

[Text]

government, and there are some conceptual problems to work out in terms of how that gets treated.

But even more substantive than that is the problem that, in fact, what we require are additional data in order to construct those indices; and the kinds of additional data that we are talking about, for example, are that that particular group perhaps uses different commercial outlets for the purchase of its product than the general target population that would be associated with the CPI, as we know it; or they perhaps have a different basket of goods; so that the expenditure patterns that we normally apply to the CPI would not necessarily be appropriate for them.

And there are other kinds of difficulties such as that. What we require is additional data if, in fact, we are going to calculate those. We have some additional data in terms of the 1974 family-expenditure survey; that is being analysed. I understand we are hopeful that we will have finished the analysis on that by March, 1978. That is really the state of affairs we are at at the moment as I understand it.

The Vice-Chairman: Your time has expired, Mr. Stevens. Mr. Poulin

• 1730

Mr. Poulin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Kirkham, if I might, I would like to go back to the last time you and your officials appeared before this Committee; I believe it was in relation to supplementary estimates, at least that was the basis upon which you were questioned the last time. The allegations made against your organization, as I recall them, at that time went right to the heart of the integrity of Statistics Canada, and whether Statistics Canada and some of its employees had abused confidentiality and the fundamental trust of your organization. There were two meetings held, I think, Dr. Kirkham. I just want to be sure that the innuendoes I am recalling that were cast towards you and your organization, that I am not being overly partisan, but are they generally the type of innuendoes that you took from the kinds of questions that were asked, and the direction that was taken by the questions in the House of Commons prior to those meetings and, indeed, the questions here by Mr. MacKay, specifically?

Dr. Kirkham: If I may respond, Mr. Poulin, I think, at the time, I suggested that those kinds of public discussions that did not sharply focus on a particular act that was considered to be inappropriate, those kinds of discussions that did not sharply focus on such an act, were extremely debilitating to an organization like Statistics Canada, which clearly has at the very foundation of the work that it carries on a requirement for public trust and integrity. It was a very trying time for us.

Mr. Poulin: Yes. Am I also accurate when I say, Dr. Kirkham, that that type of thing engaged in by Mr. MacKay was harmful to your organization and, indeed, was entirely and completely and totally without foundation at all?

Dr. Kirkham: It is very, very difficult to measure in concrete terms the amount of damage that such an activity does bring to the agency, or the length of time over which we are going to

[Interpretation]

Mais ce qui est plus important encore, nous avons besoin de données supplémentaires pour élaborer ces indices pour tenir compte du fait que ce groupe s'approvisionne vraisemblablement dans des magasins autres que l'ensemble de la population auquel s'applique l'indice des prix de détails; il faut également tenir compte du fait que leurs achats diffèrent de ceux du restant de la population, si bien que les modes de dépense normalement utilisées pour le calcul de l'indice des prix de détail, ne conviennent pas à cette catégorie.

Il y a encore d'autres difficultés. Pour calculer cet indice, nous avons besoin de données supplémentaires. L'enquête sur les dépenses des familles en 1974, dépenses actuellement, devrait nous fournir les données supplémentaires. L'analyse devrait être terminée en mars 1978. Voilà où en sont les choses à l'heure actuelle.

Le vice-président: Votre temps est épuisé, monsieur Stevens. La parole est maintenant à M. Poulin.

M. Poulin: Je vous remercie, monsieur le président.

Monsieur Kirkham, je voudrais revenir à votre dernière comparaison devant le comité lorsque nous examinions le Budget supplémentaire. Or, les accusations dont Statistique Canada a fait l'objet, mettaient en cause l'honnêteté même de l'organisme, en laissant entendre que Statistique Canada et certains de ses employés auraient trahi le secret professionnel et sapé ainsi la confiance dont votre organisation doit pouvoir bénéficier. Deux réunions ont eu lieu. Est-ce que les insinuations dont vous et votre département avez fait l'objet lors de ces réunions sont du même ordre que les insinuations et les questions formulées à la Chambre des communes avant ces réunions, et notamment par M. MacKay?

M. Kirkham: J'ai dit à l'époque que des discussions publiques ne se rattachant pas directement à telle ou telle action répréhensible étaient hautement préjudiciables pour un organisme tel Statistique Canada, dont tout le travail est fondé sur la confiance du public et l'honnêteté. Cela a donc constitué pour nous une très dure épreuve.

M. Poulin: Il est donc exact de dire que la campagne lancée par M. MacKay contre votre département a eu des effets préjudiciables tout en étant absolument non fondée, n'est-ce pas?

M. Kirkham: Il est extrêmement difficile de calculer le préjudice dans un cas de ce genre, de dire pendant combien de temps les répercussions seront ressenties. J'espère toutefois que