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Chair: Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman



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• (1630)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 138 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Members, please wait until I recognize you by name prior to speaking. I'd also like to remind everyone that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

[Translation]

Thank you for your co-operation.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Wednesday, September 25, 2024, the committee will resume its study of hate-motivated violence targeting the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Before we welcome our witnesses, I would like to provide a trigger warning. We will be discussing experiences related to hate-motivated violence. This may be triggering to viewers with similar experiences. If, indeed, at any point you feel distressed or need help, please advise the clerk.

Witnesses and members of Parliament, we realize that these are difficult conversations, and I would encourage everyone to be as compassionate as possible.

At this point, I would like to welcome our witnesses.

We have, from Alliance Arc-en-ciel de Québec, Dave Tremblay, administrator. As an individual, we have Zipp Neufeld. From Black Pride YYC, we have Daphne Dike-Hart, president and chief executive officer, and Ugo Oparadike, communications lead. From the Centre for Sexuality, we have Pam Krause, president and chief executive officer, joining us by video conference.

In addition, from Conseil québécois LGBT, we have Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil, co-chair, joining us by video conference. Last, from The Alberta Teachers' Association, we have Jason Schilling, president, who is also joining us by video conference.

[Translation]

We will now go to opening statements.

Mr. Tremblay, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Dave Tremblay (Director, Alliance Arc-en-ciel de Québec): Good afternoon.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Dave Tremblay, and I am the outgoing president and current director of the Alliance Arc-en-ciel de Québec, an organization devoted to defending the rights and improving the living conditions of the LGBTQ+ community in the greater Quebec City area.

Our mission is to promote inclusion, awareness and solidarity through initiatives that foster greater understanding of the realities experienced by the members of our communities. We strongly believe that every person deserves to live in a safe and respectful environment free of any form of discrimination or violence.

Unfortunately, those basic principles are often violated. LGBTQ+ people are still targets of violence motivated by hatred, and that has a profound impact on their mental, emotional and physical well-being. Acts of hatred come in many forms: insults, physical assault, cyberstalking, social exclusion and institutional violence. These are the result of a combination of deeply rooted prejudices, disinformation and a lack of recognition of the diverse identities and experiences of our communities.

It is important to note that the Alliance Arc-en-ciel also organizes Quebec City Pride, which is now in its 20th year. However, for the first time, the Solidarity March route had to be modified this year for security reasons, a fact that clearly illustrates the increase in hatred toward our communities. The Quebec City police service requested the modification as a result of homophobic and transphobic remarks that had been made by truckers during a gathering before the National Assembly of Quebec. I had never seen anything like it.

In response to these challenges, our organization is working hard to increase public awareness by organizing awareness campaigns in public places, to promote a positive view of our communities and to co-operate with government bodies to promote inclusive public policy. I'm thinking in particular of our work with the Quebec government on conversion therapy.

However, our work alone is not enough. It is essential that specific national measures be taken to combat hatred and create safe spaces for everyone.

For example, we recommend that more training be provided for members of Parliament on the challenges facing the LGBTQ+ communities in order to prevent public speech and pronouncements that may foment hatred. We are in favour of leading by example.

First, we recommend that mandatory training programs be implemented on sexual diversity and gender plurality in sectors within the Canadian government's jurisdiction.

Second, we recommend that national awareness campaigns be established to promote a positive view of sexual diversity and gender plurality.

Third, we recommend that guidelines be proposed for health institutions to support LGBTQ+ people in a climate of respect and trust and in a manner consistent with provincial jurisdictions.

Fourth, we naturally recommend that more funding be granted for community organizations that assist LGBTQ+ people.

Lastly, we recommend that a program be introduced to acknowledge issues that arise between law enforcement agencies and sexually diverse and gender-plural people.

In conclusion, we believe that an inclusive and respectful society can only be achieved through sustained collective efforts. The Alliance Arc-en-ciel de Québec is committed to continuing its work, but it needs government support.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Tremblay.

[English]

Zipp Neufeld, you have the floor for approximately five minutes.

Zipp Neufeld (As an Individual): Okay, thank you.

My name is Zipp Neufeld. I am a transgender, non-binary, pan-sexual 12-year-old from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. I use he and they pronouns.

To the chair and to the committee, I am here to speak to you today about the rise of violence towards the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities across Canada.

It is draining, because politicians are using queer youth as pawns, resulting in a rise of hate and violence. It's draining because this makes every day more stressful in looking towards my future. It's not a thought I wanted to think about. It's draining because we are constantly forced to rise up. Why is our leadership allowing this to happen?

Here's the thing. Yes, the issues of the queer community, in particular transgender rights, are under attack by several provincial governments, and it's creating a larger problem of discrimination. This makes school environments more unsafe, and it allows for ignorant bullying and ignorant mindsets to thrive within the general public. Even a 12-year-old like me can understand that when hateful thoughts and words are able to escalate, then violence soon follows. The way we are building our society does not give me, and trans youth like me, a future.

However, this is only half the picture, because I know that causing these movements against the 2SLGBTQIA+ community is not

really these politicians' true concerns. It is a distraction. They are using the debate on my human rights as a way to move the conversation away from what they are doing—or, more accurately, what they are not doing—on things like the housing crisis, inflation and the lack of social supports, to name a few. Knowing that your existence is being debated only as a way to not talk about big-picture things is infuriating, especially when you yourselves care about these big issues. Come on—let's focus, adults.

To those in power who support queer youth, please keep fighting. Please step up to stop the rise of these harmful bills. Do what you need to do so that we can refocus on what matters. Please use your voices so mine doesn't need to feel so drained.

To those in power who are against trans and queer youth like me, yes, we are drained by your constant attacks, but know this: We will never back down. We will always speak up. We do have communities who love us and support us. We will never stop until the violence against us does.

Thank you for your time.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Zipp.

Next, I would like to welcome Ms. Dike-Hart. You have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Daphne Dike-Hart (President and Chief Executive Officer, Black Pride YYC): Thank you, Madam Chair, members of Parliament and members of this committee, for the opportunity to address this urgent and deeply troubling matter.

My name is Daphne Dike-Hart, and I'm the founder of Black Pride YYC and Black Pride Canada. I am here with Ugo Oparadike, communications lead, representing not only the 2SLGBTQIA+ community but also the intersecting experiences of Black and queer individuals, who often bear the consequences of hate-motivated violence and systemic inequities.

We are here to discuss a crisis, one that is not theoretical, nor is it distant. It is happening right now in our communities, in our homes, in our schools. It is a crisis that puts the lives, dignity and futures of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly the youth, at great risk.

To frame this discussion, I want to share the voice of a parent of a Black trans kid from Calgary. This is her story:

“Do you know what it's like to watch hope drain from your child's face and to see it replaced with sheer panic? That is exactly what I saw when I told my 12-year-old trans daughter that Premier Danielle Smith was planning to ban gender-affirming care for people like her. I will never forget that night. Through tears, my daughter was pleading, “No, mom, no. She can't do that, can she? I can't go through that puberty. I can't. What are we going to do?”

“My daughter came out when she was eight. She was suicidal. Supporting her social transition, and the promise of accessing gender-affirming medical care, saved her life. Until the premier's recent announcement, she was thriving and happy, was doing well in school, was enjoying friends and was excelling at basketball. I fear that is all about to change. It already has. Medical care, safety at school and her beloved basketball are all getting ripped away because she's a political pawn.”

This mother's pain should haunt us all. Her daughter's story is not isolated. It is indicative of what happens when government prioritizes political posturing over the well-being of vulnerable children. These policies are not merely theoretical debates: They are life-and-death issues in countless families. Hate doesn't come from nowhere. It is nurtured by harmful words and harmful policies and by the failure by the government to act against injustice.

CSIS has warned us about the rising threats targeting the 2SLGBTQI+ community, yet we see protections in schools being taken away. Forcing teachers to out queer children to their families is dangerous, especially for the Black community, which, as a result of colonialism, is extremely homophobic and transphobic. A study published by the Journal of Family Psychology and found in the National Library of Medicine showed that “Ethnic minority parents exhibited greater parental rejection [of LGBTQ children] than ethnic majority parents, as reported by both parents and youth.”

For Black and indigenous members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, racism makes the dangers even greater, making us targets twice over, often with less access to resources and support. This is why the federal 2SLGBTQI+ action plan and the national action plan on combatting hate are so important, but they cannot remain aspirational. They must move from ideas into actions. Funding must be directed to grassroots organizations, mental health services and advocacy groups that are already doing the work to support queer and trans lives on the ground.

