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CANADA

WOMEN'S UNPAID WORK IN CANADA

**Report of the Standing Committee on the Status
of Women**

Marilyn Gladu, Chair

**JUNE 2021
43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION**

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Chair**

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NOTICE TO READER

Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

has the honour to present its

EIGHTH REPORT

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the committee has studied women's unpaid work and has agreed to report the following:

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SUMMARY

Invisible and unpaid work in and outside the home are essential to Canadian families, communities and society. Globally, and in Canada, women perform the majority of this work, which is undervalued and under appreciated. Also, women may face different challenges because of their unpaid work responsibilities. For example, women who perform unpaid work may have a double burden of unpaid and paid workloads, lower levels of labour force participation, less economic security, and negative mental and physical health effects.

Not only is women's unpaid work, including unpaid care work, undervalued, but women's paid care work is also undervalued and underpaid. Racialized and immigrant women represent a large part of the paid care workforce. In addition, many women who are newcomers to Canada face unique challenges related to unpaid work. For example, the burden of integrating newcomer families into Canada often falls on the women in these families. English and French language abilities may act as barriers to some immigrant and newcomer women's integration as well as access to services, such as childcare, and employment.

To support women who perform unpaid work, witnesses made several proposals to the Committee. For example, witnesses emphasized the importance of affordable and accessible childcare services for women, regardless of geographic location or immigration status in Canada. In addition, witnesses underlined the need to recognize and value unpaid and invisible work, including care work. Finally, witnesses advocated for investments in the care sector to improve working conditions for workers in this sector.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada work with Quebec and the other provinces and territories to recognize, reduce and redistribute women’s disproportionate responsibility for unpaid and care work by:

- **acknowledging that this work is essential;**
- **investing in the care sector, including home and community care, to build a robust care system in all regions of Canada with appropriate compensation and labour standards; and**
- **applying gender-based analysis plus to, and include caregivers’ voices in, the development of all related policy decisions. 19**

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with the provinces and territories, establish a National Care Economy Commission to develop and implement a national care strategy and to examine the possibility of applying the International Labour Organization’s “5R Framework for Decent Care Work.” 19

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada recognize the first Tuesday in April as National Invisible Work Day and encourage all United Nations member states to do the same. 19

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada explore measures to encourage parents (especially fathers) to take advantage of parental leave, such as by increasing

existing maternity and parental benefits and establishing paternity leave alongside the maternity and parental leave that exists under the Employment Insurance system. 19

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with Quebec and the other provinces and territories, with the goal of ensuring that all families in Canada, regardless of geographic location or immigration status, have access to high-quality, affordable and inclusive childcare options, work to: 19

- adequately and sustainably fund, through transfers to the provinces and territories with the rights to retraction with full compensation, an affordable and culturally appropriate national early learning and childcare system; and
- ensure that this national system includes options for Canadians such as, sufficient public childcare spaces to meet demand, or sufficient financial support to Canadians who wish to care for their children at home. 20

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada work with the provinces and territories in accordance with their respective jurisdictions to improve immigrant and newcomer women’s awareness of and access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services and supports, including English and French language classes, as well as other social and community services. 20

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada collaborate with Indigenous organizations, communities and individuals, particularly Indigenous women, to identify the needs of Indigenous women providing unpaid and caregiving work and ensure federal initiatives are culturally sensitive and meet their needs. 20

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada support Statistics Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information to properly and more frequently collect data on and track unpaid and caregiving work in all regions across Canada and expand data collection to include:

- the estimated monetary values of unpaid and caregiving work in Canada;
- data disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, age, Indigenous identity and other factors;
- pre- and post-COVID-19 pandemic caregiving and unpaid work data;
- the mental and physical health effects of unpaid and caregiving work; and
- employment and financial effects of unpaid work and caregiving..... 25

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada, with the goal of recognizing invisible work, facilitating dialogue and encouraging employers to consider workplace accommodations for caregivers, implement an awareness campaign about unpaid and caregiving work to increase both the public’s and employers’ understanding of these types of work..... 25

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada continue to support the implementation of the *Pay Equity Act*. 25



WOMEN'S UNPAID WORK IN CANADA

INTRODUCTION

Women in Canada and around the world bear a disproportionate burden of invisible and unpaid work. This invisible work is essential to the functioning of our homes, communities, economies and society as a whole. The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (the Committee) recognizes the essential contributions of women in Canada and conducted a study of women's unpaid work in Canada to examine this subject more closely. The Committee heard from 17 witnesses and received two written briefs between 3 December 2020 and 27 April 2021. Witnesses emphasized the importance of this work, while highlighting the challenges women face as a result of this unequal distribution of unpaid and invisible work.

The Committee heard about the importance of recognizing the value of women's unpaid and invisible work in Canada, including care work for adults, seniors and children. In addition, witnesses spoke about the effects of unpaid work on women's mental and physical health and wellbeing, as well as their economic security and labour force participation. The Committee has provided recommendations, based on witness testimony, related to the federal government's role in supporting women who perform unpaid work, as well as reducing and redistributing women's unpaid work to achieve gender equality in Canada.

RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF WOMEN'S UNPAID WORK

As a result of deeply-ingrained gender stereotypes and gender roles, the responsibility for domestic labour, volunteer work and both paid and unpaid caregiving typically falls on women.¹ Unpaid work is comprised of all the activities inside and outside of the home that people do to manage their households, such as caregiving of all types, any related domestic work, work in the community and volunteer work.² Unpaid work is

1 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1205 (Dr. Saskia Sivananthan, Chief Research, and Knowledge Translation and Exchange Officer, Alzheimer Society of Canada); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1220 (Yasmina Chouakri, Coordinator, Réseau d'action pour l'égalité des femmes immigrées et racisées du Québec); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1200 (Lise Courteau, President, Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 9 March 2021, 1100 (Jacqueline Neapole, Executive Director, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women).

