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Counting Uncounted Contributions

EVERY DAY, AND FOR NO PAY, CANADIANS PERFORM HOURS OF VALUABLE SERVICES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO QUALITY OF LIFE AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY. YET BECAUSE THESE SERVICES—FROM RAISING CHILDREN TO HELPING THE ILL OR ELDERLY—ARE ASSIGNED NO MONETARY VALUE, THEIR MASSIVE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION DOES NOT SHOW UP IN OUR STANDARD MEASURES OF ECONOMIC PROGRESS.

IN THIS ISSUE OF *REALITY CHECK* WE FOCUS ON VITAL SERVICES THE ECONOMY DOES NOT COUNT—HOUSEHOLD AND VOLUNTARY WORK.



GUEST EDITORIAL BY MARILYN WARING

Time Is More Than Money

HOW TIME-USE SURVEYS CAN CREATE BETTER GOVERNMENT POLICIES



Dr. Marilyn Waring

WHY ARE WE INTERESTED IN TIME? TIME IS THE ONE THING WE ALL HAVE. WE DO NOT ALL HAVE PAID JOBS OR DISPOSABLE CASH. MANY OF US DO NOT TRADE ON THE BASIS OF MONEY—INSTEAD, WE TRADE OUR TIME. OUR ECONOMICS IS ABOUT HOW WE USE OUR TIME, AND IT IS THE COMMON DENOMINATOR OF EXCHANGE. TIME IS THE ONE UNIT OF TRADE WE ALL HAVE IN EQUAL AMOUNTS, THE ONE INVESTMENT WE ALL HAVE TO MAKE, THE ONE RESOURCE WE CANNOT REPRODUCE.

Yet despite the overwhelming importance of time, governments are just beginning to chart—through time-use surveys—how people spend their daily hours. And what these surveys reveal holds enormous implications for government policies and how we value unpaid work.

On a national level, what can time-use surveys tell us? They can tell us about the goods and services households produce, and what the unemployed do with their time. They can reveal whether men and women shoulder equal amounts of household work. And they can show how much additional work children create in a household. They can also show how people in and out of the paid workforce make use of discretionary time. They may point to inefficiencies in the use of workers because of unnecessary fragmentation of time. They also reveal which sex gets the menial, boring, low-status, and unpaid invisible work, which in turn highlights oppression and subordination.

In rural areas, time-use surveys identify seasonal variations in activities such as farming. Governments can in turn identify suitable time slots for education and other programs. Time-use data also show how the activities of household members—from paid work to grocery shopping and cooking—are interdependent and how paid work, caring work, housework, community work, leisure, and time spent on personal care are all interrelated.

Such information is vital for understanding how the impact of women's paid labour-force participation leads to growth in market activity to replace formerly unpaid activity in the home. Or, alternatively, it helps us understand how the devolution of government care services to the "community" inevitably leads to an increase in unpaid activity by "invisible," uncounted workers—mothers, sisters, daughters, neighbours, aunts.

Time-use data also reveal *when* activities are carried out, and for how long. Such information provides valuable tools for planners and providers of health services, electricity, broadcast programming or retail outlets.

It is not necessary to assign a monetary value to people's time-use in order to create policies or to plan, monitor or evaluate programs. But time-use data can also demonstrate the nature of economic change. In particular, we could better understand the growth of the services economy if we measured the shift into the market of work previously done in the unpaid economy, and if we measured unpaid productive work alongside our current national account measures such as GDP.

New Zealand's comprehensive 1998 national Time Use Survey was the most sophisticated undertaken on the planet. It surveyed about 8,500 people aged 12 and over living in private households, and interviewed two residents per household. Respondents were asked to complete a 48-hour time diary on specified days, recording all their activities, as well as their location, and, if applicable, how they were travelling. Later, interviewers met with respondents to go over the diaries and confirm details such as for whom the activities were done and in what type of organization, as well as their age and health status.

The survey over-sampled the indigenous Maori population in order to provide reliable time-use statistics for Maori. This was particularly important as data from the 1996 census report on unpaid work showed that Maori had the highest participation rate of any ethnic group for those doing 30 or more hours of unpaid work outside the household. Seventeen per cent of Maori did 30 or more hours of such unpaid work. It should also be noted that Maori recorded the highest rate of "unemployment" among ethnic groups in the labour-force surveys.

Beyond the uses we could anticipate, this survey has proven itself in other policy fields such as labour, social services and education. Information from the time-use survey was used by unions and employers to find common ground in the debate over recent changes to New Zealand's Holidays Act, which sets the standard for workers' benefits such as holiday pay and bereavement leave.