Members of the House, we are not asking for special treatment; we are asking for equal rights, for the right to live without fear, for the right to see our children thrive. When governments and institutions fail to protect their most vulnerable populations, it is a failure of democracy itself.

I will leave you with this: The fight against hate is not a political issue. It is about standing up for people, for human rights, for our values as a country. It is a matter of whether we, as a country, are willing to stand by as families like the ones in Calgary live in terror, or whether we will rise to the moment, with courage, compassion and an unwavering commitment to justice. Let our kids live. Uphold humanity.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Dike-Hart.

Ms. Krause, you have the floor for up to five minutes.

Ms. Pam Krause (President and Chief Executive Officer, Centre for Sexuality): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Pam Krause. I'm the president and CEO of the Centre for Sexuality.

The Centre for Sexuality is a nationally recognized prevention-focused organization that delivers evidence-based programs and services to normalize sexuality and improve sexual health. We have been leading the way in the areas of sexuality, healthy relationships, human rights, 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion and consent for 52 years in Calgary. We serve over 40,000 people in Alberta annually, thanks to our many partnerships with schools, community groups, health agencies and corporate partners.

Much of the centre's work is school-based. Since 1975, we've been providing comprehensive sexual health education in Calgary and area schools, and we also have supports for specific populations, including programs and services for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals and communities. This includes supporting gay-straight alliances in schools and providing counselling support to 2SLGBTQ+ youth and their families. Also, annually, we host Camp fYrefly, a leadership camp for 2SLGBTQ+ youth, in partnership with the YMCA of Calgary.

An increasing number of discriminatory comments, policies, and legislation and bylaws are occurring across the country, particularly in relation to non-binary or transgender youth and adults. We have seen it at the national level in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and even in local municipalities. This is impacting the human rights and safety of a very vulnerable group of Canadians.

Hate crimes directed at the 2SLGBTQ+ community have dramatically increased, as confirmed by Statistics Canada. There are many factors, but undoubtedly the relentless targeted attacks on social media against the transgender community have led to increased hate crimes. Online platforms play a central role in this and have contributed to real-life violence.

One of the most important ways to combat the targeted attacks against 2SLGBTQ+ communities is to create safe spaces and create awareness through education. Schools play a pivotal role in this. There is proposed or passed legislation in several provinces that does not allow students to change their pronouns and names at school without parental consent; the reality is that school may be the only safe space for 2SLGBTQ+ youth who are struggling to come out and are concerned about family acceptance. Youth often have to take the time to be okay with themselves before they can come out to those they love.

In our work with thousands of youth, we know that most queer youth want to come out to their family. The first question we commonly get is, “How do I come out to my parents?” It isn't always safe, and knowing you have a community of support matters a lot. Provincial legislation that creates an environment where youth will not be able to have safe spaces in their schools will definitely lead to negative consequences.

The safety of school environments for 2SLGBTQ+ youth does not diminish the essential role of parents in the lives of their children. The role of the Centre for Sexuality is to provide support and education for parents to help them process what their child is going through, give them opportunities to connect with other parents in the same situation and find ways to provide support, even when they are confused and struggling. We also work with the youth, and this commonly leads to better outcomes for the entire family.

The federal action plan was a great step forward, but it's by no means a permanent solution. The focus on community action and on coordinating 2SLGBTQ+ issues across government departments are important steps, but these efforts need to be implemented and sustained to be successful.

The grassroots organizations, such as our centre, are working to address the root causes of violence targeted at the 2SLGBTQ+ community. However, we require resources to scale up our programming. Expanding the reach of community programming is an opportunity for the Government of Canada to create generational change and push back on the harmful narratives that persist. Long-term positive change can be accomplished only if government and community organizations work together and are committed to long-term sustained change.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Krause.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Repentigny-Corbeil, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil (Co-Chair, Conseil québécois LGBT): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Vice-chairs and members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, my name is Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil, and I am co-chair of the Conseil québécois LGBT, which brings together more than 80 2ELGBTQI+ organizations from across the province of Quebec. Thank you for this opportunity to appear today.

For many months now, threats of diminished rights for our communities have been hanging over our heads like constantly darkening shadows. In many Canadian provinces, proposals to reduce policies for including 2ELGBTQI+ youth in the schools are being examined. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service recently issued a warning about the threat of extremist violence by anti-2SLGBTQI+ movements. Every day, we at the Conseil québécois LGBT witness the consequences of this hatred, which undermines any sense of security and endangers the welfare and dignity of our communities.

Our network is extensive, committed and diverse and includes activists who have spent the past few decades fighting for gay marriage and the right to start a family, the right to work and study without fear of discrimination, the right of trans people to have identity documents that reflect who they are, and more. These people have celebrated the legal advances that have been made thanks to their determination and total devotion to the cause. However, today these people tell us that, for the first time, they are seeing a change of direction in their journey.

For several months now, and for the first time in recent history, the situation has been trending backwards, not forward. At the same time, the data show that violence, bullying and hate speech toward our communities are increasing as never before, both online and off. We are deeply troubled to see that dangerous and hateful speech is seeping into and influencing public policy. That's what we're currently seeing in Canada.

The member organizations of the Conseil québécois LGBT report disruptions and hurled insults at awareness workshops in the schools. Some people feel forced to deactivate the comments section on their social media as a result of the torrent of hateful messages. Rainbow flags are being torn down, trampled upon and torn up. Protests are being organized and held to attack the rights of trans and non-binary people, and the situation continues to decline.

Hate or dangerous speech freely circulates in the political and media spaces both in Canada and abroad. What we are seeing on a daily basis is that disinformation and fake news are wreaking havoc by fuelling moral panic based on hearsay and rumours. Sexual and gender-diverse people have become scapegoats who are being blamed for all of society's problems.

As you will remember, last year, people definitely talked a lot more about gender-neutral bathrooms than about the fact that we were lacking thousands of qualified professionals in our schools. Last year, reporting broadcast by reliable media outlets promoted anti-trans theories that have been unanimously demolished by the scientific community. Millions of videos are being posted online by influencers promoting openly misogynistic, racist, homophobic and transphobic speech—it's open season on everyone. This is a multi-faceted problem, and it's spreading on all platforms.

What I've said today isn't anecdotal. This is a crisis that calls for a decisive political response. Canada's action plan on combatting hate and the federal 2SLGBTQI+ action plan are essential tools in coordinating the response to that crisis. However, they must be implemented soon, with determination and supported by additional measures.

The community organizations need active support to respond to the growing demand from the 2ELGBTQI+ communities. Canada needs a better digital platforms framework to combat online disinformation and hate, which lead to actual violence. It must also continue to provide more monitoring of hate-based crimes by considering the specific impacts that they have on our communities. We are counting on your assistance to reverse this trend.

Thank you for your attention and support, which are essential in these difficult times.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Mr. Schilling, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Jason Schilling (President, The Alberta Teachers' Association): Good afternoon, members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today about the recent legislation that will harm our most vulnerable students.

My name is Jason Schilling. I am the president of The Alberta Teachers' Association, representing over 46,000 public school teachers. I am joining you today from Edmonton, which is located on Treaty 6 territory.

In my submission today, I may use the term “gender-diverse”—

• (1655)

The Chair: I'm going to have you pause.

I'm sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Schilling. We have a point of order in the room.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Is it possible to turn the volume up in the room? There's an echo when I use my cellphone.

The Chair: Okay.

Madam Clerk, can we turn up the volume in the room?

Okay. Please proceed, Mr. Schilling. Thank you.

Mr. Jason Schilling: In my submission today, I may use the term “gender-diverse” along with the acronym 2SLGBTQIA+ to recognize and affirm the wide range of gender identities, expressions and family structures present in schools and classrooms across our province.

Alberta's Education Act requires teachers to provide welcoming, caring and inclusive environments that foster diversity and belonging for all students. Recent changes to legislation, however, undermine this mandate by compelling teachers to disclose students' gender identities without their permission. This new legislation is deeply harmful to gender-diverse children and youth.

Disclosing a student's gender identity to their parents or guardians without the student's consent can result in family rejection, abuse or homelessness. Research shows that 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are four times more likely than their peers to attempt suicide. In jurisdictions where similar legislation has passed, suicide attempts among trans and non-binary youth have increased by 72%. Recent Canadian research has found that up to 40% of homeless

youth in Canada identify as gender-diverse, with identity-based family conflict being a significant factor in their homelessness.