2 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 9 March 2021, 1100 (Jacqueline Neapole, Executive Director, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women).



considered “invisible” because it is not part of the labour market economy in the same way as consumer spending or commercial transactions.³ Hélène Cornellier of the Association féminine d’éducation et d’action sociale told the Committee that in 1995, the United Nations valued the unpaid work performed by women and girls globally at US\$11 trillion.⁴ In the Canadian context, Laura Addati of the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that the value of unpaid work in Canada is approximately 26% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with women working nearly two thirds of the total unpaid hours.⁵

Unpaid work continues to be seen as “not adding [economic] value,” so this work remains undervalued and under-compensated.⁶ The double burden of unpaid work and paid work competes for women’s time, increases their overall paid and unpaid working hours and reduces their time to rest.⁷ Furthermore, employers may perceive this unpaid work as a “competing responsibility” with paid work, which may negatively affect women’s progression and participation in the workplace.⁸

Witnesses agreed that the social norms around unpaid work and caregiving need to shift, however, respecting cultural differences in approaches to unpaid work and caregiving remains important.⁹ Data related to unpaid work and caregiving in Canada is not easily disaggregated by sex, gender, ethnicity or culture, however witnesses speculated that this data could be beneficial in meeting the needs of people in different

3 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1200 (Lise Courteau, President, Association féminine d’éducation et d’action sociale).

4 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1200 (Hélène Cornellier, Director, Policy and Communications, Association féminine d’éducation et d’action sociale); Association féminine d’éducation et d’action sociale and Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work, [“Invisible Work Counts! Recognizing the Invisible Work of Parents and Caregivers by Measuring it and Including it in Canada’s GDP,” Submitted Brief](#), 18 February 2021.

5 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 9 March 2021, 1100 (Laura Addati, Policy Specialist, Women’s Economic Empowerment International Labour Organization).

6 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1220 (Dr. Saskia Sivananthan, Chief Research, and Knowledge Translation and Exchange Officer, Alzheimer Society of Canada).

7 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1215 (Diana Sarosi, Director, Policy and Campaigns, Oxfam Canada); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1210 (Puneet Dhillon, Communications and Research Analyst, Punjabi Community Health Services).

8 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1220 (Dr. Saskia Sivananthan, Chief Research, and Knowledge Translation and Exchange Officer, Alzheimer Society of Canada).

9 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1125 (Andrea Doucet, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Gender, Work and Care, As an individual); and FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1135 (Amy Coupal, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Caregiver Organization).

communities.¹⁰ Tina Chui of Statistics Canada indicated that unpaid work responsibilities may vary when examined through a diversity lens. She indicated that Statistics Canada is working to improve disaggregated data collection in this area and applying a diversity lens to various Statistics Canada data products.¹¹

Statistical Overview of Unpaid Work in Canada

Through the General Social Survey (GSS) Statistics Canada collects data every five years on the ways Canadians use their time. The results of this survey provide some insight into the amount of time women and men in Canada spend on unpaid work. In the survey, unpaid work is defined as “time spent doing housework, performing routine tasks related to the physical care of children, and providing care to an adult family member or friend.”¹²

Based on the most recent Time Use Survey results, in 2015 women spent an average of 2.8 hours per day on housework, 54 minutes more per day than men. Furthermore, women (76%) were more likely than men (54%) to perform routine tasks related to the care of children; women spent on average one hour more than men per day on these tasks. Regarding caring for adults, the proportion of women (3%) who performed this care (an average of 42 minutes per day) on any given day was three times higher than the proportion of men (1%).¹³ Lastly, women were more likely than men to feel “time pressures” during the day; for example 69% of women compared to 60% of men reported that they felt stressed that they did not have enough time in a day to complete all of their tasks. Furthermore, 46% of women compared to 40% of men felt constantly under stress trying to accomplish more than they could handle.¹⁴

Not only did women tend to spend more time on unpaid work than men in 2015, they were also less likely to be in the labour force than men: 57% of women were employed compared to 65% of men. For women who were in the labour force, they

10 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1135 (Amy Coupal, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Caregiver Organization); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1135 (Tracy Johnson, Director, Health System Analysis and Emerging Issues, Canadian Institute for Health Information).

11 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1225 and 1245 (Tina Chui, Acting Director, Diversity and Sociocultural Statistics, Statistics Canada).

12 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1205 (Josée Bégin, Director General, Labour Market, Education and Socio-Economic Well-Being, Statistics Canada).

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.



were more likely than men to have a part-time job and women generally spent an average of 6.9 hours less per week at work than men. Josée Bégin from Statistics Canada noted that “the disproportionate unpaid work done by women for their families favours the higher labour force participation rate and longer working hours of men.”¹⁵

In addition, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the unequal distribution of unpaid labour has been exacerbated. According to findings from Statistics Canada’s Canadian Perspectives Survey Series 3: Resuming Economic and Social Activities During COVID-19, men who were unemployed or working from home during the pandemic reported sharing more parenting tasks compared to men who had jobs or were working outside the home. In contrast, when women were unemployed or working from home, they were more likely to report that they were predominantly responsible for parenting tasks and less likely to say these tasks were shared equally.¹⁶ Furthermore, Diana Sarosi pointed to survey results from Oxfam Canada indicating that Indigenous women and Black women reported “greater challenges due to increased house and care work due to COVID-19 than their white peers.”¹⁷ For this reason, Indigenous women were three times more likely than white respondents to indicate that they have “had to give up looking for paid work.”¹⁸

Care Work in Canada

Caregiving of all kinds is essential for individuals receiving care, to the economy and to society more broadly, yet caregiving remains largely invisible and unpaid; these roles typically fall to women.¹⁹ The Committee heard about many types of caregiving, including the care of children, seniors, people living with disabilities, as well as individuals with complex care needs such as those living with dementia. Diana Sarosi explained that globally, women and girls over the age of 15 years contribute the equivalent of \$10.8 trillion in unpaid care work annually.²⁰ Witnesses explained that

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 1210.

17 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1215 (Diana Sarosi, Director, Policy and Campaigns, Oxfam Canada).

18 Ibid.

19 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1215 (Diana Sarosi, Director, Policy and Campaigns, Oxfam Canada); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1105 (Andrea Doucet, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Gender, Work and Care, As an individual).