The survey data played a significant role in the government's change in the treatment of single parents who receive social benefits. These parents—mainly women—were expected to register for paid work as soon as their youngest child reached the age of six. But the time-use survey plainly showed that these women already performed, and would continue to perform, significant work in the home. The backward law forcing them to seek jobs was overturned.

The survey findings also featured in the long-overdue partial introduction of paid parental leave. And they have been used to support an increase in the Sport and Recreation allocation in the national budget.

When the nation's yearly education reports on student examination results showed that the pass rates for girls were once again exceeding those of boys, the Minister of Education sought an explanation in the Time Use Survey. It showed that girls regularly put in more hours than boys doing homework. Hence, said the Minister, no one should be surprised by the girls' better performance.

Despite its myriad uses, there is no commitment yet to repeat the survey, and many people seem unaware of its potential. For example, time-use surveys can provide valuable market information. Yet manufacturers of major appliances and prepared foods, for instance, fail to recognize regular surveys as indicators for behaviour in their markets.

The survey also raised interesting human rights questions about how we recognize and compensate unpaid or "invisible" workers—usually women. Full-time caregivers looking after the young, ill or elderly relieve the state of an enormous—and costly—burden of care. Yet they receive no payment, and their work is not counted in our system of national accounts.

This leads to my favourite potential advocacy question. The time-use survey proved yet again that the household is the single largest sector of the nation's economy. So when will the government see fit to give households the same benefits it gives businesses—such as extending depreciation allowances to the machinery used in the production, reproduction and service work in the household sector?

At a household or community level, information from time-use surveys provides an opportunity for unpaid work to become visible. And at a government level, time-use surveys provide a powerful tool for policy change.

New Zealand political economist, farmer and three-term Member of Parliament, Marilyn Waring, is the leading spokesperson for global feminist economics, and the author of Counting For Nothing: What Men Value and What Women Are Worth (also called If Women Counted), and several other books. Dr. Waring, a member of Reality Check's editorial board, is an Associate Professor in Public Policy at New Zealand's Massey University and a pioneer in measuring the value of unpaid work. ✓

The time-use survey proved yet again that the household is the single largest sector of the nation's economy

Should 'Fun' or 'Kindness' Have a Price Tag?

Putting a price tag on life's intangibles is a potent communications tool, but it should never be seen as an end in itself, says Dr. Ron Colman, executive director of GPI Atlantic and a leading advocate of the technique.

"Monetization is only a tool to communicate with the world of conventional economics, not a view that reduces profound human, social and environmental values to monetary terms. Ultimately, a materialist criterion cannot adequately assign value to the non-material values which give human life meaning."

People in fields that are benefitting from monetization techniques are especially aware of Colman's caveat.

"Everything is about costs and the economy these days," says Dawn Stegen, executive director of Recreation Nova Scotia, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting recreation and volunteerism.

And attaching a price tag to things normally not assigned a cost is one way to get governments to pay attention.

That's why Stegen's group presented Nova Scotia Premier John Hamm with a non-negotiable cheque for \$2 billion—the value of services that volunteers contribute to the provincial economy.

The incident underscores a pressing issue: the need for volunteers and people participating in community events to have their efforts valued by governments and policy-makers.

"Something has to push them forward so that they understand that the voluntary sector is as important as the government and the private sector," says Stegen. "Why use the dollar amount? It's a way to get government to react."

But what are the implications of attaching a monetary value to activities whose value transcends money—things such as time spent helping a neighbour, enjoying a walk, or playing a game of slo-pitch?

How do volunteers and community organizations feel about the need to attach a price tag to their causes just to get governments to pay attention?

"I'm not pleased with it at all," says Stegen.

"When you position your cause or your issue as a means to an end—as a medium for someone's solution—I think there's some danger in that, and it has to be balanced very carefully."

For example, sports and leisure are being seen by governments as a means to reduce health care costs. A report by GPI Atlantic shows that physical inactivity costs Nova Scotians \$107 million yearly in health care costs alone. Promoting exercise could save the province millions.

These savings are important, Stegen agrees. But recreational activities are more than a means to an end of cutting government costs. They are "an experience that people should just be allowed to enjoy," she says.

Still, Stegen hopes highlighting the economic contribution of volunteerism, sport and recreation will encourage governments to create policies that benefit these sectors. Such initiatives might include a provincial secretariat or volunteerism and recreation department that could help fundraise or provide support such as research. Or, a percentage of earnings from the province's casinos and lotteries could go to the voluntary sector.

