



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 107

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

Chair: Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman



Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC)): I'd like to call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 107 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Before we begin, I would like to remind all members and other meeting participants in the room of the following important preventative measures.

To prevent disruption and potentially harmful audio feedback incidents that can cause injuries, all in-person participants are reminded to please keep their earpieces away from all microphones at all times.

As indicated in the communiqué from the Speaker to all members on April 29, the following measures have been taken to help prevent audio feedback incidents.

All earpieces have been replaced by a model that greatly reduces the probability of audio feedback. The new earpieces are black in colour, whereas the former earpieces were grey. Please use only the approved earpieces.

By default, all unused earpieces will be unplugged at the start of the meeting. When you are not using your earpiece, please place it face down in the middle of the sticker for this purpose, which you will find on the table, as indicated.

Please consult the cards on the table for guidelines to prevent audio feedback incidents. The room layout has been adjusted to increase the distance between microphones and reduce the chance of feedback from an ambient earpiece.

These measures have been put in place so that we can conduct our business without interruption and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters.

In accordance with the committee's routine motion concerning connection tests for witnesses, I am informing the committee that all witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of today's meeting.

I'd also like to make a few comments for the benefit of the members and the witnesses present and online.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking.

For members in the room, please raise your hand if you wish to speak. For members on Zoom, please use the "raise hand" function.

The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can, and we appreciate your understanding in this regard.

As a reminder, all comments need to be addressed through the chair.

From 11:00 to 12:00, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, November 27, 2023, the committee will commence its study of coercive behaviour.

Before we welcome our witnesses, I'd like to provide this trigger warning. We will be discussing experiences related to violence and coercive control. These may be triggering to viewers with similar experiences. If you feel distressed and/or need help, please advise our clerk.

For all of the witnesses and for members of Parliament, it is important to recognize that these are difficult discussions, so let's try to be compassionate in our conversations today.

You will note that as your time is running near to the end, I will raise my right hand to indicate that there are 30 seconds remaining and give you a heads-up. We'll try to respect this so that we can get through the meeting as efficiently as possible and respect everybody's time.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses. As an individual, we have Dimitra Pantazopoulos. I understand she has acknowledged that she can be called Dimitra. From the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, we have Deepa Mattoo, who is the executive director, joining us by video conference. From the Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women, we have Sunder Singh, who is the executive director and is also joining us by video conference.

You will each have five minutes for opening remarks, which will be followed by rounds of questions.

I'd like to start by giving the floor to Dimitra. You have five minutes.

Thank you.

Ms. Dimitra Pantazopoulos (As an Individual): Thank you.

I would like to start by expressing my sincerest heartfelt gratitude for inviting me here to testify before you on a subject that is plaguing many children and women: coercive control.

I'm here to ask that Canada steps up and abides by the report written by Ms. Reem Alsalem, a United Nations special rapporteur on violence against women, which states:

[T]he discredited and unscientific pseudo-concept of parental alienation is used in family law proceedings by abusers as a tool to continue their abuse and coercion and to undermine and discredit allegations of domestic violence made by mothers who are trying to keep their children safe.

It goes on:

[T]he standard of the best interest of the child is violated by imposing contact [with a father] even when there is evidence of domestic violence.

It has absolutely nothing to do with a lack of training for judges and everything to do with their intentional and wilful blindness. For judges, it is contact with abusive fathers at all and any costs.

I am here to ask that our children be immediately returned to their mothers and that the pseudo-science of parental alienation and its like terms be banned and prohibited from being used—

The Chair: Excuse me, Dimitra. May I kindly ask you to slow down a little for our interpreters? Thank you so much.

Ms. Dimitra Pantazopoulos: I ask that the use of reunification camps and therapy for children as part of any outcome in legal proceedings be prohibited.

I ask that abusive post-separation fathering tactics of accusing the mother of alienating the children against them be recognized as a form of coercive control, that those judgments be reopened and that the children be returned to their mothers.

The domestic violence wheel clearly indicates that domestic violence is about control and entitlement. The more controlling a man is, the more dangerous he is.

Canada encourages women to leave in order to protect their children and themselves on claims that we have the right to live in dignity and in safety. However, when we do, that is not the reality we victims face. As soon as we leave our abuser, he suddenly becomes an even more powerful monster, a monster I would equate to the Greek mythological creature of Hydra: Cut off one head and three more grow. We leave one abuser, and suddenly, like the Hydra, he grows more heads and more abusers grow around him, empowering him to suffocate, torment and torture our children, us and our entire family.

How? As you all know, my children and I have suffered, and continue to suffer, from abuse and coercive control at the hands of my ex-husband, George Giannopoulos. My two briefs, as well as the supporting documents submitted to you, clearly indicate the severity of the abuse and control from 1997, which continues today.

George, as you know, also attempted to silence this very committee by threatening to sue it, along with the House Speaker and the director of legislation. If that is not an indication of his immense control and entitlement, I don't know what is.

Upon separation, George invoked parental alienation as an extension of his abuse and control. The more my children and I divulged abuse, the more it was seen as proof of alienation, and George, like all abusers, was able to grow more fierce heads, wearing the hats of youth protection, judges and lawyers. In other words, all who, in fact and in theory, are supposed to protect victims of abuse were and are his most powerful and supportive allies and enablers.

Like all other mothers in this situation, as if George and our abusers needed more power over us, we lost custody of our chil-

dren, our parental authority and the right to even see our children. We were forced and court-ordered to self-represent. We lost our homes. This coercive control that is being granted to abusers by court order spreads onto everyone in the maternal family as, somehow, the right to see our children is also removed.

As you all know, my mother died 1,000 days from the date that my children were barbarically abducted by court order. Although she had hours to live, they still did not allow her to see my children.

This is why I would like the coercive control bill to be named “Niki's law”, to honour my mom, to ensure this never happens again and to ensure that the tragic way she died is not in vain.

Just think about this. Murderers on death row get their last wish, and a loving, innocent grandmother didn't. Rapists and murderers are able to see their children while in jail, yet protective mothers are prohibited from any and all contact.

Coercive control knows no age limit and goes far beyond the children and their mother. There should be no statute of limitations for a victim to denounce abuse and controlling behaviour. Victims who have filed charges of abuse should be able to reopen their files and to add “coercive control” to their charges. We also need to be able to reopen our files post judgment in any court.

How does Canada expect victims to come forward with abuse when Canadian courts are just going to further empower our monsters? Countless children and mothers like me are threatened by youth protection, judges and our own lawyers that if we continue to denounce abuse or to speak about it, we will lose custody.

There are attempts to force our children and us into so-called reunification therapy, whereby the end result is for us to state, by coercion and force, that the abuse never happened and that the father is safe. Is that not giving our abusers the ultimate control over us?

Due to the youth protection system, lawyers, courts and judges all acting in solidarity with the abuser and the Machiavellian pseudo-science of parental alienation, our children were deliberately orphaned from their mothers and placed in danger. The documents before you are clear. Our children are suffering and are in danger, and there is nothing we mothers are able to do to help or to protect our children, because of orders rendered against us by Canadian courts.

I never had words strong enough to describe the pain I feel every day without my boys, until the day I buried my mother and collapsed to my knees as they were lowering her into the ground. Being without my children feels like a double funeral every day since October 9, 2019. That's 1,673 days today without my boys. What crime did we commit?

Canada needs to step up and help us.

Thank you.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you, Dimitra.

I'd like to invite Deepa Mattoo to speak for five minutes, please.

Ms. Deepa Mattoo (Executive Director, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic): Good morning, Madam Chair and honourable members. Thank you for inviting me to share insights today.

I'm Deepa Mattoo, executive director and lawyer with the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, an organization dedicated to supporting survivors of violence, particularly marginalized and racialized women and gender-diverse individuals located in Toronto.

Today I aim to take you on a journey through the complexities of coercive behaviour, weaving in the story of Maria to illustrate the challenges that survivors face in seeking justice.

We are gathered here at a critical juncture in our understanding of gender-based violence. It is widely recognized as an epidemic, transcending boundaries of race, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Within this landscape lies the insidious pattern of coercive behaviour, a web of assault, threats and humiliation designed to control survivors. Embedded within gender-based violence, coercive behaviour is a harmful pattern. It's not just one event; it's a series, often accompanied by emotional abuse, leaving victims feeling trapped and powerless. The challenges posed by coercive behaviour are particularly pronounced within the legal system, especially for marginalized communities, such as immigrants, refugees, the disabled and gender-diverse individuals. This pattern of abuse often involves emotional manipulation, leaving victims feeling trapped and powerless.

Furthermore, as the committee just heard, litigation abuse is a prevalent issue across legal domains, including family situations such as parental alienation, children's custody, lack of spousal support and so many other experiences. There are also experiences within the criminal and immigration law.