20 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1215 (Diana Sarosi, Director, Policy and Campaigns, Oxfam Canada).

there are typically two types of care, both of which are predominantly provided by women. The first category is unpaid or “informal” care, which is often provided without recognition or support. The second is paid or “formal” care which is typically given by care providers, who are often paid or are associated with some type of “[care] entity.”²¹

Camille Robert and Jacqueline Neapole suggested that women’s unpaid care work and paid care work are linked and can depend on one another.²² Nora Spinks explained that both unpaid and paid work must be understood within Canada’s care economy.²³ In the care economy, someone provides and someone receives care; care has “intrinsic value” and supports a public good. Both the care economy and the market economy affect families and communities, and neither can function without the other.²⁴ Despite the importance of both paid and unpaid care work, workers in the care sector are undervalued; these workers are typically women, many of whom are racialized women.²⁵

In Canada, some witnesses pointed to the market-based approach and privatization of many care services as being contributing factors to an environment of low wages, precarious work and poor working conditions in the care sector.²⁶ These low wages and poor working conditions may contribute to challenges in hiring and retention in the sector and may lead to burnout and negative mental health effects among workers.²⁷ Professor Andrea Doucet speculated that the care sector’s low wages were among the contributing factors to men’s lower representation in the sector’s workforce.²⁸ Public

21 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1115 (Nora Spinks, President and Chief Executive Officer, Vanier Institute of the Family).

22 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1215 (Camille Robert, Historian, As an individual); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 9 March 2021, 1100 (Jacqueline Neapole, Executive Director, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women).

23 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1110 (Nora Spinks, President and Chief Executive Officer, Vanier Institute of the Family).

24 Ibid.

25 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1225 (Dr. Saskia Sivananthan, Chief Research, and Knowledge Translation and Exchange Officer, Alzheimer Society of Canada); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1245 (Camille Robert, Historian, As an individual).

26 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1210 (Vicky Smallman, National Director, Human Rights, Canadian Labour Congress); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1255 (Diana Sarosi, Director, Policy and Campaigns, Oxfam Canada).

27 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1250 (Diana Sarosi, Director, Policy and Campaigns, Oxfam Canada).

28 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1120 (Andrea Doucet, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Gender, Work and Care, As an individual).



investment in the care sector is integral to valuing this sector and its workforce, as well as to improving and maintaining labour standards, achieving fair compensation and ensuring equality for women, including racialized women, in the care sector.²⁹

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Josée Bégin of Statistics Canada explained that the importance of support workers in the health care field and the poor working conditions that many of these workers face were highlighted. For example, according to data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), while the number of health support workers (300,000) remained relatively stable in November 2020 compared to the previous year, working conditions were “much worse than for most workers.” Josée Bégin explained that these health support workers’ average hourly wage is approximately \$22 an hour, which is about \$8 lower than the national average. These employees are more likely to be working in temporary jobs and to have more than one job compared to other employees. Witnesses also explained that for many immigrants, these health support positions are a way to enter the labour market.³⁰ For example, according to the LFS, in November 2020, four in 10 health support workers were immigrants, compared to one in four for other jobs.³¹

Vicky Smallman explained that “all women provide unpaid care” but that some women can afford to contract this work out to hired caregivers and these workers, often racialized women, are undervalued and underpaid.³² Witnesses noted that racialized women and Indigenous women represent a significant proportion of caregivers, in both paid settings such as long-term care facilities, and unpaid settings in their families and communities.³³ According to Diana Sarosi, “our economies are built on the backs of women, especially women of colour who provide 12 billion hours of unpaid and

29 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1245 (Camille Robert, Historian, As an individual); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1110 (Nora Spinks, President and Chief Executive Officer, Vanier Institute of the Family); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1240 (Dr. Saskia Sivananthan, Chief Research, and Knowledge Translation and Exchange Officer, Alzheimer Society of Canada).

30 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1255 (Camille Robert, Historian, As an individual); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1210 (Josée Bégin, Director General, Labour Market, Education and Socio-Economic Well-Being, Statistics Canada).

31 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1210 (Josée Bégin, Director General, Labour Market, Education and Socio-Economic Well-Being, Statistics Canada).

32 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1245 (Vicky Smallman, National Director, Human Rights, Canadian Labour Congress).

33 *Ibid.*; FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 9 March 2021, 1100 (Jacqueline Neapole, Executive Director, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1205 (Dr. Saskia Sivananthan, Chief Research, and Knowledge Translation and Exchange Officer, Alzheimer Society of Canada).

underpaid care work each day.”³⁴ Furthermore, Camille Robert explained that there is an increasing inequality among women “with the growing use of migrant, immigrant and racialized workers to bridge the gap in care.”³⁵ As such, witnesses called for intersectional and holistic approaches to unpaid and paid care policies and investments in social infrastructure, to ensure that the most marginalized women are no longer “shouldering that burden.”³⁶ Furthermore, some witnesses suggested that a National Care Economy Commission could be established in Canada to develop and implement a national care strategy; this commission could examine the possibility of applying the ILO’s “5R Framework for Decent Care Work.”³⁷

Women’s unpaid labour and caregiving are essential to not only the people receiving care or benefitting from the labour, but also to the economy and the wellbeing and functioning of society more broadly. Lise Courteau of the Association féminine d’éducation et d’action sociale asserted that the “recognition and valuing of invisible work are central issues in achieving equality between men and women.”³⁸ Witnesses highlighted different initiatives to recognize and value invisible work, including:³⁹

- making improvements to data collection related to unpaid work;
- implementing a national invisible work day in Canada;
- improving pay equity measures;

34 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1215 (Diana Sarosi, Director, Policy and Campaigns, Oxfam Canada).

35 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1205 (Camille Robert, Historian, As an individual).

36 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 9 March 2021, 1115 (Jacqueline Neapole, Executive Director, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women).

37 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1210 (Vicky Smallman, National Director, Human Rights, Canadian Labour Congress).

38 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1200 (Hélène Cornellier, Director, Policy and Communications, Association féminine d’éducation et d’action sociale).