"Without volunteerism, and without a voluntary sector that is strong to support volunteerism, we wouldn't have healthy communities in this province," says Stegen. "We want to see it valued and nurtured no differently than the business community is valued and nurtured." ✓

Counting Kindness: the Economic Value of Volunteerism

WHEN CANADA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY SUFFERED MILLIONS IN LOSSES DURING THE FALLOUT FROM SEPTEMBER 11, THE SARS HEALTH SCARE, AND THE DAMPENING EFFECT OF THE U.S. WAR ON IRAQ, THE GOVERNMENT WAS QUICK TO HELP OUT WITH A \$37.5 MILLION AID PACKAGE.

It launched a ministerial task force and a "tourism recovery strategy" that includes direct aid to Canada's \$51.7 billion tourism sector, and "strong and aggressive" promotion of the industry, which created about 675,000 full and part-time jobs in 2002.

By comparison, when Canada's volunteer sector—whose economic contribution rivals that of the tourism industry—suffered a \$2 billion blow, it provoked little comment and even less help.

Every year volunteers contribute the equivalent of \$53 billion worth of services to the Canadian economy through formal voluntary organizations, or by informal volunteer work such as helping elderly neighbours. However, between 1997 and 2000—the latest data available from Statistics Canada—the formal volunteer rate dropped from 31 to 27 per cent of Canadians. Despite a 2.5 per cent growth in population, there were 960,000 fewer Canadians volunteering in 2000 than in 1997. The overall decline in formal volunteering cost Canada \$2 billion in lost services in 2000.

Volunteers vital to health of communities

Because these volunteers work for "free," their contribution is not counted in our economic growth statistics. It therefore remains invisible in our conventional measures of progress. Yet voluntary work is a hallmark of community strength and civil society.

"It's the ancient economics of gift-giving....Each person giving of themselves to the community, maximizes their own self-interest," writes social philosopher Jeremy Rifkin in *The End of Work*.

Health Canada uses volunteerism as a key indicator of a "supportive social environment" that can enhance health. And the Treasury Board—which publishes yearly reports evaluating national trends in quality of life—includes volunteering as one of five indicators of "the strength and safety of Canadian communities." Its latest report, *Canada's Performance 2002*, notes the "declining performance" of volunteerism.

Volunteers risk burnout

Across Canada, volunteers are trying to compensate for dropping numbers by putting in longer hours. Indeed, between 1997 and 2000, volunteers increased their annual hours from an average of

149 to 162 hours per year. Over one third of those hours were contributed by just five per cent of volunteers, who gave 596 or more hours. Still, the extra work by fewer hands has not compensated for the loss of voluntary services in most provinces. The exceptions are Saskatchewan—which maintained its level of voluntary services—and Nova Scotia, PEI and Newfoundland, where the level of voluntary services actually increased.

The longer hours donated by committed volunteers across Canada could be misinterpreted as a good sign for civil society. But fewer people putting in longer hours means these volunteers are at risk for burnout, says a 2003 report on the economic value of civic and voluntary work by GPI Atlantic. Statistics Canada surveys show that most volunteers are women, and that volunteerism rises with levels of education. However, as increasing numbers of women report feeling "extremely time-stressed"—and as the highly educated spend increasingly long hours on the job—fewer people have time to volunteer.

In addition, on a per capita basis—meaning total annual volunteer hours divided by total population—voluntary hours have dropped 10.7 per cent nationally, since 1987. A 10.7 per cent decline in the Gross Domestic Product would be called a depression—a national emergency. Yet a decline of this magnitude in the voluntary sector goes unnoticed.