Let me introduce you to Maria, a courageous woman caught in the grips of coercive control. Maria is a racialized immigrant woman with limited English proficiency. She found herself trapped in an abusive marriage here in Canada. Her husband, equipped with the resources and fluent in the language, manipulated the legal system to his advantage. He even flipped the narrative, getting Maria charged in a criminal case where he's the real perpetrator. It is a terrifying scenario where power imbalances and language barriers leave Maria unjustly accused and vulnerable. Maria's story echoes the experiences of countless survivors at the clinic.

In response, many jurisdictions have enacted legislation to combat coercive control. In England, Wales and Scotland, they have in-

troduced specific laws criminalizing coercive behaviour. However, while these legal changes represent progress, they come with their own set of challenges. Criminalizing coercive behaviour has not always resulted in increased convictions and reduced rates of domestic abuse. In fact, in many of these experiences, survivors find themselves further disempowered by the legal system, facing barriers to justice. The legal system does not understand the experiences of survivors.

Can there be change? Of course. What can change for people like Maria?

We must provide training for criminal justice system actors and family law actors to better understand and respond to these coercive behaviour cases. We need increased diversity among our justice system professionals to bring vital perspectives to foster trust with survivors. We need—

• (1115)

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt. Do you mind moving your microphone a little higher, closer to between your nose and your mouth, just for the ease of the interpreter?

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Sure.

The Chair: Perhaps you could try speaking a few words. Introduce yourself again.

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: I'm really sorry, interpreters.

Please confirm that this is better.

The Chair: Raise the mic a bit higher, closer to between your mouth and your nose. There we go. Try that.

Could you tell me what the weather is like where you are, just to...?

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: It's chilly, but the room I'm sitting in is pretty comfortable.

The Chair: They're going to give it a try.

Again, I regret interrupting you in the middle of your testimony. You can continue.

Thank you.

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Absolutely. I will take it up from recommendations for the changes I was talking about.

Can things be addressed and changed for folks like Maria, whose survivor story I was sharing with all of you? A few things can change. One of them is the comprehensive training for our criminal justice system and our family law system actors to help them better understand and respond to coercive behaviour cases. We need increased diversity among our justice system professionals to bring vital perspectives and foster trust with survivors. We also need to ensure sustainable access to justice resources. Supporting organizations like ours that offer legal services can make a significant difference to a survivor's experience with the legal system.

Public legal education plays a vital role in empowering individuals and communities to recognize and respond to coercive behaviour. Integrating risk assessment into a legal proceeding is crucial for ensuring the safety and well-being of survivors and informing decisions regarding protective measures and support. We find there is a lack of collaboration between the stakeholders, which is essential to develop comprehensive risk management plans tailored to the unique needs of survivors who are affected by coercive behaviour.

In conclusion, I would say that addressing coercive behaviour requires a multi-faceted approach. By implementing these recommendations, we can create an environment in which survivors like Maria and our previous witness can receive the support and justice they deserve.

Thank you. I'm here to answer any questions.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much, Deepa.

We now welcome Sunder Singh.

Please go ahead for five minutes.

Ms. Sunder Singh (Executive Director, Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, it will take me one minute more than five to complete my opening remarks. Do I have your permission to proceed?

The Chair: Perhaps the best way I will go with this is that our first round of questioning is with Michelle Ferreri.

Michelle, would you be willing to concede one minute of your six minutes to our witness?

• (1120)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Yes, I would, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead.

Ms. Sunder Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thirty to forty years ago, I could walk down Yonge Street in Toronto and spot girls selling their bodies. Only God knows who was making them work in the wee hours of the night in the dead of winter.

Madam Chair, the times have changed. We live in a digital world where demand for girls comes instantly on the phone and the girls are supplied by the perpetrator to men who now demand girls of the

ages of 12 and 13 be sent to them. This is all done behind closed doors.

Little girls who are not even teenagers are being supplied to meet the demand of men seeking girls younger and younger each year in our country. Canada, once seen as a beacon of safety and opportunity, is now grappling with the problem of human trafficking and being labelled as the hub for human trafficking.

Consider the alarming statistics: In the three years between 2019 and 2022, over 1,500 calls were made by 2,170 victims of trafficking to a hotline dedicated to those calling for help. A staggering 67% of calls from victims of human trafficking came from Ontario alone, and 90% of those calls were from women and girls. This is the province where many newcomer youth settle.

However, human trafficking happens all over Canada. This is mainly due to a lack of awareness among the very young and vulnerable. They start their lives here with desperation to find jobs. They struggle to pay rent, which is unaffordable, and to meet the expensive cost of living in Canada. Young people face financial difficulties every day. They do not want to go back to their home countries for various reasons. Here in Canada, they are facing the “frying pan into the fire” syndrome, making them vulnerable to labour and human trafficking as well as constantly fighting against the cost of living.

These girls are lured by perpetrators who pose as loving and caring boyfriends. Catching the pimps is very tough as they are active on social media, which is heavily used by very young people.

Human trafficking is a lucrative business and cannot be stopped. It can be reduced considerably by making young girls aware of the reality and how the system works. At Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women, we have done so, and the youth we serve are now volunteers in the community who do well in schools, respect their parents, strive to complete their studies and seek employment. They are aware of the luring done by perpetrators posing as boyfriends. They are also aware that passwords and banking information are not to be shared with anyone. It has proven to work at a micro level and needs to be expanded to a macro level across Canada.

The laws are weak in Canada. The perpetrators are aware and take advantage of that and continue to reap enormous profits at the expense of our young female population, taking away their dignity and well-being. They're getting away with this because they are allowed to do so.

To properly address this epidemic, we must strike at its root cause, which is the lack of awareness among our youth and parents regarding the true nature of human trafficking. The illusion of glamour surrounding human trafficking can be shattered starting at the school level, where, with federal government intervention, children from grade 6 onwards learn at the start of school lessons every morning for half an hour to 45 minutes, with interactive discussions and stories on topics that could make them responsible citizens.

There is an urgent need for making targeted intervention programs mandatory in the school curricula in our education system, particularly in regions where trafficking activities are most prevalent. Basic human studies are lacking in our education system. This is also the reason we see a strong prevalence of domestic violence: Many mothers have been torn away from their children, who are put into foster homes that are also breeding grounds for human trafficking.

By equipping our youth with knowledge and awareness, we can disrupt the supply chain of victims and pull the exploitation activities out by the root.

What should schools add to the curriculum? Schools should offer frank discussions on the realities of trafficking, including its techniques and methods of recruitment and how traffickers have taken full advantage of the tools that are out there now, such as social media, immigration desperation and promises of housing, education and high-paying employment. We must make kids aware that pimps are actually everyday men and women we would never suspect; that society unwittingly trusts human traffickers disguised as employers, consultants, agencies, etc.; and that the Internet and social media also play a role.

• (1125)

Madam Chair, education alone is not enough. We must also tackle the demand side of human trafficking by enforcing strict penalties for those who fuel this trade. Social network advertising must be outlawed and perpetrators held accountable immediately for their actions. We must provide comprehensive support services for survivors, including skilled trades training and mental health resources to aid in their recovery and reintegration into society as skilled tradespeople. Additionally, we must remain vigilant in scrutinizing foster homes and other care facilities that can unwittingly become breeding grounds for exploitation.

In closing, Madam Chair, let us remember that the fight against human trafficking is not one we can afford to lose. Exploitation should have no place in Canada. Elected leaders should take cognizance of this horrible problem, reminding them that every problem has a solution.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Sunder.

Thank you, all, for your opening remarks.

We'd like to move first to the Conservative Party for five minutes.

Michelle.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thanks, Madam Chair, and thank you very much to our witnesses today.

This is a very emotional, powerful study, as many of them are that we do here in status of women. Coercive control is what we're looking at.

I'm going to start with you, Ms. Singh. Thank you for your testimony. This committee did a human trafficking study, and in my community of Peterborough, Ontario, we have the third-highest rate of human trafficking in the country. Young kids, in particular young girls, are at risk, so I appreciate your testimony around human trafficking and the connection with coercive control.

You focused a lot on education, which I think is incredible, because it's the upstream end, basically, being upstream as opposed to intervention. One of the things and one of the points of how we operate here is to get recommendations from witnesses into the report, but a lot of education is provincial jurisdiction, so what I would be asking you is where you see the federal government's role.

As much as I think educating kids in school is critical, I think one of the pieces I would also ask you about is educating parents. You have a lot of parents who don't know how to use social media, and they freely allow their children access to it. We have stories of kids who are sitting literally beside their parents on a couch, watching a Raptors game and being human trafficked, and the parent has no idea.

Another woman I spoke with, who runs Little Warriors out of Alberta, an incredible organization helping child survivors, says that for the first time in their 10 years they have parents trafficking their children, not for drugs or money, but because they can't afford to eat. It's shocking, absolutely shocking.