These alarming statistics must serve as a wake-up call, not just for teachers and school leaders but also for the public and all levels of government. Gender-diverse youth are already at significant risk, and their struggles are already well known. It's confounding that our provincial government is going out of its way to punch down on gender-diverse youth. Instead, they should be investing in policies and programs to affirm and support the health and success of all students.

Our gender-diverse students know about the changes to this legislation. They know their pronouns and chosen names could be revealed without their consent, and this significantly reduces their safety at school. My teaching colleagues and I are deeply concerned about these changes and fear they will result in the erosion of trust between teachers and students. Trust is the foundation of a safe learning environment.

Another concerning element of the recent legislation is the requirement for all parents to opt in for their children to participate in any discussions concerning human sexuality and gender identity. Previously, there was an opt-out option for parents. This new requirement does not address current problems. Instead, it causes a chilling effect that ultimately risks excluding students from vital conversations about identity, belonging and sexual health. When teachers cannot discuss 2SLGBTQIA+ identities, it sends a message to gender-diverse students that they should be ashamed of who they are and that they are a problem that needs to be fixed, ignored or ushered back into the shadows. We want every student to know—especially those who identify as gender-diverse or have family members who do—that we support them. Research shows that an inclusive curriculum improves school climate and contributes to student belonging and success.

Finally, I want to highlight concerns about gender policies in school sports.

Participation in extracurriculars provides students with a vital sense of belonging, helps them feel valued, and fosters their personal growth and confidence. Ensuring fair and inclusive access and participation is essential, yet the Alberta government has enacted legislation that restricts access to these activities without providing the thoughtful and nuanced approach required. This legislation has already resulted in trans and non-binary youth withdrawing from school clubs and sports, which risks isolating them further.

As a teacher for more than 25 years, I've supported countless students through challenging times. The first question I always ask them is, "Are you okay?" Sadly, in my career, I have students who are not. I have lost several to suicide, and this breaks my heart. As educators, my colleagues and I are committed to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive in an environment that celebrates their worth and potential. We must build a future where learning is not overshadowed by fear or rejection but illuminated by compassion, acceptance and opportunity.

We are in a pivotal moment. We need to ensure classrooms remain safe spaces for all students, and that schools have the resources to support gender-diverse students, their teachers and their families. We can do better. We must do better. If we do not, we have failed our students, their teachers and their families.

Make no mistake: This legislation in Alberta will hurt our most vulnerable students and their families. It already has. It takes away their right to privacy, it has caused fear and uncertainty, and it undermines the very principles of inclusion, respect and safety that our schools should stand for.

I'm proud that The Alberta Teachers' Association remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting the rights and well-being of all students.

Thank you.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Schilling.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge, Mr. Schilling, that you can expect a call from IT to do a sound test prior to us going to the questions.

Thank you all for your opening remarks. We will be moving to our first round of questions.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Vien, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

Thanks to all of you being here today.

A special welcome to our young witness. You're very brave and a good speaker too. So bravo and congratulations.

Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil, thank you for being with us. I listened to all the testimony, and one particular point caught my attention. We too are aware that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, CSIS, has issued warnings. You said it had issued a warning regarding the threat of extremist violence against LGBTQ+ movements.

What do you mean by extremist violence against the community you represent? What type of incident are you thinking of?

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: Thank you for your question and your kind words.

This extreme violence is conveyed by violent speech, hate speech that actually strips us of our humanity. It's designed to make us invisible, to prevent people from considering us as part of soci-

ety, to diminish us and to ensure we aren't recognized. This form of extreme violence is committed in person and online. However, online violence is particularly expressive.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: I don't want to resort to sensationalism. That's not at all my intention. However, I'd like to have a clear understanding of what we're talking about.

Would you please cite a few examples to illustrate what we're discussing?

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: I can tell you about the hateful and violent comments that are made to members of the Conseil québécois LGBT. I'm not going to say the actual words, but, for example, they say they want us dead. We're insulted online and in person.

We've built a coalition against hatred that shines a light on that hatred, which comes from both society and various groups. They deny our existence and strip us of our right to exist. We receive these types of comments in person. Some of our members have had their rainbow flags torn up. The violence is expressed verbally. There have been genuine threats.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: There have even been death threats. That's what I hear. People tell you that you should disappear.

Don't they?

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: That's correct.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Every threat or expression of hate is simply illegal and inappropriate.

Could you give us a definition of hatred that everyone could agree to?

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: To pin the term down, we've thought long and hard about the concept of rolling back rights, about what that hate contains, what its roots are and how it spreads. What defines it is the wish that other people should stop existing, that they should no longer be free and inhabit their bodies, and that their identities should be cancelled.

That violence is conveyed through comments, but there are many types. It's part of a very broad continuum ranging from comments on a Facebook page to verbal violence in the street.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Everyone should address this so we can come up with a more specific definition. For the moment, people have their own definitions of the word "hatred".

Thank you, Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil. Going back to a passage from your testimony that really spoke to me. You said that it's open season on everyone.

There have been 25 femicides in Quebec in 2024, and the year isn't yet over. There have been 169 femicides in Canada. The current outbreak of violence in this country is a major concern.

Thank you for being with us, Mr. Tremblay.

• (1705)

Mr. Dave Tremblay: Good afternoon.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Good afternoon.

You're the first person who has told us about the problems that victims experience with the police, with law enforcement agencies. That's what you said. The police do a terrific job, but victims tell us it isn't easy.

Mr. Dave Tremblay: That's right.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Does the fact that people are members of the LGBTQ community make it harder for them, when they communicate with police officers, to make themselves heard and to make the police understand the reality they experience? The reality of that community has to be understood in police departments, as it must elsewhere in society. The community must have its needs known and its profile understood.

Is the community's situation now more complicated than it used to be?

Mr. Dave Tremblay: Ms. Vien, thank you for the opportunity to discuss this, and I'll give you a clear answer.

Yes, it's harder for 2ELGBTQI+ people to make themselves understood by the police. Rightly or wrongly, there's an unresolved history between our communities and law enforcement agencies. It dates back to the time when trans identity and homosexuality were crimes under the Criminal Code. That's the way it was until 1969, and the wounds still haven't healed.

Today we can see that police officers work hard and do good work in this area. We have good collaboration with the Service de police de la Ville de Québec, the SPVQ. However, I understand why certain individuals who've been traumatized are reticent, and I don't mean to criticize them for that. I discussed conversion therapies with an SPVQ officer at an activity organized by Fondation Émergence. He candidly told me that he didn't know conversion therapies had become criminal.

It's troubling to see that some information just isn't out there on the ground. If that officer had dealt with a person who had just undergone conversion therapy, the latter might have been rejected because the information hadn't been transmitted to the officer.

I get the impression there's work to be done with the law enforcement agencies, which are our last defence against hatred.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Sidhu, you have six minutes.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for their testimony.

I'll start my questions with Ms. Dike-Hart.

We've heard about social media contributing to the amplifying of hate and sometimes extremism in Canada, particularly against groups like 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Can you explain how?

Ms. Daphne Dike-Hart: Yes. Thank you so much for that question.

I think that is evident when you go through social media and see the types of comments you get, for example, when you post on same-sex relationships. People use anonymous pages, commenting right underneath with very gruesome words, such as getting five men to take the lesbianism out of them. Living your life and going through social media comments like that put you not just in a difficult mental space but also in a difficult physical space, because you don't know what your safety will be outside. Are they actually going to do it if you step out of your house?

That's the kind of hate we face as 2SLGBTQI+ people in Canada in general, not just in Calgary.

You also have people commenting about murder and things like that. When you have one person with that comment under your page, when other people see it—especially if it's people who also have that kind of sentiment—they then have the courage, I guess, to go and act on it. You have people when you walk on the streets.... Even during Pride, people would actually walk up to us. This past Pride, somebody walked up to us and said, "Oh, that group—I hope you guys die", or something like that, and just walked away. This was just random, and obviously we don't know who that person was, but if he gathers 10 other people who have the same beliefs as he does, he can easily cause harm to us. We're female, right?

I think it's very easy for us to acknowledge that this hate exists, but what are we going to do about it? That is really what our stand is.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: How can education and social programs be re-structured to disrupt these pathways and to be used as awareness?

Ms. Daphne Dike-Hart: I think education is one thing that helps. A lot of the time, as I said, hate is not something that comes out of a vacuum but is something that is taught. You educate the public about how we are existing and how we can exist the same way that you can exist. The only difference is in how we choose to love. If you educate the public in that line, then they understand that we are as human as they are, and they can create space for us to exist and be in our authentic form.