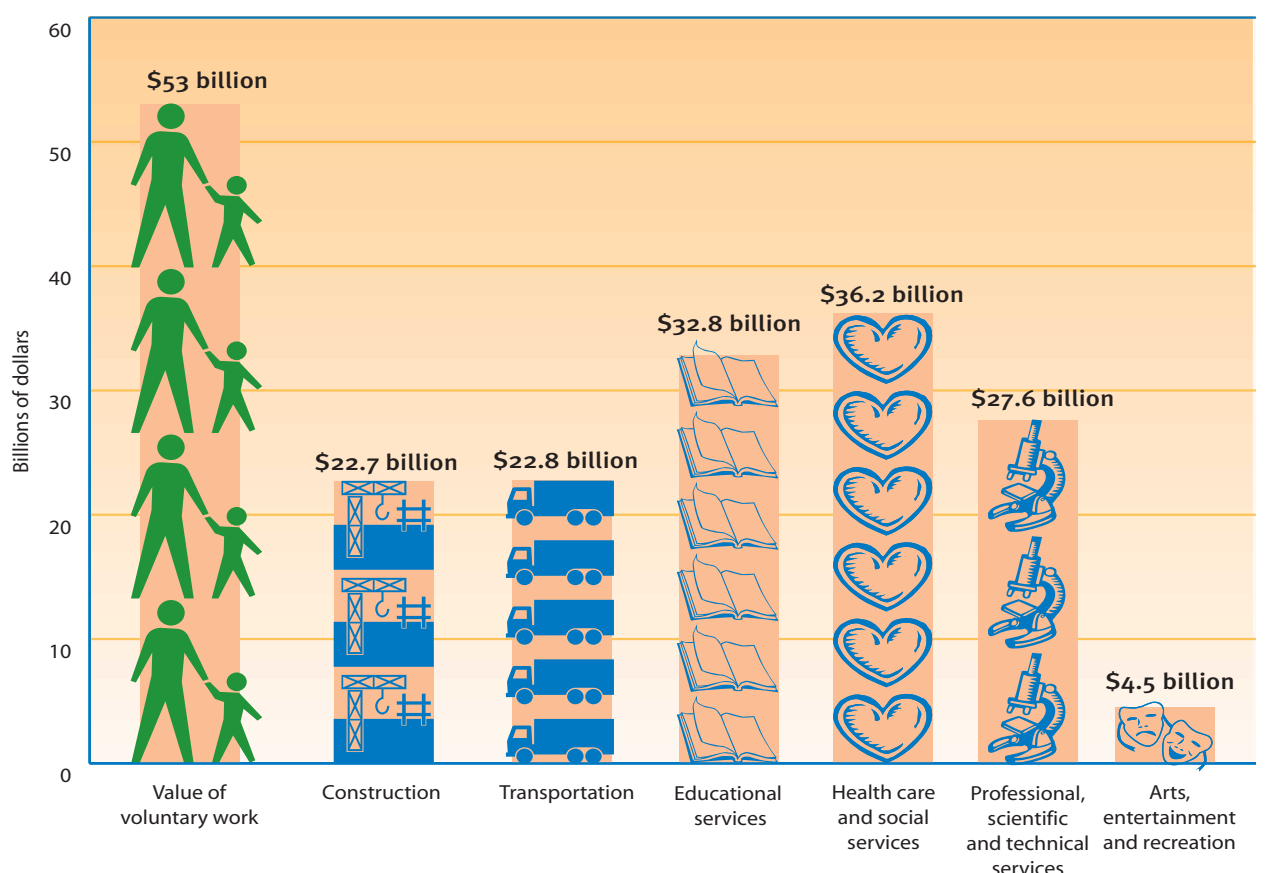
If volunteer work had continued to be offered through community-based organizations at the same rate as in 1987, Canadians would have received the benefits of 126 million additional hours of voluntary services in 2000. This stagnation of volunteerism has implications for quality of life. It means the sick, elderly or disabled are no longer receiving the same level of volunteer health support as before. The poor are receiving fewer volunteer social services, and victims of crime and abuse or youth in need are receiving less counselling or support. Voluntary services—performed through church and school events, theatres, sports or cultural and community events—also suffer as volunteers become scarcer. ✓

Canadians volunteered 1.05 billion hours in 2000—equivalent to 549,000 full-time jobs, or the employed labour force of Manitoba.

source: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy



Value of voluntary work compared to selected annual industry payrolls, 2000



Sources: Statistics Canada, *Employment, Earnings and Hours; Households' Unpaid Work: Measurement and Valuation*; and GPI Atlantic, 2003.

Roy Romanow

Connects the Dots Between Health and Wellbeing



THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT OF ROY ROMANOW'S SPEECH "CONNECTING THE DOTS: FROM HEALTH CARE TO ILLNESS AND WELLBEING," DELIVERED IN OTTAWA ON MAY 8, 2003. IN HIS SPEECH, MR. ROMANOW HIGHLIGHTED THE NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE DEFINITION OF "HEALTH" AND A CANADIAN INDEX OF WELLBEING, TO MEASURE AND MONITOR HEALTH. MR. ROMANOW, WHO CHAIRED THE COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE IN CANADA, GAVE THE SPEECH UPON RECEIVING THE 2003 CANADIAN PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD FROM THE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION, A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION CONCERNED WITH ALL FACETS OF EMPLOYEE BENEFIT AND COMPENSATION PLANS.

If one of you were to ask me for a list of my best tips on how to live a long and healthy life, here's what I would tell you:

Don't be poor. Rich people live longer than poor people and they're healthier at every stage in life.

Pick your parents well. Make sure they nurture your sense of identity and self esteem and surround you with interesting stimuli. Prenatal and early childhood experiences have a powerful effect on later health and wellbeing.