So as much as I think we need to reach the children to educate them, because I often think they're so much smarter and quicker than we are, where do you see the federal government's role in reaching parents who don't know any different? Kids who are exposed to unhealthy relationships, kids who see a coercive control marriage or partnership but have no idea that that's what that is, because that's their normal.... Where do you see the federal government's role without intervening in your freedom and your ability to live your life?

I'm sorry. That's a big question.

Ms. Sunder Singh: Thank you for all the information you have shared with us. It is critical.

The funding for the province trickles from the federal government coffers, and it has to be made mandatory for the provincial government to have in schools an educational program making it mandatory, first thing in the morning, to have discussions with children, share stories in a way that they understand what responsible citizens would mean and that gender equality is what makes the world a balanced world. It has to be taught in school on a daily basis.

For parents' education, at Elspeth Heyworth Centre we have had programs for parents, to help them understand, so the federal government can fund community centres where parents come for community programs, where the information, the awareness of domestic violence and human trafficking, can be imparted to them.

Of course, I understand the educational piece is a provincial responsibility, but the funds come from the federal government.

• (1130)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you for that. I think one of the pieces that we have to dance around is that the toothpaste is out of the tube in terms of kids having access to social media and having phones at younger ages. I'm still not sold on the fact that the government's telling parents how to do that, but I also see the very negative implications of kids on their phones and screens and the addiction parents have to their cellphones.

We know that confident children are braver regarding predators—children who have higher self-esteem, children who are accomplishing things. That comes through sports. That comes through activities. That can come through theatre, and we have fewer kids ultimately doing these things because they're staying home. They're playing video games. They're stuck on screens. They don't know how to interact with people as well as they used to. I would love to see more programming around that, encouraging kids to get outside and disconnect to connect, basically.

I think my time is up, unfortunately.

The Chair: Unfortunately, it is.

If you can, give some kind of response in less than 15 seconds. If not, perhaps you can encapsulate your answer in someone else's time.

Ms. Sunder Singh: Madam Chair, is that me? Are you giving me 15 seconds?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Sunder Singh: Again, I will reiterate that the educational program in the schools is very important. It has to start systematically, all over Canada. We may not see the changes within one year or so. It may take an entire generation, but we have to start somewhere.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Emmanuella, with the Liberal party, you have six minutes.

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

I want to start by thanking all of our witnesses for being here today to inform us on this really critical issue.

I'll start with Ms. Pantazopoulos. You spoke a lot about the fact that coercive control should be criminalized, and you've said that before.

In order for it to be criminalized, and in order for judges to be able to use this in criminal court, they need to have a specific definition. I'm wondering if you can tell us what you would include in a definition of coercive control?

Ms. Dimitra Pantazopoulos: Coercive control is not a one-time thing; neither is domestic violence. For anybody, I guess you could be having a bad day, where you can raise your voice or something happens. With domestic violence it's not a one-time thing. It's not something bad happening. You never know what sets them off.

It's really a pattern that is daily. We victims, both the mothers and the children, are forced to.... Everything has to stay hidden, because if anybody finds out, God help you. He'll make it clear that if you do or say anything, "Oh, it's going to cost me \$5,000," meaning he would hire somebody to kill you. That's on top of the attempts on my life and my children's lives.

We have to put on a face and go out in public. When people come over, when we go to school or when we go out with everybody, we have that face on. We become experts at that. At the same time, we do that to protect ourselves, but the abuser also has a face. That's what the courts need to recognize.

As I wrote in my testimony, what is going on behind doors and what the public sees are two different things. The judges and all the social actors need to recognize that they are master manipulators. I'm going to quote something that one of my children testified to. There is the George who's at home, the George who's on vacation and the George who's in court, meaning at home he's the abuser, while on vacation he acts all nice. Even now, he has a donut shop. He donates donuts, sponsors nurses and doctors—he's Mr. Wonderful. In actuality, it's that double face. Judges need to recognize that just because he looks prim and proper in court...they are able to do that.

Meanwhile, while we're in court and being accused of parental alienation, and we're forced to self-represent, we're trembling, anxious and nervous, because we're forced right now to question and act as a lawyer when we have—pardon the expression—no idea what the hell we're doing. Judges need to recognize this.

It's not only about training, because no amount of training... When I'm self-representing and I pick up a picture of clear abuse towards my son and show it to the judge, the judge's first instinct is to tell me that I could have downloaded that from the Internet. The father's hand is in the picture. Then the next thing to do is to remove my parental authority for travel and allow him to go anywhere. No amount of training is going to change the misogynistic views that some judges have. That's not only male judges; it's female judges too.

It seems to be that it's contact at all costs. I don't know where this foundation and ideology came from. Sure, it would be great if both parents had a right to their children. The children should be able to benefit from both parents.

However, if one is a clear danger, what are we showing these children, and how are they themselves going to become parents in the future? We're telling them, "The more you lie, the more you manipulate, the more you beat up on people, well, the courts are going to grant you everything."

Coercive control has to be clearly defined. The actions have to be clearly defined as a pattern. It has to do with discrediting the mother. When they shut down your bank accounts and your email accounts and they have your insurance sent elsewhere, those are clear patterns.

There's no age limit for coercive control. There should be no statute of limitations, because we're scared to come forward for anything.

• (1135)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

I'd like to also extend it to Ms. Mattoo, if you'd just like to add what you would include in a definition.

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Recognizing coercive control as abuse is crucial. What coercive control definitely does is strip survivors of their fundamental rights and freedoms. It is definitely the pattern of violence that makes it so unique.

I'm not for criminalizing coercive behaviour, because in my recommendations I've given many other recommendations that need to happen before we could get to the criminalization.

However, if there had to be a definition of coercive control, it does definitely need to include that web of coercive behaviours and the pattern of violence. Looking at the incident-based approach is very difficult to capture for the decision-makers.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next we have Andréanne Larouche.

You have six minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you for your testimony this morning. It really demonstrates the magnitude of this epidemic. There's a reason why many cities are declaring domestic violence and violence against women an epidemic.

The thinking behind this study was the "*Rebâtir la confiance*" report tabled in Quebec following the recognition of femicide as the

real scourge that it is. Quebec has made progress in some areas, but there's still much work to be done. It has made proposals. For example, it currently uses specialized courts. For example, in terms of training, which several witnesses mentioned, Quebec is trying something through courts that are more adapted to victims to minimize the possibility that they will be revictimized. Quebec is also testing electronic bracelets. We'll see what the results are, but Quebec has made progress in some areas.

However, the topic of this study comes from a discussion I had with a Quebec MLA who worked on the "*Rebâtir la confiance*" report. They told me their hands were currently tied because there's something that is outside of their scope for action. They found that coercive control was used in many cases of violence and femicide, but that it wasn't yet recognized in the Criminal Code. There's no way to explain that violence isn't always physical, but that it always hurts, and that there's a whole pattern associated with it. Control and manipulation have been noted in most femicide cases, but nothing can be done because it isn't recognized in the Criminal Code.

Since I see Ms. Pantazopoulos nodding, I'd like to ask her a question.

Why is it important to understand that coercive control and manipulation are a form of violence that is often invisible, and that it's dangerous to ignore the fact that violence more often manifests in this way?

• (1140)

[English]

Ms. Dimitra Pantazopoulos: There are a lot of things that need to come together. Coercive control needs to be criminalized, because it's not....

Let me go back. When the perpetrator doesn't allow you to leave the house, get a job, see your friends or family or pick up the phone when they call... Because coercive control is not criminalized, the police will say they don't see any bruises. Somehow, people believe that in order for there to be abuse and domestic violence, you need to be black and blue, 24-7.

That's not the reality. The abuse exists 24-7; you're just not physically black and blue. You're black and blue emotionally and psychologically. Your heart, your soul and your children feel it.

All the actors need to come together. Yes, Quebec has come forward with "*Rebâtir la confiance*", and Dr. Simon Lapierre was on the committee. They came forward. Yes, they did the electronic bracelets.

However, when youth protection has somehow been given this immense power, we file criminal charges, but somehow the police are rendered helpless and powerless because youth protection is saying that it's parental alienation and there has to be contact. They're saying that if there's no contact....

We're caught. If you don't leave your abuser, then you're not protecting your children. Youth protection will tell you that if you don't leave him, they're going to take your children because you're not protecting the children. Then, the moment you leave, you need to give contact. If you're not giving contact to the father, now you're alienating the father. You're damned if you do and damned if you don't.

There was an article in *Le Journal de Montréal*. I'm sure Andréanne must have seen it, because I send a lot of things to various people. They're called

[*Translation*]

the “directorship of abusive men”.

[*English*]

In English, that means the director, not of youth protection but of abusive men. That clearly defines exactly what they are and what they do.

