



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 013

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Chair: Mrs. Karen Vecchio



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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): I would like to call this meeting to order.

Welcome to the 13th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 1, the committee will resume its study of intimate partner and domestic violence in Canada.

Per the directive of the Board of Internal Economy on March 10, 2022, all those attending in person must wear a mask, except for members who are at their place during the proceedings.

[Translation]

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to state a few rules for witnesses and members.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are participating by videoconference, click the microphone icon to activate your mike. Please put your mike on mute when you aren't speaking.

For the interpretation, if you are participating in the meeting by Zoom, you have the choice, at the bottom of your screen, of either floor, English or French. If you are participating in person, you can use the headset provided and select the channel you want.

I would remind the members and witnesses that all their comments must be addressed to the chair.

[English]

Before we welcome our witnesses, I would like to provide a warning. We will be discussing experiences related to violence and assault. This may be triggering to viewers with similar experiences. If you feel distressed or if you need help, please advise the clerk.

I now want to welcome our guests to today's first panel. We have, as an individual, Geneviève Lessard, a professor at Laval University. From the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, we have Rekha Gadhia, manager, family services department. From the Centre-Femmes de Bellechasse, we have Marjolaine Montminy, director.

We will begin with opening remarks. You will each be provided with five minutes for your opening remarks. When you see me twirl my pen, I'm asking you to wrap it up, and I ask that you take 10 to 15 seconds to say your last words.

I am now going to turn the floor over to Geneviève Lessard.

Geneviève, you have the floor for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Geneviève Lessard (Professor, Laval University, As an Individual): Good afternoon. Thank you for your invitation.

My name is Geneviève Lessard and I am a professor at Université Laval and director of the RAIV, an acronym referring to applied and interdisciplinary research into intimate, family and structural violence. The RAIV is one of the five members of the Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence.

On December 6, 1989, a young man murdered 14 young women at the École polytechnique de Montréal. That tragic event led to the Canadian government's mobilization to fund infrastructure for research into violence against women. This resulted in the creation of our Canadian alliance, which is still active, 30 years later, and conducts a number of projects in which the RAIV researchers in Quebec are actively involved.

The RAIV was formerly called CRI-VIFF, the Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la violence familiale et la violence faite aux femmes. I mention this for the benefit of those who have been involved in this issue for a long time. We changed the name in 2020 when we received a new infrastructure grant that allowed us to expand our academic programming to study structural violence as well, in addition to violence against women and children, again adopting the same partnership and interdisciplinary research approach.

The RAIV includes about 30 full-time researchers who are attached to six universities in Quebec, some 40 national and international collaborators, and a number of students and practice partners. We have two teams funded by the FRQSC, the Fonds de recherche du Québec pour la société et la culture: one team on spousal violence, which I lead, and another on structural violence and social justice, led by my colleague Catherine Rossi.

Like myself and a number of other experts in the field, you have probably observed that the pandemic has exacerbated and accentuated intimate, familial and structural violence. Nor do we foresee a decline in violence in the post-pandemic period. In fact, we expect to see many more disclosures after the fact by individuals who have tolerated violence for a long time or who have endured more serious violence because of it being more difficult to access resources during the pandemic.

That is why opting to emphasize investment in research into violence seems to us to really be a good solution. It will enable researchers who specialize in the field to continue to support not only practice partners, but also decision-makers like you who want to be part of the solution in order to improve prevention and the way assistance is provided to the people affected. This is, in fact, what we are doing today at this meeting.

These efforts enable us collectively to reduce the social costs, which are enormous. According to the available figures, it costs \$6 billion per year, in Canada, to help victims of violence. That valuation actually precedes the pandemic, so that means that the costs are even higher today.

In the last two years, practitioners that specialize in spousal violence have faced a double challenge: first, they have had to respond to the rise in requests for help, and, second, they have had to adapt their resources to comply with public health rules. The history of the research done in the last 30 years in the area of violence shows that given this kind of challenge, researchers and practitioners have to work together to achieve social innovations. So I welcome your initiative. Thank you for the great idea of doing a national study of violence. It will enable us to contribute to this together and continue to make progress toward the dream of greater social justice and more egalitarian social relationships.

In addition to my duties as director of a centre and a team at the centre, the work I undertake in my personal capacity deals with youth: children's exposure to spousal violence, co-occurrence of spousal violence and familial violence against children, coordination between the help resources concerned, and preventive work with young people.

I have just completed a study of young adults who were exposed to spousal violence in childhood or adolescence. I was saddened to find that despite the seriousness of the violence to which they were exposed, almost none of the young people who participated in our study had had access to specialized assistance in spousal violence when they were children or adolescents. They suffered when they were young, but it was only once they were adults and able to find help themselves that they finally obtained resources. It also takes a lot of effort to find those resources and to find services that are adapted to what they are experiencing now that they have become young adults.

We also know that these young people have fewer resources in their natural network than young people who are not exposed to spousal violence. Often, it is parents who help young people and keep them at home for a long time while they are going to school. In the case of these young people, it is often the opposite: they want to escape the violent home if the parents are still together.

• (1535)

These are major challenges. We decided to transform the results of our research into practical, concrete tools, which we have made available online. We relied on the results of our research to identify the interventions that young people consider to be effective and thus determine what an adult can do when faced with a young person who has been exposed to spousal violence, to help him or her. We designed a website organized by field of activity, so there are sections for young people attending school, living in group homes, and so on.

I see that my speaking time is up.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much. I gave you a few extra seconds there and I've put the buzzer on again.

I'm now going to pass it over to the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association.

Rekha, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Rekha Gadhia (Manager, Family Services Department, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association): Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members, for inviting the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, which I'll refer to as CIWA. It is a privilege to be here today to share and to gain further insights on this issue. We are very thankful for all the work being done by this committee to end intimate partner violence in Canada.

I'm calling from Calgary, Alberta, located on the traditional territories of the peoples of the Treaty No. 7 region in southern Alberta. Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3.

At CIWA, we work with immigrant and refugee families as our target population, and in our 40 years of experience in working in this area, we believe that there is a huge need to increase accessibility and reduce social isolation and barriers to accessing community services for immigrant women/men and their families living in family/domestic intimate partner violence situations.

Intimate partner violence is growing at an alarming pace, and the pandemic only brought a further huge spike globally. At CIWA, we saw a 57% increase in the clients whom we serve. Immigrant women whom we serve are at a higher risk due to language and culture barriers, poverty and lack of information on available resources.

In our experience, violence occurs among immigrant families due to the stressors related to overcoming the barriers related to settlement and integration, an inability to meet basic needs, unique personal circumstances and vulnerabilities, and the barriers related to premigration, migration and resettlement. Cultural barriers, stigma and role reversals only intensify their abuse experience.

This is further deepened when there is pre-existing trauma in the case of refugees, for example, who come with adverse experiences of war zones, have large families, maybe have disabilities, low to zero literacy in their own language, huge cultural barriers and stigma. Intimate partner violence programs and services that we offer should aim to positively impact immigrant families, as they should anywhere, by addressing these grassroots issues and changing the way people perceive and handle stress, gender equality, equity, family conflict, etc., as they are able only then to cope with all of these barriers.

Community education and awareness are also extremely important in reaching out to victims, perpetrators and family members. Our experience shows that the need to extend the services beyond women to encompass men and boys and the community at large is critical. Very often, immigrant men come from cultures of toxic masculinity, with defined gender roles and cultural norms that do not expect them to be part and parcel of the daily routines, of upbringing and of supporting their partners. They find it difficult to understand this expectation. We have learned that the real empowerment for women and children will truly happen when we engage men and boys.

This learning became much more concrete with our engagement with the University of Calgary's violence research, Shift, and the engaging men learning collaborative. For one, we believe that working with men and boys on prevention will only enhance our collective learning to better understand men's needs and issues and their level of a lack of awareness. This will then enable us to offer concrete support for women and children and holistic services for the entire family and will address the grassroots factors that lead to perpetuation of violence and abuse.

At CIWA, we have identified some of the best and promising practices to improve supports and protection for women and girls living in unsafe environments. This includes reaching out to them where they are: when they naturally go out for their daily tasks or congregate naturally in community centres, clinics, English classes and workplaces.

Offering information in a culturally sensitive way and in their first language is critical in regard to the issue itself and to education and awareness, be it tools or resources—everything—as is engaging boys and girls early on in schools through developing and offering a gender-based violence prevention curriculum that we have developed and are offering in some schools.

Also included are healthy relationships; focused education for adults and youth; engaging ethnic communities and faith-based leaders in education and awareness to help reduce the stigma and to talk about healthy gender norms, healthy masculinity, healthy relationships and cross-cultural parenting, and eventually connecting the women and girls with them for accessing cultural supports from within the community because they trust them, and connecting women and girls with the financial resources to make them less dependent, not depending on the partner.

Included as well is having projects like “Find Me a Home”, which we have at CIWA to offer emergency transitional housing and crisis supports so that they can leave the abusive situation, which includes partnering with hotels and motels that we consider

safe and having a strong understanding of various intersectionalities with intimate partner violence—the health sector, disabilities, employment—to further address the factors that truly limit the women and girls from leaving the abusive situation and to create customized support services and resources to meet their unique needs.

Having a cross-sector and cross-system coordinated response model is extremely important and efficient. We have an example in Calgary with the police services community-based “Equally Safe” model that CIWA is also a formal partner of. Also important is having in each city and province an initiative based on a collective impact model, such as the Calgary Domestic Violence Collective's Impact Alberta violence prevention framework. Those are some of the examples of cross-system sector collaboration that we have.

• (1540)

I will leave at the end with some of the recommendations that we have come up with. We just wrapped up a WAGE-funded research project called “Employment Security Alliance” and our recommendations are that workplaces should have the culturally sensitive support—

• (1545)

The Chair: I'm sorry. We're over time there. What we can do [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] to be sent to our committee. That would be fantastic.