Graduate from high school and then go on to college or university. Health status improves with your level of education.

Don't work in a stressful, low-paid, manual job in which you have little decision-making authority or control. Poor jobs equal poor health.

Don't lose your job and become unemployed. Unemployed people suffer from stress and isolation and can become poor—and remember what I said about being poor.

Be sure to live in a community where you trust your neighbours and feel that you belong. A civil and trusting community promotes health and life expectancy.

Live in quality housing, but not next to a busy street, in an urban ghetto or near a polluted river. Clean air, water and soil are vital to your health, as are the human-made elements of our physical environment.

No doubt some of you are thinking, "What good are these tips to me as an individual? I had no choice in the family I was born into. I couldn't influence how I was raised in my early years. I can't help it if my company shuts down and lays me off. I can't decide what kind of supports or environment will be available in my community."

But that's exactly the point. The main factors that will likely shape your health and life span are the ones that affect society as a whole.

Socio-Economic Status is the Key Determinant of Health

There is a growing body of evidence that money is the single largest determinant of health. We've known that for a long time.

If you're at the bottom of the income ladder, odds are you're going to find yourself at the bottom of the health ladder. Here in Canada, life expectancy drops for every step down the ladder: the very rich live longer than the somewhat rich; the upper middle class live longer than the merely middle class; and the poorest 20 per cent are more likely to die of every possible disease from which people can die.

But in developed countries there is something more important than the average income, and that's the size of the gap between rich and poor. In Canada, we have a wide gap between rich and poor and the gap is growing by the year. Just two years ago, a study carried out by a York University professor showed that of all of the years of life lost in Canada before the age of 75, about 23 per cent can be traced to differences in income.

So if we're serious about making Canadians the healthiest people in the world, then we have to be serious about closing the gap between rich and poor.

The Early Years are a Key Determinant

We know for a fact that a child subject to deprivation or stress is far more likely to experience mental illness, obesity, adult onset diabetes, heart disease and a shortened life span. Even if these children move into a better environment after childhood, they suffer poor health throughout their lives. We're going to see the health consequences of childhood poverty for the entire next generation.

So if we're serious about making Canadians the healthiest people in the world, we have to be serious about investing in the early years of education and childcare.

The Quality of Work is a Key Determinant

Let's skip ahead from the early years to the working years. There's a very strong connection between your experience at work and the state of your health.

Many years ago, a groundbreaking study was conducted among 17,000 British civil servants. As you moved down the ladder of the civil service, each rank of worker had poorer health, more sick days, and higher mortality rates than the rank immediately above it. Even those just one rank down from the top had heart disease rates four times higher than those at the top.

Even among those that engaged in risky health behaviour like smoking, there were fewer cases of cancer, heart disease and stroke among the higher ranks than lower ranks.

Is there something inherent in a pyramid-like organization that causes those at the bottom to be sicker and die younger than those at the top? The answer is yes. The big difference is that in the higher ranks the work is more challenging and rewarding, and people have more control over decisions and more support to take risks.

If we're serious about making Canadians the healthiest people in the world, we have to take a good look at what is going on in our workplaces, and how we can make the quality of work a more meaningful and rewarding experience for all Canadians.

Physical Environment is a Key Determinant

There are many more factors that affect your health than can be cured by a medical prescription from your doctor or even a policy prescription from your health minister.

But a clean and safe environment is also vital to our health. Contaminants in our air, water, food and soil can cause everything from cancer to birth defects to respiratory illness to gastrointestinal ailments. Asthma in children, for example, has skyrocketed over the past 20 years. And hospital admissions for respiratory illness climb each summer in lockstep with smog levels.

Quality affordable housing is also a critical part of our physical environment. People who are homeless aren't healthy. People who live in sub-standard housing that is overcrowded, cold and damp are not healthy. The Victorians understood this. Their most effective weapons against infectious diseases were programs to improve housing standards.

And yet, in Canada—as in most of the world—if you want to find those with the worst health, then go look in the worst parts of the housing stock. Or worse yet, look to the streets of our cities.

So if we're really serious about making Canadians the healthiest people in the world, we have to improve the quality of our physical environment, including investing more in affordable housing.

Where do we Begin?

As Einstein said, you'll never solve a problem if you use the same thinking that got you there in the first place.

So we can't just define health and wellbeing to mean just doctors and hospitals, pills and prescriptions. We have to connect all of the dots and deal with the picture as a whole.

Societies as a whole, and governments in particular, are much more comfortable when they can fit everything into a neat box. Economic issues go into "the economy box," children's issues go into "the children's box," education goes into "the education box," the environment goes into "the environment box," health care goes into "the health care box" and so on.