All of the actors need to come together. We need to criminalize coercive control, because without it, what makes a man dangerous and able to end up killing his children or his wife is how controlling he is and not how many bruises he's given her. When they feel that they're missing this control, that's when they become.... There's no word to describe them, but that's when the ultimate danger is there.

As long as they're able to control you, fine. With me, he was able to physically get his hands on me and my children. The moment we separated, though, he had to become more creative. He brought in youth protection. He shut down accounts. Because he couldn't get his hands physically on me to hit me anymore, he had to become more....

Coercive control increases at separation. It's there while you're living with him, and he controls your every move, but when you separate, the coercive control increases and he involves all of his enablers.

Right now, by going to the Supreme Court, youth protection lost jurisdiction. There's no judgment that said there's no contact between my children and me. If I'm at an event and my children are there, and I try to go near them, he's going to send everybody else, all of the enablers, to block me.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

Thank you, Andréanne.

Leah with the NDP, you have six minutes.

• (1145)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Thank you so much.

First, I want to congratulate you, Andréanne, for putting this study forward. I know you've been waiting very patiently.

I would also like to thank all of the witnesses for being here today. I know these are difficult discussions, and I want to honour that.

We're talking about coercive control. We know that with coercive control.... When we talk about abuse, often it's physical, but even in

physical violence, probably the most violent part of it is coercive, isn't it? It's psychological. It's that belief of harm, that constant living in fear.

They have a couple of programs in Manitoba. I'm not sure if they still run. One program they run is For the Sake of the Children. It requires parents to attend in relation to not being toxic with their kids during times of separation, but the other thing they often require, particularly when there is more invisible violence, is psychological assessments of parents. The problem with that, however, is that it costs a lot of money. A psychological assessment costs about \$6,000, and the parents are obliged to pay for it.

Within those psychological assessments, however, they're usually able to tell some of the things you're talking about that you can't see through questions, because they're experts.

Do you think there should be more services provided to individuals fleeing coercive control, such as paying for supports, including providing free psychological assessments to parents going through these ordeals?

Ms. Dimitra Pantazopoulos: That would be great, but the people doing the psychological assessments need to be experts on domestic violence. In my situation, there were two psychological assessments done where the abuse was completely ignored and it was deemed parental alienation.

The assessments are done by these so-called “parental alienation experts”, which is why it goes back to parental alienation accusations being a form of continuation of coercion and abuse. In order for victims to be truly helped, it's not only about giving us free psychological assessments. Using the concept of parental alienation needs to be prohibited. Coercive control needs to be criminalized. They need to understand that unless the laws are strong enough, there's no way we can protect our children and ourselves. It's not a matter of whether it's free.

Even with shelters, who came up with the idea of the woman having to pack up her things and leave the home? Think about the realities of this. We're supposed to pick up a bag, throw a couple of our children's belongings in there, and leave, while he stays home, king of the castle.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Yes, I appreciate that. Certainly, we've spoken about that in committee with a frequent witness, Mitch Bourbonniere, who talks about reversing that so that the family gets to stay home.

My question is for Sunder Singh. You spoke a lot about income. I'm putting forward a bill—actually, I'm starting debate on second reading tomorrow—for a guaranteed livable basic income. Much of what you spoke about was financial, even in terms of sex trafficking. I'm putting forward a bill in support of a guaranteed livable basic income, with the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in mind in particular, but also providing women who are being economically abused—as we've heard about in the committee—with the financial ability to have a choice.

I'm wondering if you support putting in a guaranteed livable basic income to support keeping families and victims of violence safe or keeping people safer from being sex-trafficked. That includes a number of migrant workers, as we've heard of in former studies, because they're financially beholden to employers.

Ms. Sunder Singh: Absolutely, I support financial support for families and young people who are fighting for financial stability. I absolutely support that, for sure, but what I want to bring to the attention of the federal government is that we all realize that there's a lack of skilled trades in this country, so when there are opportunities for young people to get into developing certain skills, the federal government needs to intervene and provide support, so that, once they become skilled trade workers, they become financially very stable as well.

I certainly will support you, Leah, for—

• (1150)

Ms. Leah Gazan: It's income supports and opportunities for training—a combination of the two.

Ms. Sunder Singh: Yes, absolutely.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

I begin the second round. Anna, with the Conservatives, you have five minutes.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses.

This is a very important study, and I appreciate all your input because it helps us understand the recommendations we need to put forward to make sure that addressing coercive control is something that is top priority for all women.

I'm going to start with Sunder Singh.

I congratulate you on EHCW. I know that the foundation was started in September 1992. You and I have had many conversations. In the statement of the client's rights on your website, there are eight points, and point number one really resonates with me. It is, “Be treated with dignity, courtesy, respect and fairness”.

I know we've had these conversations before about Canada as a hub for human trafficking. I recently got an update from Timea Nagy, whom we both know, that human trafficking is a business of \$362 billion U.S. per year. Some of the things you mentioned were mental health resources, foster home, education... I agree with that, but in order for us to protect our children and make sure that this situation is put to an immediate stop, we have to change the law. I believe we have to include in that law “torture”, because it is torture. What these perpetrators and pimps, or whatever you want to call them, are doing is torture. Do you agree with that?

Ms. Sunder Singh: I certainly do. It's torture. It's the emotional murder of the children. How can they become future leaders? We send our children to schools to learn to become leaders, but these perpetrators pull these innocent children out of the system and society and kill them emotionally. It has to stop.

These perpetrators, when they're caught, are sent to prison, but in a few years' time they're back again in the mainstream of society, starting the same criminal activity all over again. This has to stop. Once the perpetrators are caught, they should be imprisoned for a lifetime. Unless the laws are stricter, the problem will not go away.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: One thing that really resonated with me was this. How can we change that law? Can we include a law that keeps these perpetrators behind bars and protects victims?

A lot of times we've heard in this committee that victims are afraid to come forward, because their families are basically being terrorized with, “If you go to court and testify, we will kill your family.”

Would you agree that if we could get the law changed from a 14-year maximum sentence to 25 years...?

Let's be honest. A lot of these perpetrators, as you've just stated and have spoken to me about as well, have come out and started all over again. That's because they know the sentence doesn't match the crime. Would you agree with that?

Ms. Sunder Singh: I certainly would, MP Roberts. Yes. The laws have to become stricter. The punishments have to become harder for the perpetrators.

• (1155)

Mrs. Anna Roberts: You mentioned foster care, in that we have to be more diligent when we place young children in foster care.

As you know, because you and I have had this conversation, I was a child of foster care. I would agree with you that we have to make sure these children are safe.

One thing I learned during my time in foster care was that they don't really do their research before they place children in foster care.

How can we make that change? What recommendation do you have?

Ms. Sunder Singh: Listening to the witnesses today who are facing domestic violence and the problem that is in society, we need to understand that the mothers who report abuse have to be protected and should still be given the authority to look after their children. The children should not be going into the care of another system, where files are created and then the children are put into foster homes as quickly as possible for care.

What we are actually doing is throwing the children from the frying pan into the fire. We all know in Canada that foster homes are the breeding ground for human trafficking.

It has to stop.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

Next is Sonia with the Liberals. You have five minutes.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for their important testimony and the work they are doing for all women.

My first question is for Ms. Deepa Mattoo.

Ms. Mattoo, I know we had a conversation before and you have appeared in the committee before. I know the work you are doing in the GTA.

An important component of this study is the experience of other jurisdictions in dealing with coercive behaviour. Scotland and the United Kingdom have already criminalized coercive control. We also know about the experience of Hawaii, where coercive control is in the definition of domestic abuse.

Do you think we should follow that path? What are your views on that?

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: One challenge we have, looking at the example of England and Scotland, is that in England, coercive control was criminalized in 2015. In Scotland, it was criminalized in 2018. The research coming out of both of those jurisdictions is that it has not had any significant impact on the rates of domestic abuse. One of the bigger challenges is securing convictions for coercive control, because that has been extremely challenging.

In fact, Scotland's model is seen as a gold standard, if a country has to choose to criminalize coercive control. Their coercive control-specific offence is seen as a gold standard of legislation on domestic violence.

However, a recent study coming out of Scotland that interviewed survivors reveals that many felt that the final sentence, in their case, did not reflect their whole experience. It found that in terms of psychological abuse and control, which is the biggest piece we are talking about today, the survivors' experience was that when the accused was sentenced, their experiences were never taken into full consideration by the court. Only a small aspect of the abuse that they endured was revealed during the trial.

I think that is at the crux of the challenge of thinking about criminalizing coercive control without changing the attitude of our justice system and the misogyny within the justice system.

This solution of criminalizing an offence might actually trigger a situation in which we will see survivors, like Maria in the story I

shared with all of you, finding instead that it is they who are criminalized in the system and facing the challenge, instead of the real perpetrators actually facing the consequences and the accountability we want.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: My next question is for Sunder Singh.