What I need to do is turn it over to our next witness right now. I'm going to turn it over for the the next five minutes to Marjolaine from the Centre-Femmes de Bellechasse.

You have the floor for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marjolaine Montminy (Director, Centre-Femmes de Bellechasse): Thank you, Madam Chair.

To introduce myself, I am Marjolaine Montminy. I have been the director of the Centre-Femmes de Bellechasse since it was created in 2000.

The RCM of Bellechasse is a large rural area located south of Quebec City. It is composed of 20 municipalities, but there are no cities. It is a beautiful agricultural and industrial region, with businesses and certain community services. In general, it is a great place to live.

We do have access to medical services and we have a CLSC within the regional municipality, but there is always some degree of precariousness.

Public transit exists on a very small scale and does not meet all the needs in the area. It is hard for transit to be viable, since there are such long distances.

There is a workaround solution, the volunteer community transportation service, but it is very difficult to maintain these days. When seniors left, as a protective measure against COVID-19, this made the most important link in the system, which operates on volunteer efforts, even more fragile.

There is no taxi service in the entire RCM.

There is a police station in the centre of the regional municipality, so when a call for help is made, a patrol car may take as long as 25 minutes to get to the scene of the emergency. The same is true for an ambulance.

Community organizations like ours normally work during day-time hours. We all know that episodes of intimate partner violence happen in the evening, at night, or on weekends. To fulfil the mission of offering effective services to women and men who need help, we have to have adequate funding. This is a major request we have been making to decision-makers for many years.

In our RCM, we are experiencing scarcity in affordable housing. People have to move away from major centres to find rents like that. The municipal housing bureaus in the regional municipality are mainly for people aged 50 and over. A young family looking for housing to get out of a spousal violence situation will probably have difficulty accessing it.

In a small rural community, it is hard to preserve anonymity. A person's entourage is often composed of people all related to one another, and this may make it easier for an aggressor to control his victim, since it will be easier to isolate her.

Internet and cellphone coverage is really not equal everywhere. Some municipalities, especially in the concessions, don't yet have access to these leading-edge new technologies. Exorbitant charges for Internet service mean that some low-income residents have to forego that tool, despite it now being considered to be essential. Imagine a person whose only income is social assistance having to pay the charges for Internet service; that would take a big bite out of their budget.

In rural communities it is hard to develop a protection scenario with a woman who lives in a concession, since there are long distances between houses.

Women with disabilities and older women are more vulnerable, since they depend heavily on their caregivers. If they are living in an atmosphere of violence, they risk taking much longer to break the silence. They don't want to lose the only help they have access to.

When an episode of violence breaks out, people tend to remind the victim of the importance of preserving family ties, when it has been proved that intervention should focus first on the victim's safety and on holding the aggressor accountable for his choice.

We must never forget that spousal violence is about taking control, not losing control.

When it comes to the judicial process, there is little interest in the history of the violence and the focus is mainly on the event that triggered the process, when the history of spousal violence may have a crucial impact on the aggressor's risk of recidivism.

In addition, the media play a large role in whether violence is tolerated or not. The women's movement has strived to change the language used in situations of serious spousal violence. People talk about family tragedies or crimes of passion, but those terms have nothing to do with the reality of spousal violence. There is no passion involved in someone establishing total control of the person they claim to love.

The women's movement has brought strong pressure to bear to introduce a difference between the words "homicide" and "femicide". The use of this new word leads to a whole different analysis of the situation. When murders of women are submerged in the general designation of homicide, the public does not realize the extent of spousal violence in our lives. The influence that the vocabulary and the media have gets downplayed.

● (1550)

Doctors and other medical professionals have to be trained to do a better job of detecting the various symptoms that a patient who is a victim of spousal violence presents. Women have to feel safe in a doctor's office and they have to be able to be alone with the doctor so they can speak freely. Too often, the treatment focused on is meant to treat the immediate symptoms, and not the real cause of what the person sought the consultation for. Treating only the obvious symptoms unfortunately contributes to increasing the tolerance of what the patient is experiencing. Often, that prevents a victim of spousal violence from initiating a real effort to get out of her unhealthy situation.

If the violence perpetrated against a spouse were instead committed against a perfect stranger, would there be such tolerance? I highly doubt it.

I see that time is running out, so I will skip to my conclusion.

In Quebec, we are doing a lot of work to implement the recommendations made in the non-partisan report entitled "Rebâtir la confiance". My opinion is that this is the way forward.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much. I really appreciate that.

We're now going to start off with our round of questions. We're going to start with each person getting six minutes. We'll be starting off with Shelby Kramp-Neuman.

Shelby, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to Geneviève, Rekha and Marjolaine.

There's no question that over the course of the study, over the last several weeks, we've been reflecting a tremendous amount, in depth, on what we can do moving forward. Ideally, we as a committee want to be part of the solution, and we can recognize that there are many challenges when it comes to victims of domestic violence and how we end intimate partner violence.

I'll start with Geneviève. How do you see the government stepping up? What is the number one priority, your role, that you see this committee moving forward with?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Geneviève Lessard: Thank you for the question. Yes, I didn't have time to finish my presentation and tell you my recommendations.

I would therefore like to present two recommendations that I think are important in connection with my presentation.

First, we have to do more and provide more support for prevention measures, by funding projects that will reach young people in a more proactive way. To do that, we have to take a broader approach to violence, so that we look at violence that may be considered to be a bit less serious, that perhaps doesn't yet correspond entirely to coercive conduct or perhaps does not present very clear indicia of dangerousness. The thing is that we have to defuse violent situations before they take root and become embedded, dangerous and coercive situations. So we need to take a preventive approach—

[*English*]

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you very much. If you don't mind, I'm just going to stop you there because of time. I'd like to get another question in.

I just have a few comments. I'm suggesting that this is disturbing and comforting at the same time. It's disturbing that we have to talk this long about it and there are so many groups that have so many horrific stories to share, but it's comforting at the same time that we have this many advocacy groups that are doing what you are doing. Thank you to all of you.

Perhaps I'll ask Rekha or Marjolaine to see if they can address any specific measures that this particular government needs to do to best address this. Some of you have come up with some recommendations, but could either Rekha or Marjolaine provide the committee with any specific measures to help address how we move forward, because a lot of us were talking and there's a lot of advocacy but we need action?

Ms. Rekha Gadhia: Sure, I can start.

One of the recommendations is... Of course, the funding is a no-brainer, prevention-based and intervention-based, but there needs to be education. For engaging the men, the workplaces need to have culturally sensitive or trauma-informed training to be happening about the gender-based violence issue itself, how to mitigate that and how they can play a role. Also, a similar curriculum could be offered in the schools. That is one solid thing.

Another is providing employment and financial security so that women are able to truly leave the situation. For that, we would like to also have customized bridging programs and policy changes, even at the workplaces, when women are going through all the vio-

lence issues and they want to leave, or even if they have left the situation but they have children, who are typically with the moms. They have to take care of the child care, they have court dates and whatnot, so the employers need to have that understanding. Having policies around supporting the women at workplaces is one of the solid recommendations I can give right off the bat.

• (1555)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you.

Marjolaine, can you reflect on any specific in-depth measures that you would suggest moving forward?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marjolaine Montminy: We're going to have to study everything relating to the laws concerning judgments in spousal violence and sexual violence cases. The perpetrator of the violence has to be held accountable. At present, women who are victims of violence are often the ones called to testify in court. Then they have to tell their stories multiple times, and it is very difficult for them. So these women need to be given help from the beginning to the end of the judicial process.

In addition, the media have to raise awareness of spousal violence in the way they talk about things. The media must not spin violent situations into fairy tales. It is also very important to use the real terminology. In fact, we have seen changes since we started using the word "femicide" instead of "homicide", about five years ago. So it really hasn't been that long.

Education is also very important. We really have to educate our young men about the idea of power. Men have to stop exercising power over their spouses. It's unfortunate, and that really isn't what love is.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to pass the next six minutes to Jenna Sudds.

Jenna, you have six minutes.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to all of our witnesses for joining us today.

I will start with Geneviève.

You spoke a bit about the impact of intimate partner violence when children are present. I'm wondering if you can share with us, from some of the research you have done, what some of the benefits are of early intervention as far as kids are concerned.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Geneviève Lessard: Thank you for the question.

One of the benefits would be to enable children to understand what they are experiencing sooner, to take the responsibility off their shoulders and let them know that help is available for them somewhere. I spoke earlier about difficulties in accessing help, but there are a lot of benefits in offering specialized services. When children can talk about what is happening, when they are able to understand the situation, when they can distinguish the violent behaviour from the person engaging in it, when they know it is unacceptable and it doesn't happen in all families, then certainly that will enormously reduce the impact of the violence.

The research that has been done in the last 30 years has shown that the impact of exposure to spousal violence was as serious as suffering the violence directly. This is a well-known fact, but it seems that this information has not been absorbed by the general public and by services that don't specialize in violence. As well, that information doesn't seem to be taken into account in assessing these children's needs. My research with young adults and a lot of other studies have shown that the consequences of exposure to spousal violence last beyond the age of 18.

Services have to be offered more proactively by going and getting the young people where they are, in school, for example. My colleagues have talked about prevention, which is very important. But we also have to offer help when young people disclose the troubles they are experiencing. On average, four to six children in a class are exposed to spousal violence. The school could be a good place to offer proactive services.

• (1600)

[English]

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Thank you so much for that.

You said something that really caught me, which prompted that. You said that often children want to flee if their parents are still together and they're witnessing domestic violence. Your comments are well noted. We can have an impact if we can get into schools, for example, and give that education at an early age.

My next question will be for Rekha.

Rekha, you didn't speak too much about this today, but I noted on your website that your organization offers employment services for women with formal education who might not necessarily have had access to education in the past. I'm hoping you can speak a bit about the impact of having access to formal education.