When they don't have that education, especially for kids and young adults who grew up in environments with those kinds of restrictions, they go outside and feel that people from the 2SLGBTQI+ community are aliens. They grow up like that because those are the households they've grown up in. Education, in that sense, helps to make us as human as possible in their eyes. That way, we all can just live in harmony, because we're really just trying to exist with the same rights that they have.

• (1710)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Schilling from The Alberta Teachers' Association.

In light of recent policy changes in Alberta, what do you see as the biggest challenges for educators in ensuring the success and well-being of transgender students in the province?

Mr. Jason Schilling: Thank you for the question. I hope the sound is better now for the interpreters.

Education is really going to be the key factor there. We need to ensure that our students have access to instruction around human identity, sexual identity and gender identity.

One of our fears and concerns is that with part of Bill 27, which is the legislation that just passed last week, there's going to be an opt-in version for instruction around those elements of sexual orientation and gender identity. This is going to cause a bunch of red tape that will get in the way of having students get this valuable instruction. They're going to miss out.

Under the Education Act currently, parents can opt out. We already have a system that's in place. We already have a system that is working. Both teachers and school boards have pushed back against the government, saying we don't need this opt-in version for instruction on human sexuality because we already have a system in place.

When people miss out on this valuable instruction that happens in schools, they don't get the information they need to know about consent, for example. I've talked to some folks who have trans children, and they say that through talking to other students or through the instruction they get at school around human sexuality and sexual identity, the children are learning that in fact they probably have been abused.

They need this information. We know that knowledge is power, so we need to ensure that all of our students can get the valuable information they need through instruction. One of our concerns is this opt-in provision.

Another part of Bill 27 that I didn't mention in my opening comments is that we now have to get all third party materials vetted through the government as well. Again, that's something that has already been happening in the course of instruction here in Alberta, but it adds another level and another opportunity for materials that can help students to be censored before the materials get into schools.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Larouche, the floor is yours for six minutes.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for being with us. Thanks as well to Zipp Neufeld, and I can confirm that their remarks were very clear. I tip my hat to them.

Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil, you had a lot to say in your preliminary remarks about hate speech both online and off. Since the legis-

lation is inadequate, as it places no limits on online hate speech, what are the consequences of that for the community?

Should we consider setting a limit, while respecting freedom of expression, before speech becomes a criminal act and a genuine threat on which police officers could rely?

Ms. Myl ne de Repentigny-Corbeil: Thank you for your question.

I think that's a multisectoral problem. There is access to justice, and there are bills and recourse mechanisms, but the act isn't suited to new forms of technology or to what actually happens online. Consider the fake news and artificial intelligence that contribute to that violence. The act doesn't yet recognize those many forms of violence.

We also have to focus on the programs and resources that the community needs. We need to introduce measures designed to support victims and increase awareness and prevention of this kind of violence. I'm thinking, in particular, of digital literacy, awareness of what happens online, monitoring measures and setting up discussion forums on online platforms. Legislation in this area has to be amended.

Your colleague discussed the connection between women and the LGBTQ+ communities. We see it: all the masculinist, antifeminist and misogynistic speech often goes together with homophobic and transphobic speech. These mentalities and ideologies are all over the web, as a result of which there are no more safe spaces for LGBTQ+ people, including young ones.

The threat is real, and I think the response it should elicit is education programs that aren't just about sexuality, but also about digital literacy and everything that happens online. This phenomenon is far too widespread.

• (1715)

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Thank you. Perhaps we can come back to this.

From what I understand, we also have to take into account the fact that artificial intelligence and fake news contribute to misinformation and disinformation. It's important that we have a statute that addresses both these new technologies and the scope of hate speech and how it can be framed. So we should continue discussing this at the federal level.

Mr. Tremblay, we met yesterday at the festivities in Quebec City. It's always a great event.

You mentioned conversion therapies. I know that Fondation  mergence organized the national symposium on conversion therapies, but I was unfortunately unable to attend.

Are you referring to that event? You said you learned some things there?

Mr. Dave Tremblay: Yes, that's true.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: We spoke with Fondation  mergence representatives following the symposium and learned that, although there's a new federal act, it's easy for certain religious communities to circumvent it and continue with conversion therapies.

My question concerns two points: first, the importance of making the judicial system aware of the new act, and, second, the need to come up with tools that can make it easier to intervene and identify religious communities that are circumventing the act so they can continue their conversion therapies.

What's your opinion on that subject?

Mr. Dave Tremblay: In 2018, we submitted a brief to the National Assembly of Quebec entitled, "Who wants to cure homosexuality?", which told the story of Gabriel Nadeau, who had undergone conversion therapy.

Perhaps you've met Mr. Nadeau. His story is very moving. He underwent a type of conversion therapy that I want to call "exorcism". That concept is woven into the title of his book.

Religious communities should be made aware of the Canadian and Quebec statutes respecting conversion therapies so that their practices don't break the law.

We should also ensure that penalties are imposed when individuals actually break the law that prohibits conversion therapies.

As we mentioned, that's one of the challenges involved in enforcing the act. The police must have a free hand and be familiar with the current legislation so they can investigate places where this type of service is offered.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Gazan, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

I'd like to thank all of the witnesses for coming today.

I want to start with you, Zipp.

A lot of the great leaders of our time—Greta Thunberg comes to mind—are younger folks who are pretty wise and provide a lot of guidance. I try to be a good ally. It's important to me. Human rights are important to me.

You said something in your testimony that I'm wondering if you can help me understand better. You said to not make this a political issue. I want your advice, so can I tell you quickly what my conflict is?

People are making it a political issue. You brought that up. You spoke about legislation being put forward. I know you testified in front of Saskatoon's city hall and made these profound statements, including this one that I'm a big fan of: "I deserve to age without fear that the bathroom and change space that allows me to feel safe and at peace will be taken from me." You said, "When trans adults thrive, trans kids survive." That's profound. That's very wise.

What do we need to do or not do, as elected officials, to make sure you survive?

• (1720)

Zipp Neufeld: I'm trying to think for a second.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Take your time.

Zipp Neufeld: Generally, what you asked was....

Ms. Leah Gazan: You see your existence up for debate all the time in political spaces.

Zipp Neufeld: Yes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: How can I be a better ally? How can we be better allies to you to make sure that you survive?

Zipp Neufeld: Personally, I think that if you are an ally, you should speak up with us. Being a better ally wouldn't be watching us speak; it would be speaking with us.

It would help us in not having to think so much about our future and about how the government is working right now. Having allies would make us feel less like everything's directed on us.

Ms. Leah Gazan: All you want to do is go to school, right?

Zipp Neufeld: Yes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: You just want to go to school.

I never begged to go to school—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Leah Gazan: —but I did hear you begging to go to school tomorrow for your science project.

Zipp Neufeld: Yes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Is it a science project?

Zipp Neufeld: Yes. We have some time to work on the science project, yes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: When you say "speak up with us", what does that look like to you?

Zipp Neufeld: Speak up with us—as in, sitting here like I am right now, you'd be speaking as well about similar stuff, about trans rights and the rights of just being human. Speak up in such a way that we can also take a break, but take our words as well to make it more vibrant, if that's a good word.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Yes.

I used to be a teacher. I don't know how I ended up being a teacher, because I used to hate school. I'm just telling you the truth here. One thing that was really important to me when I was a teacher was that I provided a safe space for my students.

Does school feel safe for you right now? I was happy to hear you begging to go to school, but what does school feel like?

Zipp Neufeld: Do you mean right now?

Ms. Leah Gazan: Yes.

You don't have to answer if you don't want to.

Zipp Neufeld: I do.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay.

Zipp Neufeld: It's just hard.

I love my class. They're very inclusive and they're wonderful, and yet people from other classes are cruel. Speaking from experience, I have a friend who was threatened to be followed home for expressing themselves, which is really hard to think about.

As an openly trans person with my parents, it's harder to see my friends who aren't able to talk to their parents go through that by themselves.

• (1725)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Yes. I really appreciate that.

Anybody around the table knows that I ask a million questions. Back when dinosaurs were still here, there was a show called *Matlock*. He was a lawyer, and he'd ask all these questions—

The Chair: Thank you so much, Leah.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you, Zipp.

Michelle, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Thank you so much to everyone for being here.

Zipp, I see you and I see your mom behind you. There's an innate human desire to belong and feel included, and we don't want to feel that we're different. Ironically, it's our difference that makes us so special.

School is not a great place for a lot of kids. For kids who learn differently, it's hard. It's really hard. I just want to say that I appreciate your being here. You're young, and you're brave and courageous. You have some support around you, which is important.