You talked about a youth mental health strategy. You also talked about the role of social media. This week is mental health awareness week. In this budget, the amount of \$500 million has been allocated to youth mental health. What recommendation can you give the committee on how this federal funding can best respond to the needs and educate and support youth mental health?

• (1200)

Ms. Sunder Singh: Again, I have to bring to the attention of the standing committee the fact that constant, regular, continuous education for young people, and at the same time their parents, is very important. You wouldn't see the results overnight. It would take an entire generation, maybe, to see the results, but the work that is being done by the federal government to create awareness through mental health programs is critical. The funding has to be allocated to the educational system and community organizations and be done in a very proactive and active manner. People need to understand both that this is a problem in this country and what we need to do to change the system.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

My next question is about cultural sensitivity. How do you ensure that the information you share with the victim is culturally sensitive? How can we train frontline staff on cultural sensitivity when dealing with coercive control?

The Chair: I'm very sorry, Sonia, but we don't have enough time for the witness to answer. Perhaps they could include that somewhere else. I apologize for that.

Perhaps all the members can be mindful of the 30-second reminder, just for the benefit of everyone.

Andréanne Larouche, you have two and a half minutes, please.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is an extremely sensitive issue, and a continuum of services should really be considered. Clearly, criminalizing coercive control wouldn't fix everything, but it could be part of our thought process to try to help victims more.

Ms. Singh, you spoke at length about human trafficking, another scourge that I am concerned about as a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. We have also conducted a study on this issue here in the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

I would like you to tell us about the link that can be made between coercive control and the trafficking of women and girls.

[*English*]

Ms. Sunder Singh: If I understand your question, you're asking what leads to this kind of coercive behaviour. It starts with the financial struggle that young people face, or the relationship that young people have with their parents. Again, education in school will teach children about respecting the family, respecting their parents and respecting gender. That's where it all starts.

What happens is that children grow up, and teenagers will rebel at home. They will leave their home and seek help from outside. Once they get into that process, they find themselves getting trapped by perpetrators who are spread all over the country. They are in schools, they are in universities and they are in colleges. They can be found everywhere. They are great at targeting. They know who the vulnerable people are who can be victimized easily. Then the process starts.

It has to start with the human studies that I am suggesting should take place in schools, supported and made mandatory by the federal government and for the provincial governments to add to the curricula. Children in schools, at the start of the day, must be educated. They must understand respect for human beings and what they need to do to keep themselves safe.

● (1205)

The Chair: Thank you so much for that.

Leah, with the NDP, you have two and a half minutes.

Thank you.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

Very quickly, because I have only two and a half minutes, I want to see if I understood what you said, Madam Mattoo.

Do you feel that one of the issues with putting in a law on coercive control is that it could, in fact, potentially be used against the person who's actually the victim? Answer yes or no.

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Yes, absolutely. That's my concern.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay. Thank you.

The other question I have for you builds on what my colleague MP Sidhu was talking about. One of the things we've talked about is the critical need for individuals fleeing violence to have culturally relevant places to go to. How important is that?

I know you've done a lot of work with newcomer families. Do you feel there's a gap right now, and how important is it to fill that gap?

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: The service design for all services from the state, including the front line, should be extremely trauma-informed and culturally sensitive.

I don't believe in the concept of cultural competence, because there is no such thing as being competent with cultures. This is because cultures evolve, move and change, and no two people from the same culture can have the same cultural experience.

Therefore, cultural sensitivity requires having all of those good elements of being trauma-informed, anti-racist and antioppressive, and listening carefully and thoughtfully. Unfortunately, because of the gender-specific bias of misogyny and patriarchy that exists in the system, we see time and again that the state response is not sensitive.

Cultural sensitivity is definitely required, but I don't necessarily agree that it can be provided only in spaces that are designed only for particular cultures, because that breeds the homogenization and othering of the communities.

I think what really needs to happen is that all spaces need to learn what it means to be trauma-informed and culturally sensitive.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

To finish, we don't want to other groups, but you believe we need to make sure that all spaces are, first of all, reflective of the populations they're serving and are always culturally relevant to the people using their services.

Ms. Deepa Mattoo: Yes. I agree with you.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent.

That will conclude our first panel. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank our witnesses for their testimony.

We will suspend for about five minutes to transition to our second panel.

Because we didn't get to a third round, is there consensus to commence with Dominique and then Anita on your side? We'll just continue.

Perfect. We'll suspend for five minutes.

● (1205)

(Pause)

● (1210)

The Chair: The committee will resume our meeting and the study of coercive behaviour.

We are now here to welcome our second panel of witnesses, but first I would like to make a few comments for their benefit.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. For those participating via video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you're not speaking. For those in the room, your mic will be controlled by the proceedings and verification officer.

You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available. You have the choice of either floor audio, English or French for your earpiece. If interpretation is lost, please let me know right away.

I would like now to welcome our witnesses.

From the National Association of Women and the Law, we have Suzanne Zaccour, director of legal affairs; and from Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society, we have Andrea Silverstone, chief executive officer, and Carrie McManus, director of innovation and programs, who are both joining us by video conference and will be sharing their time.

Each group will have five minutes for their opening remarks followed by a round of questions.

I would like to give the floor to Suzanne to start for five minutes.

Thank you.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour (Director of Legal Affairs, National Association of Women and the Law): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wish to thank the committee for inviting me to appear today.

My name is Suzanne Zaccour. I have a Ph.D. in law and am the director of legal affairs at the National Association of Women and the Law.

[*English*]

The National Association of Women and the Law, or NAWL, is a feminist law reform organization that, in 2024, is celebrating 50 years of legal leadership to advance women's rights.

Coercive control is a serious and often life-threatening form of violence against women, characterized by severe entrapment and liberty deprivation. The response to this violence can take the form of a new crime as a way to recognize the persistent gaps in how the criminal justice system addresses intimate partner violence. At the same time, the ability of the criminal justice system to deliver justice to survivors of intimate partner violence has been called into question. Importantly, many survivors, including some of the most marginalized, choose not to engage with the police or the criminal justice system. These survivors should also be protected by our society and our institutions.

I'd like to focus on how, when there are children involved, coercive and controlling partners can enlist the family justice system to further their entrapment of women.

Two days ago, as I was preparing for this testimony, I received an email from a victim who herself—not her abuser—is facing fines and eight days of incarceration. If she doesn't return her kid to her violent ex, she'll be found in contempt.

[*Translation*]

The women who contact us all tell us the same story, save for a few details: They left their spouse, got bogged down in the family justice system and had their child entrusted to the abusive father, first through shared custody and then exclusively.

How do courts come to entrust children to violent fathers? They base their judgment on a pseudo-scientific theory that has taken hold in our courts, that is, the theory of parental alienation.

[*English*]

Parental alienation is a theory that suggests that when a child doesn't want to see their father, it's the mother's fault. In practice, this concept is being used in family courts across the country to punish mothers for disclosing family violence. Rather than being listened to and validated in their experience of abuse or neglect, children are told their feelings are not appropriate. Children are being forced to spend time or even live with their father, even when they greatly fear him.

The concept of parental alienation and its dramatic interventions, such as children being prevented from having any contact with their primary caregiver, is not supported by credible science. It relies on myths and stereotypes about family violence and is causing extreme harm to mothers and children. This is why the National Association of Women and the Law and 250 other feminist organizations across all provinces and two territories in Canada are calling for the federal government to ban parental alienation accusations from being used in family court. This demand echoes a recent report by the UN special rapporteur on violence against women and girls, which called on all countries to legislate to prohibit the use of parental alienation concepts in family law. Spain has explicitly prohibited through legislation the use of this pseudo-concept. Canada needs to be next.

There can be no justice or safety for victims of coercive control if they are deterred from leaving or denouncing a violent partner due to the fear of losing their children because of family courts relying on harmful myths and stereotypes. To protect victims and free mothers and children from enduring coercion and control, we ask this committee to echo our call to the Minister of Justice by including in its report the recommendation to ban parental alienation accusations from being used in family court.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for your attention.

I'll be happy to answer your questions and talk more about the situation in other countries.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next, I welcome Andrea Silverstone.

Ms. Andrea Silverstone (Chief Executive Officer, Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society): Thank you so much for inviting us to speak on this important topic.

Domestic abuse is far more than a black eye or broken bone, but all too often we focus on instances of physical abuse, since that's what our laws commonly recognize, leaving the 60% to 80% of survivors who experience non-physical forms of abuse to go unvalued and unsupported.

I'm hopeful that with this study you agree that we must stop this epidemic of violence by seriously considering legislation to prevent and intervene in cases of coercive control.

Many jurisdictions around the world have taken steps to address coercive control, which we define as a pattern of behaviour that removes personal agency.