39 See for example: Ibid.; FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1105 (Andrea Doucet, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Gender, Work and Care, As an individual); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1115 (Nora Spinks, President and Chief Executive Officer, Vanier Institute of the Family); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1105 (Amy Coupal, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Caregiver Organization); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1240 (Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland, Director, Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1240 (Yasmina Chouakri, Coordinator, Réseau d’action pour l’égalité des femmes immigrées et racisées du Québec).



- establishing gendered budgeting practices;
- acknowledging care services as essential social infrastructure; and
- ensuring that rural and urban areas have access to strong social and physical infrastructure.

Caring for Children

The Committee heard about the effects of parenting responsibilities and childcare on women in Canada. For example, Laura Addati of the ILO highlighted that in Canada, a parenthood employment gap (the difference between the rate of mothers' and fathers' employment) exists; she pointed out that there is an "employment penalty" for mothers with young children in Canada, however, this gap is smaller between mothers and fathers without young children.⁴⁰ She also highlighted a leadership gap, with mothers being under-represented among managers and leaders; comparatively, "we see a consistent fatherhood premium in employment, wages and leadership."⁴¹

Witnesses noted that several initiatives could work together to support families in Canada, including a strong parental leave system, the Canada Child Benefit, and a national childcare program.⁴² Witnesses emphasized the importance of improving maternal leave benefits and encouraging men's participation in paternity or parental leave to achieve positive change in the gendered distribution of paid and unpaid work and in women's labour force participation.⁴³ When discussing parental leave, Professor Andrea Doucet explained that the federal Parental Sharing Benefit is important but does not "go far enough." The Parental Sharing Benefit allows parents to receive additional weeks of parental leave, "as long as they share parental benefits."⁴⁴ She explained that the Parental Sharing Benefit is not an individual non-transferable entitlement and is dependent on the first parent taking leave: "If the mother takes leave,

40 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 9 March 2021, 1100 (Laura Addati, Policy Specialist, Women's Economic Empowerment International Labour Organization).

41 Ibid.

42 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1155 (Andrea Doucet, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Gender, Work and Care, As an individual).

43 See for example: Ibid.; FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1245 (Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland, Director, Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1215 (Dr. Kate Bezanson, Associate Professor and Associate Dean, Brock University, As an individual); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1250 (Camille Robert, Historian, As an individual).

44 Government of Canada, *Parental Sharing Benefit*.

then the father can take the parental sharing benefit, but we know that one-third of mothers in Canada do not receive benefits.” As such, there is a “disadvantage built in.”⁴⁵ Finally, she noted that the overall wage replacement rate during parental leave in Canada is low in relation to international standards, and does not typically meet the 70% rate that commentators argue is required for families to feel that they can “afford for fathers to take leave.”⁴⁶

Dr. Kate Bezanson asserted that in the context of COVID-19, rebuilding the economy depends on women’s labour force participation, and women’s participation is directly dependent on the availability of childcare. The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating effects on the care sector, including on the childcare sector. Many childcare centres have closed for various reasons. Dr. Kate Bezanson pointed to the current childcare system in Canada and explained that because it is not an established system, it is fragile with no protections in a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The fragility of the childcare sector means that “we are coming out of the pandemic with less [childcare stock] than we had going in.”⁴⁷

Many witnesses called for a federally funded high-quality childcare system to be delivered through the provinces and territories, including in rural and remote regions, for parents who wish to use it. Witnesses acknowledged the success of the existing publicly funded childcare system in Quebec, noting however that access to this system could be expanded and improved.⁴⁸ Witnesses suggested that a federal childcare system could be based on the existing system in Quebec.⁴⁹ The Committee was told that the benefits of this type of system include increasing women’s participation in the labour force, improving working conditions and wages for childcare sector workers, and also contributing to economic growth in Canada.⁵⁰ Witnesses added that families in Canada

45 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1150 (Andrea Doucet, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Gender, Work and Care, As an individual).

46 Ibid.

47 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1235 (Dr. Kate Bezanson, Associate Professor and Associate Dean, Brock University, As an individual).

48 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1230 and 1250 (Camille Robert, Historian, As an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1245 (Hélène Cornellier, Director, Policy and Communications, Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale).

49 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1245 (Hélène Cornellier, Director, Policy and Communications, Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1220 (Dr. Kate Bezanson, Associate Professor and Associate Dean, Brock University, As an individual).

50 See for example: Ibid.; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 9 March 2021, 1105 (Jacqueline Neapole, Executive Director, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1205 (Aline Lechaume, Research Professor,



have different approaches to providing care to children. For example, Dr. Kate Bezanson acknowledged that:

[I]f we're thinking about how we support caregivers, the biggest impact is in building a [childcare] system that is accessible and affordable to those who wish to use it. Absolutely, nobody is speaking about any kind of compulsory childcare. 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.⁵¹

As such, families need choice in their childcare options that includes support for caring for children at home, as well as through a childcare system.⁵²

Invisible Work of Newcomer Women in Canada

The Committee heard from several witnesses about the unique challenges related to unpaid work facing newcomer women in Canada, including immigrant women and refugee women. Witnesses recognized that immigrant and newcomer women are affected by unpaid and invisible work in many of the same ways as women who are not newcomers to Canada, however, Professor Aline Lechaume added that the burden of unpaid and invisible work on immigrant and newcomer women is under-estimated as these women themselves are often invisible.⁵³ Furthermore, some immigrant and newcomer women may face racism and discrimination, which carries an additional mental burden for these women as they navigate their daily lives.⁵⁴

Faculty of Social Sciences, Université Laval, As an individual); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1210 (Puneet Dhillon, Communications and Research Analyst, Punjabi Community Health Services).

- 51 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1240 (Dr. Kate Bezanson, Associate Professor and Associate Dean, Brock University, As an individual).
- 52 Ibid.; FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1245 (Camille Robert, Historian, As an individual).
- 53 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1205 (Aline Lechaume, Research Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, Université Laval, As an individual).
- 54 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1235 (Yasmina Chouakri, Coordinator, Réseau d'action pour l'égalité des femmes immigrées et racisées du Québec).