I think all of us in this room remember everything that happened to us in those first eight years of our lives in elementary school, but we don't know where our car keys are. It's the most formative part of our life. Thank you for sharing your stories.

I want to dive in further, if I can, with Mylène.

I think the key in all of this is ensuring that we have legislation that puts consequences in place against hate crime so that it doesn't happen. One of the things that we've seen repeatedly.... Stats Canada released a crazy press release today, saying that 34% of all homicides were committed by a criminal who was out on bail or another form of release. Those are historic numbers.

In Peterborough, we had a hate crime that went public nationally, which I was a part of in terms of standing up for this person: "Pride

flag burning, homophobic slurs lead to hate crime arrest in Peterborough". The man who was charged was out violating his probation and violating his parole.

We know that Bill C-5 and Bill C-75 are two pieces of legislation right now in the House of Commons that are contributing to violent repeat offenders being out and committing crimes.

My question for you, Mylène, is this: Would you like to see those bills altered and pulled back? Would you like to see stronger bail reform so that hate crimes have consequences tied to them?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: Thank you for your question.

Yes, we have to establish much more inclusive laws respecting the many types of violence. As I like to say, the next victim is still alive, and we can still save them.

We're talking about a context of extreme violence, by which I mean murder. There's a very broad umbrella that covers all types of violence ranging from online comments to physical violence.

We must both understand the violence-related umbrella and use a range of tools to fight it. Apart from the legal aspect and criminalization, there also has to be an upstream effort to raise awareness and educate people to improve social cohesion. What has to be understood is that we have rights and our place in society. We want to learn to live together.

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I agree.

Thank you so much. I'm sorry for the rush. We have such a short amount of time.

I'm curious if you're familiar with.... We talked about images that are being shared online, the hate and scary stuff. In the justice committee we're hearing about sextortion. There are terrible things going on.

Bill C-412 is a bill I would love you to have a look at. It's a Conservative bill by a Conservative colleague, Michelle Rempel Garner, which would hold social media companies accountable for hate. We could start there.

We've seen a 251% increase in hate crimes since Justin Trudeau took office. I'm curious to know what you think would be the reason behind that, Mylène.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: I'm not familiar with those bills, but I'll be happy to read them.

The reality is that non-consensual sharing of intimate pictures, online extortion and online sexual violence are very common phenomena, and they're increasingly spreading through trolling, fake news and algorithmic discrimination.

These expressions of violence raise many challenges, and the legal system isn't designed to deal with the many forms they take. I don't know if criminalization is the solution, but there has to be a reaction to these forms of violence. As you said, cyberstalking, as a percentage of total incidents, has reached absurd heights. Some 36% of LGBT people report that they have been victims of the dissemination of sexual images without their consent. This also affects the LGBTQ+ community.

Measures really must be taken, particularly in the areas of education and digital literacy, to help people gain a clearer understanding of these phenomena.

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Hepfner, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here.

Zipp, I was also so impressed with your opening statement. As my colleague Leah said, I was blown away by your wisdom and insight, particularly when you said that politicians are using your human rights to deflect from other crises.

You're in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan recently brought in Bill 137. It requires that parents give consent for students to use their preferred name or pronouns, and it restricts sexual health education by requiring parents to consent to that as well.

My question to you is this: If gender-diverse kids can't express themselves or speak to anyone confidentially at school, and if they can't do that at home, where do they go?

Zipp Neufeld: That is a good question.

My friends have a group where we just talk to each other, either at recess or while we're working. We try to be inclusive in our class. I love my class that way. If somebody wants to use preferred pronouns, they will. It's just that they won't tell the teacher about it, because it's important for a child to feel safe among their friends—anywhere, really. Since that has been taken away, it's especially important.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: The province said it would use the notwithstanding clause, which shows that provincial leaders know it's going to be violating human rights. They're using that in advance to push it through regardless.

Thank you for that.

Pam Krause, it's great to see you again.

We met in Calgary. I was there for the pride festivities. I was so impressed with your organization, Camp fYrefly, and all that you do to support youth in the Calgary area.

When I was there, the community was very concerned at the time about this new legislation coming to Alberta. Since then, it has passed. I'd like to hear an update from you about what you're hearing from people in your circles.

Ms. Pam Krause: It's been a very difficult time. There's no question. We should all just listen to Zipp, quite frankly.

There's an immediate and serious consequence when we think about legislation that is less inclusive. Now that this legislation has passed, we immediately see a chilling effect. There's concern among teachers, parents and students about what schools and support for transgender youth will look like, moving forward.

I think one of the most important things we can do together, as adults, is to pay very close attention. Find those immediate supports. As Zipp talked about, sometimes these are informal. They provide an opportunity for community organizations to really lean into what we're meant to be doing to ensure, in a grassroots way, that we're providing that support. We're going to see some consequences that will have to be addressed. I don't want to think about what those will be, but I know they can be pretty serious.

I really believe that organizations like The Alberta Teachers' Association, community organizations and other advocacy groups are going to have to fine-tune their game and provide not just support but also real, strong advocacy work, moving forward.

• (1735)

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: A lot of your work surrounds sexual health education.

Why is that such an important piece in cutting back on the hate we're seeing against the 2SLGBTQI+ community?

Ms. Pam Krause: I think other people have talked about this. The very important thing is that everybody gets information and education so that people can learn how to be inclusive. The work we do in schools provides a safe space for everyone. From my experience in our organization, I truly believe that when you provide a safe space for one vulnerable group, you are actually opening the door for others to feel safe as well. There's a tone that can be set by inclusion that I think is very important.

The other thing about sexual health education is that the focus we provide is on helping everyone to have healthy relationships. There's an outcome to that. I think people are less likely to bully people online when they understand healthy relationships and the consequences of their actions.

Sexual health education is broad. It is meant to provide inclusive.... It's meant to provide people with ways they can be better community members and citizens and to better support other youth and adults as they grow up.

I strongly believe that it's vital education that shouldn't be part of any sort of political rhetoric at all.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Larouche, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

Once again, I want to thank all the witnesses for their testimony, which will give us a lot of food for thought.

Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil, you discussed disinformation and anti-trans theory in your opening remarks.

Would you please tell us more about that?

Ms. Myl ne de Repentigny-Corbeil: You've probably heard about a movement that has spread across the country and that denies the existence of trans people. It seeks to deprive them of access to their rights and to prevent them from fully living their lives.

The movement is expanding online, but we also see it offline. Its adherents organize protests, participate in disinformation, especially regarding the age of consent to gender-affirming surgery, create disinformation regarding the wishes of trans and non-binary people to affirm their trans identity, and spread hate speech.

I would also like to point out the connection between this movement and sex education, which these groups criticize. But sex education doesn't just concern sexuality; it also addresses relational life, emotional life, consent, relationships with others and identity recognition.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Tremblay, when you organize your events, do you yourself also notice the consequences of disinformation and anti-trans theories?

• (1740)

Mr. Dave Tremblay: Yes, absolutely.

We often hear the expression "gender theory". There's no such thing. People want to use the expression to reduce a person's existence to a theoretical entity, but it can't be done. You mustn't subscribe to that idea. Every individual has a right, individually, to live and experience what that person is. Gender is well defined, based particularly on historical, anthropological and sociological observation. Gender is therefore a construct. We must not allow ourselves to be invalidated by any use of the expression "gender theory".

So these are things that we regularly observe during events that the Alliance Arc-en-ciel organizes, during discussions and when members come and tell us about their concerns and what they experience at school. It's very troubling.

[*English*]

The Chair: *Merci.*

MP Gazan, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you so much.

My next questions are for you, Daphne Dike-Hart. You indicated that you're a parent of a 12-year-old trans daughter.

Ms. Daphne Dike-Hart: No, I read a letter to the committee from a parent of a 12-year-old trans child.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Okay.

I wanted to ask you the question because I know there's this whole debate around parental rights, and there are the rights of the child, which we've signed on to. I'm wondering if you could speak a bit to that.

Ms. Daphne Dike-Hart: I think I would bring it to my community, the Black community.

When you look at the rights that the child has, especially with these new laws that are being signed in, it's very hard. How many Black kids who are trans can walk up to their parents and say, "Hi, Mom; this is how I'm feeling"? If you don't get sent to conversion therapy, you're probably going to go for deliverance or they're going to send you to Africa or something. I don't know.

That's the kind of experience that we have, so kids, especially, are very afraid, and especially when they come from that kind of household in that box of, "You're learning it from TV. It's not something that you are," and they keep hearing that. The only place that used to be safe for them was school—

Ms. Leah Gazan: Right.

