



## Invisible work Counts!

# DECLARATION of the Value of Invisible Work

Recognising 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 we were founded in 1966. In recent years, we have seen many other organizations working for this cause, but a lack of coordination is hindering progress.

That's why, with the financial support of the Secrétariat à la condition féminine du Québec, we created an inter-organizational committee 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, unpaid and underpaid work. The nature of this work was exposed as a result of the lockdown, school and business closures, additional workload for parents and caregivers, and the urgent need for care staff in essential services such as health care.

Today, Monday, September 7, 2020, Labour Day, we are proud to present our joint declaration, "Invisible Work Counts!", along with the team of partners mobilizing in support of this fundamental issue.

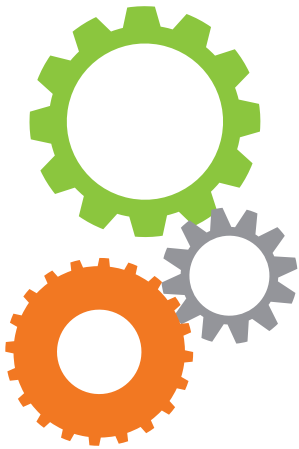
Join us in demanding greater recognition of invisible work, and add your voice or your organization's voice to ours, in order to contribute to the achievement of greater gender equality.

To sign the declaration: [www.travailinvisible.ca](http://www.travailinvisible.ca)

To contact us: [info@travailinvisible.ca](mailto:info@travailinvisible.ca)

# Definition of Invisible Work

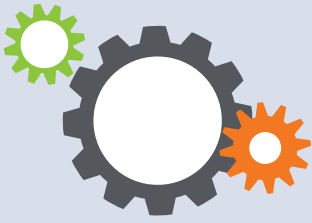
**Work performed for little  
or no pay, including**



- work performed within the family, which may include 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, which may include domestic duties and care, services and psychological support for family members (including children) who are ill or elderly, frail or 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);<sup>1</sup>
- volunteer work for organizations and/or institutions providing essential services to the public;<sup>2</sup>
- work performed as part of an unpaid internship.<sup>3</sup>

Even today, this work is still mostly done by women, 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.

This unpaid, "invisible" work, however, allows many organizations and institutions, as well as the Quebecois and Canadian 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 relatives or those experiencing loss of autonomy 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 centres, 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 the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 1995, at the United Nations (UN) International Conference on the Status of Women in Beijing, Canada committed to doing so but has yet to meet its commitment. According to Oxfam's latest report, women's invisible work is worth \$10.8 trillion, three times the value of the technology sector.<sup>5</sup>



# Committee's Specific Goals

## Mobilize feminist organizations in Quebec and Canada to execute a provincial awareness campaign on invisible work

01.

- Develop a common discourse to promote recognition of the value of invisible work;
- Increase our power of influence to achieve more equitable distribution of tasks and responsibilities;
- Develop inter-organizational partnerships.

## Highlight the economic and social value of invisible work

02.

- Increase dissemination of information on the economic and social value of invisible work;
- Obtain up-to-date gender-disaggregated statistics from public censuses;
- Within two years, obtain declaration that the first Tuesday of April shall be National Invisible Work Day, from the governments of Quebec and Canada;
- Within three years, obtain declaration that the first Tuesday of April shall be International Invisible Work Day, from the United Nations (UN).

## Promote a better understanding of the issues surrounding invisible work among the public, employers, public institutions and decision-makers

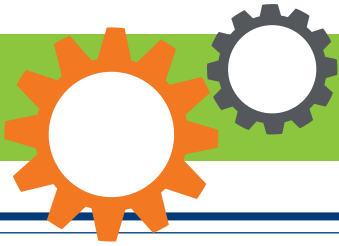
03.

- Mobilize social stakeholders toward openness and dialogue for a new social contract.

## Develop new solutions to balance the sharing of invisible tasks among women and men and the sharing of family, state and private sector responsibilities

04.

- Improve working and study conditions to facilitate the balancing of family responsibilities with social and political involvement;
- Improve fiscal policies and measures to recognize the value of invisible work;
- Integrate the notion of invisible work into the public education curriculum, from elementary school onwards, to promote the issue and raise awareness among young people, in order to deconstruct gender stereotypes and encourage more equitable sharing of responsibilities and tasks within households and society.



# Committee's Demands

## Accounting for invisible work

- Add a question regarding the calculation of hours of unpaid work to the long-form questionnaire for Canada's census of population;
- Integrate the economic value of invisible work into Gross Domestic Product (GDP) calculations.

## Recognition and importance

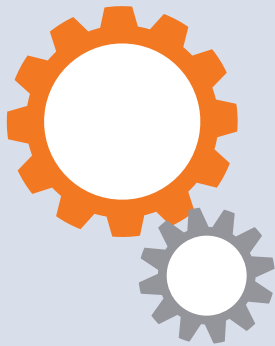
- Government decree for National Invisible Work Day (by 2022);
- UN recognition of International Invisible Work Day (by 2023);
- Application of an intersectional gender-based analysis (GBA+) and its cross-functional integration, in relation to occupational profiles and the implementation and evaluation of government measures for the recognition of invisible work;
- Integration of the issue of invisible work in the public education curriculum from elementary school onward to promote and raise awareness among young people;
- Deconstruction of gender stereotypes and creation of incentives for more equitable sharing of responsibilities and tasks within households and society.