Immigrant women may face additional barriers because of their intersecting identities, particularly single mothers who are newcomers to Canada.⁵⁵ Puneet Dhillon of the Punjabi Community Health Services explained:⁵⁶

The working hours of a full-time employed man in a day are 7.5 hours. For a woman you add 90 minutes to that. For an immigrant housebound woman you add another 90 minutes. For a single mother with no social support of an extended family you add another 90 minutes.

Newcomer women are often responsible for integrating their families into Canadian society. This responsibility is an additional facet of unpaid work that is unique to women who are newcomers to Canada.⁵⁷ Language barriers may often affect every aspect of immigrant and newcomer women's integration, including for senior women, such as:⁵⁸

- developing connections and networks in the community;
- familiarizing themselves with a new physical environment;
- securing employment and achieving financial stability; and
- identifying, navigating and accessing services, including childcare and transportation.

The barriers discussed above may reduce these women's access to formal and informal supports, which in turn impede their integration into Canadian society. For example, without a community and social support network or access to affordable childcare services, immigrant and newcomer women must perform all of the unpaid and care work for their families.⁵⁹ According to Yasmina Chouakri, many immigrant and newcomer women who arrive with precarious statuses, such as refugees, or under the family class, "come in second place" after their spouse to integrate into the labour

55 Ibid.; FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1210 and 1300 (Puneet Dhillon, Communications and Research Analyst, Punjabi Community Health Services).

56 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1210 (Puneet Dhillon, Communications and Research Analyst, Punjabi Community Health Services).

57 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1205 (Aline Lechaume, Research Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, Université Laval, As an individual).

58 Ibid.; FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1210 and 1245 (Puneet Dhillon, Communications and Research Analyst, Punjabi Community Health Services); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1220 (Yasmina Chouakri, Coordinator, Réseau d'action pour l'égalité des femmes immigrées et racisées du Québec).

59 Ibid.



market and attend language classes. These women are typically responsible for all the unpaid and care work for their family.⁶⁰

Attending language classes is often the first step towards securing employment after arriving in Canada for many immigrants and newcomers. Without access to childcare services, immigrant and newcomer women may be unable to access these classes and the barriers to employment persist.⁶¹ An additional barrier to employment is the fact that many immigrant and newcomer women's education credentials are not recognized in Canada and these women may require additional education or training to gain employment.⁶² Without affordable childcare, immigrant and newcomer women may not be able to access the language classes required to succeed in further education, nor will they be able to attend and complete the education programs. Puneet Dhillon added that without financial stability, immigrant and newcomer women may be particularly vulnerable in moments of crisis, such as instances of family violence.⁶³ Witnesses highlighted several measures to support immigrant and newcomer women in Canada who perform unpaid work. Among these measures are:⁶⁴

- ensuring access to affordable childcare, regardless of immigration status;
- improving access to language classes;
- improving the coordination of, and immigrant women's access to, community services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate;
- increasing initiatives to create networks and reduce isolation;
- providing single mothers who are newcomers with increased financial supports; and

60 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1220 (Yasmina Chouakri, Coordinator, Réseau d'action pour l'égalité des femmes immigrées et racisées du Québec).

61 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1205 (Aline Lechaume, Research Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, Université Laval, As an individual).

62 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1210 (Puneet Dhillon, Communications and Research Analyst, Punjabi Community Health Services).

63 Ibid., 1245.

64 Ibid., 1220; FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1205 (Aline Lechaume, Research Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, Université Laval, As an individual); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 27 April 2021, 1235 (Yasmina Chouakri, Coordinator, Réseau d'action pour l'égalité des femmes immigrées et racisées du Québec).

- recognizing and compensating the additional work and contributions of immigrant and newcomer women.

Recommendation 1

That the Government of Canada work with Quebec and the other provinces and territories to recognize, reduce and redistribute women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid and care work by:

- **acknowledging that this work is essential;**
- **investing in the care sector, including home and community care, to build a robust care system in all regions of Canada with appropriate compensation and labour standards; and**
- **applying gender-based analysis plus to, and include caregivers' voices in, the development of all related policy decisions.**

Recommendation 2

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with the provinces and territories, establish a National Care Economy Commission to develop and implement a national care strategy and to examine the possibility of applying the International Labour Organization's "5R Framework for Decent Care Work."

Recommendation 3

That the Government of Canada recognize the first Tuesday in April as National Invisible Work Day and encourage all United Nations member states to do the same.

Recommendation 4

That the Government of Canada explore measures to encourage parents (especially fathers) to take advantage of parental leave, such as by increasing existing maternity and parental benefits and establishing paternity leave alongside the maternity and parental leave that exists under the Employment Insurance system.

Recommendation 5

That the Government of Canada, in partnership with Quebec and the other provinces and territories, with the goal of ensuring that all families in Canada, regardless of



geographic location or immigration status, have access to high-quality, affordable and inclusive childcare options, work to:

- **adequately and sustainably fund, through transfers to the provinces and territories with the rights to retraction with full compensation, an affordable and culturally appropriate national early learning and childcare system; and**
- **ensure that this national system includes options for Canadians such as, sufficient public childcare spaces to meet demand, or sufficient financial support to Canadians who wish to care for their children at home.**

Recommendation 6

That the Government of Canada work with the provinces and territories in accordance with their respective jurisdictions to improve immigrant and newcomer women’s awareness of and access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services and supports, including English and French language classes, as well as other social and community services.

The Committee acknowledges and regrets the underrepresentation of Indigenous women’s voices in this study. As such, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation 7

That the Government of Canada collaborate with Indigenous organizations, communities and individuals, particularly Indigenous women, to identify the needs of Indigenous women providing unpaid and caregiving work and ensure federal initiatives are culturally sensitive and meet their needs.

EFFECTS OF UNPAID WORK ON WOMEN

[T]hese gaps existed before COVID...I don't think it's simply a matter of getting back to normal, because normal wasn't working. It wasn't working for many, many women.