Ms. Daphne Dike-Hart: —where they could affirm who they are, and now teachers are being forced to out them.

You also have kids who, for example, were on sports teams, like the 12-year-old kid I spoke about, who is probably not going to be able to play basketball anymore. She was really hoping to get into the WNBA. That dream has been taken away from her and she doesn't have a say. She thinks Daphne is going to wave a magic wand and everything will be okay, but our hands are tied.

This is the reality when it comes to the actual trans kids, because without this support and without them being able to medically transition or stop puberty, some of them are willing to commit suicide, so we need to be careful.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Zipp, you seem like you have a pretty amazing mom.

Zipp Neufeld: Yes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: How has that made a difference? In what ways do you think parents who maybe aren't like your mom could be supported to be more like your mom?

Zipp Neufeld: My mom is amazing and my dad is. I think a way you could make your child feel more safe to come out to you is to be inviting. Don't randomly say, "Oh, don't become trans" and that random stuff, because that's not inviting at all.

When I came out, I first told my mom because she showed me somebody who was non-binary who she thought reminded her of me, and that invited me to come out.

I think that you should just be with your child as they go through stuff. Just be with them as they do their growing up.

• (1745)

Ms. Leah Gazan: It seems really simple, but it's really hard for a lot of folks, isn't it?

Zipp Neufeld: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Vien, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you.

There's a mother sitting at the back, and I have to say that her eyes tell us a lot.

Madam, you don't understand French, but you should know one thing.

[*English*]

Your body language tells a lot. Yes, I would appreciate hearing about your experience as well.

[*Translation*]

Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil, isn't this entire situation the result of ignorance and misunderstanding? As someone said, there's a lot of violence, especially on social media, where it's hellish.

As you said yourself, it's open season on everyone, and you have to have a clear understanding of the LGBTQ community.

It's all well and good to introduce policies, but that takes time. There are a lot of community organizations on the ground, and Mr. Tremblay represents some of them.

How should we go about combating ignorance and incomprehension?

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: I fundamentally believe that ignorance and gaps in education remain.

Countering ignorance requires a three-pronged approach. First, we need to promote the spread of quality information. People must have access to straightforward and sound content and reliable data. Most people act in good faith.

Second, we need to run awareness campaigns and talk to people. We must have a collective discussion on this issue. We must overcome the echo chambers, where we talk only to people who share our opinion. We must talk to everyone, in general.

Third, we need to talk about education for both young people and the general public. We need to provide access to training in digital literacy, sex education and the concepts of gender and sexual identity. We also need to provide ways to counter misinformation and recognize platforms that provide unbiased information. This would help curb the current rise of hate.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you, Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil. Sorry, but my time is quickly running out.

Mr. Tremblay, I would like to talk about the workplace. I'm happy to have tabled the very short Bill C-378. I encourage you to read

it. The purpose of this bill is to give former employees under federal jurisdiction more time to file a complaint in cases of harassment or violence in the workplace. I did the same thing in Quebec City, when I was the labour minister.

Someone told us at our meeting last Monday that nothing was simple in the workplace and that workplaces aren't immune to issues of this nature.

What are your thoughts on this? Are these issues also becoming more prevalent in the workplace?

Mr. Dave Tremblay: You're right to raise this issue. The Alliance has received funding from the office to counter homophobia and transphobia, which specifically focuses on employers and workplaces, to help us address these issues next year. A conference is planned. A number of employers will get together to talk about their positive experiences.

For some people, the transition is going well. However, I also hear about cases where people lost their jobs. When I worked at the human rights and youth rights commission in Quebec City, I investigated cases of discrimination where people lost their jobs for administrative reasons. The employer told them that it was too difficult to change their name, or that colleagues refused to use a new name, for example. Rather than punish people who failed to respect employee rights, the employer dismissed these employees. The employer told them that it was too complicated to speak to them, that their employee number couldn't be changed, and so on.

There are also issues with customer service. The situation is very much a reality in companies. These issues must be addressed.

It's good to extend the deadline for filing a complaint. We've also been saying all along that the key lies in education and raising awareness.

• (1750)

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil, I would like to ask you a quick question.

You represent a group of 80 organizations, which are probably community organizations.

When you heard that CSIS issued a warning about a risk, what did you tell the members of your organizations?

How did you prepare them for this? What did you recommend that they do in the immediate future to help their members in their communities?

The Chair: Please be brief.

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: We were expecting it. It wasn't new to us. We didn't need to meet. We already knew that this rise of hate was happening. We had already had to deal with it.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Emmanuella, you have the floor for five minutes.

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

Thank you to all of our witnesses.

I'll begin by saying, Zipp, that I think you're extremely brave. Thank you so much for sharing.

I was also a high school teacher. I taught sec I—grade 7—so you remind me of my students. I'm very proud of you for being here today.

I have a question for you, actually. You mentioned in your testimony that this hate that the 2SLGBTQI+ community is facing is a distraction; you said that it's being used as a distraction more than anything, and I'm curious to see if you can elaborate a little bit on that point.

Zipp Neufeld: Yes. What I mean by that is that we honestly shouldn't be discussing this—hear me out—because it should just be our rights. That's basically it. Inflation has been getting bad, and all of that stuff has been getting really bad, and then they start basically putting it onto the queer communities.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: That's very wise of you to say. Actually, there are a lot of instances in history when the same thing has happened, like an economic crisis, and people not feeling secure in their own homes or in their own lives have begun to use a scapegoat. It can be a different community—it's not always the same people who are being targeted—but right now, this community is one of the main targets.

Usually, unfortunately, certain political parties, even historically, have used this hatred to their advantage and have used this in order to gain points. Unfortunately, that has been the case in this country as well.

What would you like to say to those politicians who have used that, such as, let's say, the Leader of the Opposition, who refused to go to the flag-raising ceremony last year and who literally came out saying that there shouldn't be gender-neutral washrooms? What would you say to a leader like that who is inciting this kind of hate?

Zipp Neufeld: That is a really good question. I just need a second to think.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Yes, take your time.

Zipp Neufeld: If some leader, like him, in my opinion, is saying that there should be no gender-neutral bathrooms, that is the equivalent of saying that there should be no men's bathrooms, that there should be no women's bathrooms. My saying that is problematic, in that people would get upset with it, but at the same time, they are saying that there shouldn't be gender-neutral bathrooms.

It's really where you're comfortable, and it shouldn't be such a harsh debate. It's just being comfortable.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you for sharing that.

My next question is for Ms. Krause.

You spoke about creating safe spaces generally, whether it's in schools, online, etc., and I'd like to pick your brain on the online portion of that. What does that look like? How can the federal government help make those spaces safer?

• (1755)

Ms. Pam Krause: I think the really important thing is to recognize that Canadians live in small and large places, some that have more access to services and some that don't. For us, providing support online has really been a way to make sure that youth who live in more rural or remote areas are included in getting the support they need. It then gives us an ability to look out to the community to see what might be there or to see the gaps that exist.

I think that one of the biggest themes I'm picking up from today is that isolation is also deadly. People not feeling connected is a really big deal, so I will say that the national action plan and providing LGBTQ organizations with funding were really important.

An LGBTQ organization in Nunavut received that funding. That's important, because as we've seen, and in listening to people like Zipp, we know that a lot of people operate in a very grassroots way in the community and are not seeking intervention services. How do we really provide those opportunities for support, whether it's through peers...? I know there has been some really good work happening around mental health and peer support in more rural and remote communities. It's really about looking at the people who struggle the most to get the support.

As well, I think there is a big role for government in trying to help find the people who can fill those gaps. I think it's actually essential, because the more we do in smaller centres, the more we recognize that the education isn't necessarily there and, most importantly, that the supports and services really do not exist.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

The Chair: MP Ferreri, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have a question for everybody, and you can just show me with a nod or a wave of a hand. How many of you have clients you work with or advocate for who have been victims of crime?

Of the people who put their hand up, I'll go to Mylène first.

Were there any charges laid on the abuser or person who attacked your client? What happened, criminally, to that person?

[Translation]

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: Thank you for the question.

A number of cases come to mind. Some people were victims of crime, but they didn't want to turn to the police, as we discussed, because of police violence and the climate of mistrust towards the police. Others started proceedings, but these proceedings stopped for a variety of reasons. These situations arise often in the organizations that we represent.

[English]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Okay. I'll be more specific.

Have any of your clients been victims of a crime for which criminal charges laid?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: No, no one specifically.