As was already mentioned, England, Wales and Scotland have enacted coercive control legislation. In addition, legislation to address coercive control within domestic violence has been enacted in Ireland, Australia, three U.S. states with three more pending, and South Africa. There, they've established domestic violence courts that require police to refer victims to appropriate supports, and they have enacted provisions for the financial support of survivors.

France is the only country that has coercive control legislation that governs both domestic violence and cults and groups that use mental manipulation.

While there are many things that we can learn from these jurisdictions, the greatest thing that we want to emphasize today is that coercive control is a framework that allows victims to see their experiences recognized and validated. They are then empowered to share their stories and seek help.

Three years before the United Kingdom criminalized coercive control, they changed their definition of domestic violence to include coercive control. Their Home Office began talking about it in this way, and the social sector talked about it as coercive control as well. In those three years, domestic abuse calls to the police increased by 31%.

In addition, research from the College of Policing in the U.K. found that once enacted, the law enhanced the police response to domestic abuse, allowing for earlier and more effective intervention. It also found that there have not been any identified issues with charges laid against victims. This radical change spotlights the power of changing the public discourse and the legislation around coercive control and abuse.

With that, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Carrie McManus, who's our director of innovation and programs.

• (1220)

Ms. Carrie McManus (Director, Innovation and Programs, Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society): Thanks, Andrea.

Today, I want to talk about what we have heard from people impacted by coercive control.

I cannot emphasize enough that the way we talk about abuse today has a very personal impact on how survivors view themselves,

how they understand and contextualize their experiences and the steps that they take to get support.

For many, coercive control is like an invisible cage. They feel its effects but have trouble defining it in their own lives. Too often at Sagesse, we get calls from survivors downplaying their own abuse, even though they've had the ability to make decisions in their own best interest stolen from them. They're not sure that they deserve or need our help.

I had a client once who shared a story with me of an ex randomly popping up, showing up, including when they were out and running. They never exchanged a word, but the client was terrified, even as they were told, or they told themselves, that it was a coincidence and they weren't in any danger.

This doubt and questioning often happens when survivors bravely face social stigma and shame to share their stories with their friends, family and colleagues. That's why any move to address coercive control must include these informal supporters, who are pivotal to eradicating violence.

Eighty per cent of people who experience abuse tell a friend or family member first. If they have a positive conversation in which their experiences of coercive control are taken seriously, they are more likely to seek out formal support and have positive outcomes.

One example of this comes to mind from an unlikely informal supporter. He worked as a banking associate. He provided a unique window into the personal lives of these customers, including those impacted by coercive control. Over a few months, he developed a friendly relationship with a customer who was a newcomer to Canada. One day, when the client came in to set up a bank account, they seemed to be particularly distracted, checking their phone every few minutes. When asked if everything was okay, the customer shared that things had been stressful at home and their partner was tracking their location throughout the day. Having had other clients disclose similar situations—particularly newcomers who didn't know where else to go for help—he was happy to direct them to Sagesse.

This is one of many examples of regular Canadians empowered to intervene because they understand coercive control and the terrible impact it has on individuals, families and communities.

To turn the tide on abuse, we must do more. This includes employing a coercive control lens in drafting legislation, helping every Canadian to recognize and talk about abuse, and increasing support for survivors and their supporters, who will be empowered to seek out help in far greater numbers.

Thank you for your time today and for your attention to this dangerous form of abuse.

• (1225)

The Chair: Thank you, all, for your opening remarks. At this point, we will move to our rounds of questions. I'd like to start with Dominique.

[*Translation*]

The floor is yours for six minutes.

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

I would like to say that all of us around the table are old enough to know that coercive control doesn't necessarily affect only young women or women in precarious financial situations. I think it particularly affects women, of course, and can affect almost all women.

My first question is for Ms. Silverstone or Ms. McManus, since they are both from the same organization.

You raised the element of family, of community as well. I think these are bulwarks, or at least sentinels, who should exist and be able to speak out against these situations.

In your opinion, are there any particular characteristics of someone who exercises coercive control?

[*English*]

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: The answer is absolutely yes. Sagesse actually has developed a program called Real Talk, which teaches informal supporters how to recognize domestic violence, empathize, ask the right questions and listen, because we believe that there are absolutely indicators that people can recognize that can identify coercive control, whether it's in a workplace setting, a family setting or even a community setting.

These are things like Carrie just talked about in her introductory remarks: someone getting incessant texts and those texts making them stressed out, someone constantly cancelling plans, or anyone who's unable to make decisions in their own best interest. However, I think that what's most important is that coercive control has to be identified through conversations in which you have to be able to ask the person, "Are you afraid?" I think that that's the very best way that we can actually ever identify whether or not someone is experiencing coercive control.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: As the ladies said earlier, this doesn't happen overnight. How does coercive control develop? Before getting married, you spend time with the person. There must be some red flags. What are they?

[*English*]

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: You would think so, and I wish that it was easy. I wish that coercive controllers had signs on their foreheads. However, I think that one of the previous speakers talked about trafficking and sexual exploitation, and really, coercive control in cases of intimate partner violence is no different. It's not like on the very first date someone, you know, begins to control or picks up their fist and hits someone. It's a very slow process. It is low level, and it is persistent. It is a pattern whereby, all of a sudden, one day.... It's a gradual and then sudden process where one day someone wakes up and realizes that they no longer have personal freedoms or are able to make decisions in their own best interest.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Those who engage in coercive behaviour are also intelligent enough to hide their game at a given moment.

Thank you very much for your answers.

Ms. Zaccour, thank you for being here and sharing your thoughts with us.

I have two questions to ask you.

First, I'd like you to come back to the example of other countries that we could learn from. We need to table serious recommendations that will have to be followed so that we can truly improve the situation.

In the university curriculum and at the bar, emphasis could also be placed on training interveners, judges, Crown prosecutors and even lawyers. What training should be developed for these people so that they understand clearly what coercive control is? They will be dealing with narcissistic perverts and all kinds of personality profiles.

How do we train people in the legal community?

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour: I'll begin by answering the second question.

In my opinion, it's very important to clarify that, at the moment, the law allows family courts to use the discredited notion of parental alienation. Even if we train these people well, it will never be enough. The law needs to be changed.

We heard from other witnesses earlier that survivors minimize the abuse they've experienced. This is absolutely true. However, the courts apply a theory that states that women exaggerate the abuse they've experienced. Of course, no one can be against training, but this didn't create the results we were hoping for.

We really hope the committee will recommend a change in family law because even if judges understand what coercive control is, the theory remains that what the mother says is not true. In any case, even if it's true, the child still needs to be forced to live with the father whether he has been convicted or not.

• (1230)

Mrs. Dominique Vien: In your experience, would you say that parental alienation is overused in our courts, in Quebec, for example?

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour: Yes, that theory is almost always applied when a woman is a victim of violence, of coercive control. Almost systematically, the abuser claims that the problem is not that he is violent, but that she is alienating the children. Some 250 women's organizations as well as many women's centres have brought attention to that.

In the few seconds that are left, I could talk about Spain and answer your first question.

The Spanish government passed a law prohibiting the courts from using unscientific pseudo-concepts like parental alienation. The country has made it clear that doing so is unacceptable. Courts cannot make decisions based on that myth. That is what the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls recommended.

It's also what we are recommending the committee include in its report.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much. I'm sorry, Dominique; the time is up.

Anita, you have six minutes.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I want to thank both of you especially for the work that you do.

My first question is for Suzanne. You've spoken quite a bit about the myths and the stereotypes that underpin the legal system and the support systems. Could you maybe elaborate a little on specifically what those myths and stereotypes are?

[Translation]

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour: Absolutely. Thank you for your question.

One of the myths is that society—and that includes family courts—needs to be very suspicious.

[English]

I'm sorry. You asked your question in English.

One of the primary myths is the idea that we should be very suspicious when family violence is reported. Whether it's the mother or the child reporting violence, or especially if the mother reports sexual abuse against the child, we should be very suspicious. The myth is that women lie and exaggerate and children can't be trusted. Also, women need to forgive. It's been years, and she's still angry

and the child is still angry, so there must be something going on. It can't be the normal effects of domestic violence.

These are some of the myths that are very pervasive in our court system.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you very much for that. I will try to get back to you if I have enough time.

I also wanted to go to Andrea. You talked about the U.K. and the criminalizing and whether or not it might get used against victims. We heard in the previous testimony that there is a fear that by criminalizing coercive behaviour, it could be used against the very women who need the protection.

It sounded from your testimony, like you said, that this hasn't happened in the U.K. I wonder if you could elaborate a bit on that.

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: The College of Policing has done some extensive research on how the law has been used and also to answer some of the concerns that I think were pre-existing before the law was there, as well as the other concerns that I think we have in Canada—about it being used against both victims and marginalized and racialized populations.