Ms. Rekha Gadhia: That is extremely crucial, because when immigrant families arrive in a new country, typically it's the women who are left behind, as they have to take care of the children. We really take pride in focusing on and prioritizing that.

Many immigrant women have different levels of literacy and sometimes no literacy. We first decided to develop the customized programs for different levels of literacy and then different fields of education. Some are even just on cooking. We will have customized modules for those kinds of areas where they can still leverage the skills that they have.

The other important piece is that if they at least have their own language, we are able to provide training to further formalize their training in their own language. Then they can be certified commu-

nity interpreters and have independence and empowerment, and earn money as a freelancer as well.

Those are some of the small examples. We have customized programs for different levels of literacy for women, particularly when we know that they have family conflict or a domestic violence situation going on. We at CIWA have 50-plus programs. My portfolio in particular includes domestic violence counselling and that kind of stuff. We're making sure that they are all connected. In any program, we do family violence screening as well. That way they are immediately able to be connected.

There are other programs, but the way they are designed, unfortunately, they have to be driven by the funder mandate and be completed by a certain time period. That is why one of our strong recommendations is for a customized program that could run for a longer period. A program running for six months could run for one year so that the women who are going through it, if they're in the process of fleeing an abusive situation or if they've just fled the situation, do have customized time and support. While they're healing themselves, they're also gaining that employment security.

I hope that answered your question.

Mrs. Jenna Sudds: Yes. That's fabulous.

I believe you also have a program that offers homework support for kids. In the 20 seconds I have left, can you speak briefly on the importance or the impact of that?

Ms. Rekha Gadhia: Yes, absolutely. We have the after-school homework club and the homework helpline for anyone who is in school and who, because of integration, is struggling and staying behind, or is ESL or ELL. We make sure we connect with those kids and provide that homework support.

We have our staff and we have our volunteers who, again, are able to customize and offer language support to newcomers who have language issues. They provide additional academic support to keep them from falling behind. In line with that, we also offer a gender violence curriculum in some of the schools.

The Chair: Awesome. Thank you so much.

We're now going to turn it over to Andréanne Larouche.

Andréanne, you have the floor for six minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to the three witnesses for being with us today to talk about the important subject of intimate partner violence.

Ms. Lessard, Ms. Gadhia and Ms. Montminy, your testimony is really useful for our study.

For my first round of questions, I'd like to address Ms. Lessard.

Ms. Lessard, you mentioned two recommendations or two measures that the federal government should take as a priority. In one of your recommendations, you proposed that it follow the Quebec model in terms of coordinated actions.

Would you like to explain further exactly what this coordination model is and how it could be useful for our study?

• (1605)

Mrs. Geneviève Lessard: Thank you for the question.

As I said earlier, we are a research centre, so our contribution is made in that way, not in the form of direct services to the public.

However, I think that the productive alliance and the collaboration between research and practitioners really are a winning formula for bringing about important social change.

In Quebec, we have the coordinated action component of the Programme de recherche sur la violence conjugale, funded jointly by the FRQSC, the Fonds de recherche du Québec pour la société et la culture, and the ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. It is connected with the Government Action Plan on Domestic Violence.

I will explain how that could work at the federal level, in concrete terms. The priority actions that would be set out in the federal government's action plan could lead to a call for projects. So projects would then be funded based on targeted actions. For example, projects could be organized around one, two or three focuses. That would require that the projects be carried out in partnership with practitioners and academics. You could certainly count on the collaboration of our organization, as a member of the Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence, to circulate the call for projects widely among the academic communities and practitioners working on violence, so that appropriate projects would align with the government's priorities.

This may be a model that the federal government could use if it wants to play a role in violence research.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: So it is important that multiple actors study this issue in coordination.

I imagine you have also considered the fact that when there is no assault or crime committed, the police and the actors in the judicial system often interpret violence as nothing more than arguments between partners. So they limit their intervention, despite the signs of violence that can be considered to be coercive control, behaviour that is often the precursor of much more physical violence.

So we have to work on multiple aspects. For that, first, should coercive control be criminalized, and second, should training be offered for the police and actors in the judicial system so they understand this kind of situation better and are better informed about the statutory tools available? Do you think that would be another way of working in coordination and expanding the approach, that is, seeing the problem as broadly as possible, as you said in your previous comments?

Mrs. Geneviève Lessard: Absolutely, yes. In fact, we can't solve a problem this complex by adopting a simplistic solution. Changing the laws does offer tools, but that is not sufficient if we

then don't help the people working in the field to work together to provide a safety net. Also, the tools can sometimes be poorly used.

Personally, I do a lot of work on coordination among the resources that provide help. In some regions of Quebec, crisis units have been set up in response to the "Rebâtir la confiance" report. That is really how we're going to manage to protect women and prevent femicide. We need the sometimes narrow vision of an expert to be expanded through the contribution made by another expert who comes from another practice area, who sees other dimensions and risk factors. By bringing everyone's knowledge together, we end up with a more coherent action, one that is more integrated and safer for the victims, and we really tackle the problem taking all needs into account.

We also have to tackle the people committing the violence. Apart from judicial measures, there has to be guidance. Otherwise, once the judicial measure ends, the danger will persist, if the person who exercised coercive control has not been given guidance. So a combination of measures is needed, both psychosocial and judicial, in order for change to take place.

I see that Ms. Larouche doesn't have a lot of speaking time left, so I'm going to allow her the few remaining seconds, in case she has other questions to ask.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: You talk about the "Rebâtir la confiance" report and the importance of raising awareness. On that point, I would like to mention that it was announced yesterday that Granby, which is in my riding, would be one of the towns participating in the pilot project for a court specializing in sexual or spousal violence. The federal government could therefore draw on that project to properly train participants and raise their awareness, to get them to recognize that a victim of spousal violence is not to be treated like just any other victim. There are differences and sensitivities that really have to be considered.

• (1610)

Mrs. Geneviève Lessard: When a new measure is created, as in the case of the specialized court in Quebec, it is really important that we, as researchers, be able to support the process. Our researchers are involved in the process relating to these measures and are able to collaborate. They can study what happens and determine whether the project is going in the direction of the desired objectives. That could be our contribution, in terms of research.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to pass it over to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have six minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Thank you so much, Chair, and thanks to all the witnesses for their testimony.

My first question is for Madame Lessard.

You spoke about coercive control. We often kind of bandy back and forth in this study about punishment versus rehabilitation for people who have exhibited violent behaviours. I'm of the mind that people certainly need to be held responsible for their behaviour, but penitentiaries are very anti-social and violent institutions. I feel that they're probably not the best places to assist people who have violent behaviours. In fact, we know there are very high recidivism rates.

I'm wondering if you could share your thoughts on that.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Geneviève Lessard: Coercive control is one of the most dangerous dynamics of violence, that is, dynamics that are potentially explosive and can endanger people's lives. Given this kind of dynamic of violence, more stringent and safer control measures have to be taken. For example, Quebec is in the process of setting up a tracking bracelet system. That is the kind of measure that is needed, when there is concern for people's lives, including the lives of aggressors who might have suicidal ideation. Coercive control is also connected with that. The aggressor may threaten to kill himself or may want to kill other people and then commit suicide.

We need to have a statutory tool that allows all coercive control to be punished. That would be a good thing, but this tool alone would not be sufficient. The aggressor will probably not remain in prison for their whole life. There are actually few cases in which people have generalized antisocial behaviour and exercise coercive control in all their relationships, both at home and at school or elsewhere. Often, their partner is the one over whom people exercise coercive control. That proves that these aggressors are able to control their behaviour. If they don't exercise coercive control in some relationships but they do over their partner, that means they are capable of controlling their behaviour, and accordingly, they can change it. Rehabilitation measures must therefore also be taken.

Why is rehabilitation important? To ensure the safety of the former spouse and the children in the medium and long term. In cases where the former spouses are parents, it is very rare for them to completely lose their right of access to their children. When the woman has a child, she will have to stay in contact with the child's father, whether she wants to or not, even if coercive control was exercised after the separation. So there have to be safer measures in this situation.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: I'm sorry. I have limited time.

I really appreciate that response, because I absolutely respect how dangerous coercive control is, and that there needs to be a balanced approach. It's hard to teach prosocial behaviours in an anti-social environment. That's what my concern is.

I was also taken by the fact that you talked about how mental health supports for individuals stop at 18. This is true. Prior to 18, if you're having difficulty, a lot of supports often can be provided, for example through schools. They'll provide kids with supports, but then you turn 18 and all the supports stop. There doesn't seem to be a focus on funding proper mental health care for people dealing with complex mental health and trauma, including complex mental health and trauma that come out of witnessing family violence.

Can you speak to the importance of targeted funding and programs for people recovering from trauma related to family violence?

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Geneviève Lessard: I do think there is a huge gap in the services offered for young adults. Young adults who need help have to pay out of pocket for specialized services, when, as I mentioned earlier, they have fewer resources than most other young people. I don't want to generalize, but I would say that a majority of these young people have no family network to support them financially. It is therefore very important to provide them with more services.

These services could be offered in workplaces where a majority of employees are young people, such as food services or hotels. If there were employee assistance programs aimed primarily for young people having problems related to a personal trauma, I think that would meet a need. Let's say that waiting lists for these kinds of services would fill up pretty fast.

With that said, two of my student have created a new organization in Quebec City called VIVA Jeunesse, for young people of any age who have experienced bullying or spousal violence. It may be that we will soon be seeing new organizations of this type, at least I hope so.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: I had the privilege of visiting VIVA Jeunesse the other weekend. It is a pretty amazing support.

The Chair: Leah, before you get another question in here, your time is done. I'm sorry about that.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: We'll get you back for your [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

We only have about 12 minutes left for the panel, so I'm going to divide the time into four minutes for the CPC and the Liberals, and two minutes for the NDP and the Bloc.

I'm going to pass the floor over to Dominique.