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: It's nobody? None of you? Okay.

When we talk about hate crime.... Okay. I'll leave that.

I think a big piece of this study is looking at the justice system and how we stop crime, but I guess what I'll do is go back to a piece of legislation that I think can help a lot of folks, because I think that right now what's happening is that we're having a lot of issues online, in particular with predators and with people who are particularly targeting children.

I want to just put Bill C-412 on the record again. I think it might be of interest to a lot of the witnesses here. It would put on a duty of care for social media platforms, but it would also allow judges to release the name of the person who is sharing intimate images or sharing images without consent.

I guess my question to you, then, would be this: Would you support a bill like that? If there could be a show of hands or a nod, I think that helps....

Are there no comments?

I can't see your name down in the corner. I believe it's Jason.

• (1800)

The Chair: It's Mr. Schilling.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Mr. Schilling, are you seeing this in terms of the schools? Obviously, the kids are using a lot of social media platforms. Are you seeing an increase in sextortion or of kids being at risk from shared intimate personal images?

Mr. Jason Schilling: That's not necessarily the kind of data or information that we would secure at The Alberta Teachers' Association. It would be more within the realms of the police and the RCMP that those would be dealt with.

However, through the last several years we are seeing an increase in bullying in the use of social media. We just passed a cellphone policy here within the province of Alberta, and part of that cellphone policy is to limit the use of social media sites on school Wi-Fi, but it doesn't prevent kids from going to their own data and using their data that way.

Again, it's about looking at ways to educate students about whether they are being targeted and what that looks like—what the signals are, how that is happening, who to turn to and who to talk to. To make sure that we are providing opportunities for kids to get that kind of education is really important. That's one of our concerns about the legislation here, and opting in, and knowing that potentially there could be censorship on the materials that are presented to kids, materials that have the knowledge that they need in order to know how it affects their lives.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thanks. I'm all done. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Serré, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Tremblay, you spoke about members of Parliament giving public speeches that contribute to hate towards people in your community.

Could you elaborate on this?

Mr. Dave Tremblay: This was part of my recommendations. The goal is to avoid giving public speeches and taking stances that can stir up hate. This is based on the Quebec experience. We recently heard some fiery speeches in Quebec.

Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil said earlier that we've heard much more about gender-neutral toilets in Quebec than about the lack of teachers. We've heard public speeches on the topic. Politicians have talked at length about public toilets. However, their understanding of the situation was wrong. We think that politicians must lead by example.

Today, you're all here to talk about the rise of hate towards 2SLGBTQI+ communities. It's important to do so.

That said, every day, politicians have a social duty when they give speeches. The politicians' position carries a social responsibility. They must remain aware that their words will be repeated and that they may legitimize stances that stir up hate.

For example, we hear about trans women not being accepted in women's sports or hormone blockers being denied to questioning young people.

A number of public speeches legitimize stances that encourage the exclusion of trans people in particular.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

[*English*]

Mr. Schilling, thank you for what you do as a teacher and as president of the association.

With regard to the discussion about how political ideologies are influencing universities and public schools, the Leader of the Opposition, Pierre Poilievre, noted that he had supported the Conservative premiers in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick who had implemented provincial policies requiring principals and teachers to inform parents—we heard this clearly today—and get their consent for their children to change their pronouns and their names in school. That is saying that a political leader who is aspiring to be Prime Minister of this country supports these laws that the provincial government is putting in place.

Can you comment on that, please?

• (1805)

Mr. Jason Schilling: It's a really good question and it's a good point. I think that Zipp, who has spoken so well today, sort of hinted at this as well.

Part of our commentary around Bill 27 and the other legislation that has been passed here in Alberta is that we need to depoliticize this issue. This shouldn't be something that is discussed by politicians in the legislature. This is a private, complex and nuanced conversation between children, their parents and their medical doctors.

I've said it before in the media many times that this is a sledgehammer approach to a really delicate situation, and we need to ensure that our students and their families have the supports. Quite honestly, we are lacking funding around mental health supports and other supports for families within our community. I think this is something that needs to be taken out of the realm of the legislature.

Mr. Marc Serré: Thank you.

Obviously we have Conservative members here who are very supportive, but on the questions that we're looking at here, it's a political leader who is making these comments.

Ms. Dike-Hart, as part of the association, can you also comment on how political leadership is making a difference and influencing some of that hate?

Ms. Daphne Dike-Hart: As I said in my introduction, your queerness or your transness shouldn't really be a political issue. That's one.

Second, hate doesn't come from nowhere. When political leaders make comments like this, they're inciting hate. The public that is following you will follow suit with what you're saying. We all need to be careful with how we speak on this matter.

It really shouldn't be a conversation. The medical professionals have said what is right, and that is evidence-based. We can follow suit with what they're saying. With the parents and the child, at the end of the day, our utmost priority should be the happiness and the survival of that child.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Larouche, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Prevention has come up a great deal. I hope to have time to come back to that topic.

However, I would like to talk about the loss of trust in the justice system.

Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil addressed this issue when she said that the rhetoric went further and that it was not only transphobic and homophobic, but also misogynistic.

Given this rise in hate speech, we really need to rebuild trust in the justice system. Of course, we need to work on prevention. However, once a crime has been committed, victims must feel confident about filing a complaint.

The phrase "rebuilding trust" came up in our study. We strongly associated it with restoring women's trust in approaching the police and reporting their abusers.

Mr. Tremblay, could we draw inspiration from any Quebec initiatives to rebuild trust in the justice system for people in LGBTQ+ communities?

Mr. Dave Tremblay: I see Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil nodding.

Quebec has indeed addressed the issue, especially given the domestic violence that affects women.

Quebec decided to tackle this issue by launching a reform of the system. This involved creating the court specialized in sexual violence and domestic violence. In addition, Quebec provided training for both judges and police officers. Quebec also launched the victims of crime initiative, or IVAC.

Quebec is training the people in the justice system who work with victims. The goal is to ensure that victims can turn to people who know the system.

I believe in the need to support victims when they file a complaint, particularly when it affects their identity and in situations where they feel particularly vulnerable, such as in front of a person in authority.

We could draw inspiration from this system, even though we don't want to make clumsy comparisons between the two situations.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: I don't have much time left.

Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil, I'll let you comment.

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: Thank you.

My answer ties in with previous discussions. I want to remind you that Canada ratified the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires the state to protect children against all forms of discrimination.

Parental rights aren't legislated rights. The same applies to international law and Canada's position on it.

• (1810)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Gazan, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Leah Gazan: My last question is for you, Zipp. When I grow up, I want to be just like you, but I have grown up, so I'll never be as good as you. I will quote you. How do you like that?

Before the last quote, you said:

At what point do I go from being someone you protect to someone who is a threat, not based on my heart or any of my actions, but just based on my genitalia, and your ignorant ideas of what you think who I am means...?

You said that. Can you expand on that?

Zipp Neufeld: Yes, I can. That was a while ago.

When I said that, I was talking about bathrooms and stuff. They were saying how trans women shouldn't be allowed to go into women's bathrooms because of misinformation about their intentions, which, in my opinion, is ridiculous.

What I meant by that was that because I'm a kid, there are laws saying you should protect me. I'm a child. At what point does it go from me being someone who has rights and should be protected to someone who is wrong and shouldn't be allowed to be in a comfortable space, and not based on anything I've done?

Ms. Leah Gazan: I think it's quite a stupid discussion, Zipp. What's the big deal about having a gender-neutral washroom? Why is this a topic of discussion?

You said it was stupid, right? I'm using the word "stupid". I'm using more of.... I think it's quite stupid. I'm wondering what the hysteria is about a toilet. I'm wondering why there's so much focus on a toilet.

How does that hysteria around a toilet make you feel? It's ridiculous to me.

Zipp Neufeld: Yes, that makes sense. I think the way our society has been built so that toilets are gendered makes it harder to break free from that, since we have literally built our society on toilets being gendered and separate and they should be separate at all times, which—

The Chair: Thank you. Would you like to finish that sentence?

Zipp Neufeld: No. I'm fine.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Vien, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Tremblay, Ms. Krause spoke earlier about rural communities. The regions in my constituency are largely rural. There are obviously people from the LGBTQ community. I've also heard of villagers who have gone through a transition. Unfortunately, I'm not sure that they have access to services. The Bellechasse region can't be compared to the heart of the capital, Quebec City, or to Lévis. Mr. Tremblay, you know the area well. I don't know about Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil.

Is the situation of violence described in this study more severe for people living in rural areas? Is access to services more limited? Do they fare worse than people living in urban areas?