The problem with that approach is that the real world doesn't exist in neat little boxes. Governments have to create structures that will allow them to think and act across disciplines. A promising experiment in this regard is the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy. The Roundtable brings together representatives from government, industry, Native Canadians, academic and non-governmental organizations. It brings home the point that environmental health and economic growth are all part of the same picture.

We Have to Measure Wellbeing

I want to turn to one very important piece of the picture. What we measure counts!

There is a non-profit research group based in Halifax called GPI Atlantic. It's director, Ron Colman, has made what I would regard as a very profound observation. He said, "Indicators are powerful. What we count and measure reflects our values as a society and determines what makes it onto the policy agendas of governments."

I would add that what we count and measure determines what we can be held accountable for. As I said in my report, Canadians are demanding new levels of accountability—which is why I proposed that we amend the Canada Health Act to include "accountability" as a new core principle.

Right now, the most commonly cited measure of Canada's wellbeing is our GDP. I sometimes think that GDP must stand for Gross Distortion of Prosperity, because it provides a very misleading picture of our national wellbeing. It certainly was not created as a measure of wellbeing but it is often taken as a sign of "how we are doing" as a nation.

GDP counts all economic activity as a gain. It makes no distinction between activity that brings benefits, and activity that causes harm. Crime, pollution, accidents, sickness, natural disasters and war—all make the GDP go up simply because money is being spent on prisons, lawyers, doctors, drugs, hospitals, pollution cleanup and weapons.

Cigarette sales boost Canada's GDP by \$10 billion a year. Fast food sales contribute another \$12 billion. Medical treatments for smoking and obesity-related illnesses chip in \$6 billion. If the GDP were calculated by accountants instead of economists, these would all be treated as liabilities instead of assets.

We need new measuring tools to track changes in the key factors that affect our wellbeing and quality of life.

Fortunately, there are many groups across the country now engaged in developing new indices—far more accurate indices than the GDP—for measuring our quality of life and wellbeing. There are a host of projects, from the local to the national level, some dealing with the full spectrum of quality of life issues, others dealing exclusively with sub-themes.

My good friends at the Atkinson Foundation, among others like the CPRN (Canadian Policy Research Networks), have been working particularly hard to encourage the various groups to work together to create a single Canadian Index of Wellbeing.

This new index would be based on the full range of values that Canadians regard as important to their quality of life. It would provide rock-solid data at the national, provincial and local level. The Index would be calculated and reported regularly, promoted widely and understood easily by the general public. And if this work can be developed in concert with similar efforts in other countries, we will be able to situate our progress in a global context.

A real Canadian Index of Wellbeing would engage Canadians in a meaningful debate about what it means to have global-leading quality of life and sustainability. It would provide policy-shapers and decision-makers with the information they need to measure the full benefits and costs of policy changes.

From workplace water coolers to government policy rooms, it would put the accountability spotlight on the kind of progress that Canada truly needs. Most importantly, it would contribute to the ongoing process of building a country based on true Canadian values and concerns.

For the full text of Roy Romanow's speech, visit the Atkinson Foundation Web site at: http://www.atkinsonfoundation.ca/pressroom/Document_1052404102648 ✓



Unpaid Work is a Mainstay of the Economy— Let's Count it!

THERE'S A SOMEWHAT SEXIST ONE-LINER THAT SAYS "HIRE A HOUSEKEEPER AND THE ECONOMY GROWS, BUT MARRY YOUR HOUSEKEEPER AND THE ECONOMY DWINDLES." THE SAME COULD BE SAID, OF COURSE, OF YOUR MECHANIC, CARPENTER OR GROUNDSKEEPER. SIMILARLY, IF YOU HIRE A STRANGER TO LOOK AFTER YOUR CHILD, THE GDP GOES UP. LOOK AFTER YOUR OWN CHILD, AND IT IS ASSIGNED NO VALUE IN OUR CORE MEASURES OF PROGRESS.

These examples all underscore an irony in the way we measure economic growth and prosperity. The household is the single largest productive sector in the Canadian economy, representing \$280 billion in labour value in 1998. But because household work is unpaid, it registers as nil in our system of national accounting.

Imagine if Canada's unpaid workers staged a strike. Despite the comical images this thought evokes—from meal-time free-for-alls to a workforce sporting dirty, rumpled clothes—it should drive home the point that the household is the backbone of the economy. Household production provides the strength and nourishment for workplace production. Unpaid work keeps the economy rolling.