Dominique, you have four minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a bit frustrating, because I had a lot of questions for Ms. Lessard. We could have heard more discussion about young people.

Ms. Lessard, I hope we will be able to follow up with you and you will be able to send us more information about the very promising initiatives with young people. We are also very interested in problematic intimate relationships among young people.

I'm going to take the liberty of addressing Ms. Montminy by her first name, because I have known her for 30 years.

So hello, Marjolaine. Welcome to this committee. We are very pleased to have heard from you today.

I am familiar with the rural community of Bellechasse. Our situation is the same more or less everywhere in Canada in rural communities. For example, people live far away from one another. We also see that there are no or very few front line services. In addition, transportation services are more or less nonexistent, for reasons that are very easy to understand: there are huge distances and very few people, and costs would be high, among other things. With that said, you did say that it was still possible to find solutions.

What solutions that are very promising and easy to put in place could be exported to rural communities elsewhere in Quebec, but also in Canada?

Mrs. Marjolaine Montminy: First, we have to offer Internet access at an affordable cost, because that is a major shortcoming.

For two years, all activities at the Centre-Femmes de Bellechasse, as at a majority of community organizations, have taken place via Zoom. So when the women we want to help don't have the \$55 a month to pay for an Internet connection, it is difficult to contact them. They are very far away from us. When they leave a spousal violence situation and go to a shelter, it is often us who then go and get them. That is the method we have used for two years to go out and meet our clients. These women have told me multiple times that they had no money to pay for an Internet connection. So we referred them to an organization that could lend them a computer. That is how we have managed.

Internet access needs to be unlimited and capped at \$20 per month. When you are receiving a social assistance cheque for about \$800 per month, a charge of \$55 to access the Internet is an enormous cost.

If they use their phone to access the Internet, that uses up all their mobile data, and at the end of the month they have no minutes left and they can't call anyone. That doesn't work. Something really has to be done about this.

As well, we really have to work hard on holding the perpetrators of violence accountable. There are some 180 recommendations in "Rebâtir la confiance"...

• (1620)

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Exactly, Ms. Lessard talked earlier about "Rebâtir la confiance" and the crisis units that were created when that report came out.

How are these crisis units organized? Can they play a role? Could they be promising approaches for Bellechasse or other rural regions to take?

Mrs. Marjolaine Montminy: Yes, we are in the process of setting them up.

Following the horrific incident experienced by Vickie Langlois, I asked her what I could have done for her, as the director of a women's centre, and she told me there had to be crisis units. I get emo-

tional when I talk about it. So we are working on it. The project is progressing. We have received funding and we are in the process of setting up crisis units everywhere in Quebec. It's going to be extraordinary.

The tracking bracelets may be useful, but only when the Internet is working. This is a device that works on the network: you get a phone alert if the other person is somewhere around the house. So if I live on the Trois-Pistoles concession road and I have no Internet access, it doesn't work. That is one aspect to consider.

Police have also been designated who will be dedicated to spousal violence situations. They are taking training for this. This is new...

[English]

The Chair: Marjolaine, I'm sorry, but I have to cut you off. I know you have such great expertise on this, but we have others who want to ask questions.

I'm going to pass it over, for the next four minutes, to Emmanuella.

Emmanuella, you have four minutes.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

[Translation]

A big thanks to the witnesses for being here today to answer our questions.

My first questions are for Ms. Lessard.

You spoke a lot about young women who are victims of violence, since your recent studies focus on that subject.

I would like to know whether there is a great disparity among those women, between those who have a postsecondary education and those who don't. You talked about introducing this kind of program in the workplace, but you didn't talk about universities or cégeps.

Mrs. Geneviève Lessard: Thank you for the question. However, there is a part of the question that I won't be able to answer, because my research didn't deal with women victims of spousal violence, but rather with children and adolescents exposed to that type of violence.

Our sample did include a lot of university students. We recruited participants from various places, including Kijiji and Facebook, and also through community organizations that work with youth. We found that we got a lot of responses from students in cégeps and universities.

You're right that it is important to include colleges and universities in the support measures. There are some programs on university campuses, in the form of help for students experiencing a variety of problems. At present, those services are completely overwhelmed. Even where I am, at Laval University, we have had to add resources to deal with the high volume of requests from students on the waiting list. These aren't just spousal violence cases, but all sorts of problems.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: You also said that the pandemic had shown the importance of joining together to create social innovations. Could you tell us more about this and explain how the government can support projects like these?

Mrs. Geneviève Lessard: I think the pandemic will have brought about some practical transformations. For example, in a place like the one where Ms. Montminy works, it is very important to offer certain services online, not just now, but also when the pandemic is over. These services may benefit people who can't travel, people who have a disability, or people for whom it is hard to get to a group meeting.

I think we will have to closely monitor the way the services are transformed and reorganized during the pandemic and especially afterward, to see what type of therapy is effective, for one thing.

For example, at our research centre, a researcher who specializes in psychology offers online therapy for people who have been traumatized, for victims of sexual or spousal violence. Her preliminary research has produced very encouraging results in terms of the effectiveness of the treatment.

These are new ways of working that we can explore further, that might even be used for helping young people, who are much more focused than us on technology. Online services could therefore be an avenue for the future.

• (1625)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Excellent, thank you.

Thanks to all the witnesses.

[English]

The Chair: Thanks so much, Emmanuella.

We're now going to turn it over for two minutes to Andréanne.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Lessard, we are trying to find concrete solutions to the problem of violence against women and spousal violence. You were talking about different treatments and the need to get off the beaten path.

Are there ways of preventing this violence? Are there other initiatives that inspire you? I'm thinking, in particular, of telephone hotlines for victims and other somewhat different models that would make it possible to defuse a situation before it degenerates and explodes.

Mrs. Geneviève Lessard: Collectively, we have to change and expand our language. It takes time and it takes pretty serious episodes of violence before a person acknowledges and says that she is, in fact, a victim of spousal violence. Before getting there, the person will say that things aren't going well in her relationship and she has tried everything to resolve the situation. Instead of describing herself as a victim, she will use other words.

So I urge everyone who is working in the field to take a step back and ask themselves what other prevention strategies could be used to reach out to these people before they start to fear for their lives.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: On that point, the models that rely on hot lines could provide inspiration. That would make it possible to listen to victims, and for them to express themselves. Other countries have followed this type of model. I don't know whether you have observed other measures in place on the ground in the course of your research that could be useful at the prevention stage.

As Professor Simon Lapierre said, coercive control has to be addressed as a behavioural pattern in which a person uses different strategies to deprive the victim of her freedom. In the course of your studies of that behaviour, have you seen models in Quebec that we could use, particularly when it comes to prevention? Do you have any other ideas to present to us?

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much. We are actually already over that two-minute slot.

Madame Lessard and Ms. Montminy, if you could send some information to us, that would be fantastic.

I'm now going to turn it over to Leah Gazan for her final two minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much, Chair.

My last question is for [*Inaudible—Editor*].

In my community there are real gaps in support systems for newcomer women experiencing intimate partner violence. I was wondering if you could identify some of the gaps, and how these gaps could be better addressed to ensure there are cultural responses and adequate supports, especially with some of the factors you identified in your testimony.

Ms. Rekha Gadhia: Sorry, that was for me, right? I just wanted to make sure.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Yes.

Ms. Rekha Gadhia: Definitely, one of the key things that we have identified is the culturally sensitive support, and in the first language, which is very critical, and working with the systems. We have taken initiatives like doing the culture competency or diversity training with the health system, and we are working hand in hand in a formal partnership with the Calgary police.

That is one of my solid recommendations, that each city should have this kind of model, the “Equally Safe” model. We have the police, indigenous people-serving organizations, immigrant-serving organizations, a seniors shelter, and another shelter. We're all working together, sharing resources.

We offer cultural competency training to the police. We are working with them from the triage stage to really make sure that they are interpreting the cultural nuances right from the get-go, instead of going through their checklist rather than working with us. In that way, we are also able to break the trust issue that a lot of immigrant families have with the police. That is one of the key things that we have been offering: the diversity and culture competency training and support the service—

• (1630)

The Chair: Leah, your limited time has gone.

There has been great information shared with us today, and I know there have been some requests, so for anyone who would like to send additional information as requested today, I just remind them to send it to the clerk.

On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank all of the witnesses for their excellent testimony today.

I'm going to suspend the meeting. We'll be back probably in about 30 seconds. We just need to get the new attendees online.

Thank you, witnesses. You may leave the meeting now.

• (1630)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1635)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

I'd really like to welcome the second panel for today's discussion on intimate partner violence. We have four groups of panellists today, so we're going to keep our time quite tight, but we'll work together and get through this.

[*Translation*]

We have with us, as an individual, Peter Jaffe, professor emeritus at Western University. From the Assembly of First Nations, we have Anna Betty Achneepineskum, the Deputy Grand Chief of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and Julie McGregor, director of the justice section. We also have Chantal Tanguay, director of La Gîtée, Sylvie Bernatchez, director of La Jonction pour elle, Shelina Jeshani, director of strategic partnerships and collaboration at the Safe Centre of Peel, and Lisa Hewison, inspector in the crimes against persons section of Peel Regional Police.

• (1640)

[*English*]

I would like to start off our first six minutes and pass the floor over to Professor Peter Jaffe.

Peter, you have the floor for six minutes.

Dr. Peter Jaffe (Professor Emeritus, Western University, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair, my neighbour in the Thames Valley.

Members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, thank you for this opportunity to address the committee.

I want to focus on the harm of living with domestic violence for children. They often face death, trauma or a lifetime of emotional problems. Sadly, the risk of harm to children is often overlooked.

My colleague Myrna Dawson at the University of Guelph and I have been involved in a national study of domestic homicide, with the support of 12 other universities, scholars and over 60 community partners from coast to coast to coast in Canada. One finding I wanted to highlight is that, in the last 10 years, there have been 815 domestic homicide victims in Canada. Women are the victims in over 80% of the cases. Men are the perpetrators in 86% of the cases. Domestic violence is a gender-based crime, including the mur-

der of children as an act of revenge on women trying to end an abusive relationship.

