,222 and \$45,895.<sup>50</sup>

Unfortunately, Canada has not, at least to our knowledge, done any further estimations of this type since 1992, and has not incorporated the value of unpaid work into GDP as it regularly does for commercial and institutional activities.

## **Statistics Canada**

In order for Canada to meet its commitment to estimate the value of unpaid work and incorporate it into GDP, Afeas and groups across Canada campaigned for Statistics Canada to include a question on Canadians' unpaid work within the family on the long-form, five-yearly census questionnaire. Those

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<sup>46</sup> Oxfam Québec, *Les tâches ménagères et le travail de soin, ça compte!* : <https://oxfam.qc.ca/reduire-inegalites-travail-domestique/>, Accessed 02.02.2021.

<sup>47</sup> Afeas, *Le travail invisible, ça compte!*, Montréal, Afeas, 2001, p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> ROSE, Ruth, “*Le travail non rémunéré—valeurs indexées en dollars de 2016*,” Montréal, Working document written for Afeas by Ruth Rose, Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Quebec at Montreal, November 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Afeas, *Le travail invisible, ça compte!*, op. cit. By way of comparison, in 1992 a person working 40 hours a week at minimum wage (\$5.70 for Quebec) would have earned an annual income of \$11,856.

<sup>50</sup> ROSE, Ruth, “*Le travail non rémunéré—valeurs indexées en dollars de 2016*,” op. cit.

groups were successful in 1996, 2001 and 2006.<sup>51</sup> But in 2011, under the Harper government, the question disappeared from the long-form census and did not return until 2016 when the Trudeau government reinstated the mandatory long-form questionnaire.

According to Statistics Canada experts, it is best to use data from general social surveys or time management social surveys to estimate this portion of the time invested by Canadians. While emphasizing that data from these five-year surveys on time use is very valuable, various organizations, including Afeas, are continuing to work to have the question on household activities added back to the long-form census questionnaire. In their view, this strategy is a more direct and visible way to raise awareness of this work within families and to compare unpaid and paid work.

In our view, Statistics Canada needs to deepen its analysis of unpaid work with families and loved ones, whether in terms of hours per task and responsibility, direct and indirect costs, financial and health implications for those who perform this work, etc. Obviously, this analysis must break down the proportion of women and men and distinguish between different age groups.<sup>52</sup> Collected every five years, this type of data would enable a better assessment of the needs of parents and caregivers and ensure that social, tax and economic measures properly address those needs.

### **Women and Gender Equality Canada**

Who is advocating for the unpaid work of Canadians within the Government of Canada?

Probably the Department for Women and Gender Equality, created in 2018, transforming Status of Women Canada into an official department of the Government of Canada. Its current mandate is

to advance equality with respect to sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression through the inclusion of people of all genders, including women, in Canada's economic, social, and political life. This application of a gender and diversity lens will help us to understand better the intersection of sex and gender with other identity factors. These factors include – but are not limited to – race, national and ethnic origin, Indigenous origin or identity, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic condition, place of residence and disability.<sup>53</sup>

Women's unpaid work, an implied element of the incumbent minister's mandate, must become a major issue in the portfolio, as must violence against women and girls and economic security. These are three issues preventing the achievement equality between women and men in Canada. In order to officially recognize unpaid work, which is still invisible and receives far too little recognition, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality, together with the other relevant departments, must introduce permanent and effective measures.

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<sup>51</sup> This was question 33 on household activities and worded as follows: "Last week, how many hours did this person spend doing the following activities: (a) doing unpaid housework, yard work or home maintenance for members of this household, or others?; (b) looking after one or more of this person's own children, or the children of others, without pay?; (c) providing unpaid care or assistance to one or more seniors?"

<sup>52</sup> Statistics Canada must apply Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) in an intersectoral manner.

<sup>53</sup> Status of Women Canada, *Who we are*, modified 30.04.2019: <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/abu-ans/who-qui/index-en.html>, Accessed 13.02.2021. Since 1971, Canada had been appointing a Minister responsible for Status of Women, one of the recommendations of the Bird Commission's inquiry report.

## The recommendations

It was one of the most widely telegraphed risks at the onset of the pandemic: Women, who seemed to suffer less from the COVID-19 disease, would probably pay a steeper economic price than men. The clues were hiding in plain sight. Women make up a larger share of workers in industries that ground to a halt, and they typically shoulder more of the unpaid work at home. ...

According to the United Nations, which has been monitoring government responses to the crisis in its COVID-19 Global Gender response tracker, few policies specifically targeted women. ... The consequences of this have been clear...

Governments need (among other measures) to finance a further expansion of childcare or working mothers will continue to be forced to abandon their jobs and stay at home. This would only deepen gender inequality and slow an economic recovery.<sup>54</sup>

Afeas and CIAVTI make the following recommendations that can be implemented by the federal government, building on demands pertaining to invisible work that have been made over the years.

These recommendations fall under the following headings: recognition and valuing; counting and evaluation; and tax, economic and social measures.

### ***Recognition and Valuing***

- **Legally designate** the first Tuesday in April as *National Invisible Work Day* throughout Canada;
- **Work to have the first Tuesday in April adopted** as *International Invisible Work Day* by United Nations member countries;
- **Apply and mainstream** intersectional Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+), with attention to occupational profiles and the implementation and evaluation of government measures for the recognition of invisible work; and
- **Strive to deconstruct** gender stereotypes and **create** incentives for more equitable sharing of responsibilities and tasks within households and society.

### ***Accounting and Evaluation***

- **Incorporate** the economic value of invisible work into Gross Domestic Product (GDP) calculations every five years; and
- **Add** a question regarding the calculation of hours of unpaid work to Canada's long-form census questionnaire.

### ***Economic, Social and Fiscal Measures***

- **Convert** non-refundable tax credits to refundable tax credits for parents and caregivers and **create** new tax measures better suited to their real situations;

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<sup>54</sup> MARTINUZZI, Eliza, "Pandemic need not hurt women the most – 'She-cession' policy could hasten recovery," *The Financial Post* – Comment, Thursday, December 30, 2020, pp. 1 – 2: <https://financialpost.com/pmn/business-pmn/the-pandemic-doesnt-have-to-hurt-women-most>, Hard copy accessed 31 December 2021.

- **Introduce** fair and equitable pension plan benefits (QPP and OAS) for parents and caregivers to compensate for periods when these people must withdraw from the labour market to care for children and/or frail/ill/elderly/disabled family members;
- **Add** paternity benefits to employment insurance maternity and parental benefits;
- **Modify** the employment insurance compassionate care benefit, family caregiver benefits for adults and family caregiver benefits for children:
  - (1) abolish the mandatory waiting week;
  - (2) grant 35 weeks of benefits for each of the three benefits;
  - (3) modify the “critically ill” criteria to allow eligibility for a “chronic condition”; replacing the criterion of “whose life is at risk as a result of an illness or injury” by “a health condition requiring the intensive presence and support of a caregiver”; and
- **Develop** a public system of low-cost nursery schools in Canada, while compensating Quebec to opt out of it.

