

[Text]

The Vice-Chairman: I will give you about another three or four minutes because of the time we have left.

Mr. Poulin: Mr. Chairman, clearly, I have five minutes and this exchange took eight minutes, so I would have at least another five minutes.

The Vice-Chairman: Mr. Poulin, could you please continue your questioning.

Mr. Poulin: Certainly, thank you very much.

Dr. Kirkham, before we were, I think, intentionally interrupted in the line in which we were going, and taking I was asking you whether you would categorize that type of questioning, the type of innuendo, that is left with the people of Canada through the media, is really careless and reckless with respect to the effect that it will have upon the person or upon the organization to which it is aimed.

Dr. Kirkham: Well, I think the only way I can respond, Mr. Poulin, is to respond in terms of the effect that it has on the Agency, and it did have a serious impact on the Agency, but I do not think I am really in a position to describe whether someone else would think that was careless or reckless. But, certainly, it did have a serious impact on the Agency.

Mr. Poulin: Dr. Kirkham, the allegations which were made at that time, by innuendo, both in the House of Commons, prior to the meetings, and at the meetings, here, were, I thought, relatively serious. If there was any truth whatever in the statements that were made, or in the allegations by way of innuendo, they went to the fundamental integrity, and if the allegations were correct, to the misuse of confidential information.

Now I understand that you, and officials of your Agency, as a result of this, conducted a very extensive investigation within your organization and that there was also a very extensive investigation, conducted, impartially, by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. My understanding of both of those investigations, two of which were conducted, I think, at the time the incident occurred and then subsequently, when this exploded last fall, again, by your organization, that there was no evidence whatsoever of any wrongdoing, of a criminal nature, and, indeed, there was no use, let alone misuse, no use whatsoever of confidential information, by any employee or any employees of Statistics Canada. Is that correct?

Dr. Kirkham: I would say that is the full force of the evidence that was given in the Meetings to which you referred earlier that took place in the fall.

Mr. Poulin: And your investigations indicated that there was no use of confidential information by employees, or misuse of confidential information by employees, of Statistics Canada.

Dr. Kirkham: Not only with respect to this particular incident to which you are referring, Mr. Poulin, but I can say that, to the knowledge of the people internal to Statistics Canada, there never has been a case that could be substantiated where there had been a violation of confidentiality and, I think, if someone were to go back to the point that I tried to make, at the last meeting that dealt with this particular issue, I think it is so engrained in the people of the bureau, the respect and the

[Interpretation]

Le vice-président: Vous aurez encore trois ou quatre minutes.

M. Poulin: Cette discussion ayant déjà duré huit minutes, il devrait me rester au moins encore cinq minutes.

Le vice-président: Voudriez-vous continuer, monsieur Poulin?

M. Poulin: Certainement, et je vous remercie.

Après cette interruption que je crois délibérée, pourriez-vous nous dire, M. Kirkham, si, à votre avis, les insinuations transmises par les média et portées ainsi à la connaissance du public prouvent l'irresponsabilité de leur auteur vu les répercussions qu'elles risquent d'avoir pour les personnes et l'organisation qui en font l'objet.

M. Kirkham: Tout ce que je puis vous dire, c'est que ceci a effectivement eu de graves répercussions pour notre agence, mais il ne m'appartient pas de vous dire si l'auteur de ces insinuations a fait preuve d'insouciance ou d'imprudence. Tout ce que je puis vous dire c'est que ceci a eu de graves répercussions pour notre agence.

M. Poulin: Les insinuations faites à la Chambre des communes, avant ces réunions ainsi qu'au cours des réunions, étaient à mon avis relativement graves. Si elles étaient, ne fût-ce que parties fondées, cela toucherait à l'intégrité même de votre organisation puisqu'il est question de divulgation de données secrètes.

A l'issue de cette affaire, vous avez fait faire une enquête approfondie au sein de votre organisation et la Gendarmerie royale du Canada a également effectué une enquête impartiale. Le résultat de ces enquêtes, dont deux ont été menées l'automne dernier lors du premier de ces incidents, montre que rien ne prouve qu'il y ait eu des délits ou que quelque employé de Statistique Canada n'ait trahi le secret professionnel en divulguant des informations confidentielles, n'est-ce pas?

M. Kirkham: C'est effectivement ce qui ressort des témoignages entendus lors des réunions de l'automne dernier.

M. Poulin: Et vos enquêtes montrent qu'aucun employé de Statistique Canada n'a abusé d'informations confidentielles, n'est-ce pas?

M. Kirkham: Non seulement en ce qui concerne l'incident que vous venez d'évoquer, monsieur Poulin. J'ajouterais qu'à notre connaissance, un cas de ce genre n'a jamais pu être prouvé, car ainsi que je vous l'ai expliqué lors de notre dernière réunion à ce sujet, les employés de Statistique Canada attachent une telle importance au secret professionnel et au caractère confidentiel des données qu'ils traitent, que je ne pense pas qu'ils puissent sciemment enfreindre ce secret. A ma