Children are killed in the context of domestic violence, from our research, in one in nine cases. Even the children who survive still suffer in the most profound ways. It's estimated that over 800 children have lost both parents during the research time period we described, either to a murder-suicide or their mother was killed and their father incarcerated. Four hundred children were estimated to have witnessed a homicide or the aftermath of a homicide in terms of the crime scene and police emergency response.

When a child or a parent is killed, it's rarely out of the blue. Often there are multiple warning signs known to friends, family, neighbours and co-workers. These warning signs or risk factors may also be seen by the police, social services, mental health professionals, lawyers and judges. These homicides are predictable and preventable. From our Ontario research, over 70% of these cases have seven or more risk factors known prior to the homicide: a recent separation, a history of domestic violence, depression and suicidal ideation in the perpetrator, stalking, escalation of violence, strangulation, threats to harm and a victim's intuitive sense of fear.

One death is one too many. Canadians need to work together to prevent every domestic homicide.

What can we do better? One area I want to focus on is the family court and the need for major reforms to support victims expressing concern about their safety and the safety of their children.

The good news is that there has been a major breakthrough in Canada with amendments to the Divorce Act that now recognize all forms of family violence as a factor that judges need to consider as part of determining children's best interests. The Department of Justice has done a lot to support these changes, including producing an excellent tool kit for lawyers to prepare them to better understand family violence and increase sensitivity in representing these parents.

The legislative reform must be matched by court reform. If we change the laws but fail to update the process, we may not get the real change that victims and their children need. I would hope the Minister of Justice, working together with his provincial and territorial counterparts, as well as the chief justices, can implement some immediate measures.

First, for example, is mandating judicial education programs on family violence to ensure that every judge hearing family law matters has specialized knowledge on the dynamics of family violence and the impact of family violence on children and victim safety.

Second is ensuring that cases are triaged at the outset and assigned to one judge, rather than having the case handled by multiple judges who may overlook growing risk factors of intimate partner violence. I have heard stories repeatedly across the country of parents who appear before multiple judges with multiple opinions, without any kind of focused approach to family violence. We also need a court process that doesn't allow for litigation abuse, in which coercive control in the marriage is now being played out through the family court to drain the victim financially and emotionally. Very few judges recognize these cases and put an end to this abuse happening right in front of them.

We have many thoughtful, sensitive and brilliant judges across the country, but every family violence victim deserves one of these judges and should not have to depend on fate or good luck to find this judge's courtroom. There's no room for error in family violence cases. Judges are making life-and-death decisions, often with limited information and litigants who can't afford proper representation. Access to justice is not just a day in court for a victim of family violence. It's a day with judges and court-related professionals who are educated and well-informed about these issues.

• (1645)

I'll leave my comments there, but I've provided the committee with other material. Hopefully during question period I will refer to my other major recommendation on universal prevention programs built into every school across the country.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I'm sure we'll be very interested in hearing about that last piece, for sure.

I'm now going to pass it over to the Safe Centre of Peel and Peel Regional Police.

I will let you decide who is going first on this. Shelina or Lisa, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Shelina Jeshani (Director, Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration, Safe Centre of Peel): Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members, for giving me the opportunity to appear as a witness at this very important standing committee.

My name is Shelina Jeshani. I'm the director of strategic partnerships and collaboration. I oversee the Safe Centre of Peel, which is located in the region of Peel in Ontario. I'm privileged to be here representing 16 partner organizations, accompanied by my partner, Peel Regional Police, who will share the time with me today.

I'm not here to share with you the outrageous statistics that we already know regarding the prevalence of IPV in our country. What I want to share with you today is an innovative, evidence-based, best-practice model of how a community can work together to respond and provide a safety net for victims of IPV.

The Safe Centre of Peel is the collaboration of 16 community partners who are providing an integrated, coordinated and wraparound service delivery model for victims of IPV. We have been in operation for over a decade.

In 2008, our community partners began discussions about how we needed to respond to IPV in our community differently. We

couldn't continue to work in silos, duplicate services and watch while vulnerable women tried to navigate systems that we had created. This began our journey of consulting with frontline service providers and survivors to understand their experiences, gaps and hopes for a responsive service system.

We consistently heard that victims were being told to repeat their stories over and over. Victims were told they couldn't bring their children with them to these different services. They were left trying to navigate complex systems and sectors. Many of these victims were also managing multiple barriers, such as language needs, immigration, low to no finances, young children and virtually no support system. We know the needs of victims and their children are vast and the system is just too hard and complicated to navigate.

We then looked elsewhere to see what other innovative models existed. We came across the family justice centre model that has been recognized as a best practice by the U.S. Department of Justice and has established centres across the U.S. and in 25 countries.

The Safe Centre of Peel, like the family justice centre models, works on creating a service response that is cross-sectoral. We recognize that collaboration and integration among community services, justice, legal, health and education are vital in being responsive to victims of IPV. Today, we share with you the opportunity to highlight the Safe Centre of Peel as a best practice model that can be showcased as a national model of practice.

We are all aware that we have a problem in our country with the issue of IPV and its impacts on our children and our communities. When we ask victims to go from place to place and repeat their stories over and over again, when they don't have a safe space for the children and we expect them to lead integration and connection between sectors, it is virtually impossible. We need to do something different across our country so we can keep women and children safe. IPV is a complex issue, but the service delivery doesn't need to be.

We urge you to consider the Safe Centre of Peel as a national best practice model that can be implemented across the country. The development and implementation of these models need to be adequately funded to create centres and communities that are reflective of the needs of these communities.

Part of our integration at the Safe Centre of Peel has been to establish our integrated work with our justice partner, Peel Regional Police. I would like to ask Inspector Hewison to provide an overview of this partnership.

Thank you.

• (1650)

Ms. Lisa Hewison (Inspector, Crimes Against Persons, Peel Regional Police): Thank you, Shelina.

I'd like to thank the committee and the Safe Centre of Peel for including Peel Regional Police in this deputation.

My name is Inspector Lisa Hewison and I lead one of the largest intimate partner violence units in Canada. The communities we serve are not immune to intimate partner and domestic violence. Consistently, our number one call for service is for intimate partner disputes. In 2020, it accounted for 30% of our homicides.

In 2021, we responded to over 16,000 incidents of intimate partner violence and domestic violence. That's 45 incidents every two hours every day. Also in 2021, we laid 393 strangulation charges where survivors were seconds away from being a femicide. That's over one woman being strangled every day in our region.

PRP has identified gaps in services and inconsistencies with the judicial system when it comes to IPV, which often leaves survivors experiencing additional trauma. Many IPV—

The Chair: Lisa, I hate to cut you off. I know the information you're providing us, which is a little overwhelming, to be honest, on some of this stuff.... We have to get to other witnesses. We will ask for all of that additional information to be tabled, as well, if possible.

[Translation]

I will now turn the floor over to the representatives of the Assembly of First Nations, Anna Betty Achneepineskum, who is the Deputy Grand Chief of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and Julie McGregor, who is the director of the justice sector.

[English]

I will pass the floor over to both of you for five minutes. I'll give you the one-minute warning, meaning you need to start wrapping it up, but you'll have five minutes.

Lisa, I'm sure we'll get back to you for some questions. Thank you.

Anna Betty, you have the floor.

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum (Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Assembly of First Nations): *Watchaye.*

Good afternoon, Madam Chair, vice-chairs and committee members. My name is Anna Betty Achneepineskum. I am the deputy grand chief of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation and the Ontario representative on the Assembly of First Nations women's council. I am joining you virtually from Niagara Falls, which is on the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabe peoples. I am happy to be here today to present on the topic of domestic and intimate partner violence. I am joined by Julie McGregor, who is the director of justice at the Assembly of First Nations.

First of all, in terms of the work that is done by the AFN women's council, it is mandated to provide the AFN executive committee with advice by affirming “the importance of building and strengthening partnerships between men and women [and gender-diverse people] in all levels of decision-making within the AFN, as an integral step in achieving an equitable society.” The AFN women's council comprises one or more females in leadership positions representing each of the 10 regions. There is one each from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon territory. Each region is responsible for identifying the process for the appointment of their regional representatives.

The AFN supports the “families first” principle in all the work we do on the MMIWG file. We believe it is important that the MMIWG national action plan reflects the voices of those who, for many years, have been advocating for the health and safety of our women. The AFN was a party with standing to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the AFN women's council continues to strongly advocate for the implementation of all 231 calls for justice.

Last year, in 2021, the AFN women's council carried a national engagement process in all 10 AFN regions for the development of the first nations national action plan. The AFN women's council believes strongly in listening to survivors and families about what is needed to end violence against first nations women, girls and 2-spirit and gender-diverse people. When the chiefs-in-assembly passed resolution 67/2019, giving the AFN women's council the mandate to coordinate our own engagement process with first nations, the mandate included the directive to ensure that a “families first” principle was used. In carrying out this mandate, we kept survivors and families at the heart of the work throughout the engagement processes.

In the Ontario region alone, the Chiefs of Ontario first nations women's caucus and the AFN women's council hosted 26 virtual engagement sessions with families and survivors. These virtual sessions included 10 sessions in southern Ontario, 10 in northern Ontario and six sessions dedicated to the Nishnawbe Aski Nation language groups, with translations in Cree, Oji-Cree and Ojibwa. The northern and southern Ontario sessions also had multiple sessions dedicated specifically to first nations youth and first nations 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples.

• (1655)

After the engagement was done, the Chiefs of Ontario first nations women's caucus hosted the MMIWG family gathering to build on the momentum in the region and formulate a detailed gender-based violence action plan to strategically support first nations in Ontario to prevent violence. It includes human trafficking awareness and prevention initiatives, gender diversity and bias awareness, and men's healing programs.