Every year, Canadians perform about 30 billion hours of unpaid work. New Zealand economist Marilyn Waring points out that even if broken down into specific activities, the three largest areas of industrial and service operations in the economy, measured on an hourly basis, are:

- Meal preparation in the household economy
- Cleaning and laundry in the household economy
- Servicing the household economy by shopping

Over the past 40 years, women have doubled their share of participation in the paid workforce. Yet women still do nearly twice as much housework as men—just as they did 40 years ago.

Economic growth statistics and paid employment trends are monitored every month. By comparison, unpaid work is tracked once every six years, through the time-use survey in Statistics Canada's General Social Survey. Its most recent 1998 survey shows that Canadian women perform 62 per cent of household work, including 89 per cent of clothing care, three quarters of cleaning and cooking and two thirds of child care or caring for adults in the household. Men perform 68 per cent of repair and maintenance. Overall, Canadians spend 28 per cent of their waking hours performing unpaid work.

When paid work hours are factored in, many Canadians feel a time squeeze. Full-time working mothers, for example, put in a combined weekly work week of 74 to 75 hours. Correspondingly, Statistics Canada reports that working mothers are the most time-stressed demographic group, with more than one third reporting "severe" levels of time stress.

Stress is good for the economy

A century ago in Canada, an average couple with children worked 111 hours per week of paid and unpaid work. Today that number has risen to 137 hours. Men have made some gains by working shorter hours for pay than they did 100 years ago. But they now work longer unpaid hours. Similarly, women who have entered the paid workforce have decreased their household work compared with a century ago. However, they have more than compensated with their paid hours. Mothers who have not entered the paid workforce still perform the same number of unpaid work hours as their forebears in 1900—about 52 hours a week.

Much of what is recorded as economic growth is merely a shift in work from the unpaid household economy to the paid economy. Meals eaten out or prepared foods purchased because people are too busy to do otherwise all make the economy grow. But they also have consequences for people's health and states of mind. One Harvard University study, for example, found that children who eat more meals at home have better health outcomes into adolescence and adulthood than children who eat out more often.

Statistics Canada's time-use survey shows that rates of time stress for both sexes rose sharply across the country between 1992 and 1998, with women in 1998 registering levels of time stress 30 per cent greater than those of men. Women's levels of chronic stress have been similarly rising. In 1985, women nation-wide registered lower levels of chronic stress than men by six per cent. Ten years later, their chronic stress registered 20 per cent above male levels.

Why measure unpaid work?

Failure to measure and value unpaid housework and child care renders it invisible in the economic accounts from

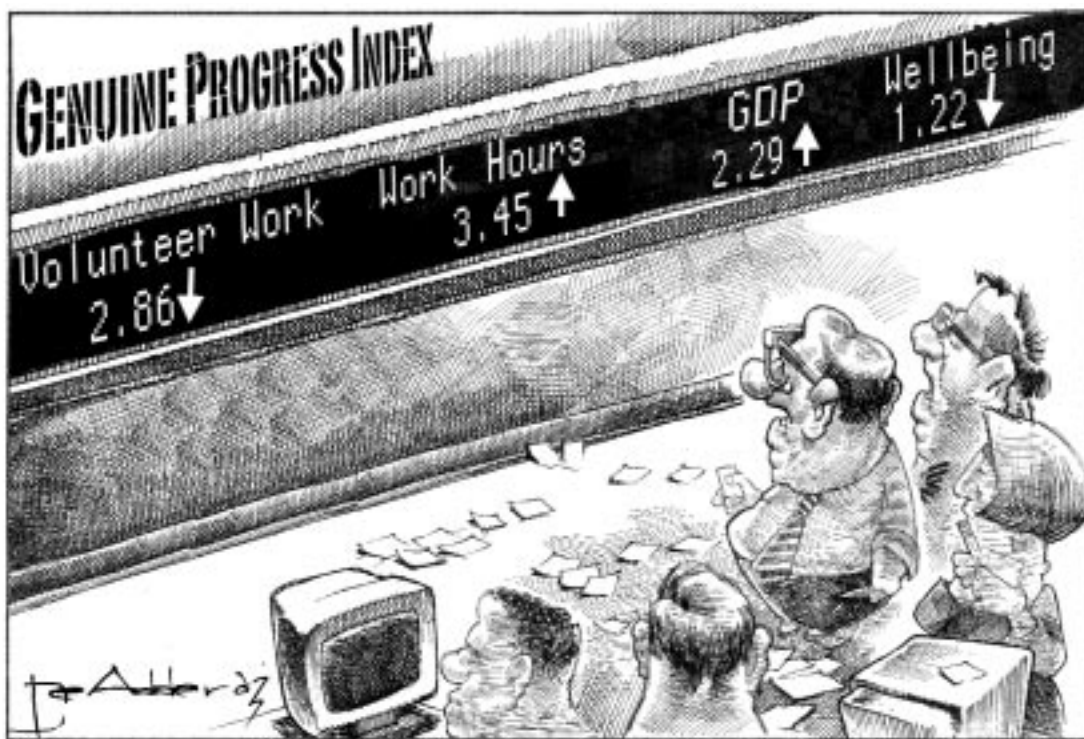
which policy-makers take their cues and which guide the behaviour of governments, businesses and individuals. The implications are especially harmful to women, who perform the bulk of unpaid work. For example, unpaid workers are excluded from pension plans, including the Canada Pension Plan, and can have trouble getting credit. In addition, if women take time from careers to raise children, they can lose seniority or opportunity for promotion, and the ability to make workplace pension contributions.