Their research has found that it actually isn't the case at all. If anything, the law has further protected those populations and hasn't been used in revictimization. I think it's a fear that does need to be addressed. I think that we have to understand why it hasn't been used in those negative ways that we're afraid of. I think it has to do with training and the funding put into training judges, lawyers and police officers.

I do think there is absolutely a way to enact the law without having a concern of victims being revictimized.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Thank you.

It can't be done by itself; it has to be done with the wraparound. Is that what I'm hearing from you?

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: Absolutely. It has to be done with the wraparound.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: You talked about your story about the bank and the role that bystanders can play if they are knowledgeable and if they're trained on how to identify...

We're a federal government. In terms of the tools we have in the federal jurisdiction, do you have particular recommendations on things that we could actually do in order to help with bystanders or in any of the other areas?

• (1235)

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: Absolutely.

We've put in a brief that was part of the report on the standing committee for justice around coercive control, with five recommendations, in particular for the federal government. Among those recommendations, we think there should be some sort of commissioner of coercive control or domestic abuse, who is able to infuse all parts of the federal government with a lens to understand coercive control and how it needs to be infused.

One of the previous speakers talked about trafficking and sexual exploitation. We have written a position paper for the federal ombudsman on victims of crime. It's exactly around that. That's something that some sort of commissioner like that would be able to do.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Could you send to our committee the same brief that you sent and maybe that report as well?

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: Yes, absolutely. I'll do that.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Okay, that's good.

I'll go back to Suzanne.

I want to delve a bit more into your recommendation. Your recommendation was that the federal government, the Minister of Justice, take action with regard to parental alienation. I don't know if that's under federal jurisdiction, but that's one question.

What would that look like? You mentioned Spain, but are there other countries that have done the same thing?

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour: We're asking for the federal government to amend the Divorce Act to say that accusations of parental alienation are not admissible, that judges can't consider them, and that they can't admit expert testimony on alienation. Of course, we'll then go knocking on the provinces' doors to do the same for unmarried partners.

In terms of Spain, obviously it's a different structure, but that's what they did. They said that it's not admissible and that children have a right to be heard. They also have a right to be respected in their opinion, because the parental alienation accusation is being used to say that although the child does not want to be with their father, I should force them to be with the father.

There are other countries that have gone the other way to say that we need to address parental alienation, not in terms of the accusations but to punish "alienating" mothers. They're now backtracking, because they've seen how sexual abuse of children and other violence is increasing and going undetected due to trying to punish mothers when there are allegations of violence.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next we have Andréanne. You have six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for sharing their views on this important topic.

It would be impossible to think that, by simply waving a magic wand, we could eliminate violence against women, which has become an epidemic.

I think we need to conduct this study with the utmost care and, as much as possible, look to what other jurisdictions are doing to form our opinions. I'd like to come back to that.

My question is for Ms. Silverstone and Ms. McManus.

You talked a lot about where things stand in other countries, and my fellow members asked questions about that.

As far as you know, are things going fairly well in countries that have criminalized coercive control, in spite of the concerns some had beforehand? Have any of the countries tried to walk back their legislation because they were sorry they criminalized the behaviour?

[*English*]

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: There are no countries that have walked it back. In terms of conversations in the research that we've done with lawmakers in the justice system as well as with organizations on the ground, there has been a sense either that the law has been a resounding success or that the law is good but just isn't doing enough in terms of the protections it can offer to victims. It's a good law, but there's not good enough support in order to enact the law.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: That's interesting.

I'll wrap up this international overview with France, which you talked about as being an exception. However, I met members of France's National Assembly, and they said that France had not excluded coercive control and that the issue was being debated.

Have you heard that as well?

● (1240)

[*English*]

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: They do have coercive legislation of a form. It's called the About-Picard law. It's a very broad criminalization of coercive control that's not specific to intimate partner violence. It covers any type of coercion, so it's also been used in cases of cults and religiously coercive groups.

The discussions in France are to expand the law or to enhance their law specifically to lay it over intimate partner violence, but they already have that law. I think they just want to enhance it in order to make it more specific to intimate partner violence.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I think I misunderstood what you meant when you talked about France as an exception. I thought that France already had that as an exception. Thank you for clarifying.

I recently attended a conference on violence against women. It was put on by women's groups in my region, and obviously, the important issue of coercive control was discussed. Violence doesn't always take the form of bruises on a person's arm. It is actually much more than that. I remember hearing as a teenager a slogan to raise awareness among Quebeckers about violence against women. It stuck with me: Violence doesn't always involve hitting, but it always hurts.

Right now, we have a bill that addresses coercive control, Bill C-332. The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights studied the legislation.

I want to go back to that study. I'm not sure whether you've had an opportunity to examine Bill C-332 and form an opinion.

Ms. Silverstone and Ms. McManus, would you care to comment on the legislation Canada is currently studying?

[English]

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: We actually had an opportunity to work with Laurel Collins on the development and writing of that bill, so we are very familiar with it.

We do have some recommendations around the length of time that the bill should be applicable post relationship, as well as what types of relationships the bill should cover. We also generally think that coercive control should also cover incidents of sexual exploitation, which the bill does not currently cover.

We've written a brief around the changes and additions that we think need to accompany the bill. We also think that it's critical that any bill that's passed in Canada have wraparound supports, services and training that come with it.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Wraparound services are essential. In Quebec, non-partisan work on the issue culminated in a report, and that's the message that stood out. Not only is it necessary to train and educate those who work in the court system, but it is also necessary to make sure that victims have supports and services. It is absolutely paramount that the bill go hand in hand with measures to ensure that those wraparound services are available.

[English]

The Chair: If you could wrap this up in about a 10- or 15-second answer, that would be great. Thank you.

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: I don't know if there was a question, but we 100% heartily agree.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: I just wanted you to confirm that it's important for coercive control measures to go hand in hand with wraparound services. You said that, but I just wanted to reiterate the point.

[English]

The Chair: I think I see a nodding "yes" for the analysts.

Leah, you have six minutes. Thank you.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much. I would like to thank all the witnesses for being here today.

I want to fully disclose that I totally believe that coercive control exists. I think it's a very misunderstood violence, and the onus is often placed on the victim to prove that it's occurring.

I really appreciate what you said, Madame Zaccour, and everything you said, I agreed with. I think it's made difficult by the way that victims of violence often minimize the violence. We know this through stats. We know which groups are more represented in violence, and there's still a lot of discrimination in the courts. I would say Black, indigenous and people of colour.... Something needs to happen about violence. We need to deal with this violence.

I asked in the last round about coercive control specifically. I want to actually go back to parental alienation. Do you think that having a bill about coercive control without first dealing with this non-scientific reality, often used primarily against women on parental alienation, places them more at risk?

• (1245)

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour: We do have those concerns. There are two things that are important, maybe three. First, any criminal bill will not help victims who don't go and report or if there are no charges or no convictions. It can be even worse if there are no convictions, because then there's the suspicion that she lied.

The other thing is that even when there's a conviction for family violence, the courts are still using that parental alienation trump card and finding that in spite of the conviction or a guilty plea, the mother needs to move on and the child needs to love the father. That's happening, including in cases where we've been involved.

The third thing that might happen is that abusers will claim that the mother's protective behaviour is alienation and that it's itself a form of coercive control. We're seeing abusers reusing that language, which they often do, using equality language to twist it. The priority for many women who have children is first to separate safely, and the criminal justice system doesn't interact directly with the family justice system, so it's not enough to help them separate safely from the abuser and protect their children.

Ms. Leah Gazan: I think that's why I'm asking all these questions. I want to know, if there was a bill that was put in place in support of changing the Criminal Code to include coercive control, how could that be done, in your mind, in a way that is safe and doesn't further marginalize victims?

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour: In our opinion, because of the concerns with the criminalization of coercive control, there are priority interventions that need to come before. That would be ending women's financial dependence, making it safe for women to leave, reforming family law and removing those accusations of parental alienation, because now we're telling women that they need to report the coercive control, but then, if they do, they might lose their kids.

First we need to address these priority issues and make women safe. Otherwise, we fear that it won't help as many women as it could, and it could even backfire in some cases. That's why we're focusing on some priority issues, because if the system is ill equipped to deal with this new crime, and if charges are dropped or abusers are found not guilty, then women have to pay and are punished for this disclosure. That will be a real problem that could make the situation either not better or even worse for some victims.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you very much. I'm not going to talk about it too long, but I always have to ask. I have a bill that I'll be speaking to tomorrow for a guaranteed livable basic income for that very reason. Is that one of the pieces, yes or no?

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Going back to eventually getting to a bill on coercive control, I do have a concern about parental alienation, and we heard from a witness just today about their experiences with the parental alienation accusation and how it was used. These are my concerns.

The other one is that—and maybe I'm wrong and you can correct me—the onus to prove coercive control is still left on victims, who are often, when they're doing it, dealing with a lot of psychological and emotional trauma and scars that make it difficult. Is that right?