The Chair: Deputy Grand Chief, I hate to cut you off, but we have gone quite a bit over time. I know that you have such important words. Hopefully, we will get them in questions or we will be able to receive additional documentation from you.

I will now pass it over, for the next five minutes, to La Gîtée and La Jonction pour elle.

Chantal and Sylvie, I will let you two divide the time. The floor is yours for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bernatchez (Director, La Jonction pour elle inc.): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

Thank you for the invitation to participate in the study of intimate partner violence and family violence in Canada.

My name is Sylvie Bernatchez and I am the director of La Jonction pour elle, a help centre and shelter, and Maison Denise-Ruel, a second-stage house, both located in Lévis. I am accompanied by my colleague Chantal Tanguay, director of La Gîtée, a help centre and shelter, and Maison Louise, a second-stage house located in Thetford Mines in the Chaudière-Appalaches region.

We have chosen to speak to you about the experiences of women and their children living in a situation of spousal violence, about their words, but also about their pain. We spend time with the women in a shelter living environment. We share the same space 24/7. Relationships are formed, discussions take place. Living with women who have experienced similar events of violence and control enables these women to break the isolation. They feel less alone in going through these problems.

We bring women and their children into a safe place that offers listening, support and guidance. So we are in a position to observe the impact of violence on the victims. We talk about fear and guilt and the many losses they have suffered—for example, loss of self-confidence, loss of self-esteem, loss of family or friends, or job loss, not to mention health-related losses involving both physical and psychological health. These women are hurting in every sphere of their lives.

The women come to the shelter to escape from spousal violence temporarily. Often, the violence continues and worsens after the break-up, so the women experience violence again after the separation.

Regaining a decent life for themselves and their children involves constant work. They have to overcome major challenges. First, they have to find a place to move to. That is a challenge in itself when safety and financial capacity are important factors. The dynamic of spousal violence impoverishes women. Often, they are

in debt or have lost their job. In fact, the financial aspect is one of the reasons why women hesitate to leave their spouse. It is often the spouse who earns the family's main income, or their own income is not sufficient to meet their family's needs.

Fear sets in and they feel trapped. Often, these women have to take sick leave because of their situation, and this pulls them into a cycle of powerlessness and vulnerability. Not only is it a challenge to find decent housing, but they also have to furnish it, change the children's school, given that they are changing neighbourhoods, arrange transportation, and cover other expenses arising from their situation. Added to that are the challenges relating to child custody in a context of violence that continues after the separation.

Yes, second-stage housing can accommodate nearly 500 women and children a year at the 34 member houses located across the 14 regions of Quebec. Unfortunately, that number is not sufficient to meet all of the demand. These women's need for safety will still exist after their time in a shelter.

The women in our houses need safety but they also need help and support in various spheres of their lives in order to regain power over their lives. In concrete terms, they need support in their efforts to build a new life for themselves and their children. Every sphere of their lives is affected. In their living environments and their help networks, these women run up against people's lack of understanding of the spousal violence they are experiencing. That is why we work together with them and with various resources to identify the consequences of spousal violence on themselves and their children. Training our partners is an essential factor in putting safety nets in place for victims. It provides a common understanding of the problem and the consequences of this scourge for women and their children and we regard this as essential.

Spousal violence is society's problem and all actors have to collaborate to put safety measures in place for victims. We welcome the creation of the Carrefour sécurité en violence conjugale crisis unit in the Chaudière-Appalaches region, which means that victim's safety can take centre stage and spousal homicides can be prevented. Shelters alone cannot keep victims safe. Our partners' contribution is therefore essential.

Thank you.

• (1700)

[*English*]

The Chair: Excellent, and thank you so much.

We're now going to our first round. Everybody in our first round will be provided six minutes for questions. We're going to turn the floor over to Dominique Vien.

Dominique, you have the floor for six minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses for their impressive presentations. This provides us with even more information about the scourge of intimate partner violence.

My first question is for Mr. Jaffe.

Your mike got cut off earlier when you were talking about the prevention kit in the schools. Prevention work also has to be done with the young victims of spousal violence. We have to talk to them about it to avoid having it recur later in their lives.

What does the kit that you didn't have time to tell us about earlier consist of?

[English]

Dr. Peter Jaffe: Thank you very much for that question.

The first thing I should say is that I circulated with the clerk a report we did for WAGE on all the prevention programs we have evaluated across Canada. I recommend you review that report, but the highlights are that we have unique opportunities to intervene with children who live with violence, and also with their peer group.

The one thing I was going to highlight is that we have a universal prevention program that's built into our school system. We call the curriculum "The Fourth R", which stands for healthy relationships. It's a 21-lesson plan built into grade 9 health and physical education. It's now available in 5,000 schools across North America. It's translated into French and actually into Spanish, as it's used in several U.S. states as well.

It's a program that doesn't require specialists to come to the school. Teachers are trained to deliver the program. It meets every provincial and territorial curriculum expectation about what all students should be learning about healthy relationships. It's been evaluated. In one study we found that, between grade 9 and grade 11, we reduced incidents of domestic violence by 50% simply through students being involved in this program.

Again, there's information in the material I gave to the clerk, but I'd really encourage you to review it.

• (1705)

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: That's perfect.

[English]

Dr. Peter Jaffe: We don't have to reinvent the wheel. We have the material.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: You're right. Of course we will look at your proposals.

Thank you very much, Mr. Jaffe.

Hello and welcome, Ms. Bernatchez.

We are familiar with La Jonction pour elle. We are familiar with your impressive work and the work of the other shelters in the area.

The shelter you represent accommodates women victims of violence and their children.

You alluded to the economic barriers that prevent women from leaving a violent situation. What do you think the government can do to contribute to removing those barriers?

Ms. Sylvie Bernatchez: Women tell us that it's difficult for them, economically speaking.

When women come to the shelter, they often have to apply for social assistance. They receive an additional amount while they are at the shelter. We have to provide letters to confirm that these women are being housed with us.

When they leave the shelter to go to an apartment, they have no assistance. They have to find an apartment elsewhere and furnish it, among other things. Since they have no assistance, they often get help with furniture from community resources. The shelters and second-stage houses help them with food.

It would be a good idea to think about the financial assistance the government can provide for these women so they are able to start over.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: As someone told us last week, it is often women who have to leave their homes. They are the ones who have been assaulted, but they are the ones who have to leave their home and deal with all the problems that creates.

Ms. Sylvie Bernatchez: That's right. It is a very frustrating situation for these women. They have to leave their home for their own and their children's safety and come to a shelter. After that, it gets very complicated for these women to go back home, even if the apartment or house is in their name.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Ms. Bernatchez, you also accommodate these women's children. What do you say to the children, who have witnessed these traumatizing acts and who come to that place? It must not be easy, already, for them to be staying in a shelter for abused women. How do you support these young people?

Ms. Sylvie Bernatchez: We are fortunate to have workers from youth services who get involved in the women's and children's lives right away. We involve the mother. We respect the mother's choice and the family's limits. She is the one who will get her children to understand, bit by bit, that they are in a shelter. The children often think they are in a hotel. It's big, they run around, they have a playroom and they have friends. The children always react when they come to a shelter, because nobody yells in a shelter. So they misbehave, but nobody reprimands them. It's an adaptation period. We go about things gently with the children, also to ensure that they don't feel responsible for the spousal violence.

• (1710)

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to pass the floor over to Sonia Sidhu.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses who are with us today, and thank you for the work you're doing in the community.

My first question is for Ms. Jeshani.

Ms. Jeshani, in your testimony you spoke about the family justice centre model of providing services to the survivors of family violence in the same location at the Safe Centre of Peel. Can you tell us more about the unique features of this model and how it's more effective?

Ms. Shelina Jeshani: Thank you for your question.

There are many unique features of the model that are based on survivors' feedback. Again, when victims come to the Safe Centre, they have a safe place for their children that is a child-friendly environment, where there is a full-time child minder who supports the children in a place where they can play and be themselves while the mummies get the information and the support they need. They don't have to bring their children into a counselling room and have to worry about what their children are going to hear.

When people come into the Safe Centre, we do one intake. They don't repeat their story over and over again. We have one file and, again, we work integratively with our partners so that we are all using the same risk assessment and, therefore, speaking the same language. When one partner says, "This level of risk", the other partner understands exactly what that means. What also happens at the Safe Centre is that we have glue positions. We have client navigators who are there to welcome and support our clients so that they don't have to navigate the system. The client navigators support our clients in accessing what resources they may need, when they need them and how to get them into their lives.

One of the other most important features of the Safe Centre is the ability to bring case conferences together very quickly and, therefore, to be able to respond to high-risk cases. Our recent integration with Peel Regional Police has added the additional factor of what women told us, which was that when they wanted to talk to police, they did not want to sit in police stations and wait there not knowing who was walking in the door. They want to be in a safe, comfortable place where they have supports around them and be able to talk to police who are trained in the issue and who understand what IPV is and the many barriers they may be facing.

Certainly Inspector Hewison can speak more about the work that we do with the Peel Regional Police.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you, Ms. Jeshani.

My next question is for Inspector Hewison. In your opening statement, you mentioned that domestic and intimate partner violence is the number one reason for 911 calls in Peel. We know that

the Peel police work closely with the service providers in our community to respond to crises. You also work with the CMHA Peel to respond to distress calls.

Can you tell us how your officers are interacting with the survivors at the Safe Centre of Peel? Do you think it's working with the Safe Centre of Peel? Is there a better outcome coming out of it?

Ms. Lisa Hewison: Absolutely. We're having a lot of success now and we're hearing from survivors how they've had a better experience with the model and how we've changed it. Our service delivery model is embedded with our community safety and well-being framework, so we're not just looking at instant responses, but we're also looking at risk interventions, social development and prevention. We're employing those upstream approaches and services for those at risk.