Failure to value women's unpaid work can also produce a subtle "wage discrimination" by devaluing women's work as a whole. Work considered traditional, unpaid female work—cooking, cleaning, child care—also fetches a low wage in the market economy. And overall, Statistics Canada reports that women still earn less than men—an average of 80 cents for every male dollar.

Failure to value unpaid child care and housework also results in a lack of social supports that especially penalizes single mothers, who spend three times as high a proportion of their incomes on paid child care as their married counterparts. For many single mothers, the paid workforce is not a viable route to an adequate income.

Recognizing unpaid work could encourage policies that address the persistent wage gap between the sexes; high poverty rates among single mothers and their children; the decreasing time parents have to spend with their children; and growing time stress from the "struggle to juggle" jobs and household duties.

Globally, implications for government policy and foreign aid are even more dramatic. Women perform the bulk of the work in subsistence-based economies. Unless their unpaid work is counted—and recognized as valuable to the economy—policies will be geared toward raising the GDP, often at women's expense, and thus devaluing women's work. ✓



Michael DeAdder



Dr. Andrew Harvey

Understanding Time Use Could Help Stop Rural Exodus

Heeding the information from time-use surveys could help stem the flow of Canadians moving from rural to urban areas, says one of Canada's leading experts on how Canadians use their time.

"If governments had a better picture of the full costs compared with the gains of movement, then they may be more willing to provide support in rural areas, to discourage some of the movement to urban areas," says Dr. Andrew Harvey, a Saint Mary's University, Halifax, economics professor who helped pioneer Canadian time-use surveys.

Knowing how Canadians use their time is one way for governments to get a more accurate picture of the economy, says Harvey, who has been studying time-use for 33 years. That in turn can lead to policies designed to promote better land use and a "saner environment," he says.

In 1871, roughly 80 per cent of Canadians lived in rural areas with only 20 per cent in cities. By 2001, the numbers reversed: 80 per cent urban and 20 per cent rural.

Even as late as 1951, 43 per cent of Canadians still lived rurally. That means much of their time was spent on tasks that do not get officially counted in the economy—tasks such as growing and preparing your own food or chopping wood.

The problem, Harvey says, is that as people move from rural to urban areas, we get a skewed perspective of economic growth. Activities formerly done outside the economy, and thus never counted as productive, now move into the economy and get counted as growth. For example, rural do-it-yourself tasks such as fixing trucks, repairing houses and growing food are less possible for most urban dwellers.

"People go out and work and they hire these things done, so they're then done through the market," says Harvey. "The result is you have the same amount of activity being done—the same number of meals being prepared and so on—but they are now done in the market instead of outside the market. Hence they get counted in the market, where they weren't counted before, so it looks as though we've grown more than we have."

Time-use data can help by counting time spent doing unpaid work. "You measure how much is produced and give it a value, and then you relate that to the value of the output from the market sector," he says.

When you take time-use data into account, urbanization does not register as such a boon to the economy. Governments might then tailor policies to help reduce urban density by improving services in rural areas. Rural Canada could be helped by public transportation, better access to hospitals and public services, investments in schools and ensured Internet access, says Harvey. ✓



Reality Check: The Canadian Review of Wellbeing is a joint project of The Atkinson Charitable Foundation and GPI Atlantic, and is published quarterly.

Publisher: THE ATKINSON CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

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Adviser: JOHN LEON

Design and Layout: SEMAPHOR DESIGN COMPANY, Halifax

Printing: BOUNTY PRINTING, Halifax

Mailed under Canada Post Publications Agreement #40613075

Reality Check welcomes comments from readers and information on wellbeing measurement projects in Canada. Email: realitycheck@gpiatlantic.org. Mail: Reality Check, PO Box 9511, Halifax, NS, B3K 5S3.

Sources used in this issue of *Reality Check*, as well as previous issues, are online at <http://www.gpiatlantic.org/realitycheck/>