## Economic, social and fiscal measures

- Provide health services and supports to enable caregivers to carry out their role in a way that is safe for them and their loved ones;
- Establish fair and equitable pension plan benefits (QPP and OAS) that take invisible work into consideration for parents and caregivers;
- Introduce tax measures such as refundable (rather than non-refundable) tax credits, for parents and caregivers;
- Introduce a benefit for all persons who give birth or adopt, paid by the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan;
- Introduce a benefit paid by the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan, to be renamed the Quebec Parental and Caregiver Insurance Plan, for all caregivers who take work leave to help a family member, adult or child experiencing a loss of autonomy, illness or disability;
- Maintain and strengthen access to universal, high-quality and free childcare;
- Quantify the unpaid work done in family businesses in order for these workers to receive fair and equitable benefits from pension plans and other tax advantages;
- Remunerate all internships that are required to earn a diploma, and ensure recognition of worker status for student interns.<sup>6</sup>

## Family-work-study balance

- Establish a policy for balancing family, work and study, including concrete measures in companies and institutions, to encourage:
  - changing social norms by encouraging men to assume more responsibilities within the family and household;<sup>7</sup>
  - women to return to or continue their studies despite their family, social or professional responsibilities, in order to gain access to more advantageous positions and contribute to more equity in the labour market and within companies.



# Members of the Inter-organizational Committee

This declaration was adopted by the members  
of the Inter-organizational Committee for the  
Recognition of Invisible Work.



**Camille Robert**  
historienne  

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**Nicole Demers**  
ex-députée de Laval – BQ



**JCCFQ** Jeune Chambre  
de Commerce des  
Femmes du Québec



Syndicat  
de professionnelles  
et professionnels  
du gouvernement du Québec



**Secrétariat  
à la condition  
féminine**



With thanks to the Secrétariat à la condition féminine du Québec for its  
financial support of **Invisible Work Counts!**

1. Many women, for example, women farmers, work long hours in the family business without being paid or recognized as co-owners of the business. Yet they clearly contribute to the business and wealth creation for the family. They are nevertheless disadvantaged and more at risk of finding themselves in a precarious situation, for example in the event of divorce (or separation from a common-law spouse).
2. Volunteerism plugs the gaps in the public system for many sectors essential to the smooth functioning of society. For example, volunteers who work in food banks for the homeless, support and settlement services for migrants, in women's centers, etc., play an important role that is too often unrecognized and undervalued. This unpaid work represents less expenditure for the government and institutions. It should be better recognized by means of social, fiscal or other measures.
3. This is the situation in most traditionally female professions (teaching, health, services, etc.), in contrast to typically male professions where internships are generally paid. On this subject, see:
  - Annellyne Roussel, 29 April 2019, "Stagiaires à boutte, stagiaires debouttes!" *La Gazette des Femmes*. <https://gazettedesfemmes.ca/14847/stagiaires-a-boutte-stagiaires-debouttes/>, retrieved 15 April 2020.
  - Marie Boule, 22 March 2019. "La grève des stages est féministe." *Vice*. [https://www.vice.com/fr\\_ca/article/kzdjya/la-greve-des-stages-est-feministe?fbclid=IwAR0aIBwMcJpp-MtjngWu8BLEGZsnpY6UKahzlt2tCf2s1ZN\\_G\\_kQifSS5s](https://www.vice.com/fr_ca/article/kzdjya/la-greve-des-stages-est-feministe?fbclid=IwAR0aIBwMcJpp-MtjngWu8BLEGZsnpY6UKahzlt2tCf2s1ZN_G_kQifSS5s), retrieved 22 April 2020.
  - Sandrine Belley, Annabelle Berthiaume and Valérie Simard, "L'exploitation n'est pas une vocation! Pour la rémunération des stages et la fin du travail étudiant gratuit" in Camille Robert and Louise Toupin (eds) *Travail invisible, Portraits d'une lutte féministe inachevée*, Montréal: Éditions du remue-ménage, 2018.
4. "In 2015, a greater proportion of women performed housework than did men (89.9% versus 76.2%). Among those who participated in housework, women spent an average of 36 minutes more per day on that activity than did men (3.1 versus 2.5 hours). » Statistics Canada, 2018. Time use: Total work burden, unpaid work, and leisure <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/54931-eng.htm>, Chart 3, retrieved 19 January 2021.
5. Oxfam-Québec, 19 January 2020. Les milliardaires du monde se partagent plus de richesses que 4,6 milliards de personnes. <https://oxfam.qc.ca/inegalites-partage-richeesse/>, retrieved 14 April 2020.
6. "Remuneration for all internships would ensure interns the minimum protections enshrined in the Act respecting labour standards, with respect to working conditions and access to certain legal recourses. Worker status would also allow interns to organize among themselves, and possibly unionize, in order to establish a balance of power vis-à-vis their employers and negotiate their working conditions, especially pay." [Translation] From: <http://www.grevedesstages.info/questions-et-reponses/> retrieved 10 April 2020.
7. "Work-family balance measures are thought out for women, offered to women and used by women," "Everything is in place to make women understand that child care and family well-being management—with the famous mental load that comes with it—is their responsibility first and foremost," Marilyse Hamelin [Translation]. See Martine Letarte, 8 March 2018. "Comment en finir avec la division sexuelle des responsabilités parentales." *Le Devoir*. <https://www.ledevoir.com/societe/521410/en-finir-avec-la-division-sexuelle-des-responsabilites-parentales>, retrieved 10 April 2020.