• (1250)

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour: Yes, it can be very difficult to demonstrate coercive control if the actors are not properly trained and don't know what it looks like.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

For the next round, we have Michelle Ferreri for five minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thanks, Chair.

There's so much to unpack here, because it's trying to get to the crux of the justice part of this.

In the 42nd Parliament, then justice minister Jody Wilson-Raybould amended the Divorce Act in Bill C-78 to introduce the term “family violence”. It says:

“family violence” means any conduct, whether or not the conduct constitutes a criminal offence, by a family member towards another family member, that is violent or threatening or that constitutes a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour or that causes that other family member to fear for their own safety or for that of another person—

It goes on with “and in the case of a child”.

There's a group, the Canadian Equal Parenting Council, and I think it is really important.... We are the status of women committee, so we're here for women, but I think it's really important to put on the record that men are and can often be victims of coercive control as well, and children are often the ones who are hurt.

I guess my question is for you, Ms. Zaccour. When we talk about parental alienation, I just want to read into the record what this states. It states, “Parental alienation happens when one parent coerces or controls a child to reject the other parent without justification. It is distinguished in practice from estrangement, by evidence and professional investigation. Peer-reviewed and published academic research concludes that alienation of children from a parent is emotional abuse. The long-term effects on children are well doc-

umented as they lose the capacity to give and accept love from a parent.”

The reconciliation...or the problem is a couple of things. One, which has been brought up, is that we need the right people investigating and interviewing these children. I recently visited the Toba Centre in Winnipeg, and I highly recommend that everybody here look into that. It's a child advocacy centre.

How do we change the law? What happens is the parent could be engaging in coercive control, but once the child is 15 or so, in their teenage years, they don't know that they're in a “coercive control” position per se. This is the whole issue around coercive control. It's very challenging, because people often don't even know they're in an unhealthy relationship. The children are subject to terrible situations, but they don't know that one parent is manipulating them or doing that.

How do we put that into a legal system? How do we train judges to know what that is?

I know I'm asking a million different questions here, but I think there are two recommendations we're trying to get out of this. Should we be making parental alienation illegal, and should we be making coercive control illegal in the Criminal Code?

I'll start with whoever wants to answer.

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour: It's really important. What we're asking for is to ban accusations of parental alienation. If we go the route of making parental alienation illegal, we're going to end up like Brazil and Mexico, where they're seeing that women are being punished for disclosing abuse.

I don't know which definition you were reading from, but the idea that parental alienation is distinguished in practice from realistic estrangement due to violence is not the case. Parental alienation is not distinguished from family violence. In scientific literature, there is no objective, reliable instrument to distinguish the two. It comes down to just an opinion.

The problem is that every time we say that this child has been alienated by their mother—it's often the mother who is accused—it could very well be, and often is, that the child is actually reacting to the father's violence, yet it's the mother who is being punished.

I'll follow up with a brief to this committee addressing some of the frequently asked questions on what the science does and doesn't show, but it's really important to know that the accusations are being used to punish victims.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you for clarifying that. I really appreciate that.

I have only 20 seconds, so if anybody can submit written testimony to the committee, I would very much appreciate that. I know we have just a few seconds left, but does the Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society have anything to add for 15 seconds?

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: We think there should be criminalization of coercive control. We think it adds another tool in the tool box of the justice system, both in terms of family law—it's great that it's part of our Divorce Act now—and in the criminalization of it.

Just to address the issue you raised that men experience coercive control, one of the reasons that we think coercive control should be one of the frameworks that we look at is that it's a non-gendered framework that actually allows whoever is the victim to get the support they need, regardless of their gender.

• (1255)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's well said. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have Emmanuella with the Liberals.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here with us and for sharing this testimony.

I'm going to take it to a different place, because we've spoken about the fact that victims don't often come forward. They're afraid, and they don't always know that they deserve the help or that they're in a situation in which they need the help. We're talking about master manipulators here, so they're in this web, and they don't necessarily recognize it.

I think that the first place to call, if somebody is experiencing this, is likely the police. If they go to the police—given that you've likely worked with many victims, both groups here today—what is the experience that they have at that first line of contact with the police? What is their experience? Are they listened to? Is it taken seriously? Are they dismissed?

Ms. Carrie McManus: I'd love to jump in here and talk a bit about the experiences of our clients and what we hear from police. We often hear from police that they are looking for coercive control legislation because it would allow them to actually act and move forward on what they're seeing. They see those patterns, the fear and the things that are happening, but they are bound within the confines of what they can do in terms of those responses. Police across Alberta work very closely with social services to ensure that people are getting those connections, but they are looking for something that allows them to actually do that better and to respond better.

I draw us back to the 80% statistic. People are not necessarily calling police, first and foremost, and across the country we know that people often don't disclose to police but do talk to friends and family; they talk to people around them. That's where the ability to take something like coercive control...the criminalization gives it a validity and a movement towards starting to better understand the impact of what is happening and how it is impacting our families and our communities, so that everyone can start to say, "I notice

that this thing is going on. Are you okay? I now understand what domestic abuse looks like."

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Suzanne, would you like to add to that?

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour: Even though the manipulation and the confusion are real, women are also experts in their danger assessments, in the sense that if they are afraid, there's a reason. That's why both the police and the family justice system need to believe that, if a woman is afraid for her life and for her children's lives, it's because there is real danger. It's not in her head. She's not imagining it.

I think it's a very important guideline to understand that women are not exaggerating. The situations they're being placed in are very difficult and hard to believe, but they're real nonetheless.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

If we were to criminalize coercive control, what are some safeguards that can be put in place to ensure that victims aren't the ones who end up paying for it?

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: I think that we should look to other jurisdictions that have done an amazing job in terms of their statutory guidelines around coercive control to ensure that victims have safeguards around them, especially marginalized victims who come from BIPOC backgrounds.

The United Kingdom put in some great statutory guidelines. Scotland has some great statutory guidelines. Australia has started developing statutory guidelines around its legislation. I think that we should look to other jurisdictions as well. We should look to our community-based organizations that are experts in areas of equity and ask them what sorts of guidelines they think should be put into place.

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour: Something that we almost always recommend, every time we're called to testify on a variety of matters related to violence against women, is that independent legal advice to victims is also really important, even before they report or as they report. That can also really help victims understand their options and the process, and it can support them in not being revictimized in this process.

• (1300)

The Chair: Thank you.

Andréanne and Leah, you both have two and a half minutes left. Would you like an opportunity to have even a minute and a half, or is that...? Are you comfortable with a minute and a half? Okay.

We'll start with Andréanne.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Ms. Silverstone, with respect to your recommendations, you mentioned your work in relation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and the fact that you've been active on the issue of human trafficking. We discussed the issue with the previous panel as well.

How might criminalizing coercive control affect another scourge, human trafficking? Why is it important to take action on that issue, as well as when it comes to online sexual violence and online control, via the Internet, something we're hearing about more and more? How might criminalizing coercive control also help to tackle those two issues?

[English]

Ms. Andrea Silverstone: The experience of sexual exploitation is actually also an experience of coercive control. We have written extensively about it, some of it published, and I'm happy to share it with the committee.

Essentially, by expanding and extending criminalization of coercive control to include victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking, it would give the police yet another tool in their tool box to intervene sooner into experiences of sexual exploitation. As well, it would give victims of sexual exploitation more tools to understand what is happening to them and possibly reach out for support without feeling like they're going to be stigmatized for making decisions. People often ask them things like, "Why did you stay?" or "Why didn't you run away?", and things like that. The criminalization of coercive control will change that discourse and make them understand there are supports and services available.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Leah.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

I think it's important to look at what other countries have done, but I also acknowledge that Canada has a very distinct legal history,

including with indigenous people. We just finished a study on the red dress alert, and one of the things that became clear is the mistrust of police because of either overpolicing or underpolicing and the minimization of violence, particularly when it comes to indigenous women. Do you think particularly that BIPOC women, and I would say in my question specifically indigenous women, who experience higher rates of violence, are more at risk for some of the things you were talking about? I mean in terms of the minimization, "She's being hysterical," and in terms of this potential for legislation that has the intent of doing good to cause harm?

Ms. Suzanne Zaccour: I think it's really important to take into account the specific vulnerabilities and colonial system when thinking about these kinds of reforms. Often, for indigenous women in particular, there are additional risk factors such as the risk of being disbelieved, and also financial precarity, that might contribute to a situation of coercive control or make it more difficult to escape the situation of coercive control and then potentially report or not report. Definitely, there need to be support systems in place and holistic interventions in all the factors that lead to violence.

The Chair: Excellent, thank you very much.

That will conclude our second panel.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all of the witnesses for their appearance.

Is the committee in agreement to adjourn today?

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>