Jacqueline Neapole
Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women

Mental and Physical Health and Wellbeing

For many women, unpaid work and caregiving responsibilities are a second or even third shift, on top of paid labour; these women are faced with the challenge of balancing all these workloads. The added burden of multiple workloads may contribute to women's stress and potential burnout, as many women do not have time to rest.⁶⁵ Witnesses explained that caregiving can have serious and persistent effects on the mental and physical health of individuals providing this care.⁶⁶

According to Tracy Johnson of the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), 96% of Canadians receiving home care services, including palliative care services, also had an unpaid caregiver. In many instances, the additional unpaid care provided to these individuals allows them to remain in their homes. Approximately one in three unpaid caregivers in Canada are "distressed" and these caregivers provided an average of 38 hours of unpaid care per week. Distress is twice as high among caregivers who live with the person they care for, compared to those who do not.⁶⁷ Tracy Johnson noted that home care services are not always accessible in all parts of Canada, particularly in rural areas; as such improving awareness of and access to home care services across Canada is an important way to "care for the carers."⁶⁸ Witnesses also explained that caregivers may benefit from diverse kinds of supports, such as adult day programs, respite care, meal delivery, community social supports, expanded financial measures, as well as support in navigating the health care systems in Canada.⁶⁹

Dr. Saskia Sivananthan noted that for people who provide care to a loved one at home, such as someone with dementia, the pandemic has contributed to higher levels of distress among these informal caregivers. The pandemic interrupted access to respite care for caregivers and has impeded personal support workers to come to the home for

65 See for example: FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1205 (Dr. Saskia Sivananthan, Chief Research, and Knowledge Translation and Exchange Officer, Alzheimer Society of Canada); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1105 (Amy Coupal, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Caregiver Organization).

66 Ibid.

67 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1100 (Tracy Johnson, Director, Health System Analysis and Emerging Issues, Canadian Institute for Health Information).

68 Ibid.; FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1215 (Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland, Director, Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work).

69 See for example: Ibid.; FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1130 (Amy Coupal, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Caregiver Organization); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1215 (Hélène Cornellier, Director, Policy and Communications, Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale).



additional support.⁷⁰ According to witnesses, caregivers need increased supports both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷¹ Short- and long-term changes in Canadian care systems are required to relieve the immediate pressures of the pandemic, while also creating a “robust care system to help us weather future crises.”⁷²

The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified negative mental health effects related to the double burden of paid work and unpaid responsibilities, and has resulted in negative health effects, such as anxiety, depression, isolation and burnout.⁷³ Witnesses described a gap in data related to unpaid and care work and the ways these responsibilities have shifted during the pandemic.⁷⁴ Despite gaps in certain pandemic-related data, Statistics Canada did conduct a voluntary data collection survey on mental health during the pandemic in April 2020. This survey found that women who participated were more likely than men (30.5% vs. 24%) to say that their lives had been moderately or severely stressful since the pandemic began.⁷⁵ Josée Bégin of Statistics Canada speculated that women’s heightened stress may be attributed to the increase in unpaid work during the pandemic. Women’s unpaid work may have increased during the pandemic because of the closure of daycares and schools, physical distancing regulations that impeded parents and friends from providing extra support and the closure of certain businesses,

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- 70 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1245 (Dr. Saskia Sivananthan, Chief Research, and Knowledge Translation and Exchange Officer, Alzheimer Society of Canada); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1115 (Nora Spinks, President and Chief Executive Officer, Vanier Institute of the Family).
- 71 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1105 (Amy Coupal, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Caregiver Organization).
- 72 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1210 (Vicky Smallman, National Director, Human Rights, Canadian Labour Congress); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1110 (Nora Spinks, President and Chief Executive Officer, Vanier Institute of the Family).
- 73 See for example: *Ibid.*; FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1200 (Hélène Cornellier, Director, Policy and Communications, Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1205 (Dr. Kate Bezanson, Associate Professor and Associate Dean, Brock University, As an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1205 (Camille Robert, Historian, As an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1210 (Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland, Director, Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work).
- 74 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1235 (Diana Sarosi, Director, Policy and Campaigns, Oxfam Canada); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1235 (Dr. Saskia Sivananthan, Chief Research, and Knowledge Translation and Exchange Officer, Alzheimer Society of Canada).
- 75 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1210 (Josée Bégin, Director General, Labour Market, Education and Socio-Economic Well-Being, Statistics Canada).

such as restaurants and dry cleaners, where women may have contracted out some of their unpaid work responsibilities.⁷⁶

Economic Security and Labour Force Participation

Unpaid work responsibilities are among “the biggest determinants of women’s economic security.”⁷⁷ The unequal distribution of unpaid labour can have negative effects on women’s wages, labour market participation, career progression, economic security across the life stages, and on gender equality itself.⁷⁸

Witnesses specified that for women in the workforce, the added burden of providing care can become too great and may force women to take unpaid leave or to exit the workforce entirely.⁷⁹ Amy Coupal of the Ontario Caregiver Organization explained that some caregivers hesitate to speak to their employers about their caregiving, as they fear reprisal or termination if they ask for accommodations or modifications to their work circumstances.⁸⁰ Nora Spinks further noted that when women are providing elder care, this care may occur at later stages in their career, which may mean a larger financial impact and a greater effect on their pensionable earnings, and consequently, their future earnings and economic security.⁸¹

76 Ibid.; FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1235 (Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland, Director, Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work).

77 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1215 (Diana Sarosi, Director, Policy and Campaigns, Oxfam Canada).

78 See for example: Ibid.; FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1210 (Vicky Smallman, National Director, Human Rights, Canadian Labour Congress); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1115 (Nora Spinks, President and Chief Executive Officer, Vanier Institute of the Family); Association féminine d’éducation et d’action sociale and Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work, [“Invisible Work Counts! Recognizing the Invisible Work of Parents and Caregivers by Measuring it and Including it in Canada’s GDP,” Submitted Brief](#), 18 February 2021.

79 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 9 March 2021, 1100 (Jacqueline Neapole, Executive Director, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1115 (Nora Spinks, President and Chief Executive Officer, Vanier Institute of the Family); FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1205 (Dr. Saskia Sivananthan, Chief Research, and Knowledge Translation and Exchange Officer, Alzheimer Society of Canada).

80 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1115 (Amy Coupal, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Caregiver Organization).

81 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1135 (Nora Spinks, President and Chief Executive Officer, Vanier Institute of the Family).