Another big change for police officers is that my whole unit is actually embedded within that community partner building. For the Peel Regional Police, that is a first, to have a whole investigative unit not in a police station. It's in a community partner building. That way, we're right there, interacting with our community partners. I have interview rooms that are built within the Safe Centre, so that the woman, the victim, never has to go into a police station, because we recognize that's one of the barriers to reporting. We're trying to look at different ways to break down those barriers and stop working in silos and work more together.

Once we finish conducting our investigation, because we're in the same building, we're able to have that warm hand-off to our community partners so they can get the supports they need.

• (1715)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Do some of your partners at the Safe Centre of Peel include cultural services organizations like Roots Community Services and Indus Community Services, which serve the Black and South Asian communities? Can you speak to that, how the culturally sensitive...? We heard in other testimony that there's a stigma out there with racialized women and they're not coming out. How can we break that stigma?

The Chair: You have about 20 seconds to respond.

Ms. Shelina Jeshani: Thank you very much.

Yes, we have partners, ethno-specific partners, who work with various communities. What's really important is that we are able to provide services in particular languages, but also with cultural nuances. We have the opportunity, by integrating, of really influencing our other system partners, again helping the police understand the cultural nuances as well as the other needs the clients may have.

One important feature is that the police on site are in plain clothes and they are all trained in this area, which also helps in the hand-off that may need to happen. Again, it's women's choice if they want to speak to the police. Not all women have to speak to the police; it is their choice.

The Chair: Excellent, thank you so much.

I'm now going to pass it over for the next six minutes to Adr anne Larouche.

You have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses. We might say that the testimony from this second group with us today is very dense. Their day-to-day work on issues of violence against women or violence inflicted by an intimate partner is truly admirable.

Mr. Jaffe, my first question is for you.

We all know that in order to end the cycle of violence, we have to do more work upstream. Multiple witnesses have told the committee this.

As we know, coercive conduct by an aggressor is often a precursor to physical violence, which is why it is important to recognize this coercive control. However, we know that recognition of this doesn't come just by waving a magic wand. We can agree on that, from all the testimony heard by the committee. But it is one tool among others. We have heard about training for actors in the judicial system, but there is also prevention among the general public and supporting women throughout the reporting process.

For all these reasons, do you think it is still important to incorporate coercive control into the law, to reinforce all the prevention, training and support measures?

[*English*]

Dr. Peter Jaffe: The answer is definitely yes. Changing the law is useless if you don't back it up with education. It should be part of what every lawyer gets in law school, what every social worker and psychologist gets as part of their training.

There should be a very active public education program. We don't do enough to educate the public. I said previously that we should have public service announcements about what coercive control looks like and how to identify it. We should have it during the Stanley Cup playoffs. We shouldn't just have a brochure in a doctor's office. It has to be in front of us.

Quebec is the only province I've seen that actually has public service announcements defining violence in all its aspects. I've seen it actually during Montreal Canadiens hockey games. I haven't seen it

elsewhere. I just use that as an example. We have to really invest in public education and take it seriously.

I think we fall short. I think Katreena Scott testified earlier in your hearings and she talked about amazing programs we have, such as Neighbours, Friends & Families. It's available in multiple languages, but we're not getting it out far enough from coast to coast.

I think we have to invest heavily in public education. The front line, our neighbours, friends, family, co-workers, if they don't know, it's one less place that victims and potentially perpetrators can go for help and support.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Thank you, Mr. Jaffe.

Indeed, we have developed excellent expertise in public service advertising in Quebec, and it is indeed important in order if we are to succeed in changing behaviour.

To conclude this study, we are looking for solutions to spousal violence. You have talked about campaigns in Quebec, but what could the federal government do to combat spousal violence? We know that its role is actually limited, because these things often fall under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

Are you familiar with what happens elsewhere in the world? Have you looked at models at the international level? For example, the criminalization of coercive conduct in Scotland also takes into consideration the consequences of this violence on the children. You have talked about that, in fact. Are there other models that could inspire us?

[*English*]

Dr. Peter Jaffe: I'm inspired every day by Canada. We have all of the answers within our reach. We have lots of model programs, some of which you've heard about during the testimony. What we lack is better collaboration between the federal and provincial governments.

I realize there are many things that are provincial or territorial government jurisdictions, but I think the federal government can still play a leadership role in bringing people to the table and sharing resources. There are all kinds of great resources that need to be shared more broadly across the country. There are innovative programs in Quebec that need to be shared with other provinces and territories. There are innovative programs, such as the excellent one we heard about out of Peel region, that are modelled throughout the country. We have to do more to share and collaborate.

I also think you make a very important point about children and exposure to violence. It's also exposure to coercive control. We have to get judges and lawyers to stop thinking that family violence is just physical. We have to understand that it also includes emotional, psychological and financial coercive control. Children are harmed by exposure to coercive control. We have to get the message out.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: So it is important that federal legislation or the Criminal Code be inspired by initiatives in the provinces or Quebec. For example, specialized courts have been set up in Quebec, where we are also going to have a tracking bracelet system. So the measures applied in Quebec and in the provinces have to match up with the measures applied at the federal level.

[English]

Dr. Peter Jaffe: I agree. There are some unique issues in Quebec and other provinces. When victims are coming forward to Family Court and talking about coercive control, they're accused of turning the children against their partner. They're accused of alienation. That is a serious concern. There are many roadblocks faced by victims in Quebec and also in other jurisdictions.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We will now pass the floor over to Leah Gazan.

Leah, you have six minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much, and thank you to all the witnesses today for their testimony.

My first question is for Deputy Grand Chief Achneepineskum. I just want to start out by thanking you for your contributions to the "Pathways to Safety" document.

Since being in the House of Commons, I've been really trying to push for a more urgent response from the government around this very serious genocide against indigenous women and girls and diverse genders. One of the quotes in a report says, "The impact of the Federal Budget needs to be felt on the ground."

There are more than 630 first nations communities in Canada and 53 Inuit communities, in addition to M tis settlements across the country, yet in the report by Stats Canada in 2017-18 there are only 85 shelters for victims of abuse that had ties to first nations, M tis or Inuit communities or organizations.

We know that six in 10 indigenous women have experienced physical or sexual abuse at a certain point in their lifetime, which rises in the LGBTQIA+ communities to 83%. I'll go back to the quote "The impact of the Federal Budget needs to be felt on the

ground." The national inquiry was released in 2019 and I'm not feeling the impact on the ground.

The report also shares frustrations regarding the lack of sustainable funding that results in preventative actions and gaps created due to a lack of interjurisdictional co-operation. This goes directly against call for justice 1.6 of the national inquiry, which calls on "all governments to eliminate jurisdictional gaps and neglect that result in [improper or] denial of services". Your report called on the federal government to take the lead in addressing these interjurisdictional issues and close the gaps.

I think the lack of action is costing lives. In fact, I know it's costing the lives of indigenous women and diverse-gender people in my riding. I'm wondering if you can comment on that.

• (1725)

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum: Thank you very much.

I certainly would welcome any comments that my friend and colleague Julie may have.

I live in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I also am quite aware of the challenges that indigenous women and girls face in terms of trying to find a safe place within their communities. Many of them have to leave and go to urban centres and, at times, face challenges there as well.

When we talk about the disparity in the funding that is provided to these organizations that provide service to the first nation communities, there is quite a difference in what they get and there's also a very noticeable disparity in terms of infrastructure. Those are some of the things that we are trying to address. Many documents and evidence support that this particular gap needs to be addressed.

Julie, I'm not sure if you want to add any more.

Meegwetch.

Ms. Julie McGregor (Director, Justice, Assembly of First Nations): As Ms. Gazan said, it's now been three years since the release of the national inquiry's final report. It's going to be a year since the release of the national action plan.

At the AFN, as the deputy grand chief spoke of, we have been reaching out in the regions and meeting with families and survivors. It was very important for the women's council to do that. We hear from them that they don't see the changes on the ground. They don't see the additional safe spaces in their communities. We know that in certain areas, especially in remote or rural areas, it is very difficult for indigenous women to find safe spaces for themselves and their families.

We see the commitments, but we just don't see the change on the ground. The advocacy of the AFN women's council certainly is that the implementation has to move faster and it has to be done collaboratively with families and survivors.

Meegwetch.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

Building on that, we have the calls for justice that came out of the national inquiry. I know that former chief commissioner Marion Buller called it a colossal failure in terms of the rollout. Many people have criticized the plan as having a lot of voices, people who gifted their stories of trauma, without action, timelines and resources. Although the federal government has committed funds, it's not rolling them out.

How has the failure to move swiftly, especially with the increased rates of violence that have occurred during the pandemic, created an even greater, rapidly increasing crisis?

• (1730)

The Chair: We're going to have to get back to that answer. I'm sorry about that. Your time is up.

We're looking at how many minutes are left in the meeting. Because we're a little delayed, and because we do have four panellists, we are able to go until 5:45 today. I'm going to extend this meeting for the additional 15 minutes so we're able to get in the testimony that we need.

I'm going to pass it over now to Michelle Ferreri. We'll then have Pam for five minutes, and then Andréanne and Leah will each have two and a half minutes.

Michelle, you have five minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Thank you so much, Chair.

It's always a struggle to fit in such big questions and such big topics, but I'm going to do my best.

Peter, I'm very impressed with what you've said today. There were a lot of shaking heads in here—and I don't know if you could see it—when you talked about public education in particular.

One of the big things I would love to see happen, and I'm curious as to your thoughts, is to really go into the preventative end of things to stop the trauma cycles. When we look at kids who've been through extreme trauma, I'm curious what interventions and treatments you believe help children recover from such trauma.

Dr. Peter Jaffe: Children need access to trauma counselling, and they're not getting very much. There's no universal program across Canada. I work with children who were at the scene of a domestic

homicide, and it's fate or luck, depending on where they were and the follow-up with victim services, whether they get any kind of appropriate counselling. That would be a priority.