What are your thoughts on this?

Mr. Dave Tremblay: I'm originally from the Saguenay, a small region in northern Quebec. The organizations are less prevalent or even non-existent in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region. I can think of Diversité 02, which has been there for a short time. I know that an organization is also found in Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

These organizations often have limited resources. They do their best, with the help of volunteers, to support people. However, this often leads to an exodus of LGBTQ+ people. It's a self-perpetuating issue. Fewer people from the LGBTQ+ community live in the re-

gions because they decide to move to the major centres where they can access services.

Even Quebec City doesn't have that many organizations. I think that there are four or five, whereas greater Montreal may have 50 or 60, or even a hundred. As a result, the representation of these organizations in the regions is quite disproportionate.

• (1815)

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil, you're a researcher associated with the Raoul-Dandurand Chair of Strategic and Diplomatic Studies.

Isn't that right?

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: That's right.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: We're hearing a great deal about this chair right now. You're looking at gender issues in relation to North African immigration. On Monday, a witness from Tunisia told us that it really wasn't easy for him in the North African countries and that he had been through two or three countries before coming to Canada. Honestly, I think that he feels at home in Quebec and Canada.

You're familiar with North Africa and Canada. Compared to other countries, isn't Canada a welcoming place where these people can flourish? Are we right to think this?

Ms. Mylène de Repentigny-Corbeil: In absolute terms, there are more rights and freedoms here. We must always look at how far current rights have been rolled back. That's why we need to fight for these rights.

These are complex situations. The immigration process also leads to people feeling uprooted and losing their sense of belonging to their community. I'll refer to the comments regarding the regions. Sometimes LGBTQ+ people in the regions find a closer-knit community. In the big cities, we lose our ties and the people who make us feel good.

I think that this is also the case for immigrants, who must deal with other forms of discrimination. I lived in Morocco for a number of years. My dissertation talked about Moroccan people in Quebec who experienced discrimination within the LGBTQ+ communities. They had to deal with racism, Islamophobia and so on. There's also a sense of not being part of the community.

In short, there are more rights and freedoms here, but there are also inherent challenges.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Okay.

Mr. Tremblay and Ms. de Repentigny-Corbeil, you may remember the drag story hour in Quebec. Schools, community centres or municipalities—I don't remember which—invited drag queens to come and read stories to children.

Mr. Dave Tremblay: Yes. I remember that.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: I think that it was in communities, actually. It caused quite an uproar in Quebec. I don't want to get into the details and I don't want to point fingers, but did this surprise you?

I've had discussions with people close to me, and they had quite strong opinions. I'm talking about people who are the same age. People in their thirties were for it and others were against it.

What do you think accounts for this?

Mr. Dave Tremblay: Honestly, I was surprised that the matter took on such proportions. Naively, I wasn't expecting that. It was linked to a petition submitted to the National Assembly calling for a ban on the practice. The petition garnered tens of thousands of signatures.

This goes back to the point about misinformation. That's what happened here. People practically thought that we were promoting homosexuality and trying to convince young people to become homosexual or transgender. This led to demonstrations in front of places where Barbada, a drag queen, was scheduled to do story time.

The National Assembly ultimately passed a unanimous motion to reaffirm its confidence in Barbada. Barbada is portrayed by elementary school teacher Sébastien Potvin. He's used to working with young people and conveying sensitive messages in the right way. A great deal of misinformation was involved in all this.

• (1820)

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Hefner, you have the last round. You have five minutes.

Ms. Lisa Hefner: That's great. Thank you very much, Chair.

This has been a super conversation.

Pam, I really appreciate that you brought up how impactful the national action plan to end gender-based violence has been one year in. It's very gratifying to hear that it's already having an impact on the ground.

Ms. Dike-Hart, I believe your organization recently received some WAGE funding to fight rising hate against the 2SLGBTQI+ community. Would you tell us more about what your organization is planning to do with that funding? I think it was about \$366,000.

Ms. Daphne Dike-Hart: Yes. Once we're done with negotiations, we're hitting the ground running.

One of the first things we're doing is creating a workshop for conversion therapy victims. This workshop will help them understand their rights from a legal standpoint and how to care for themselves from a mental health standpoint. To do that, we're going to be collaborating with professionals in that field.

Another thing we're trying to do is ensure we keep the history of the Black 2SLGBTQ community alive by implementing an online archive of Black 2SLGBTQ historians. It's about people who are older and who experienced how the Black queer community has changed from before we had rights to now that we have rights.

What was it like living in the sixties? It's things like that. We will tell our own stories so that the younger generation can see what it was like to be Canadian at that time. It's very essential, because Canada was the first country in North America to legalize same-sex marriage. We should be the pioneers of this. Sometimes it feels like we're going back as opposed to forward. It's very painful that we have to do the work to ensure that people know about this journey.

Another thing we're trying to do is work with other professionals and researchers to understand people in the community and see exactly what the discrimination looks like. What hate are you facing on the ground? That way, we can come up with different strategies on how to bridge that gap and ensure you feel safe and secure as a Black 2SLGBTQ community member.

These are just a few of the ways we're going to be kicking things off in January, all the way to 2027.

Ms. Lisa Hefner: That's amazing. It's very important work. I thank you very much for that work.

I'm going back over to Mr. Jason Schilling.

You're in Alberta.

Mr. Jason Schilling: I am.

Ms. Lisa Hefner: When we talk about activists who are against transgender people and about the sort of legislation we're seeing in places like Alberta, I hear that teachers are being blamed for this a lot. It seems to me that provincial governments are attacking school systems and the way schools are run when they take up these anti-trans agendas.

Is it fair to put it on teachers? Do you know what I'm talking about? Have you felt this as well? Do you feel like you are taking the weight of this?

Mr. Jason Schilling: That's a great question.

To a certain degree, it's yes.

We had a protest just outside of our headquarters here in Edmonton, at Barnett House, last year. It was a "let kids be kids" kind of thing. I think it was called the "1 Million March 4 Children", which happened across Canada. It was here.

There were a lot of lies, accusations and mistruths about what's happening in schools. To counter that, we have a curriculum that was approved by government, with resources approved by government, that teachers teach in schools. Simple conversations among parents, teachers and schools about what is happening are what need to be there.

A lot of the colleagues I talk to are frustrated that sometimes we hear lies perpetuated by candidates who want to run for political parties, such as that we're showing pornography in schools or that schools have Kitty Litter boxes in them. None of these things are true, but they perpetuate misinformation.

Then you see online hatred as well. I've lost track of how many times I've been called a groomer or a pedophile on social media just for the simple fact that I'm a teacher standing up with my colleagues for the protection of our most vulnerable youth.

Teachers feel the weight of that. That's why they're concerned about the legislation going forward.

• (1825)

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: I'm sorry. I'm out of time, but that's really important evidence, Jason.

Thank you very much for sharing that.

Mr. Jason Schilling: You're welcome.

The Chair: That does conclude our panel for today.

On behalf of the committee, I would also like to offer a heartfelt thank you for being here with us today. To those of you online, thank you for your time.

At this point, I have just a few notes for the committee.

On Monday, we will have another meeting and we'll be continuing this study. Then from there, moving into January, be mindful that the committee work will begin with consideration of version one of the report on coercive control. What will happen is that the report will be distributed to committee members a week before our return so that you will have an opportunity to review it.

Then additionally, the committee will be juggling a few different things when we're back. It will be a combination of wrapping up the study on 2SLGBTQI+ and....

Go ahead, Ms. Hepfner.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: A stakeholder in Hamilton reached out to me today, and she would really like to participate in this study. I can forward her contact information to the clerk. If we have room for one more witness, I'd really love to get her in.

The Chair: Sure. If you could be in contact with the clerk....

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: I'll do that today. Thank you.

The Chair: That's perfect.

Go ahead, Ms. Ferreri.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I have another witness too.

The Chair: Yes, okay. We can still take witnesses.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I thought we were cut off. Okay, that's great.

The Chair: Yes. They are added to the bottom, so there's no certainty that they will be there, but they can certainly be added.

Just going back to what I was suggesting, we are going to be juggling, come the new year. We will be wrapping up the 2SLGBTQI+ study, and then in addition, we will be getting the institutional mother-child program study amidst consideration of reports before an order for new studies is established, so we will be juggling a bit, come January or February, but that's what we're used to.

In addition, you can advise the committee.... There will be a proposed draft schedule for the new year coming out that you can all anticipate as well.

Other than that, seeing no questions, thank you again to our witnesses.

The meeting is adjourned.

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