Witnesses suggested that increased support from employers through workplace care policies⁸² and the availability of paid sick days for all workers would be an important step towards alleviating some of the stress that women face when they are balancing their unpaid and paid work responsibilities.⁸³

Senior women also face consequences of the unequal distribution of unpaid labour between women and men even when they are no longer participating in the workforce. Senior women who worked part time or who worked in the home providing unpaid care earlier in their lives may have relatively low pensions and challenging financial situations that are particularly difficult for single senior women.⁸⁴ Camille Robert spoke about possible measures to reduce senior women's economic insecurity and recognize women's unpaid work contributions, such as providing a salary to homemakers, including homemakers in the Labour Force, or compensating people who worked in the home instead of the paid labour force by providing old age benefits.⁸⁵ Laura Addati added that some countries provide pension credits, to both men and women, that take into account years spent on unpaid work.⁸⁶

While many women may face economic insecurity because of their unpaid work responsibilities, some unpaid caregivers may face additional financial burdens. For example, witnesses explained that many women who are caregivers pay for certain care-related costs from their own pockets and savings. The additional financial challenge for these unpaid caregivers can contribute to greater levels of distress for caregivers.⁸⁷

82 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1215 (Dr. Kate Bezanson, Associate Professor and Associate Dean, Brock University, As an individual); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 9 March 2021, 1150 (Laura Addati, Policy Specialist, Women's Economic Empowerment International Labour Organization).

83 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 3 December 2020, 1245 (Diana Sarosi, Director, Policy and Campaigns, Oxfam Canada); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 10 December 2020, 1125 (Nora Spinks, President and Chief Executive Officer, Vanier Institute of the Family); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1105 (Amy Coupal, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Caregiver Organization).

84 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 9 March 2021, 1120 (Jacqueline Neapole, Executive Director, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women).

85 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 25 February 2021, 1230 (Camille Robert, Historian, As an individual).

86 FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 9 March 2021, 1120 (Laura Addati, Policy Specialist, Women's Economic Empowerment International Labour Organization).

87 See for example: FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1100 (Tracy Johnson, Director, Health System Analysis and Emerging Issues, Canadian Institute for Health Information); FEWO, [Evidence](#), 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1225 (Hélène Cornellier, Director, Policy and Communications, Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale).

Women who are forced to reduce or eliminate their paid work hours to fulfill their caring duties, while also paying out of pocket for caregiving costs, face a double financial burden.⁸⁸ This financial challenge can also be very difficult for single mothers, who are providing care to their children without the financial support of a second income, as such, some mothers suggest further increases to the Canada Child Benefit.⁸⁹

Recommendation 8

That the Government of Canada support Statistics Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information to properly and more frequently collect data on and track unpaid and caregiving work in all regions across Canada and expand data collection to include:

- **the estimated monetary values of unpaid and caregiving work in Canada;**
- **data disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, age, Indigenous identity and other factors;**
- **pre- and post-COVID-19 pandemic caregiving and unpaid work data;**
- **the mental and physical health effects of unpaid and caregiving work; and**
- **employment and financial effects of unpaid work and caregiving.**

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada, with the goal of recognizing invisible work, facilitating dialogue and encouraging employers to consider workplace accommodations for caregivers, implement an awareness campaign about unpaid and caregiving work to increase both the public's and employers' understanding of these types of work.

Recommendation 10

That the Government of Canada continue to support the implementation of the *Pay Equity Act*.

88 FEWO, *Evidence*, 2nd Session, 43rd Parliament, 18 February 2021, 1130 (Amy Coupal, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Caregiver Organization).

89 Rachel Brien-MacLeod, "[Request to Increase Canadian Child Benefit for Widows/Widowers](#)," *Submitted Brief*, 4 March 2021.

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Alzheimer Society of Canada Dr. Saskia Sivananthan, Chief Research, and Knowledge Translation and Exchange Officer	2020/12/03	8
Canadian Labour Congress Vicky Smallman, National Director Human Rights	2020/12/03	8
Oxfam Canada Diana Sarosi, Director Policy and Campaigns	2020/12/03	8
As an individual Andrea Doucet, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Gender, Work and Care	2020/12/10	10
Statistics Canada Josée Bégin, Director General Labour Market, Education and Socio-Economic Well-Being Tina Chui, Acting Director Diversity and Sociocultural Statistics Vincent Dale, Director Centre for Labour Market Information	2020/12/10	10
Vanier Institute of the Family Nora Spinks, President and Chief Executive Officer	2020/12/10	10
Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale Hélène Cornellier, Director Policy and Communications Lise Courteau, President	2021/02/18	16

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Canadian Institute for Health Information Tracy Johnson, Director Health System Analysis and Emerging Issues	2021/02/18	16
Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work Marianne Pertuiset-Ferland, Director	2021/02/18	16
Ontario Caregiver Organization Amy Coupal, Chief Executive Officer	2021/02/18	16
As an individual Dr. Kate Bezanson, Associate Professor and Associate Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, Brock University Camille Robert, Historian	2021/02/25	18
Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women Jacqueline Neapole, Executive Director	2021/03/09	19
International Labour Organization Laura Addati, Policy Specialist Women's Economic Empowerment	2021/03/09	19
As an individual Aline Lechaume, Research Professor Faculty of Social Sciences, Université Laval	2021/04/27	29
Punjabi Community Health Services Puneet Dhillon, Communications and Research Analyst	2021/04/27	29
Réseau d'action pour l'égalité des femmes immigrées et racisées du Québec Yasmina Chouakri, Coordinator	2021/04/27	29

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the committee's [webpage for this study](#).

Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale

Brien-MacLeod, Rachel

Inter-organizational Committee for the Recognition of Invisible Work

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 8, 10, 16, 18, 19, 29, 35 and 37](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Gladu
Chair

SUPPLEMENTARY OPINION NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

We are happy that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women has used some of its valuable time to shine a light on unpaid care work and its massive impacts on women and the fight to achieve gender equality. We also would like to thank the witnesses for participating in this study, and to the Library of Parliament analysts for putting together an excellent report.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed what has been broken for too long and it is time we rethink our approach to carework. Strong public care systems – whether health care, childcare, long term care or care services for persons with disabilities – are central to the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

Gender stereotypes and gender roles are deeply ingrained, and they're systemic. It's not just about individual families and who does the cooking, garbage or laundry; the impact of this unequal burden is also reflected in wage rates, labour market participation, lifetime earnings and career progression.