To me, if you're a child living with domestic violence, you're at risk—not only to repeat the cycle in the future, but also for serious emotional, behavioural and cognitive problems. Those children should be getting help right away.

I think every community or every region needs to have access to specialized resources for children who are exposed to domestic violence. They're very much at risk. Whether they're infants or teenagers, we know from the research that children are impacted across the different stages of development, and we continue to deny and minimize that. It should be a standard form of what we deal with in health care. Family doctors should be asking that question as part of their regular work with families, and pediatricians should be asking that question. I think we need to build it into an action plan.

We also need awareness. Children are ignored, and it makes me sad to see that in 2022, repeatedly, we still have to raise this issue.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I couldn't agree more. I want to shout that out from the rooftops.

I think what you said is really interesting, because some kids maybe haven't been exposed to extreme trauma. It's that grey area, where we look at defining coercive control or being in a home that you didn't really know is not healthy. Kids don't know what they don't know because it's just what they're exposed to.

Do you think it's going to be possible to clearly define coercive control so we can put it into policy and law? It can get into a grey area, especially where, as many people have seen and as we've seen throughout this study, victims will say, "Well, I don't have it that bad. I'm not a victim of abuse. It's not me." Consequently, the children will learn rationalizing the irrational behaviour as well.

Do you think we can clearly define coercive control for the law?

Dr. Peter Jaffe: Yes, I think we could do a better job. I do acknowledge that it's going to be challenging. I like what we have in the Divorce Act. Now it's a question of just educating people about what it means. I think we have to define it.

For 20 years, we've had something called a power and control wheel. It looks at different elements of abuse. Many police officers, victim services, shelters and counsellors understand it. I just think we have to do a lot more to educate people what it looks like when somebody has so much control and domination over somebody else that it impacts their freedom and access to friends, family and health care. I think it's possible.

Again, each victim is going to have to find their own way to get help and also help for themselves. One example I use—and I do think the front line is important—is that we don't talk about our teachers. In our school board, we've done education with elementary and secondary teachers to be aware of the impact of domestic violence on children and what the warning signs are. Teachers may be the first line of defence to talk to children about the issues and get help, not only within the school district, but also within the community.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's so great.

Just to one more point, when we look at public education around what people deem as normal, as we try to change what we thought was normal behaviour.... It was “No, it's normal for him to control”—or women. This doesn't always happen just to women, but that he controls all the money or she controls all the money, those things were normalized.

What do you think is the most effective thing to un-normalize what was normalized for so many decades?

• (1735)

Dr. Peter Jaffe: We have to give examples. I think we have to find every avenue possible, whether it's through public service announcements or whether it's through educating counsellors. I think ultimately it's to teenagers in high schools and in dating relationships, making sure they understand what healthy relationships look like and what coercive control looks like.

It has to be universal. It's not just for people living with violence. It's for their friends, neighbours and peer groups.

The Chair: Awesome. Thank you so much.

I am now going to pass it over to Pam Damoff.

Pam, you have five minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thanks so much, Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses. Five minutes is such a short amount of time.

My first question is actually for Safe Centre of Peel.

I recently met with SafePet Ontario. I wonder if you could talk about the role that the inability to find a safe place for companion animals plays in women not being able to leave abusive relationships. The government provided the humane society of Canada funding to work with shelters, but sometimes making a shelter pet-friendly isn't the answer. I wonder if you're doing any of that at your organization.

They talked about educating the police, about having people go to hotels or finding safe foster homes for the animals, so I wonder if you could just talk about that briefly.

Ms. Shelina Jeshani: Thank you for your question.

Yes, we certainly have seen women who find themselves in circumstances where their pets are being threatened. First, we see that the violence happens with pets in order to control her further and to create that toxic environment in the home. We certainly work with her around what the possible options are. We do not, as yet, have a dedicated pathway to a humane society to get pets out and taken care of, but we certainly work with her around what her barriers and challenges may be and how we can best support her to navigate that.

Inspector Hewison, is there anything you'd like to add to that?

Ms. Lisa Hewison: No, I think you covered it all.

Ms. Pam Damoff: You want to have a conversation about it because it's a barrier to leaving before they are even able to leave the home.

I come from Halton Region and we have one of the highest rates of human trafficking, as I know Peel does as well. We did, in our plan to combat human trafficking, provide increased resources and capacity to police services, but I'm just wondering if you could talk about the connection between intimate partner violence and human trafficking, and any recommendations on what more the government could do to support you at Peel police.

Ms. Lisa Hewison: I think Shelina has a comment on that.

Are you going to talk about the hub? I thought so.

I'll let Shelina answer that one.

Ms. Shelina Jeshani: Okay, and then I'll pass it over to you, Lisa.

Thank you, again, for that question.

Absolutely, many times we see women coming to the Safe Centre exhibiting signs of IPV and as we work with her and dig in further, we actually do see signs of human trafficking, so we begin to explore that.

All of our partners are trained in that area as well, so they know what they're looking for, but we're very blessed to have a regional strategy in our community, where we have just opened our first human trafficking hub, a collaborative hub to respond to the symptoms of survivors of human trafficking, where we work, again, closely with victim services, Elizabeth Fry, Our Place Peel, and Peel Regional Police in order to really be able to respond and get the trauma support that victims and survivors need.

Certainly our colleagues at Peel Regional Police have done a tremendous job in leading a community-wide awareness-building strategy around education and training the community so that parents, teachers and caregivers start to see the signs and are able to intervene early.

Lisa, go ahead.

Ms. Pam Damoff: I have only a minute.

Ms. Lisa Hewison: I'll build upon that. In addition to doing the prevention education in the community, in Peel, something we're embarking on within the next few weeks is providing training to all frontline officers with Timea Nagy to get those indicators so they can recognize signs, get to supporting those women and get them the proper supports.

• (1740)

Ms. Pam Damoff: If you have any other recommendations for the federal government, please feel free to send them to us in writing, because we don't have a lot of time when we have this many witnesses.

Dr. Jaffe, you talked about the importance of judicial education and the changes in the Divorce Act. I've been working with Jennifer Kagan to get a private member's bill passed, called Keira's law.

Can you comment on the importance of judicial education around domestic violence and coercive control, in about 10 seconds?

Dr. Peter Jaffe: Thank you for your leadership on that issue and for picking up the torch from Jennifer Kagan.

I think judicial education is essential. As I said, in 2022, you can't be a family court judge and not understand family violence and coercive control, period.

The Chair: Absolutely. Thank you so much.

We're now going to pass it over for two and a half minutes to Andréanne. You have the floor.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

To conclude this last round, I have some questions for Ms. Tanguay, the director of La Gîtée.

A little thing I saw on your website caught my attention: a test to see whether a spouse is controlling. The test included several types of controlling conduct, including economic and social control.

Does your organization accommodate many victims of coercive violence and coercive conduct? How useful can this test be? What are you doing to help these women once they have taken the test?

Ms. Chantal Tanguay (Director, La Gîtée Inc.): The test allows the woman to identify spousal violence for herself. Often, women are experiencing this violence but don't know what it is. We have to note that people often associate spousal violence with beating or physical violence. So the test allows women to recognize that they have suffered spousal violence. This often comes as a big shock to them. In reality, that is part of the dynamic of spousal violence that makes the woman feel responsible for the violence. So it can take a woman a lot of time to realize that the problem is not her.

The women we meet in the shelters always tell us they are almost embarrassed to call what they are experiencing violence when what it is, is little things here and there. But that is how the dynamic of spousal violence works. It is made up of a collection of little things that, taken separately, look like nothing, but once you put them together, they amount to coercive control. It's when you consider the entire history of the violence that you are able to see that dynamic.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: It's a very subtle dynamic, as you say, one that does not always leap to the eye, but that is always harmful.

I just have a few seconds left to thank all the guests in this group once again and mention one last thing. Last week, I offered my condolences in response to the femicide in the community of Lebel-sur-Quévillon. In fact, another femicide happened on the same day, this time in the community of Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts. I want to offer my condolences for that death as well.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to pass it over to Leah Gazan.

You have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: My question, again, is for the deputy grand chief.

One of the things I called for this time around with my private member's bill, Bill C-223, is to implement a guaranteed livable basic income. That was in response to call for justice 4.5 of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Why is that call for justice so critical?

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum: Aside from that particular call, other calls have fallen on deaf ears. It's sometimes very discouraging when we continue to try to raise our voice and many times it falls on deaf ears.

Julie, could you continue answering that particular question, please? I have to plug in my computer.

• (1745)

Ms. Julie McGregor: Thank you, Deputy Grand Chief.

In terms of intimate partner violence and violence against indigenous women, we know that the root causes are so much bigger than just finding programs that work and so forth. It really has to do with poverty and the lack of housing, the lack of infrastructure, and the lack of clean drinking water that our people have experienced for decades.

There's a lack of housing and there's inadequate infrastructure. Our families and our people have lived in poverty for so long. They have had no way of ensuring safety in our communities. That all plays into that factor of ensuring that people have guaranteed livable income and that our families, and our women especially, are lifted out of poverty and empowered in terms of regaining their roles within their communities.

It's all interconnected. I'm sure everyone knows that. The issues are larger than just looking at programming for women who are experiencing violence. It's much larger and it's interconnected. Obvi-

ously, it's related to colonialism and the systemic violence that our people experience.

Meegwetch.

The Chair: On behalf of everyone at the status of women committee, I would like to thank all four groups for coming out today. This is the end of our study, so this panel was the last one. We'll begin drafting this report in the near future.

Thank you so much for being a part of this meeting today and for finishing it off for us.

Members, just as a reminder, we will have committee business starting on Friday to discuss a variety of different things as we move forward.

I'd like to say thank you to all of you. Let's get some good work done on behalf of all the women across Canada.

Thanks very much, everybody.

I adjourn this meeting.

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