Around the world, women spend two to ten times more time on unpaid care work than men. This unequal distribution of caring responsibilities is linked to discriminatory social institutions and stereotypes on gender roles. Gender inequality in unpaid care work is the missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes, such as labour force participation, wages, and job quality.

In this report, we wish to echo the call for Government of Canada to establish a Care Economy Commission. The Commission should have a mandate to study, design and implement a care strategy for Canada that would create a broad and inclusive labour market strategy to achieve high-quality, equitable care jobs; examine paid and unpaid care work and develop a road map to meet the increasing demands for care; and reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care work by improving access to public care services for children, the elderly and people living with disabilities.

In 2018, the International Labour Organization (ILO) released an excellent study on care work and care jobs. It said, “No substantive progress can be achieved in reaching gender equality in the labour force until inequities in unpaid care work are tackled through the effective recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work between women and men, as well as between families and the state.”

The ILO report sets out a “5R Framework for Decent Care Work” calling for policies to “recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work; reward paid care work, by promoting more and decent work for care workers; and guarantee care workers' representation, social dialogue and collective bargaining”.

Each part of this framework includes a set of policy recommendations. A Care Economy Commission could examine how the 5R framework could be implemented in a Canadian context.

For many years, New Democrats have called for investment in public health and care services including mental health, childcare, early childhood education, elderly care and other social care services that serve all our communities. Canada's market-based approach to care and the off-loading of many care services to for-profit companies has driven down wages and working conditions on a workforce primarily comprised of women, and many of whom are racialized. This has a direct impact on the quality of care overall, something that was demonstrated in long-term care throughout this pandemic with tragic results.

It is our hope the government doesn't allow this report and its recommendations to sit on a shelf like so many others have. Canadians need action in addressing unpaid care work, without it, true gender equality can not be achieved.

Bloc Québécois Dissenting Opinion

It was entirely appropriate for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to study unpaid work, since we know that this invisible work is mostly done by women. It was reasonable to believe that the lack of recognition for unpaid work contributions to the overall economy, as well as the general undervaluation of women's work, is detrimental to the status of women.

Moreover, as the committee's recent study of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women found that lockdowns had increased the burden of domestic work, an examination of the value of this work was all the more due.

The study on invisible work was to be an opportunity to reflect on the value society places on female-dominated sectors of the economy and on the economic value of domestic work, which is not measured by the key economic indicators used in public decision-making.

For these reasons, the Bloc Québécois keenly participated in the committee's work and sought to identify lessons learned. However, we do not support the majority of the committee's recommendations, mainly because they do not take into account the distinctive nature of the Quebec nation, particularly its collective choices and policies, for example in the areas of health care, home care and parental leave. Furthermore, the majority of the recommendations do not respect the division of legislative powers under the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

In Canada, Quebec and the provinces administer health care establishments and provide care to the public, train and certify health care professionals, establish health benefit plans and protect the health and safety of individuals in the workplace. The *Canada Health Act*, which places conditions on federal funding, was enacted under Parliament's spending power. This power is constitutionally controversial. Canada has no business dictating to Quebec how it should conduct its affairs in its own legislative jurisdiction.

As regards health care, the federal government's responsibility is to assume its share of funding, which has fallen from 50% in the 1960s to 22% today. The federal government must respond to the united call of the provinces and increase the Canada Health Transfer (CHT). The Bloc Québécois demands that the federal share be increased to 35% of expenditures starting this year.

The government must also stop trying to impose national strategies or Canada-wide standards on the programs it puts in place. The Bloc Québécois is opposed to the federal government's assumed right to tell Quebec and the provinces what is good for their populations. This hierarchical vision of the Canadian federation is paternalistic and contrary to the principle of asymmetrical federalism.

Recommendations

The Bloc Québécois supports recommendations 3, 5, 6, 9 and 10 of the report.

However, we oppose or question the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1

We support acknowledging that unpaid work is essential, but we refuse to allow the federal government to interfere in the quality control of health services by imposing national labour standards. This is neither the role nor the job of the federal government. The federal government must not simply collaborate but finalize health transfers, as called for by Quebec and the provinces.

Recommendation 2

The Government of Canada has neither the role, nor the power, nor the legitimacy to create a national commission to develop a health care strategy. The federal government's responsibility is to fund its fair share of health care systems by increasing the Canada Health Transfer, which it has failed to do to date.

Recommendation 4

Quebec's family policy is radically different from that of the rest of Canada. In Canada, maternity leave (available to women) and parental leave (which can be taken by either parent) are an Employment Insurance special benefit. Not all women have access to these benefits, and the amount of the benefit is small.

After years of struggle led primarily by women's groups, Quebec withdrew from the federal system in 2006, 15 years ago, to create the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP).

More accessible and more generous, the Quebec plan has been a resounding success. More Quebec women have paid maternity leave than Canadian women (97.3% vs. 83.1%), and their leave lasts an average of six weeks longer (45.4 weeks vs. 39.6 weeks).

Recommendation 7

Were the federal government to undertake caregiving initiatives, we would support them being culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of Indigenous women. However, it is not the role of the federal government to take on caregiving initiatives. It would be strange for the federal government to help women navigate health systems it does not administer.

Recommendation 8

Statistics Canada is recognized for the quality of its scientific work and is currently conducting the 2021 Census. The information collected by Statistics Canada is converted into statistics and made available to decision-makers across Canada to inform public policy. The Institut de la statistique du Québec provides reliable and objective statistical information on all aspects of Quebec society for which such information is relevant. As a government statistical agency, it represents Quebec in dealings with Statistics Canada and with statistical officials in other Canadian provinces and territories.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) is an independent, non-profit organization, not a public or government agency. We cannot give it a specific mandate.

